

SPARKHub: An open-access certification and platform for sustainable research practices

Researchers and research organisations are increasingly responding to global environmental crises and have begun to actively address the ecological footprint of their activities. At the same time, funding organisations have started developing environmental sustainability requirements in their funding schemes. However, many researchers and organisations lack reliable guidance in the form of clear standards and practical tools.

As part of an [EMBO-Policy-Workshops](#) these challenges were discussed with relevant stakeholders to define the requirements that standards and tools must meet in order to respond to the needs of the scientific community. Open access and scientifically robust quality assurance were identified as key priorities. The outcomes of these discussions were codified in the [Heidelberg Agreement](#), which emphasises the central role of funding organisations in enabling and supporting sustainable research practices.

Against this background, EMBO and other international funding organisations are contributing to the development of [SPARKHub](#) ('Sustainable Practices and Research Knowledge Hub'), a project that was launched with funding and initiative from UK Research & Innovation (UKRI). The aim is to establish an open access platform that complements existing environmental standards such as ISO and EMAS, and provides practical support for the efficient integration of environmental sustainability into all research disciplines.

SPARKHub provides

- **clear guidance for researchers and organisations** through standardised measures, training and case studies.
- **easy-to-use online tools** to estimate environmental and financial impacts.
- **certification** to enable transparent demonstration of sustainable research practices.

The platform is currently being finalised in close collaboration with the scientific community, will be piloted with researchers in early 2026, and is expected to become widely accessible in summer 2026. Progress can be tracked on the website sparkhub.eu, and case studies can already be viewed and submitted at the following link: <https://sparkhub.eu/case-studies/>

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