

GREEN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPLICANTS & GRANTEES

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- Visegrad Fund
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PREFACE

Global climate and environment-related challenges require an urgent and ambitious global response. Over the past years, several climate and sustainability agreements were made. In 2015, two major agendas providing the foundation for sustainable and resilient development were adopted, both by more than 190 countries, including the V4 (Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia). The 2030 Agenda is a commitment to achieve all three dimensions of sustainable development – environmental, economic and social in a balanced manner. The Paris Agreement focuses mainly on ensuring climate stability.

The European Union aims to be a leader in this field. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union even sets out an all-encompassing legal duty to integrate environmental protection requirements into the Union's policies and activities and strive to uphold sustainable development. This is also why the EU, in addition to the global goals, has set its own targets. In April 2021, EU representatives legally committed to achieving climate neutrality by 2050. To accomplish this goal, a new ambitious growth strategy called the European Green Deal was introduced. Its efficient implementation will require cooperation and partnerships at all levels.

The mission of our organisation is to advance ideas for sustainable regional cooperation in the V4 and broader Central Europe. When it comes to environmental sustainability, it is an integral part of our agenda. The proof is the long-term support of projects focused on improving the environmental protection in the fields of awareness raising, searching for joint solutions by municipalities and other local stakeholders, supporting joint research and study programs. In the past 21 years, we have supported more than 200 projects with a profound positive impact on the environment in a total amount of 3.2 million EUR.

Now the time has come to take further meaningful steps. We have been creating a vision of Green Visegrad, starting in-house with the whole team reducing waste, switching to digital solutions and preferring bicycle or public transport in our everyday life. Green Visegrad will grow evergreen only with us growing sensitive enough to our surroundings. We, thus, invite you, our partners, applicants and grantees, to join us to achieve a much greater positive impact. We are here to learn from you, just as to motivate and support you in organizing your project activities responsibly towards our planet with our green recommendations. Each project is specific, and the topic of environmental sustainability is complex. You may not find the answers to all your questions here. The change does not lie in this very manual, it lies in each of us understanding the green messages and environmental warnings.

Let us be an inspiration, let's contribute together to a better world.



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“We must establish
a life on our planet
in balance with nature.”

David Attenborough

ABBREVIATIONS

CNG – Compressed Natural Gas

CO₂ – Carbon Dioxide

EU – European Union

IVF – International Visegrad Fund

LED – Light Emitting Diode

V4 – Visegrad Four



1. INTRODUCTION

While economies, populations and resource demands grow, the size of Earth remains the same. Already in the early 1970s human consumption began outstripping what the planet could reproduce. Today humanity uses the equivalent of 1.6 Earths. This means **it now takes the Earth one year and eight months to regenerate what we use in a year**¹. Overconsumption of the Earth's resources is also accelerating species extinction rates and devastating the world's ecosystems. **Around 1 million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction**, more than ever before in human history, **because of human activities**². Our natural environment has paid the price also through air, water and soil pollution, massive waste, and climate change, just to name a few.

It is **human activity that is primarily responsible for the long-term heating of the Earth's climate system**. The first Industrial Revolution started a period of unprecedented economic growth. Since then, diverse carbon-intensive activities have been responsible for rising emissions of greenhouse gases trapping heat in the atmosphere resulting in rising temperatures³.

In fact, **climate change is considered as one of the greatest threats that humanity has ever faced. Its effects can be seen in the V4 countries, too**⁴. An increase in heat extremes, an increased risk of forest fires and river floods, a decrease in summer precipitation, and also a high risk of species extinctions in mountain regions are some of the observed and predicted events due to climate change⁵.

DID YOU
KNOW THAT

?

In the past three decades of the last century, Central Europe had experienced 22 heat waves. It has been estimated that between the years 2020 and 2049, the frequency of heat waves will double. The most affected areas will be Czech Republic, Slovakia, southern Poland, Hungary, northern Austria and the majority of Germany⁶.

1 Global Footprint Network, 2020. Ecological Footprint. Available [here](#).

2 IPBES, 2019. Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. Available [here](#).

3 Ritchie, H. and Roser, M., 2020. CO₂ and Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Available [here](#).

4 ClimateChangePost, 2021. Climate change: [Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia](#).

5 European Environment Agency, 2017. Climate change, impacts and vulnerability in Europe 2016, p. 25. Available [here](#).

6 Lhotka et al., 2018. Theoretical and Applied Climatology 131: 1043-1054. Available [here](#).



An increase of global temperature by every degree Celsius can trigger irreversible changes lasting for thousands of years. To combat fear about climate change, we must remind ourselves time after time that there are solutions to reduce the risk of the climate crisis. It is, however, essential to change the way we live, consume and produce. It is time to change our economic system to one that would be sustainable, carbon-neutral and resource-efficient.

Economic growth has been mostly equated with an increase in the quantity of production and fast consumption. **Utilising circular economy principles can generate value for example through re-use, remanufacture and purchasing services, rather than products.** Focus on education, health care and other service-based industries can be beneficial for the economy, as well as the planet⁷.

While the COVID-19 crisis has brought substantial challenges to all countries, it has also offered an opportunity to rethink the world we live in. As the crisis passes, there will be a need for sustainable solutions and long-term plans to help economies recover. **The analyses focusing on the next decade show that implementing a ‘green’ recovery plan by the V4 would have an overall positive impact on employment and gross domestic product growth. At the same time, the CO₂ emissions would drop⁸.** On the other hand, we can start by rethinking our individual decisions as regards our initiatives and day-to-day activities. With these recommendations, we would like to give you a helping hand. **Let us make a positive change while we still can.**



⁷ Agbugba, G., 2019. The decoupling of economic growth from carbon emissions: UK evidence. Available [here](#).

⁸ Pollitt, H. et al., Green Recovery scenarios in Visegrad countries, 2020. Available [here](#).

2. GREEN GOALS

We would like to promote and contribute to environmental sustainability. At the IVF, we welcome projects that address environmental issues directly. However, every project supported by the IVF is invited to prove its responsibility to the planet and society.

It means striving to:

- mitigate climate change,
- reduce/eliminate greenhouse gas production,
- adapt to climate change,
- use natural resources efficiently,
- protect and regenerate the environment,
- spread the word about this topic.

One of the effective approaches on how to reduce the amount of emissions and waste is to **decrease the overall consumption and to use natural resources more efficiently**. This approach is represented by the circular economy and by the hierarchical rules called 5R's, which stands for REFUSE, REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE, and ROT. If we want to live or execute projects sustainably, we should adopt these rules and learn how to apply them.

Refuse everything unnecessary and for single-use only, as it automatically becomes waste. If it is not possible to avoid the use of disposable items, at least use the fully recyclable or compostable alternatives.

Reduce the number of necessary items. Exploit possibilities of sharing stuff and use libraries of things (places offering people shared access to a pool of various objects). No need to buy and own items you use only sometimes.

Reuse products as many times as possible. Buy quality, durable and repairable items. Maintain these items in a good condition and always repair them rather than buy new ones. Also, prefer refurbished and second-hand products and products containing recycled materials. Extending product life is key to waste reduction.

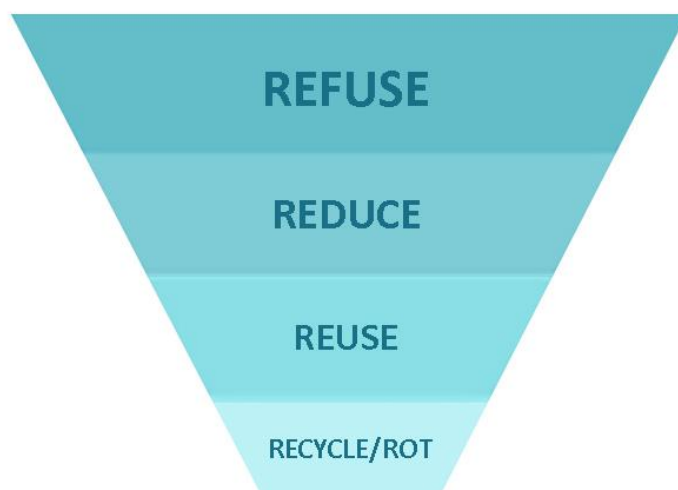
Recycle. Help to turn waste into a valuable resource by correct sorting.

Rot - compost food waste and other organic waste. Composting means turning organics back into nutrient-rich fertilizer, which is a safe alternative to synthetic fertilisers.

Recycle and Rot options are considered to be less effective than the previous 3R's. They are, however, better than waste incineration and landfilling.

Also, **prefer locally made products**. This way, you can contribute to lower emissions, which would be otherwise produced by shipment of the products from further away, and you will also support the local community and economics.

When it comes to climate actions, it is all too easy to believe that what we do as individuals does not matter. It may seem that all these steps are too small to help to solve big global problems. However, do not forget the snowball effect. For example, if these changes in organizational thinking or decision-making are done every single day, it can have a very positive effect.



3. HOW TO PROCEED

- As soon as possible, include planning of environmental actions into the preparation of a project.
- Engage all the team members in the preparation process.
- Analyse your current status. For example, you can calculate the carbon footprint of your activities.
- Brainstorm the best possible ways of implementing the topic and principles of environmental sustainability into the project. Consider the local, national, and also global perspectives.
- Set ambitious but achievable objectives. Measurable and also non-measurable ones. Where can you decrease the negative and increase the positive impact?
- Look for advice in areas that you are not familiar with. Seek experts' opinions. The topic of environment and climate is very complex and many people use greenwashing as a deceptive practice to create the impression of environmental safety and sustainability. Not all the solutions presented to be green are really that way.
- Make a detailed calculation of the expected costs of green measures. At the same time, find out whether the unconventional solutions will be accepted as eligible costs.
- Rethink your supply chain. Prefer cooperation with conscious and responsible partners.
- If you cannot find a convenient product or service on the market, create a demand. Once you find it, share gained information with others and benefit from it together.
- Motivate and educate your colleagues. They will accept new tasks and changes easier if they understand their benefits and overall context. From time to time, ask for the team's feedback.
- Regularly evaluate your achievements and failures.
- Share your results and lessons learned. We, at the IVF, will be glad to see and promote the results of your effort.



4.SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

A) OFFICE

Energy and Water Use

- Use water wisely.
- Attach aerators to taps.
- Use dishwashers only when full to conserve water, energy, and also detergent.
- **Manage lighting, heating, cooling, and equipment use efficiently.** Make sure to turn these services down or off when not in use.
- Use **energy-saving light sources** such as LED and compact fluorescent bulbs.
- **Cut the need for carbon-intensive air conditioning and heat.**
- **Prefer energy-efficient equipment.** Inefficient office equipment not only draws power but also emits heat that can contribute to higher cooling bills.
- **Avoid using standby mode for a long time.** Connect devices for everyday use, such as computers, printers, screens, and scanners into an extension cord with a switch, so they all can be shut at once.
- Use **rechargeable batteries.**

Electric and Electronic Devices

- If you use some devices only occasionally, do not buy them but rather rent or borrow them.
- Prefer local rental services to avoid transportation from places further away.
- If you buy a new device, focus on companies that offer quality repairable products and a prolonged warranty. Prefer brands guaranteeing availability of spare parts.
- Prefer products made of recycled materials, ideally produced ethically and as close as possible to your workplace.
- Use the global registry of IT products [EPEAT](#). It is a tool to look for environmentally friendly products.

Digital Communication, Storage and Printing of Materials

- Whenever possible, prefer digital communication and storage of materials instead of storing printed documents or CDs and DVDs.
- Print documents in formats that save paper and cartridges.
- Set the double-sided print to be the default option.
- Send empty printer cartridges to be recycled or refilled.
- If possible, buy quality refilled and refillable printer cartridges.



Paper

- **Cut down the usage of paper to the necessary minimum.**
- Whenever possible, instead of paper Post-its use a desktop note-taking application.
- **If one page of a paper sheet is clean, use it for notes** or give it to kids for drawing.
- Buy paper products that were made close to your workplace.
- **Prefer paper:**
 - **with a content of recycled material**
 - **without chlorine**
 - **certificated** (for more details about certificates click [here](#))
 - **non-bleached and non-coloured**
 - if it is necessary to use coloured paper, choose pastel shades.
- Avoid using glazed paper or paper combined with plastic.
- **Buy printing paper of the lowest possible weight recommended for your printer.**



Office Equipment

- **Share office accessories** such as scissors, rulers, punches, staplers...
- **Use reusable pens.** Buy only refills instead of new pens.
- **Buy products made close to your workplace,** products that can be reused, and ideally products made from recycled materials.

Cleaning

- **Replace conventional cleaning products.** Buy products with high biodegradable content, **ideally certified** (for more details about certificates click [here](#)).
- Consider shopping in packaging-free stores.
- **To use less packaging, prefer products in concentrated form and big packs.**
- Prefer reusable and compostable cleaning tools.
- Use paper towels only when necessary.

B) PROJECT PROMOTION AND GIFTS

- **Prefer a digital promotion.** Paper leaflets and brochures should be printed only when it is required. This could be, for example, when the target group has limited access to the internet such as seniors or disadvantaged groups.
- **When choosing gifts and promotional items, follow the rules from chapter 2.** Avoid giving away useless and **ordinary things** such as pens, USB keys, keychains, etc. Create original, timeless and practical gifts. Give preference to quality over quantity.
- **If you want to make team t-shirts, try to choose locally made,** with the content of recycled materials or bio cotton t-shirts.
- **Do not create single-use promotional materials only for a specific event but try to create reusable items with timeless design and content** (banners, posters, signs, etc.).



C) WASTE MANAGEMENT

- Ensure the possibility to sort waste generated at the site during the project.
- Ensure that waste sorting is set in accordance with the local system. Rules may differ in each country and municipality. Information about the sorting system is usually available on the local authority website.
- Ensure that bins are distinguishable by different colours with a clearly visible designation to help people make accurate and self-motivated recycling choices. It can be difficult for the user to determine the difference between waste and different types of recycling bins if there are no distinguishing features and additional information on how to sort waste properly.
- Hazardous waste has to be sorted in accordance with the valid regulations (batteries, electrical waste, ink cartridges, etc.).
- Sort bio-waste if separate bins for its collection are provided. Whenever possible, compost it.
- Do not use bin bags when it is not necessary (e.g. bins for paper).
- When necessary, use bin bags made of recycled materials. For bio-waste use certified compostable bags (for more details about certificates click [here](#)).
- Create information labels to reinforce the message to reduce and prevent waste such as a sign “Do not waste food” on a fridge or “Keep this packaging, we will refill it” on a soap dispenser.
- Briefly monitor the amount of produced waste and the quality of sorting. You can also measure the weight or take a few photos at the beginning and at the end of the project and evaluate the progress/development.



D) EVENTS

- Prefer video and teleconferencing whenever meeting in person is not necessary (e.g. regular organizational or planning meetings).
- Select a meeting place accessible by public transport, preferably by electric traction (tram or train).
- Prefer cooperation with partners that are environmentally responsible and willing to adjust to your green preferences/requirements.
- Do not buy any items that can be rented or borrowed such as boards, flipcharts, technical equipment, etc.
- Send an event / meeting information to attendees in a digital form and eliminate printed materials (for more, see Chapter 4, point A).
- Ensure the possibility to sort waste and send it for recycling. Alternatively, ask the operator to provide this service. It is important to separate bio-waste as well. At the end of the event, you can take photos of the collected waste to gather information on its amount and the quality of sorting. Present the results also to your team.
- If there are no collection bins for sorting waste on the site of the event, arrange a one-time pick up of the sorted waste.

E) FOOD, DRINKS AND CATERING

Food and Drinks

- If possible, procure local, seasonal, and/or organically produced foods and drinks for events and for the office.
- Before the event, find out if the attendees have any dietary restrictions or preferences. It can help you minimize food waste.
- Prefer local suppliers and caterers.
- Do all you can to avoid food waste. Order an optimal number of portions. Do not hesitate to ask attendees to bring their own food boxes for leftovers.
- If you end up with a large amount of food leftovers, check where it can be placed in accordance with local legislation and regulations. Some countries have very strict rules in terms of official food donations.

Packaging and Equipment

- Prefer unpacked foods, avoid over-packed products.
- Buy only as much food as you can certainly consume.
- Use reusable carrier bags instead of single-use ones.
- During catering, try to minimize the waste from single-use packaging, cutlery, plates, and any other tableware. Communicate your ambition to minimize waste with your suppliers.
- If possible, choose suppliers that offer reusable equipment, or at least equipment made of recyclable or compostable materials. Also, avoid composite materials, as these are difficult to recycle. Prefer products and packaging with recycled content.
- If the caterer is not able to provide reusable equipment, try to rent it.
- If possible, use tap water for drinking. You will save money and the environment, as you will not need packaging and fuel for the transportation of bottled water.
- Ask team members, and also event attendees if relevant, to carry their own reusable bottles.
- Consider renting a cooler and a water filter that can be connected directly to the water pipe.
- Make your own sparkling water.
- If it is not possible to avoid bottled water, try to procure water in returnable bottles or big tanks.
- Avoid buying a single-use capsule coffee machine.



F) TRANSPORTATION

- Create an effective travel plan for the whole team. Prefer to share rides when more people can travel together.
- **For long-distance journeys use trains, alternatively buses or carpooling.** Please note that in order to include these costs in the project budget you will need to provide an official invoice and proof of payment.
- Use electric and hybrid cars or cars powered by alternative fuels (e.g. CNG).
- Maintain vehicles in the best possible condition.
- **Motivate team members to use public transport and bicycles.** Provide them with information about accessible travel options within the area. Please note that in order to include these costs in the project budget you will need to provide an official invoice and proof of payment.
- If needed consider renting a minibus as an alternative.
- Before you travel, compare the carbon footprints of different travel modes with an online carbon calculator.



G) ACCOMMODATION

- **Prefer properties owned by locals.**
- **Prefer those accommodation owners that support and implement environmentally-friendly measures.** This includes waste sorting, reduction, and also prevention; room cleaning and change of towels only when requested; options to order local and seasonal meals; thermal insulation of the building; green roof; bicycle or other sports equipment rental; electric car charger, etc.
- In the case of a longer stay, prefer private accommodation rather than staying in a hotel. This would leave a lower carbon footprint. Please note that in order to include these costs in the project budget you will need to provide an official invoice and proof of payment.
- **Try to use energy and consume food wisely even when included in the price of the accommodation.**



WE WISH YOU ALL THE SUCCESS
WITH YOUR PROJECTS.

WE ARE WITH YOU ON THIS
MEANINGFUL JOURNEY!

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