

Top tips to organize sustainable events

The main goal of a sustainable or green event is to constantly monitor and reduce the environmental impact of the event. This also means cost saving, using natural resources sustainably, reducing waste and ensuring a healthier environment at the event. Organizing a sustainable event contributes both to the surrounding environment and the organizer's reputation.

Sustainability glossary:

Sustainable development – finding balance between human development goals and the limited natural resources of our planet.

Ecological footprint – measures how fast we consume resources and generate waste compared to how fast nature can absorb our waste and generate resources.

Carbon footprint – the total amount of greenhouse gases (including carbon dioxide and methane) that are generated by our actions.

Green conference/event – conference/event that is focused on sustainability and reducing the negative impact on the environment.

Green Key is an international eco-label awarded to accommodations and other hospitality facilities that commit to sustainable business practices.

Greenwashing – greenwashing is the process of conveying a false impression or providing misleading information about how a company's products are more environmentally sound. Greenwashing is considered an unsubstantiated claim to deceive consumers into believing that a company's products are environmentally friendly.

Digital pollution – includes all sources of environmental pollution produced by digital tools. It is divided into two parts: the first is related to the manufacture of any digital tool, and the second to the functioning of the Internet.

Before your event

- 1 Make a work plan that determines the sustainability goals and objectives of your event, and actions that are needed to achieve those. Calculate the potential ecological and carbon footprint of your event and pay attention to the risk of greenwashing. Be a leader in raising sustainability standards in your field and a good example for others by organizing a sustainably impactful event.
- 2 Acquaint yourself with the official regulations of your destination country or city (noise, waste treatment, etc.).
- 3 Keep in mind that in the future the sustainability aspect may well become the key element in a procurement process and in choosing the preferred partners.
- 4 Choosing the location (pay attention to energy saving buildings, Green Key, accessibility of the location, use of daylight, CRM activities).
- 5 Choosing accommodation options (pay attention to Green Key, event location nearby or easily accessible by public transportation, CRM activities).
- 6 Communication and marketing (utilizing online opportunities, avoiding use of paper materials, informing participants and the public about the sustainable values of the event and the steps taken to achieve these). Minimize digital pollution as much as possible (regularly clean your mailbox, only keep what is useful, avoid sending attachments and prefer drop-off sites for information sharing). Remember that organizing a green event is a marketing advantage.
- 7 Create a program that is energy efficient and promotes healthy habits (plan the start and end of each day when there is less traffic, include health breaks during the day – stretching sessions, healthy snacks, relaxation minutes and moments of silence).
- 8 Sustainable transportation (public transportation, shuttle buses, bicycles, walking, parking options for bicycles).
- 9 Find partners and service providers who offer sustainable services (make a list). Give precise guidelines and inform your organizing team what is expected from them.
- 10 Food and beverages (prefer local and seasonal produce, avoid over packaging, and favor non-packaged food, use reusable dishes, e.g., the service of renting reusable deposit cups and dishes, prefer tap water or water in glass bottles, avoid using plastic straws, sort food waste, avoid over-ordering).

- 11 Collaborate with local small enterprises both when it comes to food, as well as souvenirs or gifts. Favor things that have value and a story to tell.
- 12 When planning name tags, decorations etc. focus on recycling (use things that have been used before or make new ones in such a way that you can reuse these for future events).

During your event

- 13 Monitor waste management, use all-natural or eco-friendly cleaning products.
- 14 Avoid food waste (plan beforehand what to do when you have fewer participants than expected and you have a large quantity of leftover food, for example, work with charity organizations like the Food Bank).
- 15 Utilizing technology (electronic signage, conference app with online program and option to book lectures, sending reminders about starting time and directions etc.). To reduce digital pollution, promote technology free moments, e.g., switching off mobile phones during a certain lecture.
- 16 Offer local heritage and nature friendly tours and additional programs both for participants as well as accompanying persons (small groups, walking, content that introduces local traditions and does not disturb local community).
- 17 Avoid handing out pointless materials (conference swag ja gifts). Prefer experiences, donations or practical items that can be used more than once.
- 18 Supporting the local community (charity projects, e.g., things that match the conference topic and that participants can support, if they wish).

After your event

- 19 Summarize your green activities and evaluate the outcome.
- 20 Inform the attendees of the achieved results to maximize the spread of your green message.
- 21 If possible, share your experiences with the wider public through digital media.

In case of international events follow the [Green Key](#), [ISO 20121](#) and [EIC standards](#).