

## Call for applications: Postdoctoral fellow in the history of sustainability science

We are soliciting applications for a 3 year postdoctoral fellowship in the history of science, history of technology, STS, and/or environmental history

### Where?

The Institute for the History of Science of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, Poland (History of Natural and Medical Sciences Research Unit)

### About the project

The purpose of the “History of Sustainability Science(s)” is to study and understand the impact of the concept of sustainability and sustainable development on the empirical sciences throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. We are interested in 1) the influence of various environmental or environmentally-driven disciplines on the framing of sustainability as a concept and 2) in the way scientists’ language shifted and aligned with the principles of sustainability over the last 50 years. The project is divided into three major pillars: science(s) for sustainability, sustainability in science, and sustainability as science. These pillars provide a general framework for more specific work packages.

### Postdoc Topic

The postdoctoral researcher will be working on one of three work packages described in detail below (1. “Forgotten environmental trajectories: the history of sustainability-driven scientific disciplines outside the Anglosphere”; 2. “Environmentalism beyond the Iron Curtain: Sustainability in Science in the Eastern Block (1945-1990)” 3. “History and philosophy of non-chemical aspects of sustainable chemistry”). The postdoctoral candidates are expected to fit their individual, narrower projects within one of these work packages, although exceptionally good projects aligning with the overarching project’s broader themes may also be considered.

### Starting date and salary

The starting date: 1 January 2025 (it is possible to postpone the starting date). The applicant’s PhD should have been defended and filed by the starting date.

The position will pay around 10 500 PLN gross monthly.

### Research Environment

The Institute for the History of Science of the Polish Academy of Sciences is a fully autonomous institution located in the center of Warsaw. Established in 1954, it is the oldest Polish research center devoted to the history of science. It comprises research groups specializing in the history of education, astronomy, technology, and medicine.

The Institute is a member of HRS4R network (<https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/hrs4r>) committed to the implementation of the European Charter for Researchers.

There are no teaching requirements for this position; however, regular participation in collective scientific activities (e.g., on-line seminars) will be expected. Knowledge of Polish is **not** required. At the Institute, the postdoc will benefit from workspace, access to the library, and electronic resources. **Flexible/remote work arrangements are possible.**

### Application details

Prospective applicants should send:

- A detailed curriculum vitae including publications
- A description of the research project to be undertaken during the contract (up to 5 pages, bibliography excluded) aligned with **one** of the work packages detailed below.

- A copy of the doctoral diploma or the letter from the home institution confirming that the thesis is awaiting defence. Doctoral degree has to be obtained not earlier than 7 years before the year of employment in the project (excluding leaves related to the care and upbringing of children)

### **Recruitment**

The recruitment is based on Open, Transparent, and Merit-based Recruitment principles (OTM-R - [https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/policy\\_library/otm-r-finaldoc\\_0.pdf](https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/policy_library/otm-r-finaldoc_0.pdf)) and on the internal recruitment regulation of the Institute.

### **Application deadline**

31 October, 2024

To apply and for additional information, please contact Marcin Krasnodębski (marcin.krasnodebski1@gmail.com)

### **Detailed Description of Work Packages**

Work Package 1: **“Forgotten environmental trajectories: the history of sustainability-driven scientific disciplines outside the Anglosphere”**: The history of sustainability is examined predominantly through the lens of American environmentalism. It was in the United States where significant groundwork was laid for many environmentally-friendly scientific disciplines, frameworks, and concepts such as environmental chemistry, industrial ecology, and green chemistry. However, throughout the 20th century, discussions on the challenges we now associate with sustainability took place in various linguistic regions, leading to the emergence of independent quasi-disciplines and concepts that predate the rise of sustainability in the 1990s.

For instance, in Germany, there existed an original tradition of “ökologische Chemie” initiated by Friedhelm Korte, which developed independently but paralleled the American ecological chemistry. Another notable example is the renowned “Sanfte Chemie” created by Arnim von Gleich and Hermann Fischer, which had no equivalent elsewhere. In Japan, the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) fostered the development of a distinct tradition of sustainable chemistry (different from later European iterations that adopted the same name). Unfortunately, these concepts were overshadowed by the rise and widespread adoption of English-speaking sustainability frameworks in the 1990s and 2000s, leading to the neglect and limited understanding of their impact on national research cultures outside their countries of origin.

The objective of this work package is to investigate these or similar forgotten trajectories and gain insights into their influence on national scientific landscapes. Applicants are expected to narrow down their research topic within this package to specific countries and traditions of their interest, allowing for a focused exploration of these overlooked histories.

Work Package 2: **“Environmentalism beyond the Iron Curtain: Sustainability in Science in the Eastern Block (1945-1990)”**: The Club of Rome’s “Limits to Growth” was one of the key publications that laid the foundations for the concept of sustainable development in the West. However, during the same period, the Czech philosopher Radovan Richta arrived at nearly identical conclusions, sparking a similar debate in Czechoslovakia. It was also in Czechoslovakia where Pavel Drašar independently coined the term “Green Chemistry” in 1991 as a response to the environmental crisis, separate from his Western colleagues. In Poland, the term “sozology” was coined in the 1960s and 1970s to encompass the principles of environmental protection, anticipating many later environmental and sustainability-driven sciences (which is also relevant to

WP1). Similar discussions took place in the Soviet Union. The Eastern Bloc was a hub of ideas, although their circulation and translation into practice were limited.

This work package aims to examine the incorporation of environmentalism and sustainability principles into the work of scientists in Eastern Bloc countries. It seeks to explore the prehistory of sustainability in the Eastern Bloc. Candidates are expected to narrow down their research topic to specific countries and problems within their applications.

Work Package 3: “**History and philosophy of non-chemical aspects of sustainable chemistry**”.

The concept of sustainable chemistry has gained prominence as an overarching framework for conducting chemical research, particularly since the 2010s. While its components extend beyond traditional chemistry, encompassing ethical and management aspects (such as chemical leasing), these aspects have received limited attention from historians and sociologists of science.

The purpose of this work package is to employ the historian’s toolbox to gain a better understanding of the non-chemical dimensions of sustainable chemistry. For instance, candidates will explore questions such as: When did chemical leasing become widely practiced? How is ethics integrated into sustainable chemistry considerations? What is the history of life cycle assessment in chemistry? How has thinking about the chemical supply chain evolved over the past three decades? Candidates have the option to approach the topic as a whole or focus on specific aspects that align with their interests and expertise. The aim is to shed light on the historical development and significance of the non-chemical aspects within sustainable chemistry.