

		<i>Document number</i>	
<i>Doc subject</i>	Ecological charter review	<i>Status / action requested</i>	
<i>Doc author/owner</i>	AZA/EBO/FLL/STE	<i>Doc recipient(s)</i>	SMT
<i>Filename (incl. yymmdd)</i>	221128 Ecological charter	<i>Path on server S:</i>	

28/11/2022

Ecological charter - review

Caritas cares

The Earth and all life on it are God's creation. For this reason, we are called to take care of this gift and we are responsible for looking after the world we live in, for us and for generations to come.

Caritas Europa is an organisation acting as much as possible in a respectful way towards the environment, bearing in mind that this is the only earth available.

Pope Francis gave us the opportunity to stop and reflect with the encyclical "Laudato Si", for the care of our common home". It is now time to respond to his call, bearing in mind that a less efficient use of resources is impacting the poorest and most vulnerable the most.

Our commitment to Laudato Si' requires us to consider the environmental impact of our choices and behaviour as an organisation and as individuals and to ensure that we act in accordance with the principles of sustainability and care for the environment.

Caritas cares.

Caritas Europa principles

These 4 principles govern our work in all aspects of daily life:

1. Re-use
2. Reduce
3. Ecological & close
4. Recycle

Our commitment

Paper for printing

- We think twice before printing and only print when it is really necessary.
- We use recycled paper suitable for our printers.
- Documents are filed as a priority in digital format on servers, avoiding unnecessary paper filing.
- By default, all prints are double-sided and in grayscale.
- Smear paper is saved and used as scrap paper, for making notes, etc., and a space is available for this at each printer.
- Used paper, even small pieces are thrown out in the yellow bag bins to be recycled. The yellow bags are available in the kitchen and offices, and reminders are posted for staff to recycle paper.
- There are hand-made reminders by the printer to: print double-sided documents, print in grayscale, consider if printing is necessary.
- Note: documents with any kind of personal data must be destroyed with the paper shredder in the hallway, next to the office supply cupboard, before recycling.

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Toner printers

- Consider whether printing in colour is necessary. The cost per colour print is 6 times higher than in black and white and colour toners pollute more.
- Once used, a recycling company removes toner printers for proper ecological processing.
- Printers are set to default grey scale/black and white.

Stationery

- We reduce our consumption of office supplies: folders, pens, staplers,...
- We purchase good quality products from sustainable sources and reuse them when possible.

Energy

- We avoid the unnecessary consumption of electricity by turning off lights when not in use or necessary.
- We avoid unnecessary consumption of heating, keeping offices at a suitable temperature for comfortable work environments.
- We use sunshades in the office to help with temperature management.
- We do not open windows when heating is on, unless there is a good reason.
- The dishwasher must be full before being turned on and emptied once finished. Ensure dishes are, in fact, dirty and not from the previous load before turning on the machine.
- The dishwasher is cleaned regularly with ecological products to ensure maximum efficiency of the machine.
- Signs remind staff to turn off lights/heating/fans.
- We develop a policy for archiving documents and data management in general.

Food & water & events

- Bottled fountain water is used according to real needs. If we have filled a carafe, we can drink it also the next day or use it for coffee or tea.
- Meeting venues, hotels or catering companies are encouraged to provide water in dispensers or carafes (from water dispensers, not poured from bottles), if possible. Bottled water is to be avoided as far as possible.
- When we organise catering, we look for organic products and/or nearby suppliers, known for their ecological standards. We promote small and social businesses. We prioritise suppliers showing attention to regional/seasonal/fair trade products.
- We prioritise food packed in reusable packages, avoiding plastic boxes, utensils or individually packaged portions.
- When we order catering services for meetings, we choose organic food and vegetarian options if possible, preferably from the closest geographic production region, except in the case of specific dietary needs (taking an average of different scientific sources: 1 kg meat produces between 15-30 kg CO₂ more than other food (approx. 100-200 km by car); organic food reduces CO₂ emissions up to 25% compared to conventional food).

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- When ordering a la carte and also with regards to other choices that have an impact on the environment, Caritas Europa Secretariat staff are encouraged to base their decision on their individual discernment with the values of Caritas Europa in mind.
- Project gadgets are produced only if necessary (required by the donor or needed for publicity). The products must be useful, bought in ecological shops or from ecological and sustainable producers.
- CE-S staff is to use a checklist when organising an event with all sustainable solutions listed. The list is to be shared with the meeting venue to check if it is possible to introduce the listed solutions. It is also shared with member organisations when they host a CE event. If it is not possible to abide by the checklist, another meeting venue should be taken into consideration. The checklist includes points on the use of water dispensers instead of bottled water, local and ecological products for catering, attractive vegan and vegetarian options, etc.

Cleaning

- We use eco-friendly products to the extent possible depending on market possibilities.

Bathroom

- When using paper towels, we reduce the number of used pieces (preferably just one - shake and fold rule). We prioritise buying paper towels that are produced with recycled products.
- CE-S staff are encouraged to bring and use their own cloth towels instead of paper towels.
- We use the available products: toilet paper, air freshener, soap... in a responsible manner.

Computers, peripherals and digital storage

- We use computers and laptops for as long as they continue to function (until the end of their lives). We do not replace computers or peripheral elements just because a new model is out.
- We take care of all technical equipment to ensure their good use and quality performance as long as possible.
- We shut down laptops and computers before leaving the office and ensure screens are switched off.
- The Communication Unit is responsible for the storage and archiving of pictures and other media material. Staff is to refrain from storing unnecessary data on work computers or on the server.
- Staff must delete unnecessary files regularly (with a deadline set for the whole team twice a year) from computers and the server (where authorised to do so).

Publications

- If compatible with the desired use of the publication, we issue publications in electronic format only, avoiding printed copies. In case printed copies are essential, we ensure their thorough distribution. The same applies to translated versions of the publications.
- Provided that the quality is reasonable, we print publications on recycled paper.

Travels

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- First – the traveller, after having considered alternative options, must be able to demonstrate that travelling is justified by a compelling contribution towards achieving CE’s mission – travel is only planned when a critical business need exists, when a clear added value to the mission of the organisation can be proven and when all other alternative options have been considered and ruled out;
- Second – when multiple staff travel to the same location (either for the same event or during the same time period), each travelling staff must be able to demonstrate the added value of his/her travel;
- Third – the traveller must maximise the return on his/her travels – by ensuring, if relevant, that travel contributes to more than one agenda, and that all travellers consider additional tasks and requests by other staff members, particularly if such action contributes to reducing the number of staff travelling overall;
- Fourth – if travel is approved, the most cost-effective solution for the proposed trip must be determined on the basis of carbon usage, ethical choices, the wellbeing of the traveller, travel time as well as cost/ticketing flexibility when necessary. CE recognises that the cheapest fares are not always the most cost effective or desirable, both environmentally and ethically.

1. General guidelines:

- The most sustainable travel choice is preferred. Achieving a low carbon footprint must be taken into account and calculated. A calculation tool is included in the travel authorisation form below.
- The Carbon Contribution Tool must be filled in on a continuous basis for each travel: <S:\14 Public Access\Carbon Footprint TF\Caritas Europa - Carbon Contribution Calculation Tool Year 2022.xlsx>. The yearly contribution is assessed and decided by the SMT (see section on carbon footprint).
- When writing project applications, the travel budget is increased, if possible, to cover the yearly carbon contribution.
- Our priority is on delivering on our Annual Work Plan toward achieving our Strategic Framework objectives, but we also value the option of replacing travel for meetings with video conferences or virtual meetings where possible.
- When invited as a speaker to an event abroad, we consider the option to send a video message instead.
- Within the city limits, public transportation (bus, metro, tram) is used; taxi are to be avoided and only to be used under reasoned circumstances.
- Another option, when public transport cannot be used, is to share a car with other team members, when possible, or to carpool with friends/family/colleagues.
- CE-S staff must work on all travels (flight or train) during normal working hours if possible.

2. Travel by train:

- Travelling by train is preferred for distances up to 500 km. Flights for short distances must be an exception and need to be approved by the line manager.
- Travelling to areas which can be reached by high-speed train services are by default via train rather than using air travel to reduce the carbon impact. All direct journeys to Freiburg,

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Strasbourg, London, Paris, Frankfurt and Amsterdam are to be done by train. Long haul flights departing from these cities must also be endeavoured to be reached by train.

- The train is also encouraged for longer distances when time allows and the well-being of the traveller is taken into consideration. Additional hotel nights are considered a reasonable additional expense in that case considering the significant difference for the carbon footprint of a train vs. a plane journey.

3. Travel by air:

- Direct routes are preferred because they minimise staff's carbon footprint and maximise staff wellbeing. However, direct flights may not always be possible or economically viable. Decisions on flight routes (direct or indirect) are left to the discretion of the traveller, pending approval of their line manager (Unit Director for officers, Secretary General for Directors).
- Travelling with low-cost airlines with ethically questionable policies (employment, discriminatory policies towards passengers...) are to be avoided. These airlines can only be used if no other airline provides direct flights to the required destination.

Carbon footprint

This measure reflects the cost of carbon per flight, by computing the carbon price with the average emissions per hour and the hours needed to fly to the destination. Since airline companies currently do not pay taxes, and the existing carbon offsetting schemes do not value carbon at its real cost, calculating the amount of the carbon contribution/debt for CE secretariat is a way to acknowledge its environmental footprint.

With the total amount computed per year, CE can then decide to support a handful of social, environmental and climate-related initiatives to bring about positive impacts. These positive impacts must not be seen as redeeming (also stated as compensating) the secretariat's "climate debt", but as a voluntary contribution to help mitigate the global climate (social & environmental) challenges.

Where to allocate this yearly carbon contribution?

At the end of each year, the SMT will decide among the following options:

- CE-S supports a chosen member organisation that is developing initiatives to mitigate the social, economic and environmental challenges of climate change. The member organisation can be chosen based on awards of the Innovation Festival or other suitable means that are transparent in their processes.
- CE-S allocates a yearly donation to positive impact projects using the services of platforms to finance energy efficiency initiatives, e.g.:

<https://native.eco/our-approach/help-buildtm/>

<https://www.investopedia.com/best-carbon-offset-programs-5114611>

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Carbon price – using the EU ETS baseline

The EU's emissions trading scheme (EU ETS) was launched in 2005 to promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in a cost-effective and economically efficient way. It restricts the volume of greenhouse gases that can be emitted by energy-intensive industries, power producers and airlines.

For the Carbon Contribution Tool, the average of the EU ETS price¹ is updated once a year when the SMT decides on the allocation using the link below:

<https://ember-climate.org/data/carbon-price-viewer/>

Average emissions

Different emissions calculators exist online, but for convenience, we use a calculator that offers to calculate emissions for flights, trains and other travel means:

carbonfootprint.com - Carbon Footprint Calculator

¹ The original price was set at 90€ per tonne of CO₂, as the average price for the early year 2022. This price should keep increasing.