

Statement of Principles on Sustainable Research

Preamble:

The participants of the Global Research Council recognise the relevance and promote the importance of all types of research, from basic to applied, that support sustainable development. Such research plays a crucial role in understanding and mitigating the complex and interrelated environmental, social, and economic challenges the world is facing.

Research funding organisations share a responsibility to support the contribution of research to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations by leveraging research on the topic and making research more ecologically, socially and economically sustainable. GRC participant organisations recognise the need for a plurality of research systems and agree to the importance of both solution-oriented and curiosity-driven research for this endeavour.

In the GRC Annual Meeting 2024, the GRC participants explored the relationship between sustainable development and research based on concepts and questions suggested in a specially prepared discussion paper. Discussions led to the following principles which all GRC participants agree on:

Principles and practices for sustainable research:

Research for sustainable development

GRC participants will work towards

- Raising awareness of the responsibility of research funding organisations, policy makers, research-performing institutions and researchers to ensure research contributes to sustainable development.
- Supporting international and multilateral cooperation of funders and researchers, as addressing global challenges requires working across borders and removing practical barriers.
- Developing research agendas, that address gaps in the research required to address societal needs and that are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Providing stable financial and regulatory frameworks that are fundamental for the effective management and support of research contributions to sustainable development.
- Strengthening inter- and transdisciplinary competences and capacities, as sustainable development research cannot develop its full potential when confined to disciplinary silos.
- Developing the understanding of and training in the intercultural competences of researchers, professional practitioners and stakeholders involved to include different capabilities, perspectives and experiences.
- Supporting solution-oriented research for sustainable development while experimenting with suitable funding formats.
- Fostering diversity in sustainable development research such as by integrating diversity analysis in research design and including multiple voices and experiences in the research and decision-making process. For example, indigenous research and knowledge systems offer unique opportunities and solutions for sustainable research.

- Shaping funding mechanisms that can adapt to changing circumstances while allowing for the longer time commitment required in transdisciplinary research to build contacts, networks and partnerships
- Supporting collaborations for sustainability with necessary policies, resources, safeguards and partnerships.
- Enabling equitable partnerships and community involvement that strengthen reciprocal collaboration by building on the capacities, perspectives and knowledge that each partner contributes to create more level playing fields.
- Supporting research and innovation processes that are conducted in an inclusive and ethical way extending to technology transfer and commercialization efforts.

Making research itself sustainable

GRC participants will work towards

- Recognising the responsibility of funders to incentivise responsible and sustainable practices (e.g. travel and mobility, waste management, gender equality, social inclusion, quality over quantity, employment conditions) in the conduct of research, leading by example.
- Pooling resources and efforts to achieve greater and longer impacts and sharing of good practices.
- Encouraging open science as the basis for diffusing research findings and to ensure the effective management, utilisation, reuse and replicability of research data to ensure more global access to research publication.
- Adopting and promoting sustainable and responsible research assessment strategies and processes. This includes focusing on the quality rather than the quantity of research outcomes and being adaptable to a diversity of research approaches and ways of knowing, including research that is performed with broader engagement across scientific disciplines and sectors of society.
- Developing and implementing systems to monitor how research contributes to a more sustainable future across the different dimensions of the SDGs.
- Promoting secure careers and career development to foster imagination, creativity and risk taking, which includes reducing the risks of precarity, especially for early career researchers.
- Encouraging positive changes in research cultures to make sustainability central to research practices.

Making sustainability science matter

GRC participants will work towards

- Encouraging systems thinking so that understanding the relationships among complex environmental, cultural and social systems is further developed to ensure that sustainability science matters.
- Enabling dialogue between research communities and other parts of society and supporting science communication, seeing science as a crucial actor within society.

- Building capacities amongst researchers, research funders, policymakers and other stakeholders (individuals and institutions) to support knowledge exchange between different stakeholders through the whole research process.
- Supporting participatory approaches in research that are both co-created and respond to societal needs.
- Building trust between stakeholders, including local communities, policymakers, public and private enterprises to foster collaboration and knowledge transfer.
- Valorising research outcomes in all their forms, especially those not usually expected in an academic context; and recognise and where appropriate reward researchers for doing so.