

MSCA-NET

POLICY-BRIEF: THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

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Introduction

This policy brief aims to provide a short, but comprehensive overview of the European Green Deal policy objectives. The brief aims to help researchers and organisations better understand the policy objectives in the context of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions.

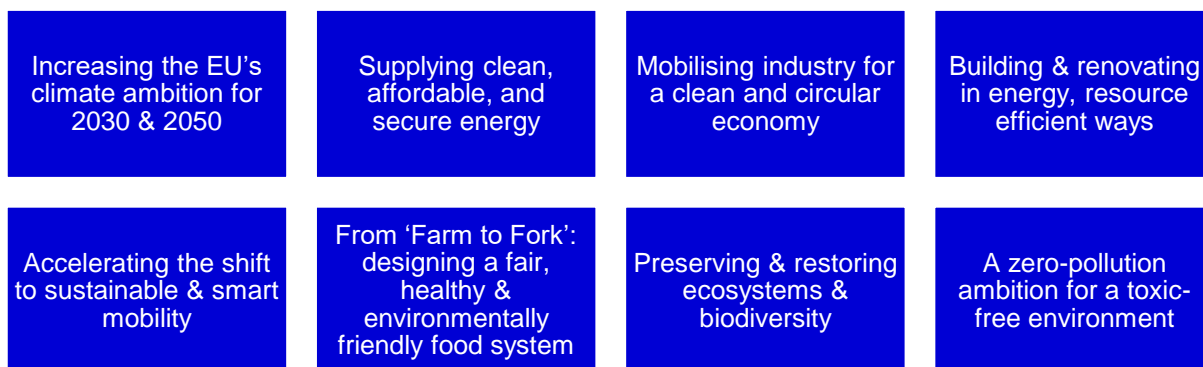
The brief is not intended to duplicate or otherwise replace existing EU guidance and will bring the different information sources together and provide direct signposting to the most relevant resources.

Introduction to the European Green Deal

The European Green Deal (EGD) is a one of the flagship policies¹ of the European Commission, set out by President Ursula von der Leyen in December 2019. The goal of the European Green Deal is to make Europe the first climate neutral continent by 2050. The European Green Deal also aims to help boost the economy and improve the health and quality of life of European Citizens. It is an integral part of the EU strategy to implement the United Nation's '2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'², and the UN Sustainable Development Goals³ as well as to meet the terms of the Paris Agreement⁴.

The European Green Deal goes beyond climate change issues to take a comprehensive approach offering a broad framework which includes building and renovation, sustainable industry, and mobility. It also looks at the efficient use of resources by supporting the move to a clean, circular economy, restoring biodiversity, and cutting pollution. Moreover, it provides a roadmap with policies and measures to deliver this transformative change, including specific funding opportunities, policy initiatives and alterations to existing approaches.

Eight key areas



Open Science practises, including enhanced engagement with citizen, civil society, and end-users, play a key role in increasing societal impact and achieving the transformational change necessary to meet the goals of the European Green Deal.

The European Green Deal in Horizon Europe

Research and fostering innovation play a key role in achieving the aims of the European Green Deal. Specifically, research and innovation activities help to accelerate and navigate the necessary transitions, demonstrate and implement, solutions as well as engage with citizens.

A minimum of 35% of the Horizon Europe budget will go towards advancing the science of climate change, developing solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to adapting to climate change, and to strengthen investments in biodiversity. In addition to specific funding calls within Pillar II - Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness and Innovative Europe, European Partnerships

¹ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024_en

² <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

³ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

⁴ <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement>

and the EU missions will play a role in driving the environmental, societal, and economic transformations necessary to reach the goals of the European Green Deal.

The European Green Deal under MSCA

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) supports collaborative R&I projects between institutions and offers training and career development opportunities to excellent researchers from all over the world. Due to the bottom-up nature of the MSCA which allows topics to be chosen freely by the applicants. Though the main drivers are scientific excellence and innovation, the programme funds numerous projects that directly contribute to the European Commission's commitment to tackling climate and environmental-related challenges.

In addition, all MSCA-funded projects are strongly encouraged to address and adhere to the MSCA Green Charter in order to minimise the environmental footprint of their activities. While physical mobility remains a central component of the MSCA, the Charter encourages researchers and participating organisations to take the lead in avoiding unnecessary travel, in the creative use of teleconferencing tools, and in reducing their carbon emissions in a way that sets a positive example to others within the research community.

What are the requirements under MSCA?

Explicit evaluation criteria

Applicants are free to choose their own research topics, however, they are required to demonstrate the wider scientific, economic, and societal impact as set out in the MSCA Work programme 2023-2024. This includes direct references to EU and other related policies, such as the European Green Deal, under the **'excellence criterion' in part B1 section 1, which** can help applicants to demonstrate a chosen topic's timeliness and relevance to society.

Though not a requirement for MSCA, applicants are encouraged to think critically about their proposed research topics, methodologies and potential project outcomes, and impact in the context of the **'Do No Significant Harm principle'** (DNSH). Under the DNSH principle, proposed projects and activities should not support or carry out activities that would cause significant harm to any of the six environmental objectives detailed under the EU taxonomy for sustainable activities.

As outlined in the MSCA Work Programme 2023-2024, applicants to the MSCA and Citizens call, Researchers at Schools activities must include engagement activities on key European Commission priorities such as the European Green Deal, sustainable development, and health.

From 2023, all applicants to Postdoctoral Fellowships, Doctoral Networks, COFUND and Staff Exchange calls will need to complete *'Environmental aspects in light of the MSCA Green Charter'* in **Part B2 Section 5**.

EU Taxonomy for Sustainable Activities

The EU taxonomy is a classification system that creates a list of environmentally sustainable economic activities. The six environmental objectives are:

1. Climate change mitigation
2. Climate change adaptation
3. Sustainable use & protection of water & marine resources
4. Transition to a circular economy
5. Protection and restoration of biodiversity

Developing skills and enhancing long term employability for staff and researchers

Beneficiaries and individual researchers are urged to think critically and innovatively about their training, and career development needs. The novelty of the research training must be detailed under the

‘excellence criterion’ in Part B1 section 1. Moreover, activities to increase the career perspectives and employability of staff and researchers as well as contributing to their skills development, such as increasing their knowledge of the climate crises, sustainable and green working practises, and eco-management, must be addressed under the **‘impact criterion’ in Part B1 section 2.**

Those involved in supporting and or implementing the project may require additional training to help understand and reduce the environmental impact of research and innovation activities and to promote a sustainable approach to research. Under the MSCA, the associated costs can be claimed from the institutional unit costs. For COFUND, cost eligibility is determined at the project level.

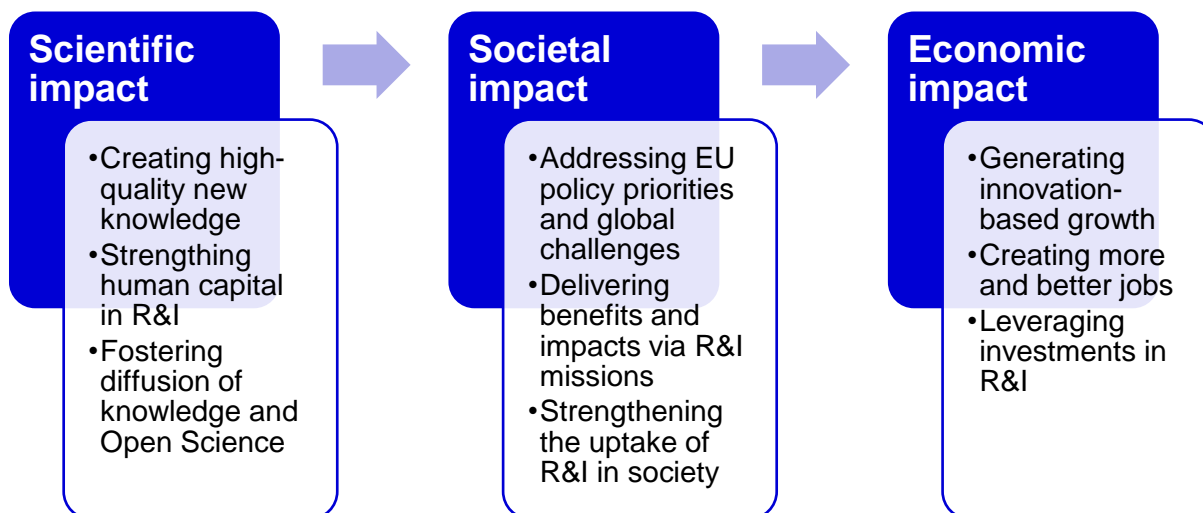
Planning your dissemination, exploitation and communication activities

Applicants must think about and plan their dissemination, exploitation, and communication activities carefully. To develop the appropriate dissemination, exploitation, and communication activities, applicants must clearly identify the problem or the need that is being address, the value added by the project in terms of research, technology and or methodology, the key exploitable result(s) and the key target group(s). Where relevant, thinking of these in terms of the wider EU, global, national, and or local polices can help to better understand the key messages, and target audiences, thereby helping to develop a more comprehensive, innovative, and targeted dissemination, exploitation, and communication plan. The activities must be clearly explained under the **‘impact criterion’ in Part B1 section 2.**

Beneficiaries will need to submit a detailed dissemination and exploitation plan along with a plan for communication activities in accordance with the timeframe specified in the grant agreement.

Demonstrating Impact

Having a clear dissemination, exploitation, and communication plan will also make it easier to demonstrate the importance of the project’s contribution to the expected scientific, societal, and economic impacts. Under the **‘impact criterion’ in Part B1 section 2,** applicants will need to describe the immediate impact of the project in terms of scientific, societal, and economic impact. All of this can directly contribute to achieving the goals of the European Green Deal.



Implementing measures to minimise the environmental footprint of MSCA project

Beneficiaries, individual researchers, staff members and other organisations involved in supporting research, innovation and training activities are strongly encouraged to undertake measures to reduce the project’s environmental footprint. The MSCA Green Charter is a non-binding code of good of practice for individuals and institutions to help raise awareness of environmental sustainability, as well as to encourage thinking and promoting best practice in sustainability at all stages of the research life cycle. All participants in the MSCA should adhere to the Green Charter on a ‘best effort’ basis.

The MSCA Green Charter

The measures presented in the Charter should serve as guiding principles and participants are encouraged to complement them with other related activities. Measures include but are not limited to:

- Researcher-related measures such as reducing the production of waste and harmful substances, as well as attending events virtually unless a physical presence is strictly necessary.
- Institutional-related measures such as promoting green purchasing for all project-related materials and supporting the use of carbon offsetting.
- Consortium-related measures such as the sustainable organisation of events, as well as providing and promoting training on issues of sustainable research management and environmental awareness.
- Outreach activities such as those that promote environmental initiatives and policies for example the European Green Deal and sharing of best practice for improving the sustainability of research.

Additional guidance material to support the implementation of the Charter is [available on the MSCA website](#).

Reporting

As part of the final report, beneficiaries will be asked to report on what they have or have not done to reduce the environmental footprint of their project in line with the MSCA Green Charter.

Feedback to Policy

In July 2021 and June 2022, the European Commission, and the European Research Executive Agency (REA) held dedicated events to explore how research and innovation can help achieve the goal of climate neutrality.

- The [MSCA European Green Deal cluster event](#) brought together projects and researchers funded under the MSCA, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), the European University Alliances, Erasmus+ and Creative Europe with EU policymakers and experts. Topics included biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and soil health, clean energy, eliminating pollution, climate action, and green action.
- The [MSCA Cluster event on Mission Ocean and Waters](#) brought together researchers, experts, and EU policymakers to examine how research and innovation activities can help achieve the objectives of the EU Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters”, which is one of the 4 EU missions dedicated to achieving the aims of the European Green Deal. The event brought together researchers and projects funded under MSCA as well as the EIT. The event focused on protecting and restoring marine and freshwater ecosystems and biodiversity, preventing, and eliminating pollution, as well as making the blue economy carbon-neutral and circular.

References and Resources

- **Horizon Europe and MSCA**
 - [Regulation establishing Horizon Europe](#)
 - [Specific programme implementing Horizon Europe](#)
 - [MSCA Work Programme 2023-2024](#)
 - [The European Research Area \(ERA\)](#)
- **The European Green Deal**
 - [A European Green Deal](#)
 - [Research and innovation for the European Green Deal](#)
 - [Factsheets on the European Green Deal](#)
 - [The Role of Citizen Science in the European Green Deal](#)
- **Addressing the European Green Deal in a research and innovation proposal**
 - [Horizon Europe Programme Guide](#)
 - [Horizon Europe Strategic Plan \(2021-2024\)](#)
 - [The MSCA-NET handbooks](#)
 - [GreenComp The European Sustainability Competence Framework](#)
- **MSCA and the Green Deal**
 - [The MSCA Green Charter](#)
 - [The MSCA Green Charter Guidance Material](#)
 - [MSCA European Green Deal Cluster Event](#)
 - [MSCA Cluster event on Mission Ocean and Waters](#)