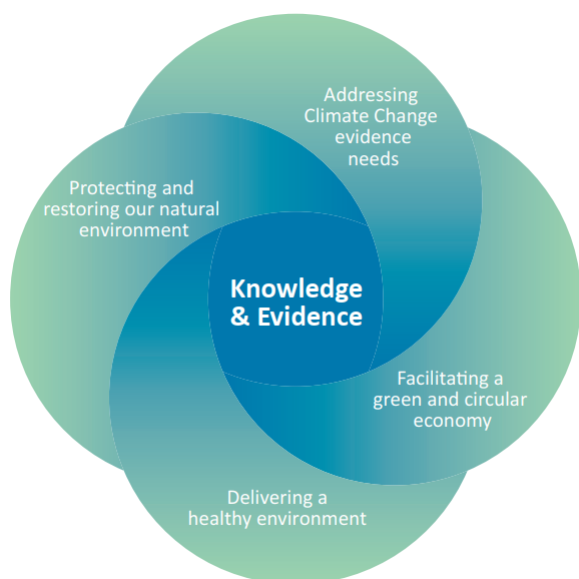


EPA Research 2030

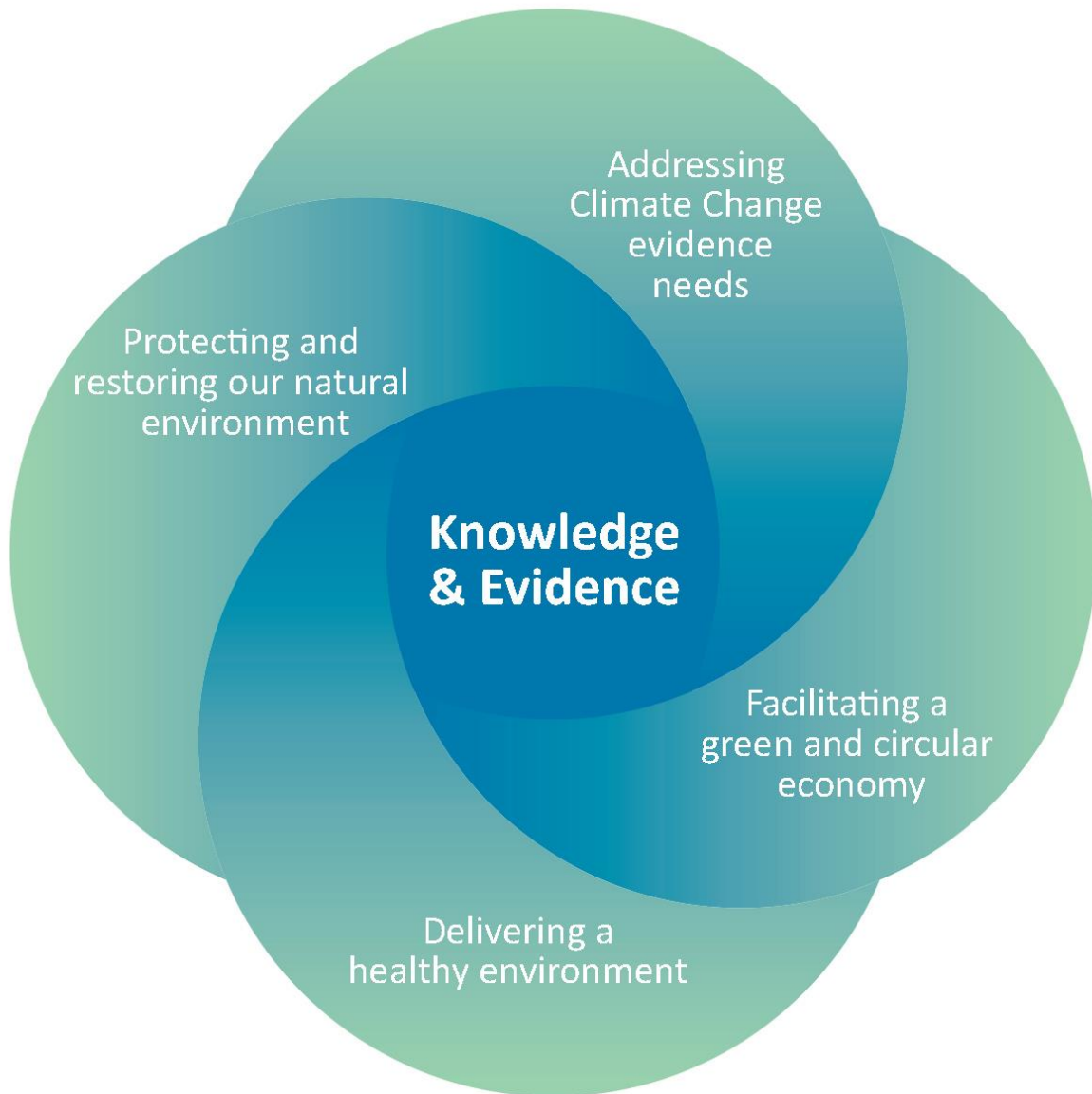
2021 Action Plan



Putting science and innovation at the centre of environmental protection in Ireland through the development and proactive transfer of knowledge

February 2021

The EPA Research Programme is a Government of Ireland initiative funded by the Department of the Environment, Climate & Communications.



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 and Integrity • Relevance and Impact • Innovation • Partnership

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Introduction

EPA-funded environmental research provides essential scientific support for environmental policy development, implementation and broader decision making. **EPA Research 2030** is the ten-year high-level framework for the EPA's research programming (2021-2030), designed to be agile, responsive and flexible. It sets out the broad structure and ambition for the EPA research activity during the period 2021 to 2030.

This **Action Plan 2021** provides a guide for the planned activities of the EPA Research Programme in 2021.

This document provides an overview of the:

- [Implementation of the EPA Research 2030 Framework](#)
- [Planned Activities for 2021](#)
- [Selected Key Performance Indicators for 2021](#)
- [List of related documents](#)
- [Guide to the funding schemes available in 2021](#)

Implementation of the EPA Research 2030 Framework

EPA Research Funding

EPA Research funds research using a tailored suite of awards to achieve the **EPA Research 2030** objectives.

- **Competitive Funding**, which is provided via Research Calls for which the pre-award and post-award processes are managed by the EPA. This funding is aimed at:
 - Addressing medium- to longer-term policy needs with Desk Studies, Medium-Scale, Large-Scale and Capacity Development Projects funded via the EPA Research Calls using top-down (where specific research questions have been identified) and bottom-up (open calls) approaches; and
 - Capacity building with the funding of research fellowships.
- **“Commissioned” Research**, which is provided outside the Research Calls process. This includes:
 - Fast-track-to-Policy funding looking at providing evidence synthesis, review of policies, best practices to answer urgent emerging policy questions (addressing emerging short-term policy needs);
 - Specific evidence-based research fellowships (e.g. 5-year assessment of climate research); as well as
 - Evidence-based research agreements (e.g. framework with the Economic and Social Research Institute and the Institute of Public Administration).

The pre-award and post-award processes are managed by the EPA.

- **Strategic National Partnerships** for which the pre-award and post-award processes are managed by another research funding organisation. This funding is aimed at:
 - Addressing medium- to longer-term policy needs, with co-funding provided to other national research funders in areas of common priorities.
 - Capacity building, with funding of four-year PhDs or other researchers-based awards, as appropriate, via partnerships with strategic partners such as the Irish Research Council and the Fulbright Commission (bottom-up approach).
- **Collaborative Awards**, by providing funding to enable the participation of the Irish research community under Joint Transnational Calls at EU and international level. The pre-award and post-award processes at transnational level are managed by a Call Steering Committee composed of the international network of funding agencies participating in the call, and the post-award processes for the Irish partners are managed by the EPA.
- **Event Support** for small conferences and workshops promoting environmental research in Ireland.

In addition, the **EPA Green Enterprise Scheme** under the umbrella of the Government of Ireland National Waste Prevention Programme is a funding programme to support innovators in Ireland to develop and demonstrate consumer and business solutions that will stimulate the circular economy. It is managed through the National Waste Prevention Programme and is co-funded by EPA Research.

Post-award Monitoring to maintain quality, ensure policy-relevance and enable knowledge transfer

Research funded by the EPA is independent and is intended to contribute to the necessary debate on the protection of the environment. The involvement of policymakers and key end-users in the post-award monitoring of EPA-funded projects (i.e. as Steering Committee members) allows for on-going knowledge transfer between researchers and key stakeholders. This will facilitate the development of a more robust science-to-policy interface in Ireland.

Accessible and Timely Research Outputs

Outputs from the EPA-funded research are made accessible to all, through the publication of EPA Research Reports, EPA Research Evidence Review Reports (for the targeted short-term evidence-based studies), and via the public EPA Research Data Archive. Projects may also have specific outputs, which can include for example:

- Peer-reviewed publications (e.g. papers, posters, books, etc.);
- Non-peer reviewed outputs (e.g. newspaper articles, press releases, policy reports, radio, TV, presentation, infographics, etc.);
- Models and tools (e.g. methodologies, datasets, toolkits, etc.);
- Innovation (e.g. patents, NDA, trademarks, new products, etc.);
- Etc.

Engaged Communication and Dissemination

Communication and dissemination activities arising from EPA-funded research are strongly encouraged and monitored throughout the lifetime of funded projects. EPA-funded research is communicated to a wide range of audiences, while ensuring that the underpinning science is not compromised. Significant societal and behavioural change is required to respond to climate change and to environmental threats and opportunities. **EPA Research 2030** reinforces the focus on communication activities at Research Project- and at Research Programme-level. The EPA will also continue to investigate innovative and more environmentally-friendly ways to better communicate.



Pro-active Transfer of Knowledge

Research projects have the potential to yield great environmental, social and economic benefits. An important challenge for environmental policy is to make the best use of research results and new scientific findings to inform and underpin policy development and implementation. It is therefore crucial to communicate outputs from EPA-funded research projects to policy makers in a tailored, targeted, appropriate and accessible way for them to make evidence-informed choices when developing policies aimed at delivering sustainable solutions to environmental problems. In addition, citizen engagement in research (including through citizen science) is also a key medium to advocate for, inform and promote behaviour change. To be truly effective, knowledge transfer works a two-way process whereby knowledge outputs move are disseminated from a knowledge source to a targeted potential user, who then applies that knowledge in a meaningful and impactful way.

Knowledge Transfer activities are framed around target users' needs. Such transfer will be enabled by pro-actively engaging with key stakeholders and users of the research in the:

- Framing of the EPA Research Calls (co-design);
- Post-award monitoring to support and provide guidance for the EPA-funded research projects (co-development);
- Transfer of the knowledge outputs through strategically targeted communication and dissemination activities (co-creation).

EPA Research 2030 will actively support knowledge transfer activities, both at research project-level (i.e. by the researchers) and at Research Programme-level (i.e. by the EPA). Proposed activities include, for example, but are not limited, focussed-policy workshops, devising of policy briefs, setting up 'knowledge hubs' (networks of experts and/or projects), in tandem with outreach activities and educational materials, combining the findings of multiple research projects (i.e. clustering projects).

National Environmental Research Coordination

The EPA is responsible for the coordination of Ireland's environmental research. To-date, this has been enabled by the EPA-led Research Coordination Groups, which aim at facilitating, supporting and promoting coordination, synergies and liaison between relevant cross-sectoral funding organisations; and at reducing the fragmentation and/or duplication of environmental research in Ireland.

Under **EPA Research 2030**, acknowledging the interconnectedness of environmental issues, the EPA's research coordination activities will be streamlined by merging the research coordination groups under one main national environmental research coordination group (NERG), where thematic sub-groups may be considered, when and as relevant.

Support towards Ireland's participation in EU Framework Programmes

The EPA will continue to actively support Ireland's participation in EU Research Funding Framework Programmes (e.g. Horizon Europe 2021 - 2027). Working closely with the national support network in place, the EPA will engage with and influence the European research and innovation landscape through participation in programme committees and via collaboration with national and international stakeholders. In the context of Horizon Europe 2021-2027, the EPA will have a role in relation to Clusters 5 (Climate, Energy and Mobility) and 6 (Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment), in addition to the Euratom research programme for 2021-2025, which compliments Horizon Europe.

The EPA will also continue its active participation in EU/International networks of strategic relevance to **EPA Research 2030** and importance to Ireland's research community, for example:

- Joint Programming Initiatives (JPIs) on Climate and Water;
- Network of funders in Biodiversity (BiodivERsA) and in Environment & Health (Env-Health);
- Horizon Europe Partnerships (in particular the ones related to Water and Biodiversity).

Resourcing and participation in other networks will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Planned 2021 Activities

Key Priorities for 2021

Launch of the new EPA Research 2030 ten-year Framework
Launch of the redeveloped Grant Application and Project Management Interface
Set up of the Knowledge Transfer activities
Monitoring of the EPA-funded portfolio (c. 235 projects)
Piloting of new Fast-Track to Policy Funding Scheme
Redevelopment of the EPA Research Data Archive
Continued engagement with national strategic partners
Continued engagement with EU / International networks

The timings provided below are indicative and subject to change, e.g. in response to variations in the EPA's Research annual budget allocation, resources, new initiatives the EPA may develop, as well as arising Government policy/priorities.













Indicative Timeline	Activities
28 th January 2021	Interim reporting deadline for LIVE EPA awards
March 2021	Budget confirmation and approval of allocation
March 2021	Launch of EPA Research 2030 Framework and 2021 Action Plan
March 2021	National Environmental Research Coordination Group Meeting-1
March / April 2021	Invitation to Tender for Knowledge Transfer Activities
March / April 2021	Signature of the new 3-year Research Funding Agreement between the EPA & Department of the Environment, Climate & Communications

Indicative Timeline	Activities
March / April 2021	Awards under the 2020/2021– Water JPI Aquatic Pollutants Joint Transnational Call ‘Risks posed to human health and the environment by pollutants and pathogens present in water resources’
March / April 2021	Launch of 2021-2022 Communication Plan
May 2021	Launch of redeveloped Grant Application & Project Management interface
May 2021	Launch of the 2021 EPA Research Call & 2021 EPA Green Enterprise Scheme
From May 2021	Start of the redevelopment of the EPA-funded Data Repository and national inventory of environmental research projects database
From May 2021	Piloting of the Fast track to Policy Funding Mechanism
June 2021	Publication of the 2020 Climate Research Coordination Group Annual Report of Activities
June 2021	Awards under the 2020/2021 BiodivERsA – Water JPI Joint Transnational Call on Degraded Ecosystems
End June 2021	Close of the 2021 EPA Research Call & 2021 EPA Green Enterprise Scheme
30 th June 2021	Rolling deadline for the EPA Research Event Support Scheme
July – September 2021	Evaluation of the 2021 EPA Research Call & 2021 EPA Green Enterprise Scheme
28 th July 2021	Interim reporting deadline for LIVE EPA awards

Indicative Timeline	Activities
August/September 2021	Launch of the Fulbright-EPA Awards (closing in October / November 2021)
From September 2021	Launch of the Knowledge Transfer Activities
September / October 2021	Irish Research Council / Health Research Board / EPA Launch of the DOROTHY Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action COFUND Research Fellowship Call
September 2021	Launch of the EPA-IRC Postgraduate Scheme (Closing in November 2021)
30 th September 2021	Rolling deadline for the EPA Research Event Support Scheme
September/ October 2021	National Environmental Research Coordination Group Meeting-2
September/ October 2021	1 st Horizon Europe 2021 Calls Deadline (Clusters 5 and 6)
1 st October 2021	Interim reporting deadline for LIVE EPA Scholarship awards
October 2021	Notification of the outcomes of the 2021 EPA Research Call & 2021 EPA Green Enterprise Scheme
November 2021	2021 Competition – Short Informing Policy Videos
November / December 2021	Awards under the 2021 EPA Research Call & 2021 EPA Green Enterprise Scheme (with start dates up until 31 st March 2022)
December 2021	Start of the consultation for the 2022 EPA Research Call
31 st December 2021	Rolling deadline for the EPA Research Event Support Scheme

Active engagement in national and international research fora and activities will also take place throughout the year.

Funding Schemes available in 2021

Funding Type ↓	 Funding Mechanism	 Type of Research	 Indicative Timeline	 Type of Awards
 Short-term Evidence-based Studies	Fast track to Policy Initiative	Literature review, evidence-base review, evidence synthesis, review of policies, best practices - addressing short-term policy needs	As required	Usually < 9-month duration and < €50,000
 Project-Based Awards	Annual EPA Research Calls	Research projects addressing Medium- to Longer-term policy needs (in response to specific topics or open)	Calls opening in April/ May - with awards made in November / December	12-month Desk Studies (< €100,000) 24- to 36-month Medium-Scale Projects (up to €350,000) 36- to 48-month Large-Scale Projects (up to €1,00,000) 48- to 60-month Capacity Development Projects (> €1,000,000)
 Strategic National Partnerships	Co-funding provided to other national research funders in areas of common priorities	Variable	Variable	Variable
 Collaborative Awards	Joint Transnational Research Calls	Research addressing Medium- to Longer-term policy needs requiring a transnational approach (usually topic specific)	Variable	Usually Medium-Scale Projects (36-month duration, up to €300,000 for the budget requested to the EPA by the researchers from Ireland)
 Research Fellowships*	Annual EPA Research Calls	Research addressing Medium- to Longer-term policy needs; In response to specific topics or open calls	Calls opening in April/ May - with awards made in November / December	24- to 36-month Research Fellowship (up to €250,000)
 4-year EPA-IRC PhDs*	EPA-Irish Research Council Postgraduate Scheme	Research addressing Medium- to Longer-term policy needs; In response to open calls	Calls opening in September with awards made in March/April	48-month PhDs (up to €96,000)
 Fulbright-EPA Awards*	Fulbright Award	Research addressing Medium- to Longer-term policy needs; In response to open calls	Calls opening end of August with awards made in June	3- to 12-month duration (budget variable) for the Fulbright-EPA Awards
 Event Support	Event Support Scheme	Financial support for small, not-for-profit workshops, seminars, and other events showcasing Irish environmental research	Rolling Deadlines (30th June; 30th September, 31st December)	Up to €3,000

* Capacity Building

Funding will also be available through the [EPA Green Enterprise Scheme](#).

Key Performance Targets and Indicators

The implementation of a **Programme Logic Model** will enable the EPA to measure the achievement of the objectives of the **EPA Research 2030** Framework and a series of indicators have been designed to capture the information required. The following **Key Performance Targets and Indicators** have been identified for 2021. These will be reviewed and revised in 2022 as/if required.

Targets and Indicators which are influenced by and/or depending on factors outside the EPA's area of control are identified by (*).

Ref.	Targets & Indicators	Outcomes	Measured by	Target
1	EPA Research Funding Commitments	Aligned research investments with key environmental challenges Funded high quality, responsive, timely and impactful research	2021 research priorities for inclusion in the 2021 Research Call identified following a deliberative process; and Fast track to Policy Funding mechanism piloted in 2021	Award of timely and policy-relevant projects and successful piloting of Fast-track to Policy Funding
2 (*)	Funding leveraged by strategic partnerships and collaborative awards	Ensured a cohesive approach with national and international funding strategies, and effective coordination of environmental research across national government departments and agencies	% Cofunding Commitments secured Vs. EPA Research Budget Commitments for new awards (EPA Research Calls only)	10% over 3 to 5 years
3	Funding leveraged by collaborative awards	Facilitated successful involvement in European and international funding networks	% EPA Commitments pledged towards Collaborative Awards Vs. EPA Research Budget Commitments for new awards (all new awards)	10% over 3 to 5 years

Ref.	Targets & Indicators	Outcomes	Measured by	Target
4	EPA Research Programme Efficiency	Funded timely funding of high quality, impactful, responsive, research with a strong focus on supporting policy development and implementation	% of Projects grant awarded within 6 months of Call Deadline (EPA Research Calls only)	90% over 3 to 5 years
5	Number of new PhDs supported in new awards made	Increased national capacity in environmental research	% EPA Commitments pledged towards EPA-IRC awards Vs. EPA Research Budget Commitments for new awards (all new awards)	10% over 3 to 5 years
6	Promoting an Integrated Approach in new awards made	Supported relevant implementation actions and behavioural change interventions	% Medium-Scale, Large-Scale and Capability Development topics included in the call which are multi-disciplinary Vs. Total number of topics included in the call (EPA Research Calls only)	At least 50%
7 (*)	Number of peer-reviewed Journal Publications supported	Supported the excellence and competitiveness of the Irish environmental research community	Number of peer-reviewed Journal Publications (as reported by researchers and/or as measured using bibliometric online tools) per € 100 k of funding provided towards EPA Research awards (funded through the Call)	At least 1 peer-reviewed publication per € 150k of funding provided over 3 to 5 years
8	Number of EPA Research Reports published	Transferred actionable knowledge to key stakeholders and deliver accessible research outputs	Reduction of the time required between submission of draft report and reports published	Establish baseline and identify target in 2021

Ref.	Targets & Indicators	Outcomes	Measured by	Target
9 (*)	Research outputs have contributed to the debate on policy	Funded high quality, impactful, responsive, and timely research with a strong focus on supporting policy development and implementation	Representation of policy /end-users on Steering Committees	At least 85% of our Steering Committees include a representative of a relevant policy-making body
10	EPA Knowledge Transfer Activities	Transferred actionable knowledge to key stakeholders and deliver accessible research outputs	Award of the EPA Knowledge Transfer Contract	Contract awarded, list of activities and proposed indicators agreed

Related Documents

Related documentation is available from www.epa.ie and includes:

- [EPA Research 2030 Framework](#) (high-level roadmap for the EPA Research Programme from 2021 to 2030)
- [EPA Research 2030: 2021-2022 Communication & Transfer Knowledge Plan](#) (documenting knowledge transfer ambitions and modalities, for all stakeholders, and will also explore innovative communications solutions)
- [EPA Research 2030: 2021-2023 Thematic Research Areas Assessment](#) (identifying the arising priorities on a three-year cycle and used to inform the preparation of the Annual EPA Research Calls)
- [EPA Research Funding Documentation](#) (e.g. Guide for Applicants, Guide for Grantees, Call Technical Descriptions and Terms & Conditions), which will provide details the funding instruments, funding rules and opportunities (i.e. topics) and are prepared/reviewed on an annual basis.
- [Findings and Recommendations from regular Interim Reviews](#), which will assess if the objectives are being achieved and provide indications of any adjustments required.