ELIA Guidelines for Eco-Responsible Travel

The Guidelines for Eco-Responsible Travel should be applied to all of ELIA’s business travel. Business travel includes all trips for which ELIA bears financial responsibility, as well as those funded by third parties but undertaken by ELIA representatives.

In practice, this means that the guidelines should be implemented every time ELIA staff members and freelancers travel for work between different cities, except if it is part of their regular commute (between their home and the ELIA office). This includes travel within one country (e.g. the Netherlands) as well as international travel.

The guidelines also apply to volunteers or other individuals if their travel is ELIA’s financial responsibility. For instance, this is the case when the ELIA team books travel for event steering group members. Volunteers that are not being financed by ELIA for their travel are also encouraged to take the guidelines into consideration, however, for them implementation is not mandatory. For instance, this would be the case for Representative Board Members traveling to a Board meeting on their own budget. The guidelines do not apply to personal travel.

ELIA staff members and freelancers need to be able to justify how the trips they are responsible for align with the guidelines if/when asked by the auditors of the SHIFT Eco-Certification. If they are able to do this, it is not mandatory to write a report for every trip. In case of doubt during the process of deciding whether to travel and which travel choices to make, please refer to the Green Team, which will be happy to help.

The Guidelines for Eco-Responsible Travel are complementary to ELIA’s Eco-Policy and Action Plan.

All business travel should be approved through the proper channels in consultation with the relevant manager and in case of doubt should be checked with the Executive Director. The Green Team is authorised to provide advice, solicited or unsolicited. The Executive Director will account for her travel to the Executive Group in the regular Executive Director reports.
The procedure to follow when planning travel is as follows:

1. **For every business travel that is planned between different cities, a proper justification is needed, explaining what the trip's added value to ELIA’s activities is.** Every time you plan a business trip, consider whether the trip is truly needed, and whether an online alternative might be equally sufficient to achieve the foreseen aim of the trip. Ask yourself the following questions:
   - Is this travel really needed? Why?
   - Would you be able to do this meeting/event online?
   - If you did not attend the meeting at all, what would be the consequences?
   - Do you expect a much higher quality or result of the meeting/event by attending in person?
   - Does your presence have a significant amplification effect on the envisioned result of the meeting/event?
   - Are you able to combine the event/meeting with other purposeful travel for ELIA?

If after answering these questions, you are in doubt about whether the value of your trip justifies its carbon footprint, discuss your travel plans with the Green Team.

2. **In case a trip is organised by a third party, share ELIA’s travel policy with them well in advance.** An invitation by a third party will normally only be accepted if it is in accordance with the ELIA travel policy. If this is not the case, employees will need to have approval from their manager.

3. **If travel is considered to be of added value: plan travel in such a way that you minimise the reliance on carbon-intensive modes of travel, such as flights.** Follow these steps:
   - Consider combining multiple trips to a similar region into one longer trip. This will reduce the total distance that you will need to travel, and often you will be able to find environmentally responsible options (such as trains or busses) to take you to your destinations.
   - Travel by train as much as possible. For a trip of under 700 km taking the train is mandatory. If the train journey (while under 700 km) would take longer than 8 hours, or, if no connection is available, you can explore other transportation modes, including travel by plane.
   - If you travel by plane, choose direct flights over stop-over flights, even if this option is more expensive. Only book stop-over flights if there is no other option. Consult about this choice and the budget involved with your manager, when needed.
   - Exceptions can be requested for personal reasons but need to be approved by the Executive Director.
4. **ELIA staff, freelancers and volunteers are encouraged to consider taking the train, or other low-carbon travel options, over flying for long-distance travel (a trip over 700 km/8 hours) as well.** One possible option would be to take the plane one way and choosing a low-carbon option the other way. These trips should be approved by the Executive Director on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration budget and additional requests from staff/freelancers/volunteers to make the travel suitable to their individual needs.

5. **For overnight stays: choose accommodations that are eco-labeled.** In cases where eco-labeled options are not available, please document your reasons for selecting alternative accommodation.

6. During your stay in a different city, **ELIA encourages you and all staff, freelancers, and volunteers to opt for public transportation or other sustainable transportation modes** (such as walking, biking or shared electric vehicles), whenever possible.

7. While acknowledging this is a personal choice, **ELIA encourages staff, freelancers and volunteers to choose environmentally responsible food options and providers while traveling.** Environmentally responsible food options include organic, fair trade, vegetarian, vegan and local offers. This particularly applies in the case of business lunches, dinners and/or other meals.

8. **The physical and mental health of its staff, freelancers and volunteers is important to ELIA.** If you feel that you need any additional support to make green travel feasible for you, please flag this to the Executive Director. Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.