

EPA Research 2030

A Framework for EPA Research Programming 2021-2030

Putting Science and Innovation at the centre of environmental protection in Ireland through the development and proactive transfer of knowledge





EPA Research 2030

The EPA is at the front line of environmental protection and policing. As part of its wide range of functions the EPA manages an environmental research programme that delivers essential scientific support for environmental policy development, implementation and broader decision making. Since 1994, the EPA has funded research that has increased national understanding of our environment, the challenges it faces and responses to these. EPA Research focuses on achieving environmental objectives, informing policy and bringing together researchers and research users.

EPA Research 2030 is a 10-year high-level framework for research programming (2021-2030), designed to be agile, responsive and flexible. EPA-funded research is essential to:

- Supporting the monitoring, assessment, reporting and regulatory activities of the EPA.
- Generating evidence crucial in assisting Ireland in meeting its commitments and requirements under the various international, EU and national policies and strategies.
- Generating the evidence base that supports decision making, behaviour change and policy development.
- Addressing knowledge gaps, providing the evidence-base and responding to priority challenges.
- Developing environmental research capacity in Ireland, recognising the importance of not only sustaining the research-base but also of building and training the researchers in specific areas.

Environmental policies must be underpinned by an in-depth level of knowledge that needs to be delivered through a systematic programme of environmental research and

assessment. Research can play an important role by generating evidence that will support the design and implementation of effective and robust policy, evaluate its outcomes, and demonstrate its value. EPA Research 2030 will further our understanding of our environmental and natural systems. It will enable the outcomes from research to be put in action to protect and improve our natural and built environment. EPA Research 2030 will generate evidence to support Ireland's response to global challenges, including climate disruption and biodiversity loss, and will be an enabler to informing and engaging with citizens and communities.

This research programming framework sets out the broad structure and ambition for the EPA research activity for the next ten years. It will be implemented through supporting Thematic Research Priorities Assessments and Annual Research Calls, which will be developed in partnership with key stakeholders and at regular intervals to ensure ongoing relevance (at least three cycles over the 10 years). EPA Research 2030 implementation will also be supported by Action Plans, Communication & Knowledge Transfer Plans and Performance Reviews.

EPA Research targets the needs of key governmental and non-governmental stakeholders

Robust evidence-based policy is more effective and efficient in delivering meaningful outcomes. Evidence to support policy must be timely, accessible and actionable.

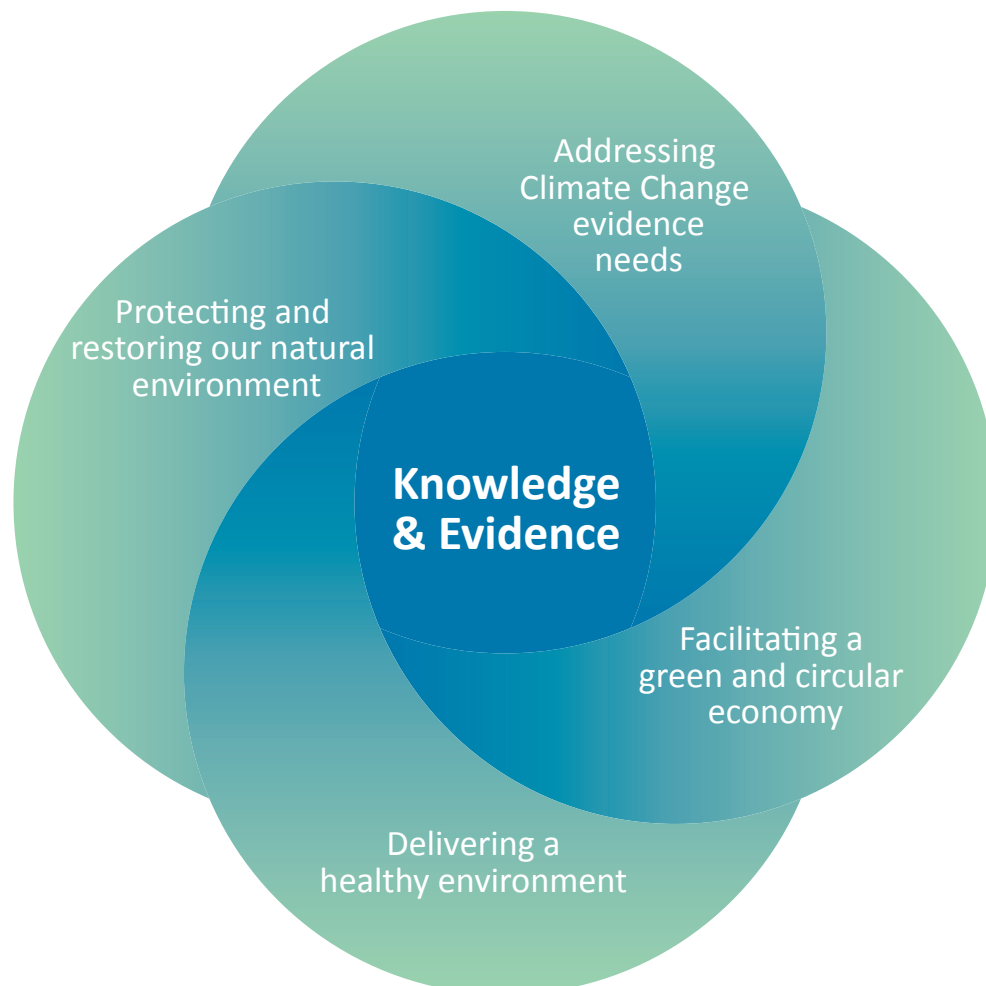
The EPA recognises the value of engagement and networking with other sectors and relevant organisations that interact with the environment. The EPA further acknowledges the need for effective cooperation and communication of environmental research across government departments and agencies. Targeting all parts of our society (i.e. societal segments) will be important for fostering grassroots awareness as well as interest and participation on environmental issues. Citizen engagement in research (including through citizen science) will also be key to informing and promoting behaviour change.

EPA Research 2030 is designed to generate evidence crucial in assisting Ireland in meeting its commitments and requirements under the various global, EU and national policies and strategies. The EPA will strive to ensure that the knowledge and research outputs generated are efficiently transferred, in an appropriate and readily usable format, to the key end-users of EPA-funded research, who are responsible for environmental policy making and implementation.

Thematic research approach

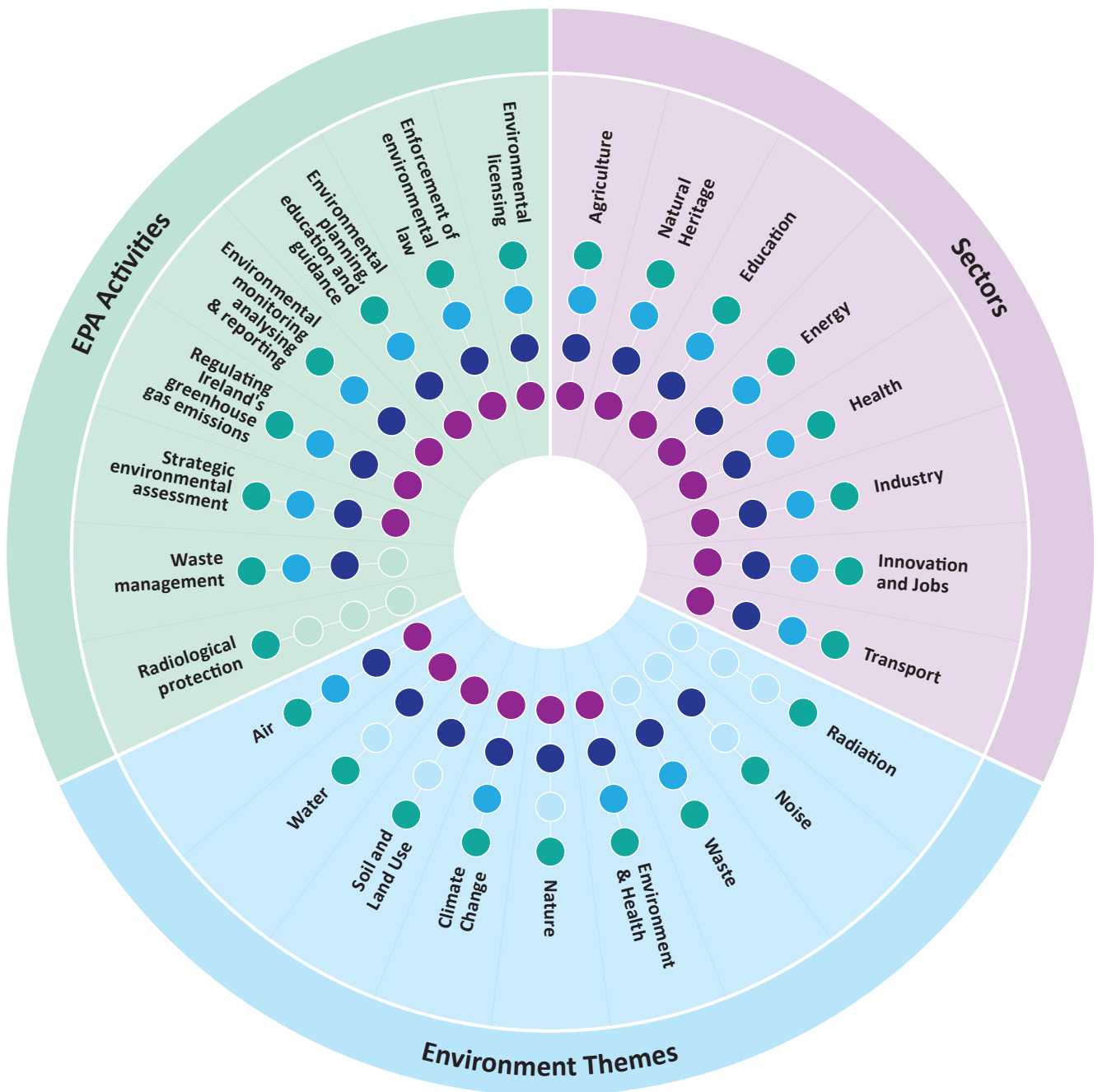
EPA Research 2030 thematic structure comprises four interconnected hubs that bring an integrated and cross-sectoral approach, enabling holistic management and protection of our environment.

The scope of EPA-funded research is informed by its relevance to policy and its alignment with the key activities of the Agency. Consideration of the interactions between social, behavioural and economic factors as an integral component of environmental research will lead to enhanced governance and more effective implementation of environmental policies and strategies.



On a 3-year cycle, the EPA will carry out a detailed consultation to identify key research needs, including emerging challenges and knowledge requirements, to inform the direction of the subsequent three-year cycle of EPA research awards. The identified priorities will seek to address policy and research needs on various timescales (short-, medium- and long-term), as well as project scales (spanning fast-track policy supporting assessments to large-scale multidisciplinary and complex projects). These research needs cycles will be further supported by an annual consultation and shortlisting of research projects for funding. Operating together, this structured approach will allow for an award process that is rational, comprehensive, flexible, and agile in response to changing priorities.

Mapping EPA Research 2030 and EPA Activities, Sectors and Themes



Addressing
Climate Change
evidence needs

Protecting and
restoring our natural
environment

Facilitating a
green and circular
economy

Delivering a
healthy
environment

EPA Research 2030 – A Framework for Research Programming 2021-2030

OUR PURPOSE	WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE	WHAT WE WILL DO
Putting Science and Innovation at the centre of environmental protection in Ireland through the development and proactive transfer of knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have delivered impactful research readily usable by our end-users • Have delivered timely evidence to support policy and decision making • Have addressed identified knowledge gaps in relation to existing and emerging environmental pressures • Have supported relevant implementation actions and behavioural change interventions • Have enhanced the national environmental research capacity • Have supported EPAs assessment, knowledge and regulatory functions • Have delivered open knowledge and data solutions for research output 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align research investments with key environmental challenges • Fund high quality, responsive, timely and impactful research • Transfer actionable knowledge to key stakeholders • Deliver accessible research outputs • Support a cohesive approach to national and European environmental research coordination • Support excellence and competitiveness in the national research community • Provide access to EPA data and knowledge systems



CORE ELEMENTS OF FRAMEWORK DELIVERY

	Protecting and restoring our natural environment	Facilitating a Green and Circular Economy	Delivering a healthy environment	Addressing Climate Change evidence needs
Interconnected Research Hubs	Our natural environment provides us with clean air and water, food and the raw materials to sustain us and our economy. Research is required to inform and support a cross-sectoral approach to managing our natural environment and for the development of policies relating to the regulation of emissions and activities, and the protection of our water, land, and ecosystems.	Environmental and sustainability challenges are inextricably linked to economic activities and lifestyles. Research under this Hub will contribute to the mainstreaming of sustainable management of natural resources and waste, unlocking the potential of the circular and bio-economies, and boosting competitiveness, through resource efficiency and deployment of innovative technologies and solutions.	A clean, vibrant and safe environment is a prerequisite for good health and wellbeing. Environmental degradation, pollution, as well as known and emerging substances of concern threaten our health and that of our supporting ecosystems. Research under this Hub will contribute to understanding the risks and benefits, and to identifying appropriate policy and behavioural responses.	Climate change is already having an impact in Ireland and strong mitigation and adaptation measures are needed. Research is essential in providing the evidence necessary to improve our knowledge systems and inform policy decisions that will advance our ambitions to be carbon neutral and resilient to climate disruption.
Collaboration & Engagement	We will collaborate with policy makers, research funders and other key stakeholders through Environmental Research Coordination to identify key and emerging priorities, as well as fostering support and promotion of information exchange and operational synergies between relevant cross-sectoral funding organisations.		Support towards Ireland's participation in EU Framework Programmes . The EPA will actively support Ireland's participation in EU Research Funding Framework Programmes and will engage with and influence the European research and innovation landscape through participation in programme committees in collaboration with national and international stakeholders.	
Key Processes	<p>Action Plans will provide an overview on the proposed activities of the EPA Research Programme and details on available funding schemes on an annual basis.</p> <p>Scaling of project modalities spanning fast-track policy supporting assessments to long-term large-scale multidisciplinary and complex projects.</p> <p>Communication plans will document knowledge transfer ambitions and modalities, for all stakeholders, and will also explore innovative communications solutions.</p> <p>Key Research Priorities Thematic Papers, which will identify following an extensive consultation process the arising priorities on a three-year cycle and will inform the preparation of the Annual EPA Research Calls.</p>		<p>Measuring Outcome & Impact. Regular focussed Interim Reviews will be carried out throughout the 10-year Research Framework period to review the progress made towards achieving core objectives and key activities, and to provide a framework for identifying any necessary adjustments.</p> <p>Operating and publishing key performance indicators and associated targets A series of indicators focussed on outcomes and outputs have been designed to assist monitoring the programme.</p> <p>An ex-post analysis of the EPA Research 2030 Programme will be carried out once the programme has been completed.</p>	
Our Commitments	EPA Research 2030 commits to doing the right things, in the right way, at the right time, and this is reflected in our stated values : EXCELLENCE • EFFICIENCY • TRANSPARENCY & INTEGRITY • RELEVANCE & IMPACT • INNOVATION • PARTNERSHIP			



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