



An Roinn Comhshaoil,
Aeráide agus Cumarsáide
Department of the Environment,
Climate and Communications

The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications Research and Innovation Survey — Public Consultation

Fields marked with * are mandatory.



**An Roinn Comhshaoil,
Aeráide agus Cumarsáide**
Department of the Environment,
Climate and Communications

Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications Research and Innovation Strategy — Public Consultation

The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications has set out a vision of a climate neutral, sustainable, and digitally connected Ireland. This will involve leading ambitious climate and environment action across Government and society together with a fundamental shift in sustainable resource use and a transformation of our energy system while at the same time delivering world-class connectivity and cyber security. The Department has identified research and innovation as important enablers of its goals, and is one of a group of five Government Departments which invest significantly in research and innovation. Impact 2030, the national research and innovation strategy, outlines a strong role for the Department in delivering on Strategic Objectives in Climate, Environment and Sustainability (including Energy), and in Digital Transformation (including cyber security). During 2023, the Department is now developing its inaugural Research and Innovation Strategy.

Please complete this survey by 5:30 pm on Friday 11th August.

Note 1: There are no mandatory consultation questions. Fields can be left blank if you do not wish to answer a particular question.

Note 2: Responses to each of the consultation questions is limited to 2000 characters.

Note 3: Copying and pasting text into the boxes directly from Microsoft Word may cause user experience issues. To avoid this, it is recommended to 'paste as plain text'.

Note 4: You can download a PDF copy of your completed survey after you have submitted it.

* Please enter your name

Text of 5 to 200 characters will be accepted

* Please enter your email address

* Please enter your occupation

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please enter the name of that organisation.

200 character(s) maximum

Job Title (if applicable)

What gaps do you see in the Department's current research and innovation activities? How should we address those gaps in the Department Research and Innovation Strategy?

2000 character(s) maximum

Many of the solutions to climate breakdown and biodiversity loss have already been identified by the physical sciences. Significant blocks to transformative action on climate and biodiversity take place in various societal arenas, such as politics, policy, economics, the media, and in society in general. The social sciences and humanities have a vital role to play in strengthening Ireland's responses to these urgent challenges. Despite this, national funding continues to prioritise research and innovation activities in the natural sciences and engineering.

An emerging finding from Ireland's Climate Change Assessment, particularly its volume 4, is the need for greater research capacity on the societal dimensions of our response to the climate and biodiversity crises, in order to underpin transformational approaches to climate action.

Building on these observations, the Department should therefore fund more social science and humanities research, either directly or through agencies such as the SEAI and the EPA. Increased research funding calls and other schemes to enable the development of skills in transdisciplinary research (which brings together researchers from a range of disciplines with civil society stakeholders) should be considered.

What actions can the Department take to identify future trends in the areas under our remit?

2000 character(s) maximum

Are there specific thematic areas relevant to the Department's remit which you would like to see more research and innovation activity in? How can this be achieved?

2000 character(s) maximum

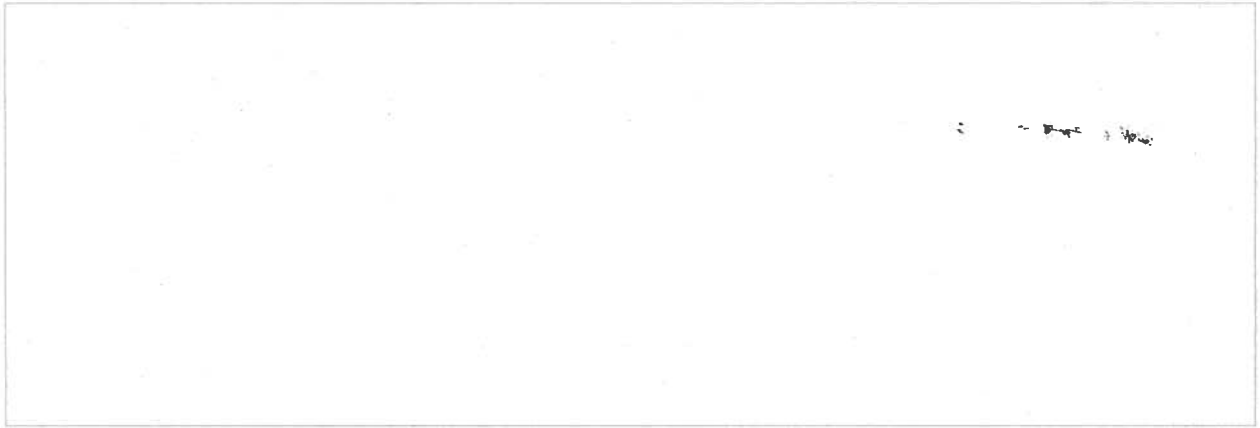
The Centre for Climate and Society highlight the following areas as worthy of prioritisation:

Public Communications Research: The Department's ongoing climate communications strategy should consider a major research programme aimed at identifying how high carbon and vulnerable sectors, groups, and communities construct the challenges and opportunities of climate action. Evidence-based insights on the discourses and sense-making processes used by farming and coastal communities, as well as the corporate and transport sectors in response to the radical social transformations required to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss can be employed as part of targeted, national communication and engagement strategies.

Politics and governance: There has been limited analysis to date of climate institutions and governance arrangements in Ireland. In light of the significant evolution of the governance landscape in recent years as a result of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and related processes, further research is needed to study the implications of these changes and provide a basis for further strengthening of the framework, with a focus on three areas in particular. First, research is needed on how the layering of new climate governance arrangements on existing institutions plays out in the distinctive context of Irish politics and policymaking. Second, future research ought to focus on the governance of particular sectoral climate action challenges. Third, further research on climate governance at local and regional level, and in a multilevel governance context, would help to strengthen climate action responses and avoid fragmentation.

Have you views on the impact of disruptive technologies such as AI, Quantum and 6G as part of the digital transformation agenda and the implications of these technologies for the Department?

2000 character(s) maximum



How can the Department better communicate its research and innovation needs?

2000 character(s) maximum

This is potentially an area for future research.

The Department should consider a funding call to support research aimed at improving the Science/Policy interface for Climate, Energy and Biodiversity research in Ireland. In particular, such a project could explore how to embed meaningful two-way communication between the Government and HEIs to support the Climate, Environmental, and Energy policymaking process from a communications and research funding policy lens.

How can the Department work more effectively to source evidence from the national research and innovation community to support its work in policy development, policy implementation, and the uptake of new technologies?

2000 character(s) maximum

See response to the question above.

How can the Department engage more effectively with all stakeholders in the national research and innovation system? If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please state how the Department could more effectively engage with your organisation.

2000 character(s) maximum

Ongoing engagement with the research community would be a welcome initiative. [REDACTED] visit to the DCU Center for Climate and Society in July 2022 was very welcome. In previous years (pre-pandemic) [REDACTED] (EPA) undertook visits to HEIs early in the calendar year to inform the development of each year's EPA Research Call. Such visits could be repeated, or an annual research priorities workshop could be held with invitations extended to the research community.

It would also be very useful to receive feedback on such meetings, and to develop them into an ongoing two-way dialogue. The feedback could include an overall report summarising the key findings from the HEI feedback and any details of how this information has feed into the Department's research and innovation system.

Should the Department seek to grow its capacity to carry out in-house research? If yes, how can this be achieved?

2000 character(s) maximum

There is potential for the Department to play an important role in creating a two-way, reciprocal process of capacity building. For example, departmental officials could be seconded to work with university-based researchers on specific research projects. Likewise, university researchers could work in the department, in collaboration with the department's in-house research team. This sharing of expertise, methodological approaches, and research cultures could be of benefit to both parties.

Are there examples internationally of Government strategies on research and innovation in climate, communications / digital, circular economy, cyber security, energy or environment that we should examine? If so, can you provide details?

2000 character(s) maximum

The Swedish research council 'Formas' (established to fund research for sustainable development) emphasizes interdisciplinary research when addressing the environmental challenges, and, more importantly, the kind of interdisciplinarity that includes the social sciences. It is, however, crucial that independent social-scientific approaches are not reduced to mere "accessory sciences" to the natural sciences in such collaborations.

Large-scale interdisciplinary studies should also focus on promoting collaborations within the social sciences and humanities. Crucially, the discipline of communications and media studies should be included as part of the drive for a wider range of theoretically-grounded insights to understand the social dimensions of climate action, energy transition and biodiversity loss. A broader range of social theories are needed to develop more robust recommendations on how to move to an environmentally-sustainable and just future.

Are there any other matters you wish to raise in relation to the development of the research and innovation strategy?

2000 character(s) maximum

Our work with media organisations has identified a need to increase capacity and environmental literacy within the media sector. Levels and quality of climate change coverage in the provincial press and local radio are in particular need of remediation. Additionally, an EPA funded analysis of media information-seeking and sharing (McNally 2020) found that citizen's would like an independent, one-stop source of information on climate action (and the biodiversity crisis). The Department could examine supporting an initiative similar to Yale Climate Connections (<https://yaleclimateconnections.org/>) whereby a free, independent, multimedia environmental news service is provided by a university-based team of student reporters and senior, professional editors that speaks to an audiences looking for an independent, trusted source of information.

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