



# SWISS TPH DECARB POLICY

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**Directorate**

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# INTRODUCTION

In 2019, Swiss TPH has committed to take a far looking-ahead initiative towards a clear policy that aims at an institutional effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero emissions in the next 30-50 years. This effort is essential if the Institute wants to contribute to the global effort to halt global warming below +2 degrees Celsius.

The moving of Swiss TPH to a new building in 2021 represents a great opportunity to review and adapt several areas generating greenhouse gas emissions in order to minimize their output. Likewise, the Covid-19 pandemic that started in 2020 gave Swiss TPH the opportunity to collect many experiences among others on how to maintain professional activities at Swiss TPH with home office or international travel restrictions. It may also have triggered reflections about the relevance of travels for various activities as well as accelerated the usage and acceptance of new technologies.

Decarbonizing science through a climate-friendly change in behavior and culture might be perceived as restrictive but it does not have to affect academic performance, on the contrary, it potentially opens new perspectives for the future.

The present decarb policy takes a holistic perspective and refers to different sources, e.g.: business travel, waste management, heating, electricity, and catering.

## 1. OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the policy act is to reduce Swiss TPH greenhouse gas emissions by 30% in its infrastructures and operations by 2030.

The specific objectives are:

- To reduce CO2 emissions related to professional travel by offering cost-effective alternatives to flights
- To reduce the consumption of fossil energy (gas fuel) and gradually switch to 100% renewable electricity (solar and hydraulic)
- To reduce CO2 emissions linked to catering and food consumption
- To promote and improve alternative methods of management, teaching and research while keeping a high quality of professional and social interactions
- To increase institutional support for a working culture based on environmental awareness among all the institute members and partners
- To create feasible concepts for monitoring and reporting CO2 emissions
- To evaluate measures and iteratively improve the decarb strategy

## 2. LEVELS OF ACTION

To support the general and specific objectives, this policy act envisions that everyone commits to three levels of action:

1. Think sustainably
2. Act sustainably
3. Commit to compensate for CO2 emissions

### Think sustainably

Integrate the environmental dimension in your work and strategical planning. Consider the nature or the objective of the action, service or product you are envisaging and its potential impact on the environment. Is this impact worth the benefit you will get from it?

### Act sustainably

Favour alternative ways and tools to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and disseminate good practices among colleagues and institutions.

### Compensate

If carbon emissions are unavoidable, do it in a way that minimizes emissions and encourage the compensation of those emissions. Offsetting emissions as compensation should not be a substitute for real reduction, but a transitional measure.

## 3. INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE DECARB POLICY

To successfully achieve the above-mentioned objectives and actions, the Swiss TPH supports an institutionalization of a Decarb Policy, which will include the following complementary requirements that would be needed (not exclusive if any additional ones):

- Training and support for digital or alternative tools
- Sharing and disseminating good practices
- Improved data collection on Swiss TPH carbon emissions and monitoring developments using SMART targets, that are measurable and comparable
- Developing a communication/sensitization strategy to inform about Swiss TPH CO2 reduction strategies and promote a science culture at Swiss TPH that is CO2 sensitive without compromising on excellence
- Developing a reward system for innovative CO2 reduction behaviour (e.g. make every year a small award for an intelligent example/solution announced at a symposium or the Swiss TPH party)

## 4. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Directorate of Swiss TPH has the overall responsibility to promote and implement this policy as well as to provide the resources needed to carry it out.

Department and Unit heads are responsible to monitor its implementation and report or correct if there are any failure in respecting these measures. A supervisor should approve travel reasons by considering:

- Whether the purpose of international travel justifies associated CO2 emissions

- Whether alternative travel routes or means of transportation with less CO2 emissions can be recommended

All Swiss TPH collaborators have the responsibility to comply with these measures using the approaches outlined in the Appendix of this document.

The Travel Safety Officer has the responsibility to set up a data collection and monitoring system in order to be able to measure change over time. It will continue to communicate with travel agencies for letting them know about the Swiss TPH Decarb policy act. It will also to keep an eye open on initiatives that could be launched on the matter by similar academic and research institutions to ensure that Swiss TPH remains taking part in any advanced measures on the matter.

The Communication unit through a communication strategy will support efforts to promote and disseminate this policy act and environmental awareness within Swiss TPH.

## Annex 1: Guidelines for sustainable travels

Professional travels represent a major source of carbon emissions at Swiss TPH therefore reducing flight-related greenhouse gas emissions is a major priority for all the institute members (staff, researchers, students). On the other hand, travelling and physical presence on project sites worldwide is part of Swiss TPH culture and modus operandi. The aim of these measures is not to ban travels, but rather to include climate considerations as a main concern in the planning of trips. Climate friendly alternatives and new technologies make such a reduction realistic and are compatible with Swiss TPH excellence in science and best career opportunities for researchers.

### 1. Think sustainably

Consider the objective of the travel

- Is my physical presence really required?
- Does the purpose of my travel justify the associated CO2 emissions?
- Will the benefits of my travel outweigh the environmental impact?
- How does the length of time away from work, the fatigue and stress generated from the trip affect my quality of life?

### 2. Act sustainably

Favour alternative ways to replace travel

- Consider whether a virtual meeting could be an alternative option
- Plan strategically to reduce the number of people at the same conference, field visit or project meeting, taking into account most critical contributions as well as career needs
- Disseminate ideas and good practices among colleagues and institutions

General principles for acting sustainably

- Aim for not more than 1-2 international conferences per year
- Avoid attending international conferences for non-prominent presentations such as poster or pitches or for conferences with little network opportunity
- Consider to deliver virtual key note speeches instead of flying for just one talk.
- Arrange international meetings by virtual conference facilities (e.g. PhD defence, giving presentations/lectures, low priority meetings, representing visits, etc.)
- Use online platforms for discussion and exchange of documents (e.g. webinars)
- As conference organizer: apply intelligent design of virtual conferences and cooperation on-site
- When planning new research, service or teaching project, consider how travel-related CO2 emissions can be minimized and include approaches to scientific exchanges by virtual conferences

### 3. Travel sustainably and compensate

If travel is essential, do it in a way that minimizes carbon emissions

- Travelling by train is compulsory for destinations reachable in 4 hours or less.
- Travelling by train should be favoured for destinations reachable in 4 to 8 hours.
- Take direct flights and avoid stopovers whenever possible (e.g., Paris, Amsterdam, Frankfurt). Instead, take the train and get a direct flight from there when available
- Favour attendance at conferences and course, which can be reached by train.
- Bundle and combine activities to reduce the number of trips (e.g. conference and project meeting)
- Select meeting locations in a way to minimize overall traffic load of all participants
- If several meeting place options or travel options, quantify the CO2 impact using a travel search engine to find the cleanest way and route travel, for example by using: <https://www.routerank.com/en/> or <http://www.ecopassenger.org>.
- Support compensation mechanisms of emissions from essential flights.