

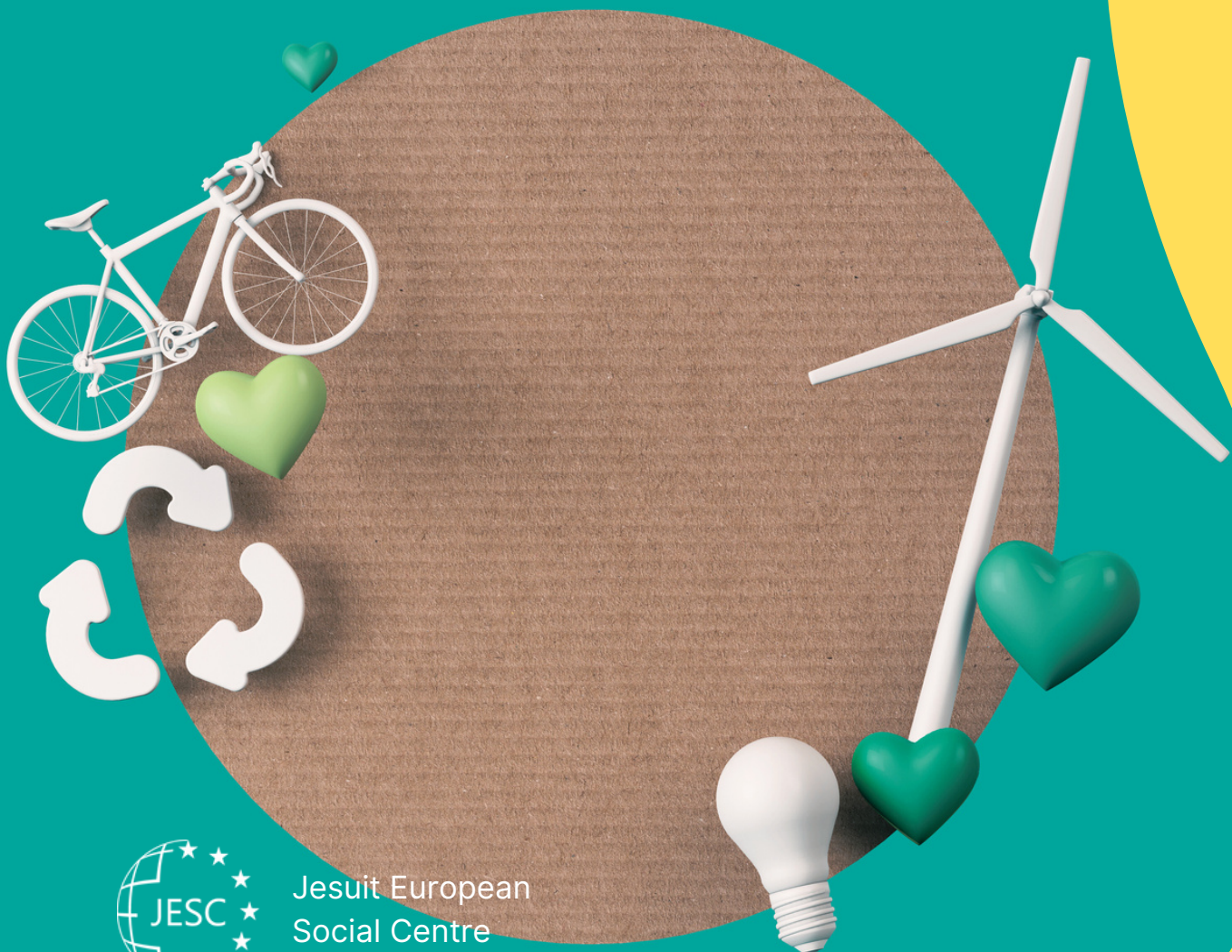
Working document



Towards Carbon Neutrality

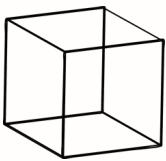
Developing a common framework for decarbonisation efforts by Jesuit communities and institutions in Europe.

January 2024



Jesuit European
Social Centre

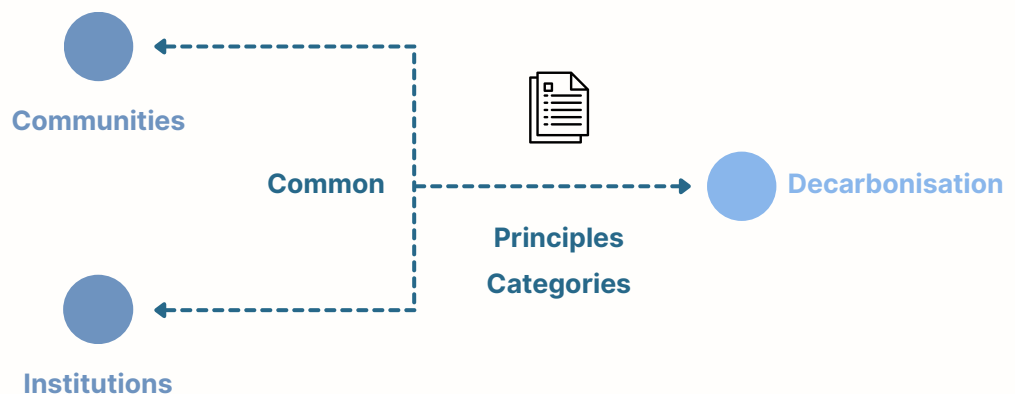
A common climate action framework



Developing a common approach to decarbonisation for Jesuit communities and institutions based on science and centered around the promotion of sustainable practices, emissions reductions, target-setting and a shared, collective, contribution to global climate action.

The framework outlined in this document aims to foster an integral ecology inspired approach to reducing carbon emissions which is **consistent with science** and which ultimately addresses the climate transition as a single collective human enterprise.

We invite Jesuit communities, institutions and other interested actors to contribute to this discussion and to think of, design and articulate their climate action strategies around the **proposed conceptual model**.



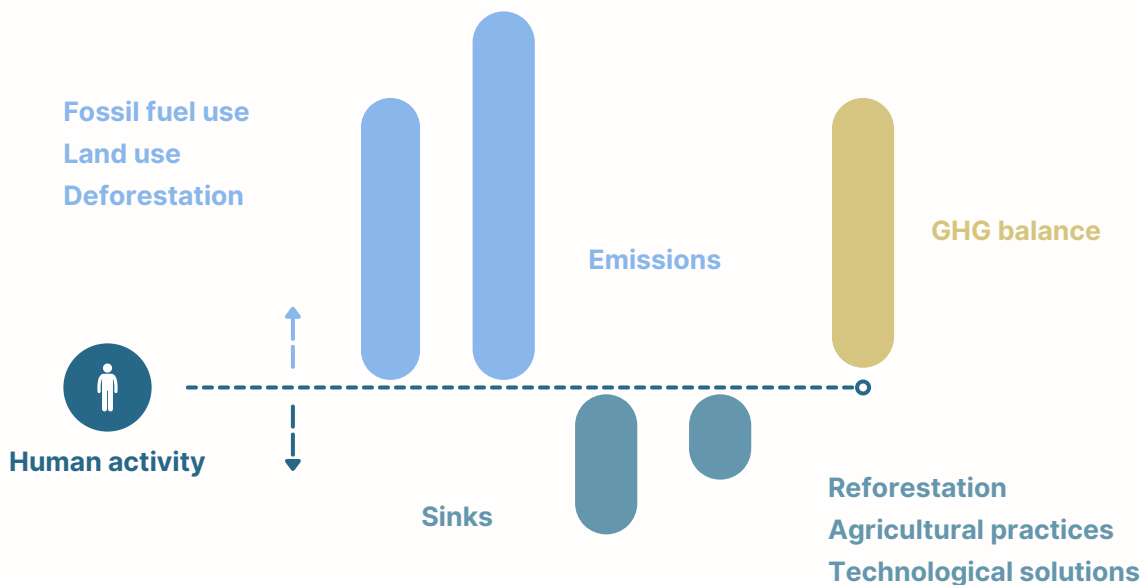
The **JESC Carbon Initiative** is a project by the Jesuit European Social Centre (JESC). For contact, please email us at: telmo.olascoaga@jesc.eu

What does carbon neutral mean?

Un-linking human activity from the concentration of greenhouse gases (GHG) in the atmosphere.



Science defines carbon neutrality (or net-zero) as the **global balance** between anthropogenic GHG emissions and the anthropogenic removal of GHG gases from the atmosphere. That is, between the human activity derived emissions (including CO₂ and others) and the humanity induced atmospheric removal of these gases.



To aim towards carbon neutrality, societies must then confront global warming **by acting on two fronts**: by reducing emissions and by increasing removals by helping to develop carbon sinks.

Reducing emissions must come first



While carbon sinks and removals have a role to play in confronting global warming, only sustained emissions reductions can lead us into meeting the targets set by the Paris Agreement.

In the context of the global quest towards carbon neutrality, the idea that emissions can be “cancelled out” through the purchasing of carbon credits or investment in carbon sinks is **problematic**.

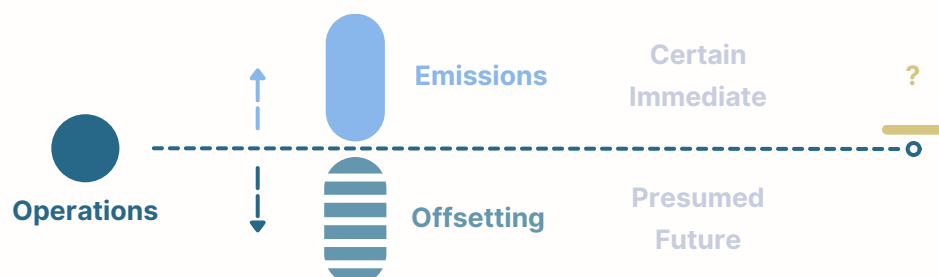
- **Above all, offsetting can't possibly be a universal solution**

To put it simply, there are not enough offsets around the world to balance out current emissions.



- **Offsetting also creates a dangerous illusion**

Offsetting equates certain and immediate emissions with presumed and / or future emissions reductions or removals.



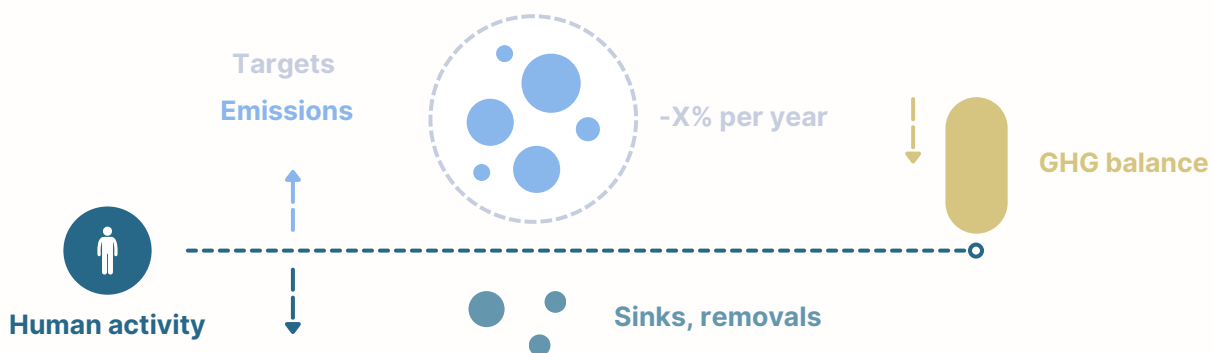
Contributing to carbon neutrality

From immediate individual, virtual, carbon neutrality to collective action towards global net-zero based on sustained emissions reductions.



As previously outlined, the idea of negative emissions is not a viable nor real solution to the climate emergency. Carbon credits fuel complacency by allowing to reach an instant, virtual, “net-zero” and this **swifts the focus away** from reductions - **making progress in that critical area invisible**.

Carbon sink development and removals must thus be an auxiliary dimension of climate action, which needs to gravitate around the **gradual reduction of emissions** between 3% (2°C above pre-industrial levels target) and 7% (1.5°C target) per year as put forward by the Paris Agreement.



Derived from this diagnosis, institutions, communities and other social actors who engage in carbon offsetting would **no longer be “cancelling out” their emissions**, but further contributing to the collective effort to contain and reduce global warming - **a voluntary extra effort**.

Towards 3 climate action pillars

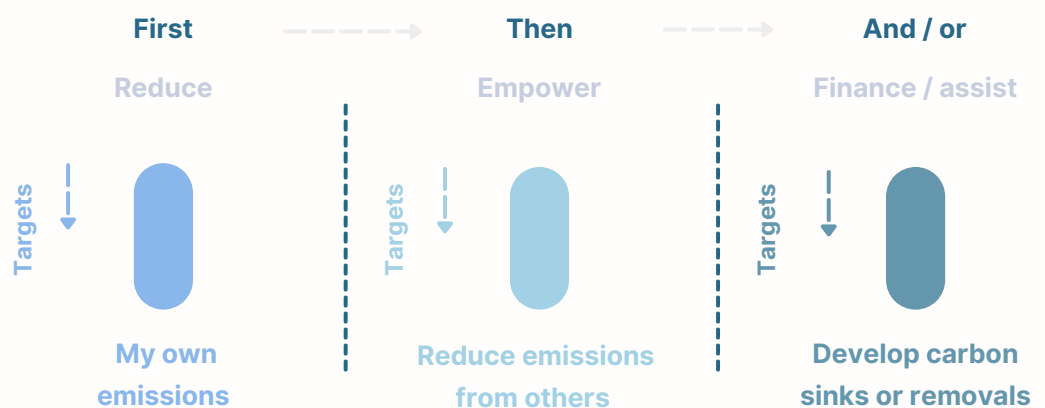


A new framework for communities and institutions to reflect about and contribute to the shared effort against global warming.

Based on the ideas presented:

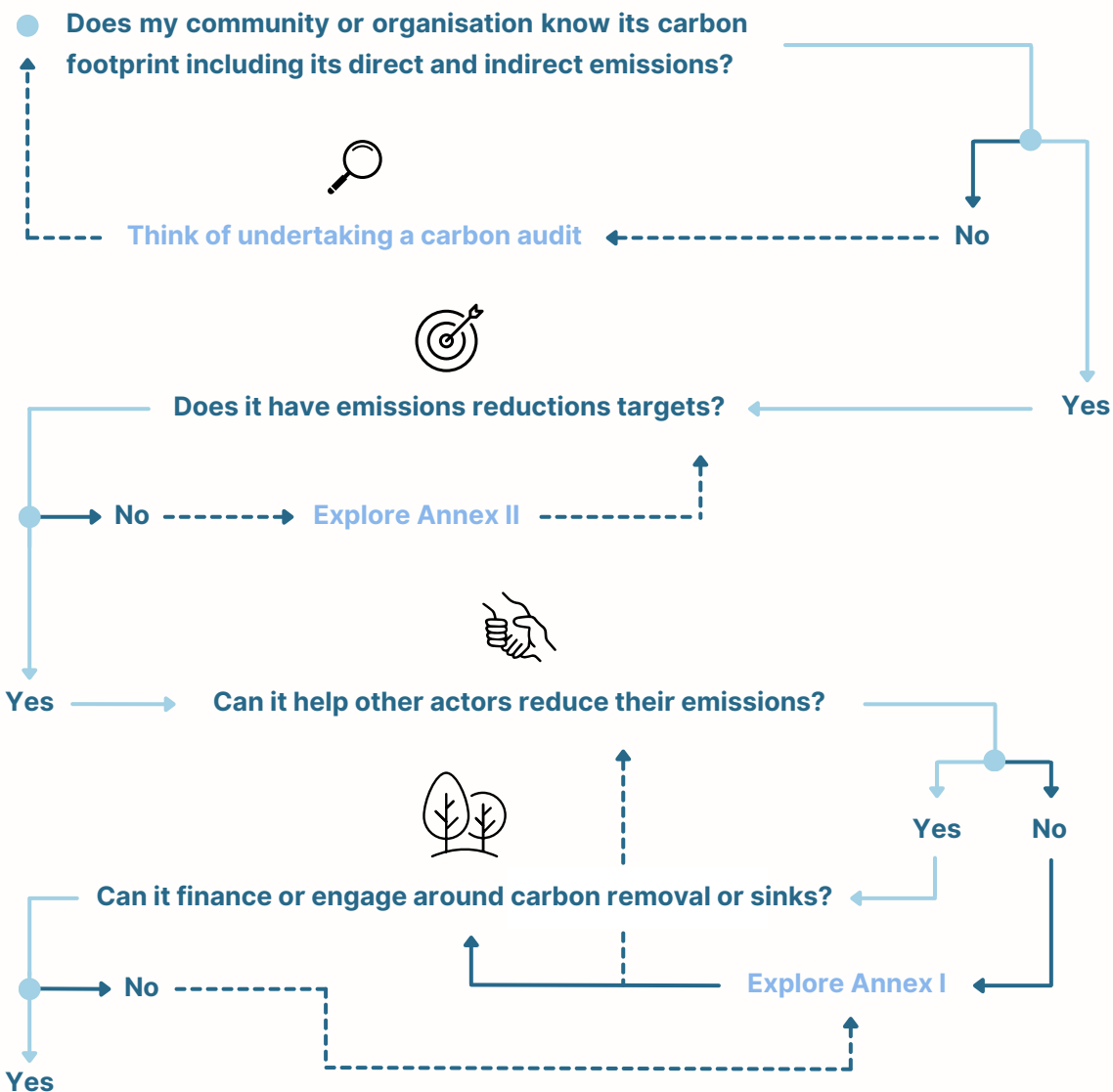
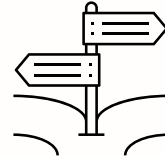
- Carbon neutrality (or net-zero) **refers only to the global goal** of balancing anthropogenic emissions and removals. It is not applicable to a community, an institution or to any other actor individually.
- A community, an institution or any other social actor can **contribute** to the collective goal of carbon neutrality **in different ways**.
- Contributing to reducing the emissions of others, or helping to improve or develop carbon sinks **needs to be accounted separately**.
- These actions **cannot be used for the purpose of “cancelling out”** emissions derived from lifestyles or operations.

We can draft the following framework for climate action:



Climate action decisions tree

Below you can find a simple decision making schematic which can be used to guide climate efforts in your community or institution.



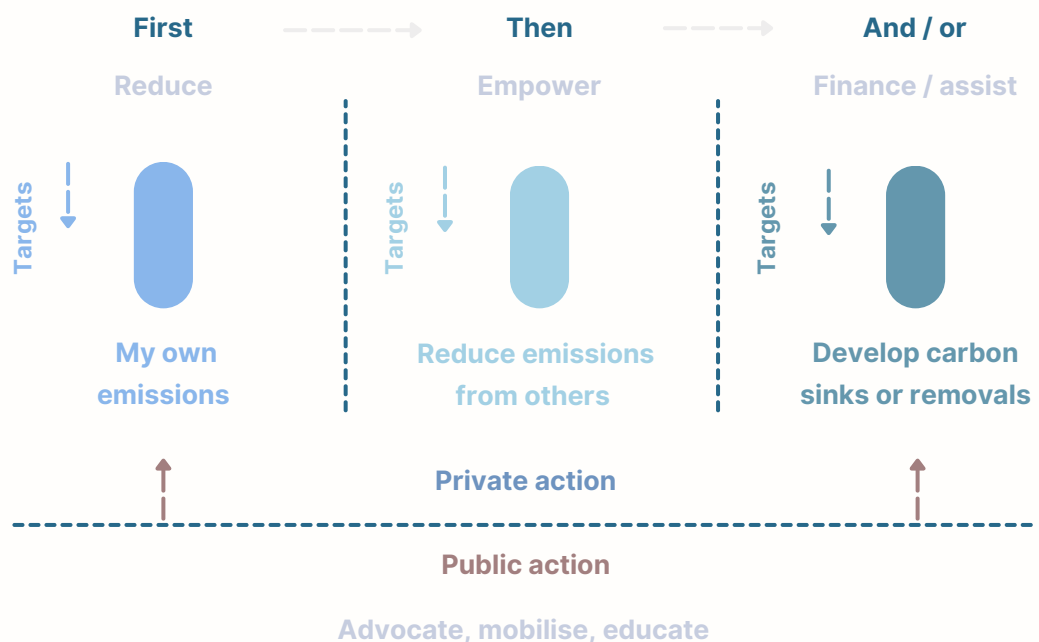
Carbon neutrality as a societal endeavour



Awareness raising, education, advocacy and political campaigning can be interpreted as a potential, important, fourth pillar of climate action.

A sizable percentage of our carbon footprint depends on **variables which are often beyond our control** (the technological level of the economy, existing infrastructure, national energy mixes for electricity generation, regulations, etc.). Acting on this “baseline” of carbon intensity requires from **public policy** - which can be influenced through advocacy, social mobilisation and education.

On the basis of this reality, it is possible to argue that influencing public policy can be considered a transversal line of action which brings together communities and organisations in demanding action to **boost and facilitate decarbonisation** at all levels of society:



Climate action beyond us

Communities and institutions can contribute to carbon neutrality by helping others avoid emissions or by financing or developing carbon sinks.



Please find below the categories of action for each type of climate action pillar:

● Helping others avoid emissions



Finance or co-finance initiatives which would allow for lower emissions from third actors (such as installing solar panels, better insulation, etc.).



Increase the climate and carbon literacy of the members of a community or an organisation so more effective climate action can take place (such as educating on making more climate friendly food or transport choices, etc.).

● Financing or developing carbon sinks

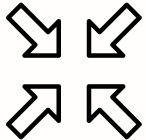


Finance or co-finance initiatives which revolve around carbon removal or sequestration, either through the purchasing of carbon sequestration certificates or by supporting said projects (such as reforestation initiatives, technological sequestration, etc.). Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) is a widely recognized and respected standard for the certification of emissions removal projects.



Actively develop or take part in projects which revolve around carbon sequestration (such as reforestation or natural development initiatives).

Reducing our emissions



The hierarchy of emissions reductions is a common frame used to structure and tackle emissions which are within our control.



● Eliminate

Assess needs

“How can we arrange our organisation or community to reduce the structural GHG emissions derived from our activity?”



● Reduce

Optimise

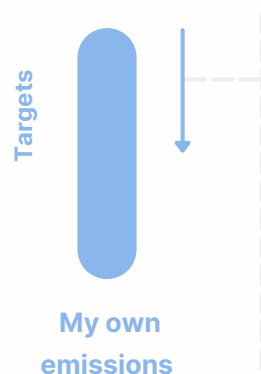
“Can our organisation or community become more efficient and further reduce its carbon emissions?”



● Substitute

Adopt low-carbon alternatives

“Can our organisation or community adopt or use technologies or products which are less carbon intensive?”



New building, structure, attitude



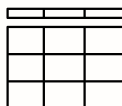
Doing more with less



Renewable energy, products, diet

Annex III

Example template



Structuring climate action based on the outlined framework

Period: Month / Year - Month / Year

Pillar 1 (First)	Pillar 2 (Then)	Pillar 3 (And / or)	Pillar 4 (If possible)
<i>Reduce your own emissions</i>	<i>Help others reduce their emissions</i>	<i>Help develop carbon sinks</i>	<i>Engage in wider public action</i>
Goal for the period (below)	Goal for the period (below)	Goal for the period (below)	Goal for the period (below)
“Activity-related emissions -15%”	“Emissions avoided +10%”	“Carbon captured +10%”	“Support 1 advocacy initiative”
Baseline (tCO2e):	Baseline (tCO2e):	Baseline (tCO2e):	Point of departure:
Actions taken	Actions taken	Actions taken	Actions taken
Action 1	Action 1	Action 1	Action 1
Action 2	Action 2	Action 2	Action 2
Action (n)	Action (n)	Action (n)	Action (n)
Impact (tCO2e):	Impact (tCO2e):	Impact (tCO2e):	Result:
Evaluation	Evaluation	Evaluation	Evaluation



Acknowledgements

This document is inspired in the Bilan Carbone carbon accounting methodology developed by the French Environmental Agency (ADEME) and the decarbonisation framework formulated by Carbone 4, a leading French consulting firm specialised in low carbon strategies and climate adaptation.

