



# Ecologic Institute

Science and policy for a  
sustainable world

**ecologic.eu**

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**Think  
Tank**  
Ranking  
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Ecologic Institute has been ranked in first place worldwide among Environment Policy Think Tanks in the University of Pennsylvania's 2020 Global Think Tank Ranking Index. This significant honour marks the 11th consecutive year under the top 10 in this category and the first time atop the podium.



## Planet & people

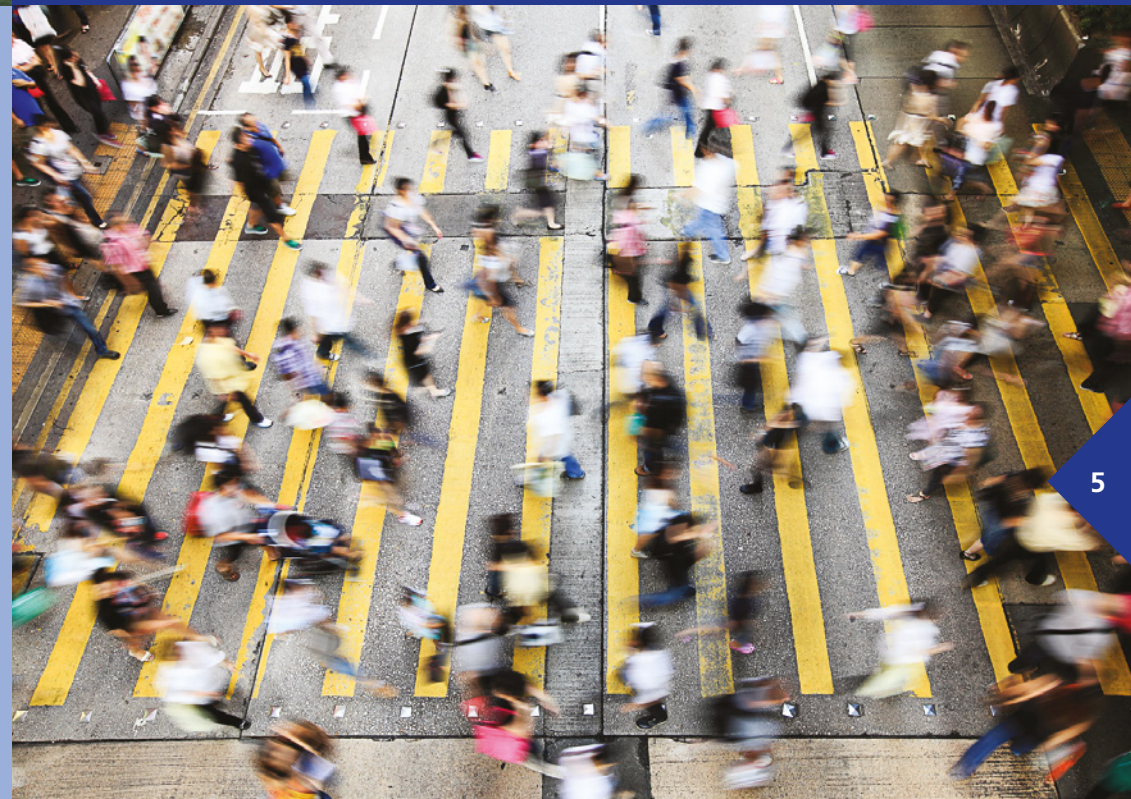
Earth is the only planet known by us to harbor life. Now, however, the widespread extinction of plant and animal species and the disruption of natural cycles threaten our planet's intricate balance. This is mostly caused by pollution and human overexploitation of the Earth's resources. Burning coal and other fossil fuels is also driving global climate change, increasing storms, droughts and wildfires, raising sea levels and acidifying the oceans. If adequate measures are not taken soon, catastrophic impacts for life on Earth and human society are inevitable. The longer we wait to address the known problems, the higher the social and economic cost.

**By developing paths to a sustainable future—and doing so quickly—there is much we can save.**

## People & planet

Human beings are gifted by nature with intelligence, the capacity to reason, sophisticated sociability and toolmaking. Using these abilities, we have developed complex societies and fostered rapid technological change. We have been successful in harnessing the resources and energy of the Earth. However, our intelligence and ingenuity—as we have applied them—have led to severe environmental and social challenges, and risked the substrate of our progress. We are overstepping planetary boundaries.

**Today we have the opportunity to rethink our path to a sustainable way of living.**



*Dear readers,*

We live in times of change—political, technological, cultural. Human behavior even influences the fundamentals of our natural environment—from climate change and the loss of biodiversity to ocean acidification.

In these times of change, it is imperative to find and follow a path towards a sustainable future.

Essential for this purpose are respect for the boundaries of our planet and consideration of the social dimension of change. Another key factor is science-oriented decision making.

Our compass to the future should be directed towards socio-ecological sustainability. However, our current modes of consuming and doing business are neither socially nor environmentally sustainable. There is an urgent need to find better answers to how we can live within the planetary boundaries while at the same time meeting the needs of a growing human population. We must rethink and reorient.

The city of Berlin is emblematic of system transformation. The city where the Wall came down in 1989 is the city where Ecologic Institute was founded. For more than 25 years, we have worked passionately to identify pressing environmental challenges and develop future-proof solutions. As pioneers of transdisciplinary research, we work with scientific partners and policy makers as well as stakeholders from business and civil society. We collaborate across disciplines and at local, national, European and international levels.

For 10 years in a row, we have been ranked among the top 10 leading environmental think tanks in the world. This recognition of excellence inspires us to persevere in our commitment to a flourishing world full of diversity, to which we contribute with our expertise and analysis, with empathy and creativity.

**“Act so that the effects of your actions are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life.”**

Hans Jonas

*Dr. Camilla Bausch*



# Who we are

**Ecologic Institute is an independent, academic think tank for environmental research and policy analysis.**

Since its founding in 1995, Ecologic Institute has been dedicated to improving environmental policy, sustainable development and policy practice. We strengthen the European and international dimensions in research, education and environmental policy discourse.

**Through research and analysis, facilitating discussion and international capacity building, Ecologic Institute works to improve environmental policy making around the world.**

**Our experts cover the entire spectrum of environmental policy, sustainable development and socio-ecological research.**

We are committed to mainstreaming environmental issues into other relevant policy areas. We research, support and evaluate political processes on the local, national, European and international levels, bringing together actors from academia, policy making and practice. The results are in-depth analyses and innovative recommendations. We are also committed to education and cooperate with different partners from across the globe, including leading American and German universities.

**Ecologic Institute is a private, not-for-profit think tank financed through its project work.**

Funding partners include the European Commission, the European Parliament, German Parliament, German ministries and agencies, civil-society organizations and various foundations.

# What we do

## Research relevant for society

We do independent research on pressing issues that are relevant for society and the environment. With our scientific output—be it reports, comparative studies, policy evaluations, metastudies or discussion papers—Ecologic Institute provides relevant insights for policymakers and stakeholders. Striving for impact, we cooperate with universities as well as with practitioners. Our inter- and transdisciplinary projects generate knowledge and solutions that guide the evolution of sustainable policies and their successful implementation.

## Legal analysis

Our Ecologic Legal Team links environmental analysis and policymaking to legal frameworks and law-making processes. Our team of specialized lawyers works on various aspects of international, European and domestic environmental law. They analyze the governance challenges at hand and develop practical legal solutions.

## Education

A solid knowledge foundation helps build a better future. Ecologic Institute engages in education and capacity building around the world.

## Inspiring & innovative events

We create memorable events—be they conferences, summer academies, workshops or other formats. Our dedicated Events Team develops concepts fit for purpose, integrates innovative and interactive elements and ensures professional organization.

## Targeted communication

Excellent results need excellent outreach to create impact. Our Communications Team develops successful strategies to disseminate our research findings to targeted audiences. Our specialized information designers and web developers create classic and innovative online and offline materials such as websites, infographics, books, brochures, podcasts and videos. Team members have an in-depth understanding of the science-policy interface.

## Our people

Working at Ecologic Institute is an opportunity to contribute at the forefront of transformative research and positive societal change. We collaborate with outstanding scientists, policy makers and change agents. Our staff critically analyze current problems, develop novel approaches to challenges and search for the best ways to communicate our findings. We aspire to be a family-friendly workplace where everyone has the opportunity to expand his or her capacities and where each person can contribute with passion in line with his or her greatest talents. With over 100 staff members from over 20 countries, we are a diversity of stories and perspectives.

**Curious, responsible and engaged—we work for a future conducive to human thriving and environmental sustainability.**

Dr. Zoritza Kiresiewa, geographer, and Holger Gerdes, environmental economist, making final adjustments to their presentation for the kick-off meeting of their European research project BE-Rural. Their bioeconomy research helps ensure the responsible use and conservation of the Earth's biological resources.

## Our approach

### Fact-based

We provide multi-faceted analyses of today's environmental challenges, using a broad range of methods, including empirical social research, action research and transformation research. We undertake qualitative and quantitative assessments, conduct surveys and analyze laws. We investigate indicators, trends and processes to provide fact-based recommendations to policy makers and change agents.

### Inter- and transdisciplinary

Drawing on our network of partners and a staff versed in different disciplines, Ecologic Institute is well equipped to address cross-cutting and systemic challenges. We work with stakeholders to develop solutions that work.

### Collaborative

Complex systemic challenges like transitioning to a circular economy or implementing forward-looking agricultural policy cannot be successfully addressed by one country alone nor tackled by one specific actor. We believe in cooperation and engage with partners from around the globe and across the political spectrum.

### Future oriented

Our highly dynamic world is facing fundamental changes, presenting us with many challenges and opportunities. Ecologic Institute is regularly called upon to tackle novel issues and develop solutions for a sustainable and resilient future.

### Innovative

Many complex problems require new ways of thinking. We use forward-looking approaches to find innovative solutions where old ones have failed—be it with respect to policy challenges, formats for international exchange or scientific methods.

### Reliable

Our staff is committed to our mission as an institute, partner and employer. We feel honored to have been cooperating with numerous institutions for many years. Our Board of Shareholders, Director and Steering Group provide strategic direction and a robust institutional framework.

# Research

Ecologic Institute uses inter- and transdisciplinary approaches to research socio-political questions related to environmental sustainability.

Our research topics include:

- ▶ Socio-ecological research to support sustainability transformations.
- ▶ Assessments of the socio-economic, legal and environmental dimensions of policies and strategies for environmental improvement.
- ▶ Assessments of the use of natural resources, including effects on air, water and ground quality as well as biodiversity.
- ▶ Research on public acceptance, governance and citizen participation at regional, national and supranational levels.

Ecologic Institute has over two decades of experience in the coordination of national, European and international research projects.



## Biodiversity & nature-based solutions

All over the world, urbanization, land-use changes, poor land-use practices and ecosystem fragmentation threaten biodiversity and the delivery of ecosystem services. These problems are compounded by the effects of climate change and pollution. Urgent action is required to conserve biodiversity, mitigate climate risks and foster resilience. Ecologic Institute recognizes the potential of nature-based solutions to help achieve these aims and has become a global leader in this research area. We equip cities and stakeholders with evidence, knowledge and tools to implement restorative solutions for increased biodiversity, livability, resilience and inclusiveness. In addition, our work on sustainable agriculture, on soils and international law contributes to the protection of biodiversity.



## Resource conservation & circular economy

Resource use and its associated impacts are growing, driven by population growth, increased per-capita consumption as well as infrastructures, value chains, institutions and governance systems rooted in linear thinking. The circular economy holds promising potential to reduce primary resource use and associated impacts, as it aims to maintain the value of materials for as long as possible while minimizing waste generation and emissions by closing material loops along life cycles of products and services. Ecologic Institute analyzes trends, drivers and policies affecting the transition to a circular economy.

## Plastics

Plastic waste and littering are global environmental problems and the ecological consequences have yet to be fully assessed. Concerned citizens and civil society have been pushing policy makers to keep the issue high on the agenda. At the same time, there is still a lack of basic research on relevant aspects, like microplastics. Ecologic Institute focuses on several aspects of solving the plastic waste problem. One focus is on research into more effective plastics governance. Our methods include citizen-science actions, e.g. with children and young people, who collect data on plastic-waste pollution along rivers.

## Bioeconomy

The bioeconomy refers to the use of renewable biological resources for the pursuit of economic and ecological objectives. However, the transformation towards a bio-based economy brings with it controversy and conflicting goals. Ecologic Institute aims to foster the discourse on the opportunities and risks of the European bioeconomy and to support the participatory development of national and regional bioeconomy strategies. Building on the principles of action research, Ecologic Institute investigates how a sustainable bioeconomy can be developed while balancing economic, environmental and social goals. In addition, the team investigates the potentials of rural development while ensuring the sustainable use of agricultural, forestry and marine ecosystems.

## Water

Water is key to all life on our planet and essential for many economic sectors. Managing water resources in a sustainable way is a pressing challenge. Ecologic Institute bridges the science-policy gap to tackle this complex issue and brings together interdisciplinary expertise. This includes developing crosscutting approaches to enhance sustainable water governance and management of river basins as well as urban water infrastructure. Ecologic Institute is active in informing water policy making at the national and European level. Our research contributes to improving the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive and its daughter Directives.



Over the last 25 years, environmental policies have proliferated. Major international agreements have been passed, such as the Paris Agreement and the Nagoya Protocol.

Environmental policies have **partly succeeded** in delivering cleaner air and water, and shifting energy supply from fossil to renewable. Yet they have failed to halt biodiversity loss, resource depletion or climate overheating.

Ecologic Institute has contributed to the progress made in many areas—through legal analysis, transdisciplinary research and capacity building.

In this decade, **we must change course** towards a sustainable, climate-friendly future. The Sustainable Development Goals point the way, and around the world, countries and regions have pledged to become climate neutral. But targets must translate into concrete actions—and fast, to avoid further irreversible damage.

Ecologic Institute develops policy innovations in many areas, include “net zero” governance structures, nature-based solutions, low-carbon diets, sustainable and resilient urbanization, bioeconomy, circular economy and sustainable digitalization. We foster exchange on these solutions and engage in outreach—locally, within Europe and globally.

Shaping the future **requires a vision** of what we want it to be. Economic structures and social practices will need to change significantly. This demands political will, broad societal support and large investments—but also engagement and fresh ideas from all corners of society and from different disciplines.

At Ecologic Institute, we use our expertise and networks to understand trends and explore alternatives, based on scientific methods and empirical data. We use these to sketch images of a climate-neutral, sustainable and just future—and of the paths that lead us there.



**Concrete involvements included:**

- EU Emissions Trading System
- Nagoya Protocol
- EU Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources
- Mining Waste Directive
- Water Framework Directive
- Arctic Policy Guidelines
- Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement
- EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020
- Sustainable Development Goals
- EU Adaptation Strategy
- Energiewende
- Marine Strategy Framework Directive
- Renewable Energy Sources Act (EEG)
- EU Strategy on Green Infrastructure
- Common Agricultural Policy

**Current work topics include:**

- Coal phase-out in Germany
- Farm to fork strategy
- Blue growth
- EU Circular Economy Action Plan
- Sustainable agriculture
- EU Climate Law
- European Green Deal

**Participatory policy-making**

- Water scarcity and drought
- EU Sustainable Finance Taxonomy
- Green recovery

**Nature-based solutions**

- EU Bioeconomy Strategy
- Plastics in the environment
- Air quality

**EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030**

- Adaptation financing

**Work areas of and for the future include:**


- Designing resilient and sustainable cities
- Ensuring healthy and resilient ecosystems and biodiversity
- Concluding fossil fuel phase-out
- Achieving zero emission transport
- Supporting transition to a climate-neutral society
- Rethinking our food systems
- Fostering sustainable financing
- Establishing a green and circular economy
- Supporting sustainable digitalization
- Promoting just and inclusive societies
- Promoting transformative knowledge systems
- Protecting natural resources and ensure their use within planetary boundaries

# Education

Education is a central component of Ecologic Institute's mission. Our educational, training and capacity-building activities target university students as well as professionals from the public sector, journalists as well as change agents from civil society and business. A fundamental feature of our education work is international exchange.

Examples of our education activities include:

- ▶ **International university programs:** Ecologic Institute partners with renowned US universities, hosting their study-abroad programs in Berlin. This includes long-standing collaborations with Duke University, the CU Denver, the University of Notre Dame and the University of Maryland.
- ▶ **Teaching engagements:** Staff members teach at German universities, including the Bremen University of Applied Sciences, Braunschweig University of Technology and the Eberswalde University for Sustainable Development.
- ▶ **Training and capacity building:** We conduct training and capacity-building activities covering the design and implementation of environmental policies and the related policy processes. Formats range from focused trainings to two-week summer schools.
- ▶ **International Study Tours** We host policy makers, opinion leaders and practitioners from various fields to learn first-hand from experiences and solutions in other countries, for example about Germany's energy transition, nature-based solutions, sustainable farming and its political system.
- ▶ **International Fellows** We regularly have the pleasure of hosting visiting fellows and scholars from all over the world.
- ▶ **Apprenticeship:** Ecologic Institute is proud to be recognized as a training centre by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Berlin (IHK Berlin) and enriched by the bright young apprentices on our teams.



Ecologic Institute's educational programs provide guided, experiential and self-directed learning opportunities.



## Policy analysis

Policy makers need well-founded knowledge at their disposal to tackle today's governance challenges.

Ecologic Institute is committed to supplying policy makers with an informed scientific foundation that supports governance for a more sustainable world.

Ecologic Institute covers the broad spectrum of environmental topics and includes the integration of environment-related issues into other political spheres. Our recommendations are directly applicable to the policy discourse and communicated clearly to target audiences.

**Scientific excellence, innovative research and a transdisciplinary approach ensure results with societal relevance and impact.**

To ensure research with impact, we make use of our extensive professional networks in Europe and beyond, and follow current developments in environmental policy closely, including at EU and Member State levels.

## Indicators

Performance indicators measure progress on the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability. Ecologic Institute applies existing indicators and develops new indicator approaches. Working together, our data analytics team, scientific staff and in-house designers can transform unruly data into appealing charts and infographics. Our experience ranges from small-scale community initiatives to global monitoring initiatives such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

## Governance

Although often invisible, institutions matter. They are essential for effective environmental policies. Without them, change is often not possible, and never lasting. Ecologic Institute's research has had a focus on institutions since it was founded in 1995. We analyze institutions in detail—compositions, mandates and internal structures are often at the core of our work. We have also worked on many political processes. The Ecologic Institute works on various UN or EU processes—in all fields of environmental policy making. We also contribute as experts to various political processes in Germany, mostly at the federal level, sometimes at regional or local levels.

## Environmental law

Law is an important and often necessary way to express and anchor environmental policy. It is one tool for steering the behavior of individuals, institutions and states and to manage environmental risks. The Ecologic's Legal Team identifies and analyzes legal options for achieving environmental policy objectives at international, EU and national levels. We provide legal assessments of existing law and its implementation, as a robust basis for policy making, and translate research findings, ideas and policies into legal forms. Our research has contributed, for example, to the evolution of the Paris Agreement. Our team develops proposals for climate laws, analyzes trade laws and assesses environmental criminal law based on empirical data.

## Climate & energy

The climate crisis threatens the very foundation of modern society. To avert it, the global economy needs to fully decarbonize within a generation. Energy use takes center stage since power plants, vehicles and buildings cause the majority of EU emissions. Sustainable alternatives exist, but require new rules and incentives and integration across sectors. Ecologic Institute's scientists work on building this new framework. Our research contributes to international negotiations, e.g. under the Paris Agreement. We advise on effective governance, design policy options and evaluate policy instruments on all government levels, and we foster dialogue—always striving to propose solutions that can work in real life.



## Agriculture, food & climate

How we produce and consume food has wide-reaching implications for the environment, public health and our ability to mitigate and adapt to the climate crisis. The urgency to transition towards sustainable production and consumption systems is a central challenge, e.g. for the European Green Deal. Ecologic Institute works to inform and support EU and national policymakers to identify, implement and evaluate effective approaches required to move towards climate neutrality and ensure resilience to climate impacts while delivering on biodiversity, water, soil and health objectives. This includes work on carbon sinks, carbon farming initiatives, Common Agricultural Policy implementation and food system transformation.

# Communications & events

Ecologic Institute works to ensure that scientific results receive the attention and public relevance they deserve. This requires an intensive exchange among science, policymakers, business and civil society.

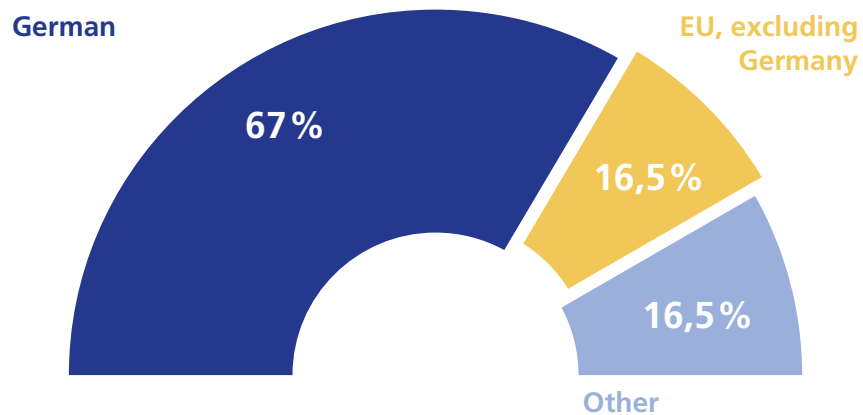
**Our events are unique opportunities to share knowledge, promote dialogue and contribute to capacity building for experts and stakeholders across the world.** At Ecologic Institute, a team of event managers works closely with researchers and partners to co-design and organize events around specific audiences and objectives. Interactivity, innovation and sustainability are at the core of the Institute's events. Formats include large-scale conferences; expert workshops; visitor programs and study tours; summer schools; roundtables; and event series. The team's "toolbox" includes several online and offline methods, including World Cafés, Fishbowl conversations, PechaKucha presentations, online surveys and webinars.

**Ecologic Institute's communications team has expertise in knowledge management, public relations, information design and web development.** Based on thoughtful strategies, online and offline communication are combined and tailored to reach specific target audiences. The wide range of options and formats spans from websites and web applications to surveys, print products, infographics, podcasts and videos. Close cooperation with the scientific teams as well as many years of experience in communicating environmental policy issues ensure a tailored selection of target groups, content and communication formats for each research project. Ecologic Institute's communications team support and use the principles of open source, open access, open data and creative commons.

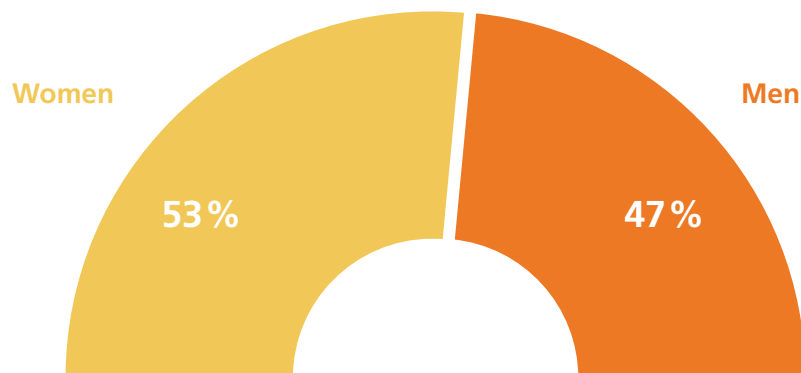


# Key facts

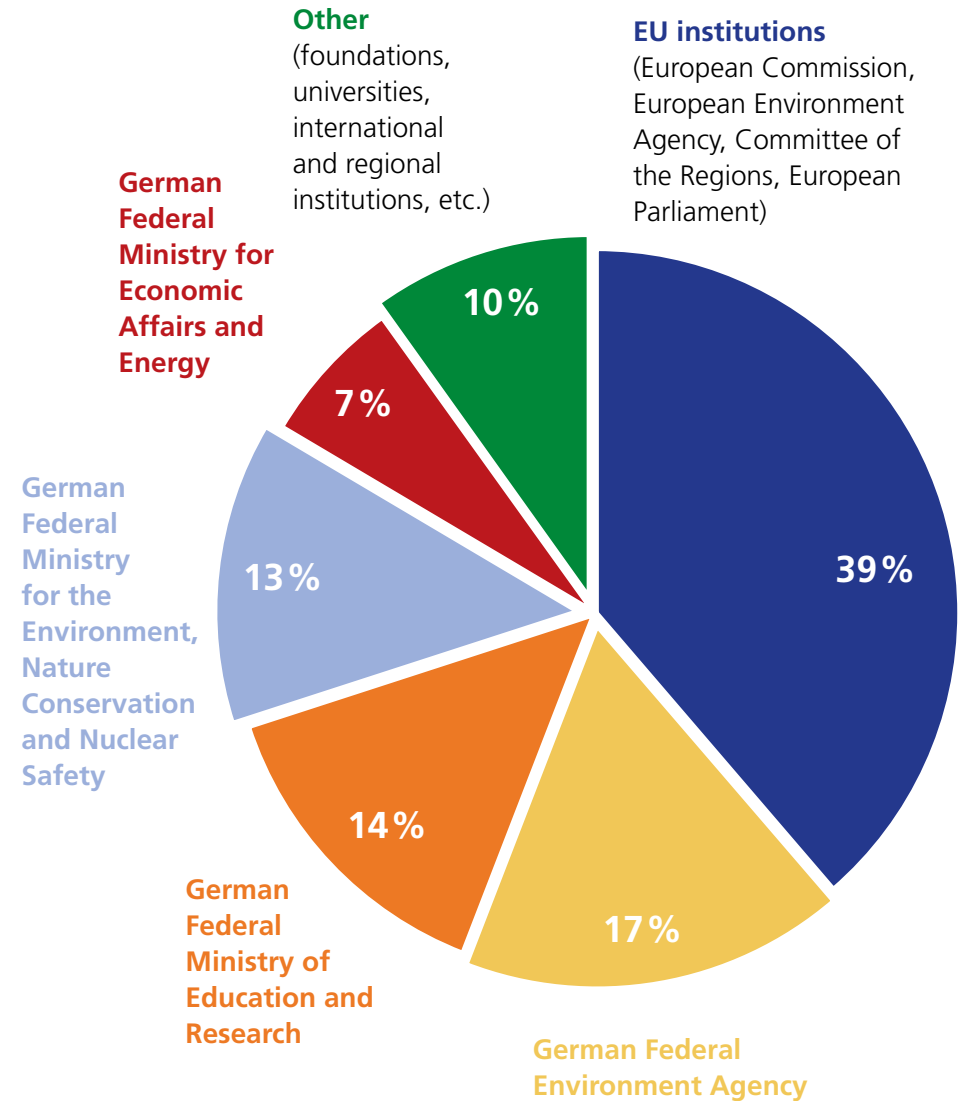
## Nationalities of scientific staff members



## Women and men in leadership positions



## Sources of project revenue 2017–2020

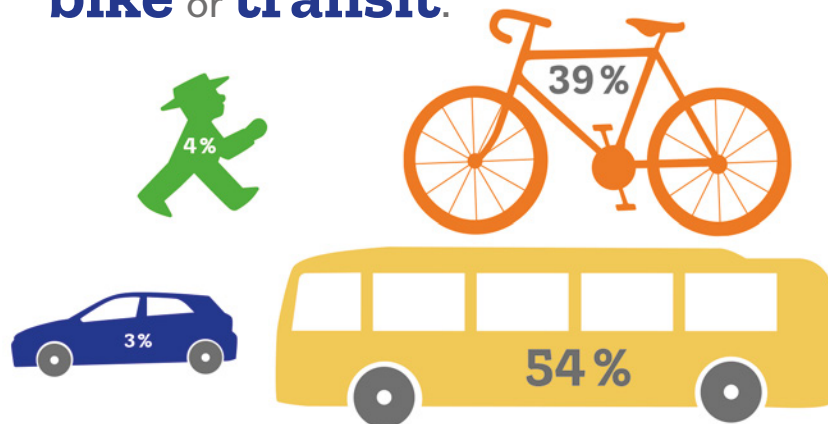


# Fun facts

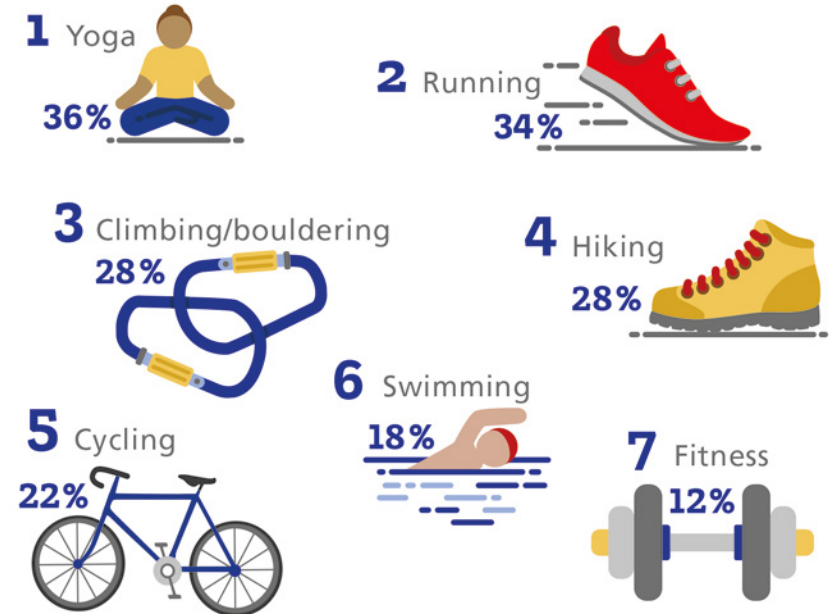
▶ We speak **28 languages**.



▶ **97%** of us come to work by **foot, bike or transit**.



▶ Of course, we do not just sit at our desks. Our most popular **sports** are:



▶ **94%** of us use **green electricity**.



# Contact

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# Imprint

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