



## EMBL Events Sustainability Pledge

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## 1. About this pledge

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1.1 This Sustainability Pledge covers the activities of the EMBL Course and Conference Office and the EMBL-EBI Training Team, referred to collectively in this document as **EMBL Events**.

1.2 This pledge outlines our commitment to supporting the principles of sustainability and recognises that a sustainable environment is central to our lives and our work.

1.3 EMBL Events are committed to managing their activities to promote sustainability, minimise environmental impact, ensure provision of an accessible and fair service, and bring about continual improvement in EMBL's environmental performance.

1.4 EMBL Events recognises and supports the inclusion of the whole breadth of the scientific community as an important aspect in the wider scope of sustainability. We support EMBL's values of openness, inclusion, integrity, transparency, and fairness, and we commit to upholding these values in the delivery of our training programme. Our goal is to deliver events that are not only environmentally conscious but are also socially responsible and foster the emergence of new generations of environmentally conscious scientists.

1.5 Owing to the nature of research carried out at EMBL, we recognise that the EMBL Events programme will include topics that are environmentally relevant, and we are proud to host these.

1.6 The aim of this Sustainability Pledge is to integrate a philosophy of sustainability into all of the EMBL Events activities and to establish and promote sound environmental practice in EMBL's operations. We will achieve this by:

- a. Informing staff and stakeholders of our commitment to the environment and sustainability.
- b. Supporting the implementation of sustainability focused actions within our operations.
- c. Monitoring the progress of those actions.
- d. Communicating the outcome of those actions to relevant stakeholders.

## 2. Who is responsible for this pledge?

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2.1 This pledge is owned by the EMBL Events Sustainability Working Group who hold the responsibility for maintaining and implementing this pledge. It was adopted on 19 December 2025 and will be reviewed every year. Changes may be made at any time based on guidance or amended organisational priorities.

2.2 EMBL Events have day-to-day responsibility for adhering to this pledge.

### 3. What activities are covered by this pledge?

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3.1 This pledge applies to courses and conferences that are directly organised by EMBL Events taking place at the Heidelberg and Hinxton sites.

3.2 This pledge has been developed by and agreed upon by the EMBL Events Sustainability Working Group, EMBL Training Leadership and EMBL Sustainability Office.

### 4. Environmental sustainability pledge

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4.1 As detailed in its [Sustainability Strategy](#), EMBL is committed to responding to the threat of climate change by focusing on three areas: being environmentally responsible in our operations, doing environmentally relevant research, and promoting sustainability.

4.2 Conferences and face-to-face meetings are a pivotal part of the scientific process. They enable scientists to share and discuss research findings, to exchange ideas and insights, and to network for collaboration and career development. However, we cannot ignore the fact that the environmental impact of mobility and events features highly on the global sustainability agenda.

4.3 EMBL Events commits to the following principles and practices:

- a. Supporting EMBL to achieve its sustainability targets and reduce EMBL's environmental impact by reducing energy use, reducing travel impacts, increasing recycling rates, reducing waste, and eliminating non-essential single-use plastics.
- b. Monitoring and managing EMBL Events' environmental performance and working towards targets to reduce adverse impacts.
- c. Keeping up to date with industry-specific best practice.
- d. Disposing of all waste appropriately and minimising non-recyclable waste.
- e. Where possible, encouraging suppliers to meet the highest standards of environmental performance and using suppliers with the most sound environmental credentials.
- f. Communicating this pledge to all employees, contractors and other stakeholders, as well as making this pledge available to the general public.
- g. Reporting on the EMBL Events environmental performance in both internal and external communications, where relevant.
- h. Reviewing this pledge annually and measuring targets and performance as part of that review.

## 5. Significant sustainability issues

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EMBL Events has identified four sustainability areas that are most significant when considering the range of activities we undertake, where we have the biggest environmental impact and where we possess a level of control to drive continuous improvement.

### 5A. Sustainable consumables

5A.1 We commit to the principles of buying locally where possible and making a concerted effort in all our procurement decisions to reduce the distance travelled between source and destination.

5A.2 We commit to keeping waste to an absolute minimum by preventing, reusing, recycling or recovering waste wherever possible. We will ensure waste is sorted, stored and disposed of properly and in a sustainable manner. For practical courses, we will work closely with the lab kitchen staff who handle lab consumables, waste and water management.

We will select sustainable alternatives of our consumables whenever possible and use our purchasing power to promote sustainable alternatives with our suppliers.

5A.3 We will contribute to EMBL achieving its waste management targets<sup>1</sup> including reducing its waste generation by 20% by 2030 compared to 2019, recycling 90% of its waste by 2030 and eliminating non-essential single use plastic by the end of 2026.

5A.4 We will achieve this by:

- a. Phasing out the use of non-essential single-use plastics by the end of 2026.
- b. Ensuring that there are facilities to recycle waste, including food waste and packaging.
- c. Promoting and encouraging recycling by staff and attendees.
- d. Using reusable, compostable, recyclable and/or recycled products.
- e. Reducing the use of non-recyclable items such as laminated or plastic based material.
- f. Minimising the amount of conference merchandise that is actively offered to participants and, when merchandise is offered, work to source products that are sustainably produced.
- g. Minimising the amount of printing and the amount of waste paper.
- h. Using electronic communication as our primary method of communication and promotion.

5A.5 We will encourage our main suppliers to adopt principles of environmental sustainability.

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<sup>1</sup> EMBL Sustainability Strategy - <https://www.embl.org/documents/document/sustainability-strategy/>

## **5B. Sustainable participation**

5B.1 We will support modern working practices including hybrid working, in line with EMBL guidelines, if the position allows.

5B.2 We will continue to offer online access to our training programme as an alternative to travelling.

5B.3 We will actively work to reduce air travel as much as possible by encouraging participants (including speakers) to use sustainable modes of transport to travel to EMBL events.

5B.4 We commit to supporting EMBL to reduce the carbon footprint of its staff travel activities by 50% by 2030 compared to 2019.

5B.5 We will achieve this by:

- a. Committing to providing open access to on-demand training resources as an alternative to travelling off-site to deliver training.
- b. Including innovative formats including virtual and hybrid computational courses and multi-hub computational and laboratory based courses as part of our programme, and including hybrid conferences as standard.
- c. Leading by example, by choosing sustainable travel options where possible when staff travel is in the best interests of EMBL, the staff member, and the planet.
- d. Promoting green travel options to participants and speakers, including offering discounted travel options where they exist (for example, the DB event ticket).
- e. Providing a free shuttle bus service between hotels and the venue, to reduce the use of higher-carbon options such as taxis.

## **5C. Sustainable catering**

5C.1 We commit to minimising food waste.

5C.2 We commit to continuing to work with an on-site catering provider and collaborating with them to offer a low carbon operation.

5C.3 We will achieve this by:

- a. Working with our in-house catering teams and communicating to them in a timely manner the exact number of onsite participants. Staff will monitor the menu options that are most consumed and adjust during events as required to avoid food waste.
- b. Increasing the ratio of vegetarian and vegan to meat-based food we order per event and by including a vegetarian day during events where possible.
- c. Including dishes that are seasonal and sourced from local suppliers.

- d. Continually monitoring catering trends at events and participant feedback and working in conjunction with our onsite catering providers to improve the sustainability of our service.

## 5D. Energy

5D.1 The use of electricity and gas is a key contributor to greenhouse gas emissions; however, we cannot host events without energy. Therefore, efficient energy reduction is one of the clearest and most important ways to reduce our overall impact, and is a key part of our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint.

The ATC building, in which EMBL Events hosts training and conferences in Heidelberg, uses 560GWh of electricity and 388GWh of heat per year (based on 2024 figures). This is a 21% reduction in total energy compared with 2021<sup>2</sup>.

The EMBL-EBI South building, in which EMBL-EBI Training takes place, uses 647GWh of electricity and 520GWh of gas per year (based on 2024 figures). This is a 17% reduction in total energy compared with 2021<sup>3</sup>.

5D.2 We will contribute to EMBL achieving its carbon reduction target, which is to reduce its Scope 1<sup>4</sup> and Scope 2<sup>5</sup> emissions by 50% by 2030 compared with a 2019 baseline.

5D.3 To accomplish a reduction in emissions from energy use, we will:

- a. Undertake an energy audit.
- b. Install energy monitoring equipment for our spaces, including the Klaus Tschira Auditorium and our main training facilities at EMBL Heidelberg and EMBL-EBI.
- c. Further to the energy audit, produce a plan to reduce our energy usage.
- d. Maintain the changes that have been put in place to manage temperature control in training spaces since 2021.

## 6. [Green Labs](#)

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EMBL uses the [Laboratory Efficiency Assessment Framework \(LEAF\)](#), specifically developed for laboratory based research, to improve the sustainability and efficiency of all laboratories across our sites. EMBL scientific courses taking place at EMBL Heidelberg use training laboratories and facilities that have received the Gold award by LEAF.

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<sup>2</sup> The ATC building used 621GWh of electricity and 586GWh of heat in 2021.

<sup>3</sup> The EBI South building used 670GWh of electricity and 731GWh of gas in 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Scope 1 emissions refer to those which are emitted from on-site combustion activities, such as burning gas in our boilers.

<sup>5</sup> Scope 2 emissions refer to those which are emitted from the energy we purchase, such as at electricity power plants.

## 7. Accessibility and inclusivity

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7.1 We include accessibility and inclusivity in our sustainability pledge because a truly sustainable event must support not only environmental goals but also social equity. This ensures that diverse voices and perspectives are represented and enables broader participation, richer collaboration, and more impactful, equitable outcomes in science and innovation.

7.2 We support EMBL's values of openness, inclusion, integrity, transparency, and fairness and commit to upholding these values in the delivery of our training programme.

We commit to providing an inclusive, safe, and harassment-free learning experience for all course and conference participants, and we expect all participants to adhere to our Code of conduct when participating in our events. Participants violating this Code of conduct may be asked to leave the event without a refund at the sole discretion of the event organisers and/or also banned from attending future events organised by EMBL.

7.3 We are committed to supporting global participation in our events, providing opportunities for a diverse, international audience to participate. We acknowledge that increasing global participation at our events can lead to an increase in our carbon footprint. However, we will work to minimise this increase through, for example, encouraging virtual participation where this is suitable. We will accept an increase in our carbon footprint in those cases where in person participation would support EMBL in achieving its goals.

7.4 We are committed to recognising limitations to accessibility in our venues, both onsite and virtual, and, where feasible, are committed to working towards resolving these.

7.5 We will achieve this by:

- a. Including virtual and hybrid courses as part of our programme and including hybrid conferences as standard since 2022.
- b. Reviewing our communication, design, and other practices to enhance inclusivity.
- c. Making captions available during virtual and hybrid events.
- d. Offering financial assistance for both onsite and virtual attendees.
- e. Adhering to our inclusivity guidelines for speakers to ensure a balance of gender and geographic participation.
- f. Monitoring any feedback on the accessibility and inclusivity of our events through our participant surveys.
- g. Undertaking an accessibility audit of our venues.

## 8. Promoting sustainable practices in scientific events

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8.1 We will communicate about our event sustainability initiatives with our internal and external partners and encourage them to update us on their own commitments and achievements.

8.2 We will update our website with information on our sustainability efforts and make this sustainability pledge publicly available on the website. We will also inform event participants of our sustainability pledge before they arrive on-site and encourage ways in which they can participate more sustainably themselves. We will promote our sustainability initiatives on-site during events.

8.3 We will provide opportunities for participants to share their feedback and comments on the sustainability measures we are taking at our events.

8.4 We will achieve this by:

- a. Communicating this to our participants when sharing information about the event.
- b. Having a dedicated page about event sustainability on our website.
- c. Collecting participants' feedback on our sustainability practices.

## 9. Training and staff involvement

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9.1 We will maintain an active EMBL Events Sustainability Working Group to drive involvement and stewardship of sustainability across EMBL Events.

9.2 Staff involvement is critical to ensuring the adoption of this pledge and in our efforts to become more sustainable. We will work to raise internal awareness of environmental sustainability initiatives across our operations by:

- a. Introducing the sustainability pledge to new staff members as part of their induction programmes
- b. Providing regular updates from the EMBL Events Sustainability Working Group on pledge implementation in EMBL Events team meetings.
- c. Consider further training on environmental sustainability for EMBL Events staff where appropriate.

## 10. Questions and suggestions

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We welcome questions or suggestions to improve this Sustainability Pledge. These should be sent to [events@embl.org](mailto:events@embl.org).