

Guidelines for understanding environmental protection and sustainability for households



Co-funded by
the European Union



inΔrt
international.arts.centre



Co-funded by
the European Union



The iMPACT project has been funded with support from the European Union. This document reflects only the views of its author. The European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

Introduction

If you're concerned about your lifestyle's impact on the environment, you're in the right place. We're a group of enthusiasts from various professional backgrounds. We created the iMPACT project united in our commitment to climate preservation.

As busy professionals and family-oriented individuals, we've encountered challenges in adopting climate-friendly habits recommended by the media. Many suggestions are impractical for daily life and require significant lifestyle changes. Not everyone can afford eco-friendly housing, dedicate time to gardening or knit own shopping bags from old textiles...

Balancing climate consciousness with personal and professional responsibilities is no easy task, even if all the family is committed to change for the sake of a healthier planet.

Yet, we urge you not to give up. Environmental sustainability is a responsibility we all share. We surely don't need to convince you about that!

Through the iMPACT project, we aim to help households of all sizes to adopt environmentally and economically sustainable lifestyles tailored to their needs. Our project brought together fourteen diverse women: mothers, teachers, businesswomen, and artists. We've researched scientific data, policy frameworks, and practical solutions relevant to Europe, where we reside.

Our research led us to a crucial realization: piecemeal approaches won't suffice. Each household needs a personalised environmental plan aligned with its values and daily routines, as well as with its budget.

That's why we've compiled these guidelines. We've distilled the latest knowledge on climate impact and linked it to practical tips, EU policies, and psychological insights. Our goal is not to prescribe rigid solutions but to inspire you to innovate and collaborate - with nature and with the others in your family and your community.

Inside, you'll find an overview of key environmental issues and principles for designing your solutions. We provide examples and handpicked credible sources, for further exploration and inspiration.

Enjoy this journey and join us in safeguarding the planet!

Guideline 1

Start by changing what is directly in your control.

Individual small actions may not feel like enough but collectively people around the world have the power to make change. [Science has proven](#) that, because of human activity, many areas on the Earth may become unsuitable for human life already in this century, with the trend aggravating by 2500.

The European population alone is 742 million (estimate). If each one of us makes at least one change, the benefit for the climate will be evident very quickly.

On the other hand, being concerned about the environment, and wanting to do your part, you may feel the urge to change your entire lifestyle at once. This may feel overwhelming.

Experts advise: become green and sustainable consciously, and in a way that you can control. Inform yourself first, then build your own plan and start implementing it, one by one.

A journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. This ancient proverb can serve as an excellent starting point in everyone's path to an environmentally friendly and economically sustainable household.

Carefully analyse your daily habits. Plan Your Family's Consumption and Assess Your Impact:

Start by planning your family's consumption habits and assess their impact on the environment, including water usage, electricity consumption, waste generation, and transportation habits. Take stock of your household practices and evaluate where improvements can be made. Many online tools and apps can assist in calculating your family's environmental footprint.

Set Clear and Realistic Sustainability Goals:

Establish clear and realistic sustainability goals for your family. These goals should encompass reducing resource consumption, minimizing waste and improving your efficiency in energy and water consumption.

We hope that our Guidelines will help you select the specific areas which will be the easiest for you and your family to start with.

Go further:

[Environment - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/)
[How will climate change's warming pattern look in the future? | World Economic Forum \(weforum.org\)](https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/01/how-will-climate-change-warming-pattern-look-in-the-future/)
https://www.flpr.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/lpr_2022_full_report.pdf
[Little Green Dots | Facebook](#)
[Ensemble. créons le déclac avec la Fresque du Climat !](https://www.ensemble.be/fr/ensemble-creeons-le-declac-avec-la-fresque-du-climat)
<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate/live-sustainably-how-be-conscious-consumer>
<https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/five-tips-living-more-sustainably>

Guideline 2

Stop using plastic

A commitment to reducing plastic consumption is a pivotal aspect of environmental stewardship. It's evident that our planet faces significant challenges, including the concerning projection that by 2050, the volume of plastic may exceed that of fish in our oceans. However, through concerted efforts, we can mitigate this impact.

One could start by a thorough assessment of their own daily plastic usage: from commonplace items such as plastic wraps for meals to the less conspicuous presence of microplastics in textiles, identifying areas for improvement is essential.

Here are several examples of actionable strategies that we at iMPACT found realistic and easy to apply, including in busier family households:

Food packaging: adopting a selective approach to consumption by scrutinizing the necessity of products and considering the environmental footprint of their plastic packaging.

Sports clothes contain plastic too! Use your sports outfits longer. The materials in them make them durable enough. Try to resist the temptation of buying new ones every year.

Encouraging the use of permanent cutlery sets in workplaces and educational institutions minimizes the consumption of disposable plastic utensils.

Embracing reusable cloth bags for shopping purposes significantly reduces reliance on plastic carriers.

As a next step one could consider influencing their professional environment. Fostering dialogue within our respective spheres of influence, whether it be workplaces or educational institutions, is instrumental. Engaging stakeholders (management, human resources department, business operations officers) in discussions about implementing recycling infrastructure and facilitating access to water refill stations at work, may reinforce sustainable practices at a systemic level.

Where to find more information:

[Tips to reduce your plastic waste | WWF](#)

[Polymers in sports - ScienceDirect](#)

[Your Clothes Are Probably Made Of Plastic: What Fabrics To Avoid — Sustainable Rookie](#)

[Presence of microplastics and nanoplastics in food, with particular focus on seafood - - 2016 - EFSA Journal - Wiley Online Library](#)

<https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/wash-documents/microplastics-in-dw-information-sheet190822.pdf> -

<https://www.fraunhofer.de/en/press/research-news/2024/march-2024/revamped-plastics-recycling-chain.html>

Guideline 3

Find creative ways to reuse everything

The best type of recycling is no recycling at all. It's a way to view materials in our lives as having multiple purposes, thus minimizing waste.

Consider the items in your home not as disposable, but as resources waiting to be repurposed. Materials have multiple lives – one can make good use of them, and stay low on budget. Plastic, textiles, and paper, for instance, are abundantly found in most households. While they may be harmful to the environment as waste, they are durable and easily transformed for secondary use, such as in packaging, insulation, or even upcycling into clothing, toys, and art projects.

The key is to embrace a mindset of reuse, repurposing, and transformation. From small, worn-out objects like toothbrushes and dishwashing sponges, to larger items such as furniture or old tools and the old tyres of your car or bicycle, there are endless possibilities for creative reinvention.

Wondering how to get started? Your imagination and practicality are your greatest assets. Before rushing to purchase new tools or supplies for a home project, consider what resources you already have on hand. Get inventive! For example, we've heard of people using milk cartons for house insulation or repurposing egg cartons for sound insulation due to their unique 3D shape.

Feeling stuck for ideas? Don't hesitate to seek inspiration from local artists, craftsmen, or interior design experts. Collaborating with them can lead to wonderfully creative solutions for home or garden renovations. And let's not forget the most imaginative collaborators of all: the children in our families and communities. They often bring fresh perspectives and boundless creativity to repurposing projects.

In essence, let's rethink our approach to waste and discover the beauty in giving new life to old objects. It's a journey that not only benefits the environment but also sparks joy and creativity in our daily lives.

Where to find inspiration:

https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/index_en

[7 Eco-Artists and Their Inspiring Work \(daybring.com\)](#)

[Get inspired - European Union \(europa.eu\)](#)

[BOSS Magazine | 7 Impressive Homes Built with Recycled Materials \(thebossmagazine.com\)](#)

[10 Everyday Products Made From Recycled Materials \(biofriendlyplanet.com\)](#)

[29 astuces de bricoleurs vraiment utiles | Réussir \(presque\) tous les projets DIY \(youtube.com\)](#)

Guideline 4

Know your food

Understanding the origins and composition of our food, as well as the significance of minimizing food waste is fundamental, if we are to live in a sustainable and environmentally-friendly way. It stands for educating ourselves about where our food comes from, cooking meals using fresh and locally sourced ingredients, and advocating for transparency in food labelling.

Understanding the sources of our food and reducing waste can have significant implications for the environment. By supporting local and sustainable food production practices, we can reduce the carbon footprint associated with transportation and support ecosystems. Additionally, minimizing food waste helps to conserve resources such as water and energy, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions from decomposing food in landfills and over-crowded growth of livestock.

Reducing food waste is the one thing that depends directly on you and your household. According to the [UNEP Food Waste Index 2021](#), 61% of the food waste in 2019 came from households.

Eat to live, don't live to eat. Set family food standards. Knowing our food means making informed choices about what we eat and where it comes from. It means opting for fresh, locally produced ingredients whenever possible, and cooking meals from scratch to reduce reliance on processed foods. By being mindful of food labels and understanding the composition of our food, we can make healthier choices and minimize the intake of additives and preservatives.

To address these issues collectively, we can work together with family members and neighbours to advocate for transparent food labelling and support initiatives that promote local and sustainable food production. We could organize community events such as cooking classes or farmers' market visits to learn more about where our food comes from and how to prepare it sustainably. By sharing knowledge and resources, we can empower each other to make more conscious food choices and reduce waste.

Where to find more information:

[Food Waste - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

[Food safety and quality - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

[Feeding change: Cities empowering healthier and more sustainable food choices | urbact.eu](#)

[Information booklet about the European Federation of City Farms \(EFCE\) and its members | FAO](#)

[UNEP Food Waste Index Report 2021 | UNEP - UN Environment Programme](#)

[REFRESH Home | REFRESH \(eu-refresh.org\)](#)

[Quiz: Food Waste Valorisation \(eu-refresh.org\)](#)

<https://sustainablefoodtrust.org/>

[Le portail Good Food | Good Food](#)

Guideline 5

Reduce household energy and water use

Reducing water and energy use involves implementing practices and technologies to minimize consumption of these resources within the household. This includes measures such as installing energy-efficient appliances, using water-saving fixtures, and adopting sustainable habits to lower overall environmental impact.

It goes without saying that reducing water and energy use, even in one household, will help conserve natural resources, reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with energy production and water treatment, and ultimately will help mitigate climate change. By minimizing water and energy consumption, we contribute to environmental sustainability and preserve ecosystems.

For individuals and families, reducing water and energy use means lowering utility bills, improving energy efficiency, and creating a healthier living environment. It also fosters a sense of responsibility towards the environment and promotes sustainable lifestyles that prioritize conservation and resource efficiency.

Collaborating with neighbours and friends can amplify the impact of sustainability efforts. Engage with your community to monitor and track sustainability efforts collectively. Compete with neighbours or friends in friendly challenges to reduce energy and water consumption, minimize waste, or lower transportation emissions. Make sustainability a fun and collaborative endeavour for everyone involved.

Continuously educate yourself, adapt to new technologies and practices, and inspire others in your community to do the same. Pooling resources for group purchases of energy-efficient appliances or solar panels can also make sustainability more accessible and affordable for everyone. Together, we can make a positive impact on the environment while improving our economic well-being.

To explore further:

[Find a Sustainable Energy Day near you - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

[European Environment Agency's home page \(europa.eu\)](#)

[Énergie - Canopea](#)

[Climate & energy – Deutsche Umwelthilfe e.V. \(duh.de\)](#)

[Zelena akcija \(zelena-akcija.hr\)](#)

[La Gestion Rationnelle de l'eau - Lycée Pilote Ariana \(youtube.com\)](#)

Guideline 6

Balance out technology

Tech can be a friend and a foe to the environment. On one hand, excessive live streaming or lengthy screen-scrolling without a purpose only comes to heat up the servers, and ultimately adds to global warming. On the other hand, technology can be leveraged to make our homes more efficient, reduce e-waste, and support us in making eco-friendly choices. Additionally, advocating for sustainable policies and supporting businesses committed to environmental sustainability can drive positive change on a larger scale.

For individuals and families, balancing technology usage can mean embracing smart solutions that improve home efficiency and transportation, and to transform our consumer practices,. It would involve making informed decisions about the technology that we use, prioritizing energy efficiency, and minimizing e-waste. By staying educated about environmental issues and engaging in community advocacy, we can contribute to a more sustainable present – and future for ourselves and the next generations.

Collaborating with neighbours and friends can amplify the impact of technology-balancing efforts. Consider organizing community events or initiatives to share knowledge, resources, and best practices for sustainable living. Pooling resources for group purchases of energy-efficient appliances or supporting local businesses with eco-friendly practices can also make a collective difference. Furthermore, advocating for sustainable policies and engaging in community-based environmental projects can foster a sense of shared responsibility and can empower your community.

Where to find more information and ideas:

[DIGITALEUROPE](#) - The voice of digitally transforming industries in Europe

[WEEE Forum](#) (weee-forum.org)

[The Borneo Bulletin](#)

[European Electronics Recyclers Association](#) (eera-recyclers.com)

[La technologie peut-elle sauver la planète ?](#) (youmatter.world)

[54577](#) (srce.hr) – an academic article by a Croatian scientist about human ecology and technology of transcendent communication

[Écologie numérique : les 15 gestes faciles à adopter dès aujourd'hui](#) (hellocarbo.com)

Guideline 7

Be a harmonious part of your habitat

Cherish and preserve biodiversity! Live in harmony with the nature around you. This is the way to maintain the interconnectedness of all life forms on our planet. There are meaningful actions that individuals and families can take to restore habitats, reduce environmental footprint, and minimize harm to ecosystems and wildlife.

Preserving biodiversity is crucial for the health and resilience of nature worldwide. The complex networks of interacting animals and plants, some visible – others – invisible to the human eye, work constantly to ensure essential resources such as clean water, oxygen, food, and shelter for humans and wildlife alike. Biodiversity also plays a vital role in mitigating climate change by serving as a natural defence and absorbing a significant portion of human-caused emissions.

At individual and family level, one can help to preserve biodiversity by adopting sustainable practices to minimize own environmental impact and to protect natural habitats. This involves reducing non-compostable garbage, noise and light pollution, as well as chemical pollution. Creating awareness, supporting local producers and eco-friendly products are also excellent paths to contribute to a healthier environment.

Invasive species are an underestimated challenge. These are non-native organisms (plants or animals) that disrupt ecosystems by outcompeting native species, spreading disease, and altering habitat. It is not always a good idea to bring an exotic plant or animal from a trip abroad, nor to bring a local one when visiting friends in another country or continent. Take personal responsibility to prevent the spread of invasive species and eliminate them when encountered to protect native biodiversity and maintain ecosystem balance.

Collaborating with neighbours and friends can amplify efforts to preserve biodiversity. It is more fun to enjoy nature together, but also to develop group knowledge and consciousness, support local biodiversity initiatives, businesses, and producers, grow local plants and animals, and create city meadows and gardens to enhance urban biodiversity and provide habitat for wildlife.

Where to find more information and ideas:

[Natura 2000 - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/nature/natura2000/)

[Biodiversity Information System for Europe \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/biodiversity/)

<https://unfoundation.org/blog/post/biodiversity-explained-facts-myths-and-the-race-to-protect-it/>

<https://www.unicef.org/globalinsight/stories/why-biodiversity-important-children>

[Zaštita prirode - Zelena akcija \(zelena-akcija.hr\)](https://www.zelena-akcija.hr/)

[Dalmatian Islands Environment Foundation Executive Summary - Conservation Collective \(conservation-collective.org\)](https://www.conservation-collective.org/)

<https://www.wwf.be/fr/regions/belgique>

[Board & Team | MAVA Foundation \(mava-foundation.org\)](https://www.mava-foundation.org/)

<https://www.lifeasap.eu/index.php/en/project/asap-project>

Guideline 8

Turn environmental challenges into opportunities. Be Entrepreneurial.

Turn lemons into lemonade for the planet! Resort to your entrepreneurial mindset: focus on opportunities rather than problems – and seek to foster environmental protection and economic sustainability! By adopting this perspective, one can uncover innovative solutions that benefit both the planet and our own well-being.

How? Try to develop sustainable practices that would reduce negative environmental impact or will contribute to the preservation of natural resources for future generations.

Why not test yourself in circular economy? This is an economic model designed to minimize waste and maximize the lifespan of resources by promoting reuse, repair, remanufacturing, and recycling. By keeping products and materials in use for as long as possible, circular economy reduces resource extraction, energy consumption, and waste generation, thus mitigating environmental degradation and contributing to sustainable resource management.

An attempt to start an eco-friendly project that may bring you a bit of cash on the side, or that can grow into a proper business, is an opportunity for positive change and growth for everyone. Or why not, for the whole family! It may open doors to new ways of living that are both environmentally responsible and financially rewarding.

Pooling efforts with neighbours and friends amplifies the impact of individual actions. Consider organizing community initiatives such as neighbourhood clean-up events, group composting efforts, or shared gardening projects. By working together, we can create a more sustainable and connected community.

Innovate, seek and find sustainable, economically viable solutions. Imagine eco-friendly ideas for your family, building, or town. Let the children – the big dreamers - join too. Tally your savings, invest, sell - become an eco-entrepreneur, leading by example!

Where to find new avenues and practical examples:

[ReTraCE \(retrace-itn.eu\)](https://retrace-itn.eu)

<https://clustercollaboration.eu/tags/eco-innovation>

[Kako je jedno malo hrvatsko poduzeće svojim održivim pristupom zasjalo u europskoj konkurenciji - Poslovni dnevnikHrvatska u Top 10 potrošača eko proizvoda Naturala.hr](#)

[Reconversion professionnelle : devenez entrepreneur écologique \(ecopreneur.fr\)](#)

[Les avantages de devenir un eco preneur dans l'economie verte d'aujourd'hui - FasterCapital](#)

[Home - Sivén ja Takala \(arksi.fi\)](#)

[Kudzu eco webshop: Eshop aux produits naturels et écologiques](#)

Guideline 9

Seek others. Connect with others.

We cannot stress enough how important it is to create a support network and connect with like-minded people, to make your efforts in environmental protection easier and more rewarding. You don't have to fight alone. Collaborate with friends, engage with local communities, nonprofits, and eco-friendly businesses, and utilize social media platforms to organize and advocate for environmental causes!

Engaging with like-minded individuals and organizations as a family, can bring a whole new dimension to your life. It will expand your perspectives and will provide valuable resources, knowledge, and motivation to adopt sustainable practices and make positive changes in daily life. Involving children in these efforts can also instil environmental values and empower them to become stewards of the planet.

Working together with neighbours and friends, as a community, you can amplify the impact of your actions. Choose a cause and connect with like-minded people to form a supportive network. Engage with local nonprofits, eco-friendly businesses, and community organizations to collaborate on environmental initiatives. Create a dedicated social media profile or group to share information, and resources, and organize events or campaigns. Organize community events, clean-up activities, or educational workshops to raise awareness and promote sustainable practices.

Group action is more effective. However, remember to stay structured and keep it constructive, for the sake of the environmental cause you chose.

Where to find new avenues and practical examples:

[Energy communities \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/energycommunities/)

[La référence de l'actualité belge et internationale - Ensemble pour la planète - RTBF Actus](https://www.rtbf.be/actualite/international/ensemble-pour-la-planete)

[Ljubljana – Organizing Nature Days for Children – co-citi-sense](https://www.co-citi-sense.org/)

[https://youtu.be/wDiyskrCYpQ?si= AIQ8BIVXCafV_Du](https://youtu.be/wDiyskrCYpQ?si=AIQ8BIVXCafV_Du)

[LIFE 3.0 - LIFE21-CET-ENERCOM-TANDEMS/101077514 \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/life30/)

<https://www.earthday.org/>

Guideline 10

Contact those in power. Keep them accountable for their action and promises.

One crucial way to take action on a bigger scale is to communicate with those in power and influence. It's not true that nothing will change. If you speak up, it can start a wave. Even a small one which can be enough to achieve something. Embody the fact that one person can indeed make a difference. Politicians are in the business of getting re-elected and the people they normally hear from are those who make an effort to communicate with them.

Focus on one key issue, research it thoroughly, and construct two or three (not more) solid arguments based on credible sources to effectively communicate your concerns to policymakers.

By actively engaging with elected representatives and administration and holding them accountable for their environmental promises, you as an individual, or why not as a family – you can influence decision-making processes and advocate for policies that promote environmental protection and sustainability. This can lead to positive outcomes like increased environmental awareness, improved legislation, and enhanced conservation efforts.

What you can do:

- Focus on one issue in your immediate community. For example, no recycling available in your local park, the use of Styrofoam by local restaurants/bakeries, the need for more trees in a concrete environment, protecting a local species of plant or animal
- Find out who your local community representatives are. Speak with friends and neighbours if you don't know. Contact them via LinkedIn, their offices and/or community hearings. Social media today is very powerful. Post comments on their posts. Keep it polite and constructive.
- Speak with your neighbours and friends if the issue impacts them too. Find out if they will attend a meeting with you or sign an email with you. Involve your children. See what concerns them and focus on that issue as a family.
- Google local/county/country organizations who are active on the issue that concerns you. Team up with them or seek advice.
- Keep raising awareness whenever possible and don't give up! Change can take years, but it's worth it!
- Finally, no issue is too small. If it matters to you, it matters to others. Lead by example and know your vote and voice count.

Where to find more information:

Home | MEPs | European Parliament (europa.eu) – find the Members of the European Parliament from your country (and send them an email)
How to communicate clearly within local authorities - Pink Elephant Comms
CIVITAS Learning Centre (talentlms.com)
PolicyJuly.doc (ceu.hu)
Powerful, local stories can inspire us to take action on climate change (theconversation.com)
5 climate action wins from around the world | World Economic Forum (weforum.org)
Le Conseil Nature – Conseil Nature (conseil-nature.be)
Spreading the word through Eco Art - MAHB (stanford.edu)

Brussels-Zagreb, September 2023