

Léargas Sustainability Statement

April 2023



Sustainability Statement

Purpose

Léargas is implementing sustainable practices across the organisation in 2023 to help Ireland achieve its commitments to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We are committed to ensuring the needs of future generations, focusing on social well-being and sustainable environmental practice. Environmental stewardship is a shared organisational responsibility and commitment to protecting the environment and minimizing the impact of our daily decisions. Léargas is committed to reducing its environmental impact and ensuring environmental sustainability.

Léargas operates under the aegis of DFHERIS and is a registered charity, in our role delivering EU programmes, the fight against climate change is already one of the core priorities of our programmes and we welcome the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate. While we are not a public body, the Léargas Sustainability Statement promotes innovative approaches to environmental action among staff and supports our commitment to policy priorities at the National and European levels.

Objective

Léargas strives to improve the environmental performance of daily business operations and demonstrate public health leadership in environmental sustainability and the global fight against climate change.

Sustainability Education

We encourage all our staff to prioritise and champion environmental sustainability in their work and representation of Léargas. We are committed to building awareness of sustainable practice throughout Léargas and out into our funded projects where we will share clear criteria to guide the performance of projects around sustainability. We will invite expert organisations to Léargas to enhance our knowledge and enable us to gather sustainability intelligence and we will review our own performance around the Sustainable Development Goals.

We have established and resourced a 'Green Team', to encourage and innovate awareness activities to support staff to become integrated drivers of sustainability. We have a dedicated space on our Teams

channel to share knowledge, excite and engage the wider staff team around the sustainability conversation.

The Green team will support our approaches to training and awareness across the staff team and beyond, in the following ways;

- Encourage discussion on Léargas' green focus in staff induction and links to Léargas Citizenship behaviours.
- Annual/ongoing training for staff and regularly communicating updates and best practices.
- Consider how green competencies could be included in the PMDS process. - Identify and propose signage to highlight good practices.
- Promote our efforts to ensure that Léargas is seen as a green organisation.

Léargas will liaise with all relevant Government Departments and other stakeholders to ascertain their actions and approach to Sustainability. We will align with the Government on important agendas regarding Climate Change and Sustainability and will promote the adoption of sustainable practices to support decarbonization strategies for achieving Net Zero by 2050.

We will also liaise with the Green Salto, an organization that provides training support to national agencies across Europe for Erasmus+ and ESC programmes on climate issues and environmental topics. Salto has previously provided the following support to other national agencies:

- Assisted in raising the quality and impact of projects focused on climate change.
- Optimized implementation, monitoring, and follow-up of the priority on environmental protection.
- Guided national agencies on the analysis and impact evaluation of projects focused on environmental protection.

This cooperation will help us to ensure that project participants and beneficiaries are aware of the ways that they should address and deliver sustainability in their projects. Please see the Léargas website to see the nominated member of staff on sustainability.

Léargas has nominated a representative of our senior leadership team as a ***Climate and Sustainability Champion***, this is the Head of Finance.

Policy

Reporting

Léargas recognises the importance of data collection, data analytics and reporting on carbon footprint to promote transparency. Léargas has analysed the impact of its activities on the environment to measure its annual carbon footprint; the organization has set ambitious targets to reduce its impact in the hopes to achieve net zero by 2050. We aim to find a digital solution to enable effective tracking to provide KPI metrics to determine our success over time. A range of strategic initiatives undertaken by Léargas are outlined below:

Recycling

Staff will conserve and recycle whenever possible through the adoption of simple practices. Recycling bins are positioned throughout the office and kitchen for paper, plastic, and other recyclable

containers. Every effort will be made to recycle office equipment, supplies, and other recyclable products.

Waste Management

Staff will conserve, reuse and recycle whenever possible through the adoption of simple practices and the waste hierarchy which identifies ways to be more environmentally friendly, in priority order.

1. **Eliminate** - Avoid producing waste in the first place.
2. **Reduce** - Minimise the amount of waste you do produce.
3. **Re-Use** - Use items as many times as possible.
4. **Recycle** - Recycle what you can only after you have re-used it.
5. **Dispose** - Dispose of what's left in a responsible way.

Water Use

Staff make every effort to conserve water daily. Whenever possible, staff will promote and provide tap water and avoid the use of bottled water during meetings:

- Léargas provides water dispensers in the office and staff are provided with renewable and sustainable bottles for personal use

Paper Use

Léargas continues to digitise workflows as much as possible, and our move to QES Signatures for contract signing in flagship programmes has significantly reduced the consumption of paper resources. Staff will conserve and recycle paper through the adoption of digital practices and other simple actions:

- consider digital alternatives for documentation and signing options as appropriate.
- consider the use of digital tools for meetings and digital meeting packs.
- using the recycle bins located throughout the office and kitchen.
- reduce printing and copying and enable default settings to double-sided printing.
- edit documents using word processing tools (as opposed to printing).

Digital Footprint

While minimising paper use is valuable, data storage has its own significant environmental impact, therefore Léargas will consider and review digital practices with a view to the following:

- Training and support for staff on the impact of digital activity, File Management and Retention and File Sharing and also consider when video calls are needed vs voice calls in the knowledge that video calls use significant bandwidth.
- Minimise carbon footprint at the back end of our website by looking for eco-friendly web hosting, optimise data transfers and compressing large video or images. We will also conserve energy by continuously monitoring and removing any unused plugins.

Energy Conservation

Léargas will conserve energy through the adoption of several easy-to-use strategies. Whenever possible, we will:

- set office air-conditioning to the recommended 19 degrees.
- consider energy efficiency in purchasing electronic equipment.
- enable and set to default the eco-friendly options on all copiers, printers, and other electronic equipment.
- enable timers for office copiers and printers that will automatically turn off unused equipment/use energy-saving modes after long periods of inactivity.
- continue to use and properly dispose of compact fluorescent light bulbs.
- arrange for cleaning staff to turn off lights left on after hours.
- turn off unused lights in cubicles and hallways and use additional lighting only when necessary.
- continue the practice of equipping low-traffic areas with automatic light sensors.
- program their computer monitors to turn off automatically after periods of inactivity.

Purchasing

Staff will consider environmental protection and conservation when purchasing office supplies and other materials. We will

- ask all our current and future suppliers for their environmental policies, for evidence of implementation of such policies and indicate that such performance will be used as criteria for supplier selection.
- prioritise fair trade and equity in selecting products.
- establish procurement contracts with companies offering environmentally preferable purchasing options.
- refrain from purchasing those items which cannot be recycled or repurposed.
- make every effort to avoid products containing plastics.
- purchase office paper that uses 30% or more post-consumer waste.
- remain committed to purchasing recycled/biodegradable products, including paper plates, napkins, paper towels, and other kitchen supplies.
- prioritise options for locally grown foods that require minimal energy for transport and production for catering at meetings. If possible, aim for minimum 30% vegetarian options, considering sustainability and locally produced products in mind.
- link to Procurement planning and review in 2023

Meeting & Event Planning

Staff will make every effort to conduct meetings with minimal environmental impacts and promote environmental conservation. Whenever possible, we will:

- conduct online meetings as a sustainable option, where suitable
- review the work of meetings to reduce committee sizes and frequency of meetings and use online meeting facilities as appropriate.
- determine attendance at meetings on every occasion, staff should only attend when an active role is required.

- minimize carbon emissions from travel by promoting non-motorised travel, public transport, shuttle services taxi shares and where necessary private car /transport.
- eliminate bottled water, in favour of tap or filtered water.
- eliminate disposable products and encourage the use of biodegradable and reusable products, including dining items.
- make sure recycling bins are easily accessible at meals and breaks if there will be recyclable materials present.
- consider public transportation options, the city or region’s conservation projects or “walkability,” when selecting a location.
- support facilities with recycling programs, efficient water use equipment, and other green initiatives
- limit hard copy handouts and make programs and itineraries available online or on posted signage.
- print double-sided on any necessary hard copy materials.
- encourage a badge return at the end of the conference or use only sustainable badge materials.

Transportation

A significant component of the environmental sustainability initiative in Léargas will focus on transportation; we aim to reduce our carbon footprint by using low-impact methods of transportation whenever possible. This enables us to do our part in supporting Ireland to achieve its target of a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. As road transport was responsible for 94% of all transport emissions in 2020, staff are encouraged to reduce their individual and collective carbon footprint when travelling to work. Research has shown that opting for public transport improves air quality, promotes community health, and decreases carbon dioxide emissions significantly. Therefore, the following alternative modes of transport are encouraged:

- Léargas supports the purchase scheme of annual tickets for public transport for staff.
- When travelling by plane which is necessary given our *island* status, non-stop flights will be prioritised, these take the most direct route to the destination.
- Léargas encourages the use of transportation options with minimal carbon emissions, promoting non-motorised travel, public transport, shuttle services taxi shares and where necessary private car /transport.
- Staff are encouraged to opt for environmentally sustainable taxi services.
- Consider the effectiveness of online meetings and reduce unnecessary travel.

Offsetting

As an island and as an agency which supports the benefits of intercultural and international exchange, we acknowledge the necessity of Air Travel and its high carbon impact. We commit in 2023 to exploring the options available to responsibly offset this impact, considering our scale, structure, and resourcing.

Economic Sustainability

Léargas is exploring all options for green investment of the Léargas pension fund. Research has shown that sustainable pension funds are one of the most effective individual actions toward combatting climate change. We commit to ensuring the prioritisation of green investment and minimising any investment in pension funds to support the fossil fuel industry or any industry that would contribute to environmental harm and degradation.