



## Sustain-FiT: A Guide for Host Organisations

An opportunity for Higher Education Institutions and Research Performing Organisations to contribute to high-impact sustainability research aligned with the EU Green Deal.

An Enterprise Ireland initiative, co-funded by European Union's Horizon Europe programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 101177663.



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# Introduction

## What is Sustain-FIT?

Sustain-FIT is an Enterprise Ireland initiative, co-funded by the EU's Horizon Europe Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions. It supports Irish-based HEIs and RPOs in partnering with industry to deliver high-impact sustainability research aligned with the EU Green Deal.

Through Sustain-FIT, Host Organisations recruit and employ an international postdoctoral researcher - a Sustain-FIT Fellow - who undertakes a 36-month applied research programme, including a 6–12 month secondment in an Irish company.

The programme strengthens research excellence, expands intersectoral collaboration and accelerates real-world climate and sustainability impact.

## What does Sustain-FIT offer Host Organisations?

Sustain-FIT enables HEIs and RPOs to:

- Advance scientific excellence by recruiting high-calibre international postdoctoral Fellows.
- Deliver cutting-edge sustainability research aligned with global priorities
- Strengthen industry engagement - build or expand strategic partnerships with Irish industry.
- Demonstrate intersectoral collaboration required under Horizon Europe.
- Increase capacity and reputation.
- Attract competitive EU-level funding to support research teams.
- Grow institutional expertise across [EU Green Deal](#) thematic areas.
- Support talent development - train Fellows in academic, industry and transferable skills.
- Provide multidisciplinary supervision and career development pathways.

## What types of projects does Sustain-FIT support?

Projects must be challenge-led, industry-relevant and aligned with at least one thematic area of the [EU Green Deal](#), such as:

- Clean Energy
- Sustainable Industry / Circular Economy
- Buildings & Renovation
- Sustainable Mobility
- Sustainable Food Systems
- Pollution Elimination
- Biodiversity
- Climate Action
- Digitalisation for Sustainability

Projects must combine academic excellence with clear potential for real-world application via the industry secondment.

### Role of the Host Organisation

As the contracting organisation, HEIs/RPOs play a central role in designing, supporting and delivering Sustain-FIT projects.

Your core responsibilities;

#### **1. Employing and managing the Sustain-FIT Fellow**

- Recruit, contract and host the Fellow for the duration of the 36-month fellowship.
- Ensure compliance with MSCA and national eligibility requirements.
- Provide a high-quality research environment, facilities, and resources.

#### **2. Academic supervision & mentoring**

- Appoint a suitably qualified Lead Academic Supervisor.
- Provide structured supervision, progress monitoring and career development support.
- Maintain regular communication with the company partner (Secondment Enterprise).

#### **3. Project design & co-development**

- Co-create the research project with the company partner (Secondment Enterprise).
- Ensure alignment with the EU Green Deal and Sustain-FIT evaluation criteria.
- Develop a secondment plan that meets programme requirements (6–12 months).

#### **4. Administration of funds**

- Manage the Sustain-FIT budget in line with MSCA and Enterprise Ireland rules.
- Oversee salary, mobility, research and indirect cost allocations.
- Ensure transparent accounting and reporting.

#### **5. Training, skills development & impact**

- Provide research training, transferable skills development and intersectoral exposure.
- Support dissemination, exploitation and communication activities.
- Facilitate ethical compliance and risk management.

#### **6. Secondment coordination**

- Formalise the secondment agreement with the company partner.
- Ensure the Fellow has access to the company environment, data and mentors.
- Monitor the Fellow's progress during the secondment.

## What do Host Organisations gain?

### **Research, academic and strategic benefits;**

- Funding for a 36-month postdoctoral researcher.
- Enhanced sustainability research capacity.
- Strengthened industry collaboration and innovation impact.
- Increased competitiveness for Horizon Europe and other EU programmes.
- New collaborative intellectual property opportunities.

### **Talent and capability development;**

- Ability to attract international research talent.
- Opportunities for supervision experience for academic staff.
- Expanded interdisciplinary and applied research capacity.

### **Institutional impact;**

- Stronger links with enterprise and national innovation priorities.
- Enhanced reputation for sustainability leadership and [EU Green Deal](#) alignment.

### **Funding and eligible costs;**

Host Organisations receive full funding for the Fellow's:

- Gross salary
- Mobility allowance
- Research, training and networking costs
- Indirect costs (in line with MSCA regulations)

Funds are administered by the Host Organisation. Companies do not pay the Fellow's salary, they contribute in-kind support (mentorship, access to facilities, data, etc.).

### **Intellectual Property (IP)**

Intellectual property arising from Sustain-FIT projects is managed by the Host Research Performing Organisation (RPO) in accordance with Ireland's National IP Protocol 2019 and the Horizon 2020 Marie-Curie requirements. Enterprise Ireland does not claim any ownership of resulting IP. A written agreement between the Host Organisation and the Company partner must be completed to address IP management, confidentiality, publication, and secondment arrangements.

For more information visit:

- National IP Protocol: <https://www.knowledgetransferireland.com/Reports-Publications/Ireland-s-National-IP-Protocol-2019-.pdf>
- EI guidance for companies working with RPOs: <https://www.enterpriseireland.com/en/Research-Innovation/Companies/IPP-Putting-public-research-to-work-for-Ireland.pdf>

## How the application process works – for Host Organisations

### **Stage 1: Project Formation (2 March – 30 April 2026)**

Host Organisations should:

- Identify a company partner with a clear sustainability challenge.
- Co-develop the project, research plan and secondment structure.
- Identify and confirm an international postdoctoral candidate.
- Support the candidate in drafting the application.

### **Stage 2: Application Submission (1–29 May 2026)**

The postdoctoral applicant submits the full proposal, supported by:

- Host Organisation
- Company mentor
- Academic supervisor

Host Organisations may help prepare supporting documentation.

### **Stage 3: Evaluation & Interviews (June–September 2026)**

Applications undergo independent international evaluation by Enterprise Ireland.

Shortlisted Fellows are interviewed (September 2026).

Final decisions issued in Q4 2026.

## Next Steps for Host Organisations

If your institution is interested in leading a Sustain-FIT project:

- Identify potential company partners with strong sustainability challenges.
- Scope possible research themes aligned with the EU Green Deal.
- Begin identifying suitable international postdoctoral candidates.

Contact Sustain-FIT for guidance or lists of participating companies.

Email: [sustain-fit@enterprise-ireland.com](mailto:sustain-fit@enterprise-ireland.com)

Further information on the thematic pillars of the EU Green Deal [The Environment: Ireland's Green Deal - European Commission](#)

Ends

*All information contained in this document is accurate on 02.03.2026*