



Environmental Protection Agency
An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil



EPA Research Programme 2021-2030

Fast-track to Policy Funding: Supporting policy development for 'out of season' bathing in Ireland.

May 2022

EPA Research Fast-track to Policy Funding

This document provides the Technical Description for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Fast-track to Policy Funding to support policy development for ‘out of season’ bathing in Ireland.

Applicants should read the following carefully and consult the other documentation provided (e.g. EPA Research Programme 2021-2030 Fast-track to Policy Funding Guidelines and Terms & Conditions).

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Introduction

EPA Research 2030¹ is the ten-year high-level framework for the EPA's research programme (2021-2030), designed to be agile, responsive and flexible.

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.

Fast-track to Policy Funding

Fast-Track to Policy funding aims to provide evidence synthesis, review of policies and best practices to answer urgent emerging policy questions (addressing emerging short-term policy needs). This funding will be provided as short-term evidence-based research studies.

Fast-track to Policy Funding	
Type of Project	Short-term evidence-based research study
Indicative Timeline	From 2 weeks to 9 months
Indicative Budget	from € 5,000 to € 50,000
Outputs	Short Summary Evidence Report, published by the EPA, and any other specific deliverables included in the topic description

Application Process

Making an Application

Applications **must** be made online at <https://epa.smartsimple.ie>

You will also need to refer to the following documentation, which is available to download from the EPA's Online Grant Management and Application Portal or from the EPA website²:

1. EPA Research Programme 2021-2030 Fast-track to Policy Funding Guidelines and Terms & Conditions; and
2. EPA Online Grant Management and Application Portal System User Guides.

¹ <https://www.epa.ie/our-services/research/epa-research-2030/>

² <http://www.epa.ie/our-services/research/>

Call Content

Topic Title	Supporting policy development for ‘out of season’ bathing in Ireland.		
Call Topic Reference	Delivering a Healthy Environment 2022 Call Topic 13		
Project Type	Short-term Evidence-based Research Studies		
Maximum Budget	€ 35,000	Maximum Duration	2 months
Latest Start Date	21 st June 2022.		

Policy Need

The EU Bathing Water Directive³ states that “Member States shall annually identify all bathing waters and define the length of the bathing season”. The Directive was transposed into Irish law through the Bathing Water Quality Regulations SI 79/2008⁴. The “bathing season” is defined in the regulations as the period from the 1st June to the 15th September.

In recent years, there has been increased interest in “out of season” or winter swimming, and, as such, there have been calls for the extension of the bathing season to a 12-month season with requests for communication of more rapid or “real-time” bathing water quality monitoring results. The National Bathing Water Expert Group (BWEG)⁵ has been considering how best to protect bathers’ health, with a particular focus on “out of season” and is currently gathering data on out-of- season bathing from the public and local authorities.

The Dublin Bay Task Force⁶ is developing communication strategies and reviewing available technologies for rapid analysis of bathing water quality, while also actively implementing mitigation actions on the ground. Irish Water is undertaking an assessment of the benefits of leaving the Ringsend wastewater treatment plant UV filtration on during the “out of season” on the bathing water quality while the Acclimatize Project⁷ is a project being carried out by researchers in Ireland (University College Dublin) and Wales (Aberystwyth University). The project aims to work out how bathing waters at the seaside become polluted in a way that can impact on public health, and how climate change may affect the quality of these waters in the future.

This research is needed to assist in identifying and reviewing all relevant research relating to bathing water quality monitoring and associated public communication strategies. The proposed research would collate all available scientific evidence to help inform policy development and guidance for ‘out of season’ bathing in Ireland. This would include the identification of best practice to inform this emerging policy question.

³ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-bathing/review_en.html

⁴ <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2008/si/79/made/en/print>

⁵ <https://www.catchments.ie/winter-swimmers-the-bathing-water-expert-group-wants-you-to-fill-out-this-survey/>

⁶ In November 2019, Dublin City Council (DCC) set up a Task Force including representatives from Irish Water, Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage (DHLGH) and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (DLRCC). The Task Force meets on a monthly basis and is working to improve water quality on Merrion Strand and Sandymount Strands and to address other issues.

⁷ <https://www.acclimatize.eu/>

Scope

Innovative research proposals are invited to undertake a research study to:

- Identify national/international research relating to bathing water quality monitoring results, and the associated public communication strategies.
- Review existing/emerging technologies and methodologies suitable for monitoring 'out of season' bathing water quality, including traditional, field-proven and rapid assessment techniques.
- Review monitoring, risk assessments and public communication strategies considering, in particular, the winter months and the extent of the designated season.
- Evaluate best practice and emerging approaches for effectively communicating monitoring results effectively at the point of need.
- Undertake a comparative review of Member States' management approaches to winter or "out of season bathing".
- Investigate/compare any best practice monitoring, communication and management practices at federal/local level for winter bathing.
- Review sources of information available regarding illness arising from bathers presenting at healthcare facilities.
- Provide clear recommendations to inform policy development for 'out of season' bathing in Ireland. These recommendations should be made in the context of winter bathing water quality monitoring results.
- Provide recommendations on how the public can report issues to facilitate accurate data collection/records.

Expected Outputs

The outputs from this project include:

- An EPA Evidence Synthesis Report. This report should be written in concise (maximum 30 pages), non-technical, and accessible English and be tailored for non-academics and policy makers. This will be a summary of the overall study findings in terms of monitoring, communication, and management of 'out of season' bathing. This report will also include clear recommendations to inform policy development for 'out of season' bathing in Ireland.
- A short guidance document for bathers including a simple risk assessment tool, e.g. one-page infographic on what to consider before bathing.

It is expected that monthly update meetings will be held.

Please consult the EPA Research Programme 2021-2030 Fast-track to Policy Funding Guidelines and Terms & Conditions for the full list of expected outputs and interim/final reporting requirements.

Indicative Timeframe

Wednesday 11 th May 2022 at 11:00 GMT	Call opening
Wednesday 18 th May 2022 at 17:00 GMT	Deadline for queries relating to the technical contents of this call
Wednesday 25 th May 2022 at 17:00 GMT	Submission deadline
Tuesday 31 st May 2022 at 17:00 GMT	Approval deadline
Latest start date: Monday 21 st June 2022	Start of successful project

Further Information

Information on current research projects being supported by the programme is available in the Research section of the EPA website: <http://www.epa.ie/our-services/research/>.

The following additional documents are available from the EPA website:
<http://www.epa.ie/publications/research/current-call-documents/>

- EPA Research Programme 2021-2030 Fast-track to Policy Funding Guidelines and Terms & Conditions.
- EPA Research Programme 2021 – 2030 – Communicating Research.

Other relevant EPA Research Programme Strategies and Policies are also available from the EPA website: <http://www.epa.ie/our-services/research/epa-research-2030/strategies-and-policies/>.

For updates on EPA Funding opportunities:

1. Subscribe to [EPA Research Newsletters](#)
2. Follow us on Twitter [@EPAResearchNews](#)
3. Visit the [EPA Funding web pages](#)
4. Check the [Research Call Frequently Asked Questions web page](#)

Any queries that are not covered in the call documentation or on the FAQs webpage must be submitted to research@epa.ie.