

## **TRAVEL POLICY AND SUSTAINABILITY**

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### **1. Preamble**

Travel is an important element of university life, including for purposes of research, teaching and academic exchange and collaboration. By travelling for academic purposes, faculty (and other staff) make an important contribution to the overall aims of the Institute, creating visibility and fostering knowledge exchange. Frequently, such travel means that they spend significant time away from home and family, including on evenings and weekends. Moreover, many faculty members and researchers are already making significant efforts to reconcile work demands with family priorities, actively contributing to address climate change, for instance by reverting to online conferences or privileging public transportation.

At the same time, the high emissions intensity of travel, particularly air travel which is responsible for around 2.4 percent of global carbon emissions from fossil fuel use, substantially contributes to global warming. In line with its commitment to the global goal of sustainable development as outlined in its Charter and illustrated in its teaching and research focus on sustainable practices, the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (hereafter the “Institute”) is committed to reduce its carbon footprint and contribute to the objective of the 2015 United Nations Paris Climate Agreement to keep global temperature increases this century to well below 2 degrees Celsius. In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) demonstrated that limiting global heating to 1.5 degrees Celsius would require “net zero” carbon emissions by around 2050.

In 2021, the Institute launched the [Sustainability Initiative](#), which proposed in its 2021 report on sustainability a comprehensive methodology to compute the carbon footprint of the Institute, and recommendations to lessen its environmental impact. In 2022, the Initiative computed that the Institute emitted approximately 852.50 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> through air travel. The goal is to reduce these CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 30 percent by 2030. Accordingly, this Travel Policy (hereafter “Policy”) seeks to mitigate the environmental impacts of the travels of its employees and researchers by promoting the use of lower-carbon methods of transport where possible, minimising the overall number of journeys, encouraging virtual alternatives to travel, and promoting awareness of environmental sustainability.

## **2. Scope of application**

This Policy applies to all persons whose transportation costs are financed by the Institute or through grants administered by the Institute.

This includes guest speakers and those invited for the purpose of academic engagement (for example to attend a doctoral thesis defence) when the funding is administered by the Institute (in case they would use funds from their own institutions, it is then expected that they would follow their institution’s own rules). The same derogations that apply for Institute employees apply to them.

Other rules may apply to our faculty and researchers when the travel costs are paid and administered by a third party not related to the Institute: in particular, if they are invited by other institutions which administer their travels (for instance, being invited for a PhD defence in another university, or being invited for a workshop as part of a research grant located in another university).

## **3. Principles**

Persons subject to this Policy must comply with the conditions laid down in this Policy.

In addition, they should respect the following principles:

- being aware of the environmental impacts of travel and favouring means of transport with a low environmental impact
- taking the train rather than flying whenever possible
- preferring non-stop flights over flights with a stopover, as the take-off phases are particularly emission-intensive
- bundling individual travels by combining several reasons for travelling, e.g. attending a conference and hosting an alumnae-i event for instance (principal investigators and supervisors should encourage PhD students and postdocs to prepare their trips to make them as productive as possible)
- questioning the necessity of travelling and choosing not to travel when virtual collaboration tools will adequately fulfil the purpose of travel (the environmental impact of the IT infrastructure required for video conferencing and other forms of virtual exchange, while not negligible, is generally much lower than that of travelling)
- abstaining from undertaking long travels by plane for very short stays
- reducing the number of persons in a team travelling to a specific event to the minimum necessary
- promoting the use of public transports in the host city (such as trains or buses)

## 4. Train

Travel by train is the general means of transportation that the Institute requires its employees to privilege for any travel in Europe lasting less than seven hours.

Annex I, which forms an integral part of this Policy, provides an indicative list of destinations which must be reached by train. The journey's duration is calculated as the fastest travel possible from the first departure station to the destination station, including time spent in transit between stations or waiting for connections and a one-hour estimate corresponding to an average of 30 minutes from the workplace to the Geneva station and from the station to the hotel in the destination city. The table in Annex I does not include this one-hour estimate.

The Institute also requires its employees to privilege train travel over car rides as a mode of travelling for short-distance travels. If access to the destination by train (and/or bus) is difficult or impossible, making travel by car the only option, the Institute then encourages its employees to privilege carpooling.

In line with the Institute's "*Règlement de remboursement de frais*",

- persons subject to this Policy are authorised to travel first class for train journeys of more than 100 km (single route);
- employees who frequently travel by train in Switzerland as part of the Institute's activities to attend conferences or professional meetings outside the Institute may request reimbursement of an SBB half-fare or general season ticket. They can write to the Administrative Director explaining why they are requesting this reimbursement, and the Administrative Director will take the decision with the relevant authorities.

## 5. Flights

Air travel is the largest source of carbon emissions at universities, rendering improvements in this area imperative. Trains have approximately five to ten times less environmental impact than planes.

As already said in point 4, air travel is only permitted if the alternative train journey would last more than seven hours.

In line with the Institute's "*Règlement de remboursement de frais*", only economy class or economy plus class flights may be reimbursed.

Persons in charge of cost centres must ensure that no flights are validated for reimbursement if they are on the list of destinations that must be reached by train, except for exemptions granted under the specifications listed in point 8 of this Policy. Accounting must double check this is the case when validating the expense claims.

## Carbon Offsetting Policy

Carbon compensation is strongly recommended for all flights carried out within the Institute's framework.

- The minimum compensation suggested for all flights is 0.1 t = CHF 2.50 or CHF 25.00 for 1 ton.
- The amount of CO<sub>2</sub> emission may be calculated by using the myclimate methodology taking into account the location of airports, the type of airplane and the travel class.
- The compensation may be paid from the same budget line as the Institute's dedicated flight funds, researchers' personal research funds or, where applicable, grants administered by the Institute, depending on the terms and conditions of the donor or funding agency.
- When submitting their expense reports to their cost centre, employees who have chosen not to pay for compensation do not have to justify the reasons for their choice.

### 6. Taxi and other means of transport

All journeys to train stations or airports within Switzerland must be taken by public transport, including transfers to and from the airport/train station, with the exception of taxi rides arriving to the train station or airport before 9 am or leaving the train station or airport after 9 pm.

In addition, the Institute encourages its employees to privilege public transport over taxi when travelling to train stations or airports outside of Switzerland.

### 7. Travel costs

The reimbursement of travel costs by the Institute is laid down in its internal regulations "*Règlement de remboursement de frais*" and "*Summary of the expenses claim regulations*".

### 8. Derogations

The principles laid down in this Policy must be followed. Derogations may be granted on request by

- the Head of Department (the Director of the Institute if the Head of Department makes the request) for all expenses drawn from professors' "personal research funds" or for all expenses drawn from the department's budget (for invited guests, PhD students and others)
- the Centre Director or Co-Directors (the Director of Research if the Centre Director or Co-Directors make the request) for all expenses drawn from an externally funded project administered by a centre
- the Director of Research for all expenses drawn from "seed money" funding and for guests invited by a Centre Director or Co-Directors on the Centre's own annual budget

Admissible derogations that apply equally to all categories of people (employees of the Institute or guests) include

- health impairments of the person travelling
- reconciling care responsibilities and work
- safety considerations due to particular events

- teaching and/or administrative constraints – if a destination cannot be reached on time by train due to teaching schedules and/or institutional commitments
- cases of force majeure
- for PhD students only, significant financial discrepancies between the price of air travel and that of train travel that would prevent them from attending a conference

The person requesting a derogation must provide all the necessary elements to justify their request each time it is made (no blanket derogation can be obtained). A request for derogation must be made as soon as possible and, in any case, before costs are incurred.

If the derogation is granted, it must be attached with the expense claim submitted by the travelling person (or the person in charge of inviting a guest) to the cost centre to justify the reimbursement

## 9. Implementation of this Policy

The persons mentioned in this Policy (travelling person, competent authority for approval, etc.) must comply with this Policy.

In the event of non-compliance, the Institute reserves the right to request reimbursement of the costs it has incurred that relate to the travel, or to refuse to reimburse the costs already incurred by the employee in violation of this Policy if reimbursement has not yet been made.

## 10. Resources

### *Travel*

- SBB
- [Deutsche Bahn](#)
- Omio
- Chronotrains
- [Rail.cc](#)

### *CO<sub>2</sub> compensation*

- [myclimate](#)
- atmosfair

### *Sustainability at the Institute*

- Sustainability Initiative Business Travel Research and Recommendation Report
- Sustainability Initiative
- 2021 Sustainability Report

### *General*

- Climate Change Resources

This Policy has been approved by the Comité académique on 6 June 2024 and enters into force on 1st September 2024.

**Annex I**  
**Indicative List of Cities Where Air Travel Is Not Permitted**

<b>From Geneva to destination</b>	<b>Train travel in hours</b>
Lyon/FR	1h56
Paris/FR	3h16
Milan/IT	4h01
Montpellier/FR	4h02
Marseille/FR	4h16
Nimes/FR	4h19
Torino/IT	4h36
Brussels/BE	5h18–57
Lille/FR	5h19
Bologna/IT	5h25
Stuttgart/DE	5h30–49
Frankfurt/DE	5h53
Leuven/BE	5h55
Rennes/FR	5h56
Antwerpen/BE	5h58