

European Sleep Research Society (ESRS) - Sustainable Travel Policy for ESRS Events

Developed by the Early Career Network (ECN)

Before Your Travel

1. Choose (more) Sustainable Transportation

- **By Air:** If you travel by plane, opt for **direct flights** and avoid (multiple) short-haul flights whenever possible to lower emissions.
 - **Why it matters?** Takeoff and landing use the most fuel during a flight, making them the most carbon-intensive moments of air travel. Direct routes also tend to cover the shortest distance between two destinations, meaning less total fuel burned compared to itineraries with multiple legs.
 - Emissions released at cruising altitude such as CO₂, water vapor, nitrogen oxides, and fine particles have a greater warming effect than the same emissions at ground level. This enhanced impact is known as radiative forcing and occurs partly because airplane emissions can form thin clouds that hold in heat.
- **By Train, Bus or ferry:** Across Europe, trains (e.g., [trainline](#), [Omio](#)), long-distance coach travel (e.g., [FlixBus](#)) and ferries offer efficient and far more sustainable alternatives to (short haul) flying. They also often directly take you into the city center, thus saving you the extra mile to the airport.
 - **By night train:** Travelling overnight lets you combine the cost of the journey and accommodation while reducing emissions. You can explore available overnight routes and operators (such as [Nightjet](#) or [Trenitalia](#)) on the overnight connections [map](#).
 - When buying train tickets, consider [interrail tickets](#) or buying tickets on country specific websites separately as they can be cheaper.
 - **Ferries, really?** Modern ferries can emit less CO₂ than planes because they avoid energy-intensive takeoffs and high-altitude emissions. They also share fuel use efficiently across many passengers and cargo and can be combined with other more eco-friendly options like train or bus travel.
- **By Car:** If public transport is not an option, consider carpooling ([BlaBlaCar](#)) or renting low-emission or electric vehicles to limit your environmental impact.
- Whenever possible, use **digital tickets** and boarding passes instead of printed copies to reduce paper waste.

2. Calculate Your CO₂ Footprint

- As you plan your trip, use a [CO₂ calculator](#) to see how different travel choices compare in terms of emissions.

A quick example:

- *Night train (Milan → Vienna): ~43 kg CO₂ per person*
 - *Plane, economy class (same route): ~2690 kg CO₂ per person*
- You can choose to **offset** your footprint through certified climate projects.
 - *The [ECN webinar](#) provides helpful guidance on trustworthy approaches to carbon offsetting.*
 - *Sleep Europe Congress participants opting for sustainable travel can apply for the [ESRS Sustainable Travel Grants](#).*

3. Pack Light

- Traveling light not only makes your journey easier but also helps reduce emissions. The ESRS events' dress code is *smart casual*, so there is no need to purchase or bring formal attire. If you wish to refresh your conference wardrobe, consider choosing second-hand options through thrift shops to give clothes a second life.
 - *The heavier your luggage, the more fuel is needed to transport it, whether by plane, bus, car, or train.*

4. Choose an Eco-friendly Accommodation

- When you book accommodation, look for hotels with **sustainability certification** (e.g., [EU Ecolabel](#)) to ensure *eco-friendly* practices.
- By considering shared apartments and splitting accommodation with colleagues, you can significantly lower your environmental footprint.
- Camping at a campsite might be an unconventional but fun way to turn your conference attendance into a little holiday adventure.
 - *Hotels often have a high environmental impact because they require constant energy, water, and laundry services, making nightly stays surprisingly carbon intensive.*

5. The Environmental Cost of Artificial Intelligence

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) models consume staggering amounts of electricity and water ([Zewe, 2025](#)). Be mindful of their environmental impact when using generative AI to prepare your presentations.

Note: At the ESRS event, any use of generative AI in your presented research must be disclosed, including a clear description of how it was applied (see [Wiley Author Guideline on Generative AI tools](#)).

6. Posters

- Whenever possible, print your poster on materials that can be easily recycled or reused.
 - *Posters laminated with plastics and textile ones are usually not recyclable.*

During Your Stay

1. At Your Accommodation

- **Save energy** by switching off lights, air conditioning, and electronics when not in use.
- Unplug devices after charging.
- **Reuse** towels and bed linens.
- Reduce your impact on the environment by choosing **locally sourced** and/or vegetarian and vegan meal options.

2. At the Congress Venue

- **Go Digital:** Use digital materials instead of printed ones whenever possible.
- **Bring a Reusable Water Bottle:** Water stations are available throughout the ESRS venues.
- **Recycle:** Use the designated recycling bins to help properly sort and process waste.

3. Enjoy!

- Sustainable travel might take a little more time, but it's also a great way to unwind and slow down. Traveling sustainably to the ESRS event with your colleagues can make the journey a memorable part of the experience!
 - **Get inspired:** Check out how our ESRS members traveled sustainability to *Sleep Europe 2024* under **#ESRSsustainable** on LinkedIn and Instagram.

Planetary Health and Sleep Go Hand in Hand

- Discover how environmental factors affect sleep by exploring insights from our ESRS community:
 - [ESRS/SRS Joint Webinar: Sleep and Climate Change](#)
 - [Climate Change and Sleep in Humans](#)
 - [Sleeping Through the Heat: Strategies for Restful Nights](#)
 - [How to Sleep During a Heatwave – Do's and Don'ts](#)

Follow us on the [ESRS](#) and [ECN](#) LinkedIn profiles for event-specific sustainable travel recommendations.