



ELIA's Eco-Policy: Quick Overview

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Revision History

Revision	Date	Description of changes	Requested By
3.0	8 December 2025	Minor text revision, alignment to ELIA Strategy launched in November 2024, and improved alignment to ELIA's EDI policy.	ELIA Green Team and Executive Director
2.0	11 November 2024	Minor text revisions. No content modifications. Approved by ELIA Executive Group	ELIA Green Team and Executive Director
1.0	29 November 2023	Updates after review of draft presented to the ELIA Team, Executive Group and Representative Board.	ELIA Green Team and Executive Director

Policy	This policy seeks to ensure that ELIA operates in an environmentally responsible way in its activities and practices.
Purpose	ELIA as an organisation aims to minimise its footprint, optimise environmentally responsible practices, and act as an example of good practice for its members and other networks.
Scope	This policy applies to the entirety of ELIA's work.
Governance	This policy is overseen by ELIA's Representative Board and will be implemented through ELIA's yearly Sustainability Action Plan, managed by ELIA's Green Team. This policy will be assessed annually by the Green Team, which will report its findings to the Representative Board and amend the policy when necessary.
Related Policies & Procedures	All ELIA's other policies and procedures are interconnected with the Eco-Policy and should align to its principles. This includes, but is not limited to, the travel guidelines, procurement procedures, and event production protocols and agreements with host institutions.

Responsibilities	This policy applies to all staff members (the ELIA team), freelancers, and volunteers. Volunteer bodies include the Representative Board, the Executive Group, Event Steering Groups, Working Groups, and Platform Steering Groups. ELIA staff members, freelancers, and volunteers are required to ensure compliance with the Eco-Policy in any activities they undertake or projects they (co-)manage as part of their duties, in letter and spirit. Members of the Representative Board are required to ensure that their decisions and the activities and practices of ELIA and its staff also comply with the Eco-Policy in letter and spirit.
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ELIA's Environmental Approach

ELIA acknowledges the detrimental and dangerous impact that current human activity has on the planet and its ecosystems and ecologies. ELIA recognises the ecological footprint associated with running its globally connected European network and the further impact its operations have on the planet's ecosystems. ELIA is committed to making ecologically responsible choices, and this eco-policy is a crucial step in that endeavour.

ELIA's eco-policy enables the network organisation to integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation principles transversally and, in the coming years, to explore further development and integration of regenerative and circular approaches.¹ The scope of the policy therefore includes operations and practices as well as ELIA's governance model, policies, and strategies.

Becoming an ecologically sound and responsible organisation is not a linear process, but rather a continuous and iterative effort to develop practices, operations, strategies, and governance models that are in harmony with our planet, and with the changing ecosystems, ecologies, and inhabitants that surround us. For ELIA, publishing this eco-policy serves as a renewed commitment to this process. The policy is a governance tool meant for harmonising and strengthening the implementation of greening measures and actions, as well as encouraging reflection and shared learning within the organisation.

ELIA's ecological impact and adaptation and mitigations measures will at times intersect with other types of impact the network can have (e.g., social, economic, political, cultural). While this policy focuses specifically on the ecological part, a more holistic approach, taking these different aspects into consideration, should be pursued across ELIA's operations. ELIA will work towards increased synergies between the Eco-Policy and its [Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity \(EDI\) Policy](#). This includes aligning to our EDI work culture aims and EDI commitment in further developing and implementing our eco-actions and eco-policy in the coming years.

Finally, ELIA's endeavour is not occurring in a vacuum, but in relation to and with the aim of contributing to broader international frameworks. Most importantly:

- The [United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals](#) and the [2015 United Nation Paris Agreement](#), which acknowledges that climate change is a 'common concern of humankind' and recognises 'the need for an effective and progressive response to the urgent threat of climate change on the basis of the best available scientific knowledge'.
- The [European Union's Green Deal](#) and the [European Climate Law](#), which ultimately aim to achieve climate neutrality in the EU by 2050.

Background

² ELIA's climate action and approach to eco-responsible governance, practices, and operations is closely connected to ELIA's long-term [strategy](#). The strategy builds on a set of

¹ Definitions of [climate change mitigation and adaptation](#), and of [circular and regenerative approaches](#).

³ The [ELIA Strategic Focus 2020–2024](#) has been an important stepping stone for ELIA's climate action, as it included *Achieving Ecological Sustainability and the Green Shift* as one of its ten strategic priorities. Published in 2020, this document describes how important it is for ELIA to tackle climate change and sustainable ecological development as a network, both through its practices and by

core values, particularly relevant to this policy is the value ‘We Support a Culture of Care’, which is described as follows:

‘Through collaboration with our members, we prioritise care in every action we take. Actively seeking solutions to global challenges, we are committed to taking responsibility for our environment and each other.’

Our aim is to ‘live’ this value (as well as the others) through the implementation of the three missions presented by the strategy: Community, Connection, and Advocacy. This is how eco-responsibility becomes part of everything that ELIA does.

Throughout the ELIA network, first its strategic priority ‘Achieving Ecological Sustainability’ (2020-2024)³, then our value ‘We Support a Culture of Care’ (2024 onwards) resulted in activities to raise awareness around climate change, capacity building on (organisational) climate action, and increased carbon literacy. Furthermore, ELIA actively facilitated dialogue and peer learning on topics related to climate change among its members. Many different projects and events in the period 2020–2025 contributed to this, most notably: [SHIFT](#), [Plastic Justice](#), [Agents of Transformation](#), [CrAft](#), [Cultuur Campus Putselaan](#), Envirology and the [ELIA Biennial ‘No Stone Unturned’](#).

With the SHIFT project (2019–2022), ELIA also took on a leading role in sharing and promoting resources and best practices with colleague networks in the cultural and education sectors. In fact, ELIA led the creation of the SHIFT Eco-Guidelines for Cultural Networks, which have since been integrated into the SHIFT certification scheme (launched in 2022). Championing and promoting climate action is an important goal for ELIA, as the organisation recognises the great potential for positive impact that can be achieved by fully leveraging its broad network of partners and members, and through its sphere of influence.

Projects and programmes over the past years led to the realisation that more could and should be done to structurally embed ecological responsibility across ELIA, and of the importance of ‘practicing what is preached’. This eco-policy, together with a yearly action plan and the organisation's eco-certification, will be a key building block for realising this ambition.

Note on language

In this document we refer mostly to ecological responsibility, as well as the concepts of climate action, climate change mitigation, and (to some extent) climate change adaptation. The choice for most of these terms (climate action, mitigation, adaptation) originated in the SHIFT project, which has been a key driver for ELIA to establish its eco-policy. The SHIFT project relied on the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as its primary framework. On the topic of climate change, it mostly aligned with SDG target 13: Climate Action. However, in this document we are refraining from using the term ‘environmental sustainability’, following critiques of the term in the discourse surrounding climate action.

facilitating peer learning and exchange on the topic with its members. [ELIA Strategic Focus 2020-2023](#)

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Alternative concepts and frameworks related to climate change and eco-sustainability efforts are also becoming increasingly important; for instance, the concepts of climate justice and regeneration, and climate discourses in intersectional frameworks. While these concepts and frameworks served as inspiration for some policy points, they have not been fully incorporated in the terminology used for the first iteration of ELIA's eco-policy. Reflections on terminology will be included in the regular policy reviews, with the possibility of amending terminology if/when needed.

Governance

1. Overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy lies with ELIA's Executive Director.
2. The policy will be assessed annually by the Executive Director and the Green Team, who will report significant findings and an opinion on whether any amendments are needed to the Representative Board with each review. Amendments will be made when necessary.
3. To ensure ELIA meets the established aims and spirit of this policy, the Green Team and the Executive Director will:
 - 3.1 Discuss and review how well ELIA is implementing this policy and adjust its practices and action plan where necessary.
 - 3.2 Assess any significant new or revised ELIA policies and procedures regarding their environmental impact.
 - 3.3 Integrate environmental responsibility into ELIA's action plans and strategies across its operations and in collaboration with the different departments.
 - 3.4 Ensure ELIA's employment practices and procedures are consistent with the aims of this policy.
4. All staff and Representative Board members have a responsibility to ensure that their own actions are consistent in letter and spirit to the contents of this policy. For maximum effectiveness, this policy must be made understandable to and embraced by staff, suppliers, partners, and trustees.

ELIA's Eco-Policy

General

1. ELIA's practices and activities are aligned with the SHIFT Eco-Guidelines for Networks, as these guidelines are specifically tailored for organisations like ELIA.
2. ELIA strives to be eco-certified through the SHIFT Eco-Certification scheme, as this is an effective way of holding the organisation accountable for its commitment to ecological responsibility and climate action.
3. Since scientific and operational developments in the field of climate change mitigation, adaptation, and related areas are expected to continue advancing at a rapid pace, ELIA strives to remain well informed concerning new practices and measures that can be taken to further strengthen the organisation's ecologically responsible practices.
4. ELIA facilitates continuous peer learning and exchange among its members concerning how ecology, circularity, regeneration, climate action, etc., relate to higher arts education by building an ELIA Platform and community dedicated to these themes and featuring the topic at its main events.

Travel

1. ELIA aims to minimise the environmental impact of its business travels, in particular greenhouse gas emissions, while maximising the professional impact and value of any travel undertaken. This includes strategically planning its activities in such a way as to minimise reliance on carbon-intensive modes of travel, such as flights, as much as possible.
2. Measuring impact is a crucial step in implementing change. In line with this goal, ELIA accounts for all travels for which it bears financial responsibility, as well as those funded by third parties but undertaken by ELIA representatives, in a yearly carbon footprint calculation.
3. ELIA develops effective strategies to reduce its carbon emissions resulting from travel. These strategies are grounded by the results of a yearly baseline comparison of the annual emissions (2023 is the baseline year). The baseline comparison uses two indicators: the organisation's yearly average emissions per kilometre and the organisation's yearly average emissions per staff member. For the development of these strategies, the ELIA team is considered as an ecosystem; therefore, we consider collective totals and averages.
4. All trips for which ELIA bears financial responsibility, as well as those funded by third parties but undertaken by ELIA representatives, should follow ELIA's Green Travel Guidelines.
5. Environmentally responsible travel modes can sometimes be more expensive and take longer than their carbon-intensive alternatives. ELIA will organise its budget to support environmentally responsible travel as much as possible, even if the cost is higher. ELIA will also allow employees to declare travel time as work time, to facilitate environmentally responsible choices.
6. ELIA offers its employees the flexibility to work remotely part of the time, on a voluntary basis. This enables footprint reduction related to commuting and allows employees to more easily combine international trips, thereby reducing the overall international travel footprint.
7. Collaborative Advocacy: ELIA will actively engage in collaborative efforts with partners and/or peers in our sector to advocate for lower carbon emissions and accessible transport solutions, fostering collective action towards environmentally responsible and inclusive transportation for all.

Events

1. ELIA aims to minimise the carbon footprint of its events and explore the integration of circular approaches by implementing climate change mitigation and other ecologically responsible measures. In doing so, ELIA will take into account the specific local conditions at each venue, and other key principles that may influence the event arrangements. These include accessibility, inclusivity, geographical representation and spread among members and hosts, and the availability of host institutions.
2. ELIA will incorporate climate change mitigation and principles for raising awareness in event communications, programming, production, and logistics, as outlined in chapter 4 of the SHIFT Eco-Guidelines for networks. Environmentally responsible processes will be part of the event organisation before, during, and after ELIA events.

This includes the inclusion of a sustainability clause in contracts and agreements with event hosts.

3. ELIA acknowledges that, due to the constantly changing locations of its events, which are often held in different countries, the implementation success of climate change mitigation and other ecologically responsible measures will not follow a linear path. However, ELIA will systematically integrate such measures in each of its events, to improve its practices overall. Additionally, through collaborative engagement with third-party host institutions (mostly ELIA members) and by integrating environmentally responsible planning and reflection in the hosting protocols, ELIA will promote a culture of ecologically responsible event production across its network.

Procurement

1. ELIA actively chooses environmentally responsible suppliers and providers who uphold an eco-policy and offer sustainable products and services, ensuring a commitment to eco-friendly practices throughout its operations. This means that, when available, ELIA will choose suppliers/providers and products that are eco-labelled. Additionally, ELIA will prioritise options that are local and/or circular and/or rely on renewable energy. For IT and utilities, ELIA will prioritise options with energy label A.
2. ELIA will communicate its procurement policy to its members, its potential partners or sponsors, and its (potential) regular suppliers and providers, when appropriate.
3. If the decision-making process on procurement is beyond the organisation's control, ELIA will proactively advocate to influence and inspire sustainable change among the decision makers involved.

Office

1. ELIA aims to run its office operations in an environmentally responsible manner, including by optimising resource utilisation and minimising waste generation.
 - 1.1 ELIA tracks its office's carbon footprint, estimating its yearly consumption of energy and water and its waste production.
 - 1.2 Whenever possible, ELIA follows the principle of the 3 R's (Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle) across its operations.
 - 1.3 ELIA avoids single-use plastic products.
 - 1.4 ELIA reduces the consumption of (raw) materials, such as printed documents, and actively seeks more ecologically responsible alternatives, which in many cases might mean prioritising the use of digital solutions.
 - 1.5 ELIA commits to minimising its energy consumption wherever possible.
2. ELIA encourages all employees to make environmentally responsible choices both within the office and when working remotely from home.
3. ELIA will engage in communication with its landlord or building manager at least twice a year to encourage, discuss, and evaluate the green initiatives implemented by the building management team. ELIA expects to see the energy efficiency and overall ecological performance of the A Lab office space improve significantly in three years. If these improvements are not satisfactory, ELIA will consider whether moving to a more sustainable office space is needed.

Communications

1. ELIA advocates and raises awareness regarding environmentally responsible approaches and practices among its stakeholders, members, and wider community through its communication channels.
2. Where possible, ELIA implements measures to make its communications practices less carbon-intensive. This includes minimising reliance on printed materials and using communication options that are less carbon intensive, which in many cases might be digital. Any action following from this should also align with ELIA's EDI efforts, thereby contributing to communications practices that are sustainable and accessible for all.

Finance

1. ELIA is committed to conducting its financial operations in the most ecologically responsible manner possible, adhering to responsible practices and minimising environmental impact. ELIA takes its inspiration from the report published by Julie's Bicycle, '[Counting on Culture: How to Stop Financing the Environmental Crises](#)' (2023).
2. ELIA will refrain from investing in or accepting private funding directly or indirectly related to fossil fuel companies.
3. ELIA will raise awareness about environmentally responsible funding and financial partnerships. In particular, it will bring the topic of environmentally responsible funding up for discussion in its advocacy towards funding agencies, whenever appropriate.