

Ecological Charter

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

Awareness raising

Caritas Europa is a signatory of the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organisations and has developed a series of targets and planned actions against the Charter's commitments. By signing the Charter, Caritas Europa commits to:

- Reviewing and updating the Ecological Charter every January and whenever relevant.
- Orienting all new staff and volunteers on the Ecological Charter and organising refreshers every other year on the Ecological Charter during team meetings or team retreats.
- Rolling out the Environmental Stewardship Tool (EST) with member organisations.
- Systematically encouraging our member organisations working on humanitarian action to sign the Climate Charter.

The full overview of Caritas Europa's targets can be found in Annex 1.

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.

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).
- 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.
- Caritas Europa 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.
- Caritas Europa 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

- Please refer to the *Caritas Europa Sustainable Travel Policy* for more information on the ecological considerations concerning travels.
- When writing project applications, the travel budget is increased, if possible, to cover the yearly carbon contribution.
- Working during travels: Caritas Europa staff must work on all travels by plane or train during normal working hours if possible.

Carbon footprint from travel

The carbon footprint of Caritas Europa is the measure of the total amount of greenhouse gases, specifically carbon dioxide (CO₂), emitted directly or indirectly by our activities. Caritas Europa monitors its carbon footprint linked to travel by plane of staff, volunteers and consultants, who must fill out the **Carbon Contribution Tool** for each travel. The yearly contribution is assessed and decided by the Senior Management Team (SMT).

The Carbon Contribution Tool enables Caritas Europa to methodically document the travel-related emissions of both its staff and volunteers. It calculates 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. The tool calculates the total cost and provides a yearly figure in euros. Since the existing carbon offsetting schemes do not value carbon at its real cost, calculating the amount of the carbon contribution for CE secretariat is a way to acknowledge its environmental footprint.

With the total amount computed per year, Caritas Europa can then decide to support social, environmental and climate-related initiatives to bring about positive impacts. These positive impacts must not be seen as redeeming or as compensating the secretariat's "climate debt", but as a voluntary contribution to help mitigate the global social & environmental challenges created by climate change.

Through documenting its travel-related carbon emissions, Caritas Europa gains insights into the travel patterns of its staff, volunteers, and consultants. This allows informed decision-making to mitigate such emissions. Caritas Europa commits to decrease the average emissions stemming from air travel by its secretariat by 25%, using the emissions from 2024 as a benchmark.

Where to allocate this yearly carbon contribution?

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

- Caritas Europa 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.
- Caritas Europa 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>

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](#)



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Views and opinions expressed are however those of Caritas Europa only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

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.

Annex 1: Climate Charter Targets for Caritas Europa

<p>Commitment 2: Maximize the environmental sustainability of our work and rapidly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions</p>
<p>Target 1: We review and update our Ecological Charter on a yearly basis. Planned action 1: Review and update the Ecological Charter every January and whenever relevant.</p>
<p>Target 2: All staff and volunteers are aware of our Ecological Charter and how they can reduce their carbon footprint in their organisational work. Planned action 2: Orient all new staff and volunteers on the Ecological Charter. Organise refreshers every other year on the Ecological Charter during team meetings or team retreats.</p>
<p>Target 3: By 2024, we systematically record all travel-related emissions² of all staff and volunteers³. Planned action 3: Staff and volunteers fill out the Carbon Contribution Calculation tool for all travels.</p>
<p>Target 4: By 2025, we will reduce our average emissions related to plane travel as a secretariat by 25% with the emissions of 2024 as a baseline. Planned action 4: Evaluate the necessity of each travel by plane and consider alternative modes of transportation.</p>
<p>Target 5: We will off-set at least 50% of our travel-related emissions by 2025. Planned action 5: Identify and contribute to a project in line with our values that offsets at least 50% of our travel-related emissions.</p>
<p>Commitment 3: Embrace the leadership of local actors and communities</p>
<p>Target 6: By 2024, all our advocacy efforts will be informed by local voices and priorities, using appropriate methods and taking concerted action to ensure equal and equitable representation. Planned action 6: Local voices and priorities brought to Caritas Europa through its members inform all our advocacy efforts.</p>
<p>Commitment 4: By 2025, all relevant staff and partners will be trained on the integration of climate and environmental risks in our programs.</p>
<p>Target 7: By 2025, 65% of our member organisations have participated in trainings or information sessions on the integration of climate and environmental risks in their programmes. Planned action 7: Roll out the Environmental Stewardship Tool (EST) with member organisations.</p>
<p>Commitment 6: Use our influence to mobilize urgent and more ambitious climate action and environmental protection</p>
<p>Target 8: We will systematically encourage our member organisations working on humanitarian action to sign the Climate Charter. Planned action 8: Organise at least one information session on the Climate Charter for CE member organisations by 2024. Inform relevant CE working structures about CE's signing of the Charter.</p>

² Travel-related emissions: emissions cause by travelling by plane, train, bus or car

³ including Executive Board members and consultants