



Climate sustainable Red Cross

Climate Action Tips For Branches

Climate change is the most serious problem of our time and affects the lives of all of us. It is a massive humanitarian challenge that weakens the opportunities of millions of people to acquire livelihoods, remain in their home areas and cope with extreme weather phenomena that are occurring with increasing frequency. Almost all disasters caused by floods, storms and other natural hazards are either fully or partially the result of climate change, and their impacts continue to grow.

Action is clearly needed.

The Finnish Red Cross climate sustainability policy was approved in autumn 2022. The policy steers the sustainability of the organisation's activities, its work towards climate change adaptation and preparedness, as well as communication and influencing in connection with climate change, in particular. The policy, shared by the entire organisation, encourages and supports everyone involved in the Finnish Red Cross to assess the activities' climate effects, make decisions that reduce emissions and, where necessary, change their operating models and practices. The aim is to take the policy into account in the branches' and districts' action plans, and in the agreements with partners and subcontractors.

The core function and strength of the Red Cross is to prepare to assist victims of disasters and accidents both at home and abroad. The Red Cross is prepared to take action when assistance is needed. The climate sustainability policy sets an important task to the entire organisation to assess the local, district level (districtwide) and nationwide effects of the climate crisis and prepare for them. Preparedness plans and action plans are good ways to think locally how we can respond to the changes caused by climate change and make changes to our ways of working.

The Red Cross is not alone with the effects of climate change. We have partners, and the need for cooperation is increasing. It is also important for us to take the impact of climate change into account in a tangible way when working with our partners and responding to new needs for assistance.

The aim of this brochure is to inspire and encourage the Red Cross branches and activity groups to consider their own climate impact, and provide tips on matters that should be paid attention to. This guide contains ideas for the branches' activities, from easy actions to transformative changes. The aim is for everyone to find something that they can do, regardless of their branch's resources, scope of activities or the circumstances.

Even the smallest actions count. If your branch already has some good practices in place, please share them widely with others. Do use all opportunities to share your own ideas with other branches, such as at district events, on social media or at national events!

You can learn more about the climate sustainability policy online at:

<https://www.redcross.fi/our-work/ethical-and-responsible-red-cross/environmental-responsibility/>

Climate sustainability in our own operations

Reducing emissions and decreasing the environmental impact of our activities is the entire organisation's duty. We are already doing things slightly differently: we are digitalising our operations, in addition to which we are able to use fossil-free energy sources and favour circular economy. Good practices can be promoted at the branch level, which in the best-case scenario enhances the sustainability of the actions and opportunities for participation, for example through digital means. It is important to identify the existing good practices and share them between branches.

Easy actions:

- Organise remote meetings whenever possible.
- Travel on foot or by bike, public transport or carpool whenever possible.
- Serve climate and environmentally friendly meeting refreshments (e.g. avoid or reduce red meat and other animal-based products, favour seasonal vegetables and reduce food waste).
- Avoid the use of disposable tableware, if real tableware can be used.
- Avoid printing if paper versions are not necessary. Check beforehand from participants whether printouts are required.
- Minimise waste and recycle.
- Avoid plastic as a packaging material whenever its use is not essential for a product's shelf life.
- Energy efficiency: turn off lights and computers, and regulate the use of radiators and air conditioning.
- Do not acquire unnecessary things.

Advanced actions:

- Assess the environmental effects of personal actions and become more skilled in climate sustainability.
- Become aware of personal emissions and calculate them with an existing climate calculator or the calculating tool of the headquarters.
- Take the climate sustainability policy into account as part of a branch's action plan.
- Work together with other branches and climate influencers in order to promote climate sustainability.
- Reduce energy consumption in the facilities and check the electricity contract (own premises or influencing the owners of the facilities), e.g. through LED lamps and lower room temperature.
- Improve the recycling options (own premises or influencing the owners of the facilities).
- Use the operating facilities more efficiently (shared facilities, shared use, giving up unnecessary facilities).
- Take climate sustainability into account in procurement and assess the necessity of procurement.
- Acquire second-hand products or environmentally certified products
- Take action in the surrounding environment, e.g. protecting the environment or picking litter, potentially in cooperation with other organisations.

- When thanking and giving recognition to volunteers use immaterial goods instead of material, or give only useful items
- Provide training via remote connections, hold webinars.
- Take sustainability into account when making investments.
- Take sustainability into account in fundraising, e.g. the type of items that are sold and the way that they have been manufactured.
- Train volunteers, group leaders and trainers in remote participation and facilitation, and provide them with the tools they need.
- Take part in the Finnish Red Cross climate influencers' activities.

Transformative actions:

- Assign a climate change focal point for your branch.
- Make a result-oriented climate plan for the branch and ensure its monitoring.
- Establish a climate-related activity group.
- Promote circular economy in practice, e.g. utilising second-hand items in activities, recycling or flea market activities.
- Take part in calculating the entire organisation's carbon footprint, creating an emission reduction plan and committing to becoming carbon neutral by 2030.





Climate change adaptation and preparedness work

Climate change is bringing challenges and will increase the need for assistance in Finland, too. Responding to climate change requires better awareness of weather and climate risks, and means of adapting to change. Adaptation involves long-term preparation for sudden crises. As climate change progresses, extreme weather phenomena, among other things, will increase in frequency and severity. The consequences of climate change are forcing people to move, and this may also lead to increased migration to Finland, thereby increasing the need for assistance and protection.

Easy actions:

- Maintain competence by taking part in topical (remote) training in connection with preparedness (e.g. extreme weather phenomena).
- Maintain good cooperation with the neighbouring branches and participate in district level meetings connected to the theme.
- Ensure that the branch has its own preparedness plan or that it is part of a district plan.

Advanced actions:

- Recognise the local effects of climate change or changed conditions (such as heatwaves, floods, crown snow-loads, etc.).
- Identify key risks linked to climate change in terms of preparedness (such as access to clean water and power cuts) in preparedness training.
- Identify vulnerable groups, such as the elderly during heat waves.
- Cooperate with other branches and actors in organising preparedness exercises.
- Utilise the know-how of experts and authorities.
- Cooperate with local authorities, e.g. to create climate or preparedness plans.
- Promote everyday safety and preparedness actively, and engage new volunteers into the activities.

Transformative actions:

- Take advantage of current research information (such as the Finnish Meteorological Institute or www.climateguide.fi) as part of preparedness planning.
- Cooperate extensively with other local stakeholders.

Communications and influence

Communications and influencing enhance the role and ability of the Finnish Red Cross to prevent, prepare for and respond to increasing climate-induced disasters. Communication improves people's awareness of weather and climate risks, and their adaptation options. It also boosts the status of the Red Cross as a climate change actor and an advocate for the most vulnerable people. Our communications regarding our operations focus on the preparation for and adaptation to the effects of climate change.

Easy actions:

- Participate in Hunger Day through visible local presence.
- Share information about branch's actions via Oma Punainen Risti and actively welcome new volunteers through the system.
- Share the Red Cross's climate messages on social media.

Advanced actions:

- Shed light on the effects of climate change on people by writing blog posts or articles in a local paper.
- Create opportunities to mitigate climate change (i.e. to reduce emissions).
- Increase knowledge of the local effects of climate change in terms of preparedness, e.g. by organising discussions.
- Share good local practices and successes, e.g. by cooperating with municipalities to reduce emissions or taking local action (recycling, reduction of food waste, etc.).

Transformative actions:

- Create a communication and influencing plan for the branch.
- The branch monitors and shares information about its climate actions.
- Hold a webinar or organise training in connection with the climate and preparedness.
- Establish an active climate activity group.

