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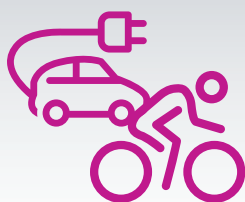
## SUSTAINABLE@WORK

*Guidelines on organising  
sustainable meetings and  
events at the Commission*

Approved by the EMAS Steering Committee on



**30/07/2018**



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EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL  
HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY  
Directorate HR.D. – Health & Wellbeing – Working Conditions  
EMAS Coordination Team



## ***Guidelines on organising sustainable meetings and events at the Commission***

Approved by the EMAS Steering Committee on 30/07/2018

### **Foreword**

The European Commission is responsible for policies and regulations designed to ensure that Member States develop more sustainable economies thereby reducing their environmental impact to the benefit of all interested parties including EU citizens. Initiatives such as the Clean Energy Package, successive Water Framework Directives, the Circular Economy Package, the European Plastics Strategy, and support for the Paris climate agreement ensure that Europe leads in delivering a more sustainable future in line with the global vision provided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

As expected, the Commission leads by example in reducing the environmental impact of its everyday activities, being the first EU Institution to be registered under the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) in 2005. Currently, the EMAS registration includes its eight largest sites in Europe: Brussels, Luxembourg, JRCs Geel (Belgium), Petten (Netherlands), Sevilla (Spain), Karlsruhe (Germany), and Ispra (Italy), along with DG SANTE at Grange (Ireland). Moreover, under EMAS, the Commission has committed to continuously reduce its environmental impact, and progress towards 2020 targets for its core environmental parameters.

*The purpose of this Guide is to offer advice to EC-staff on how to organise more sustainable meetings and events, demonstrating that we 'practice what we preach' as we seek to reduce our environmental impact.*

By following at least the minimum requirements set out in this guide, meetings and event organisers will contribute to the Commission's overall environmental commitments and long-term objectives.

Uniting our efforts in organising more sustainable meetings and events will significantly contribute to improving the Commission's environmental performance and deliver significant benefits by implementing the Commission's vision of a more sustainable European Union.

## Introduction

Meetings, conferences and other events are standard business practice within the European Commission for the simple reason that they are often the most time-efficient and effective way of exchanging ideas and know-how, identifying solutions and reaching agreement, while creating ‘face-to-face’ communication. However, they can leave a significant environmental footprint – by consuming energy, water and other natural resources, generating waste, causing air pollution, indirectly contributing to soil and water pollution, and to climate change through greenhouse gas emissions.

Of course, meetings and events will continue due to their many indisputable benefits. This Guide<sup>1</sup> is designed as a practical tool to help event planners maximise the positive environmental impacts and minimise the potential negative ones in the course of planning and delivering meetings and events.

*A sustainable or ‘green’ event is one designed, organised and implemented in a way that minimises potential negative impacts and leaves a beneficial legacy for the host community and all involved<sup>2</sup>.*

What are the concrete benefits of sustainable meetings and events?

- **Environmental benefits and financial savings:** saving resources, reducing energy use, reducing waste, purchasing organic and sustainable products, opting for more sustainable food choices and simply consuming less can eventually save money and reap environmental benefits. Initially there might be a higher price, as a result of the lower current market demand for sustainable goods and services. However, applying sustainability principles will in the long term reduce costs (e.g. less printed material, less waste to be collected) and, most importantly, help reduce our collective carbon/climate footprint. Moreover, increasing demand for more sustainable products can bring down prices and stimulate the market for more sustainability.
- **Reputation and public image:** by organising sustainable events, we adhere to the Commission’s political commitment under the eco-management and audit scheme (EMAS) to continuously reduce its environmental impact and to pursue the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Conference participants and the general public are becoming increasingly aware of environmental issues and expect the Commission to ‘lead by example’, paving the way for a more sustainable and equitable world.
- **Multiplier effect and triggering innovation:** other EU institutions and agencies, national and local authorities, private companies, and civil society organisations already look up to the Commission as a point of reference and an inspiration in terms of environmental and social improvements in all aspects of their operations, including event organisation. Organising sustainable meetings and events may inspire others to follow in the Commission’s footsteps and further promote innovative green techniques, such as using little or no promotional material; avoiding gadgets, or choosing ones which are eco-labelled, fair-trade and can be reused for practical purposes; and serving seasonal (and/or organic) food and drinks, as well as offering a wider choice of plant-based food.

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<sup>1</sup> To be updated every two years in line with any latest developments at EC-level.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from the UNEP Green Meeting Guide 2009 and based on the principles developed at the ICLEI Greening Events Symposium in Barcelona, Spain, September 2004.

## 7 simple steps for making your events more sustainable!

The main issues that should be considered to significantly reduce the environmental impact when organising an event are presented below. You can complete the summary checklist on pages 4 to 6 to keep a record of how you have taken them into account for a particular event.

A more detailed explanation of what you can do for each step, and supporting information, is provided in the following pages.

7 simple steps	Pages
<b>Step 0: <i>Is a physical meeting/event necessary?</i></b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Step 1: <i>Is the venue sustainable enough?</i></b>	<b>8</b>
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For each of the above steps, there are two categories of ‘greening’ actions:

- (i) *minimum requirements* which all Commission events and meetings should meet to contribute to continual reduction of environmental footprint<sup>3</sup> and
- (ii) *advanced options* with more ambitious sustainability goals for event organisers who wish to go further.

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<sup>3</sup> For further details, refer to the European Commission’s Environmental Policy as part of its annual Environmental Statement see at: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/emas\\_registrations/emas\\_in\\_the\\_european\\_institutions\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/emas_registrations/emas_in_the_european_institutions_en.htm)

## Planning checklist for a proposed event or meeting

<b>Completed by:</b>	<b>Event Description:</b> <b>Date:</b>
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<b>Step 0: Is a physical meeting/event necessary?</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Minimum requirements</b>		
Reflection on the need to hold a physical meeting/event.		
Replacement of a meeting (if relevant/appropriate) by an audio/video conference or webinar, possibly supported by additional corporate solutions for collaboration.		
<b>Advanced options</b>		
Use of a sustainable event management system (e.g. ISO 20121) or environmental management scheme (e.g. EMAS) internally or by suppliers/contractors.		

<b>Step 1: Is the venue sustainable enough?</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Minimum requirements</b>		
Easy access by public transport, bike/walking and availability of secure bike parking facilities		
Energy efficient building		
Waste collection and recycling system in place		
Additional ICT facilities available allowing virtual (remote) participation		
Limited customization of room needed: (a) Limited transportation necessary for equipment and persons and (b) Pre-set meeting room layout (rather than customized room, which implies use of additional resources)		
<b>Advanced options</b>		
Venue with an environmental management system in place (e.g. EMAS)		

<b>Step 2: Are the promotional material sustainable?</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Minimum requirements</b>		
Use of on-line promotional tools (e.g. on-line registration, on-line communication material and resources)		

No use, or limited and optimised use, of printed promotional material (e.g. eco-friendly design & printing)		
Avoid and limit distribution of promotional gadgets and gifts (e.g. minimise the number and include eco-friendly criteria)		
Request the minimum office supplies, choose them recycled, rechargeable and made of natural material, collect them after the event for future use		
Re-use conference materials from past events for the same purpose (e.g. stands, general banners)		
<b>Advanced options</b>		
Re-use conference materials from past events for different purpose (e.g. old banners turned into bags)		

<b>Step 3: Are the 3 Rs applied? Reduce, Reuse, Recycle</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Minimum requirements</b>		
Minimise waste (e.g. reduce printed material and gadgets, packaging, single-use items, food waste)		
Recycle waste via an appropriate system of waste sorting, collection and recycling		
<b>Advanced options</b>		
Organise a 'zero waste' event		

<b>Step 4: Is the catering sustainable?</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Minimum requirements</b>		
Choose seasonal (and/or organic) food and drinks		
Offer a larger choice of plant-based food options		
Prevent food waste and avoid single-use items (e.g. use reusable cutlery and crockery, drinking water in jugs)		
<b>Advanced options</b>		
Propose a full vegetarian or vegan menu, as well		
Give extra points in the selection procedure to certified caterers applying environmental management schemes (e.g. EMAS)		

Explore food donations of leftover food in collaboration with the catering sub-contractor (when possible).		
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<b>Step 5: Are the accommodation &amp; transport for participants environmentally friendly?</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Minimum requirements</b>		
Recommend accommodation close to the venue and easily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling		
Information on sustainable commuting provided to participants (e.g. maps, timetables)		
Recommend that participants use more sustainable modes of transport (e.g. train instead of air travel)		
<b>Advanced options</b>		
Choose certified hotels that apply sustainable operations (e.g. Green Key, EU Ecolabel) or an environmental management system (e.g. EMAS)		
Recommend that participants compensate the GHG emissions from their travel		

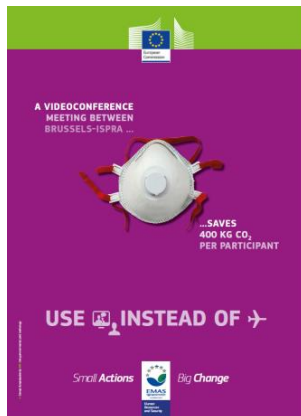
<b>Step 6: Are social aspects considered?</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Minimum requirements</b>		
Require companies to apply eco-friendly procedures when performing the contract, or to employ staff in a socially-conscious manner (e.g. complying with safety and labour rules, employing disadvantaged/long-term unemployed), even among sub-contractors (e.g. catering, accommodation)		
<b>Advanced options</b>		
Select fair trade products (e.g. promotional material and gadgets)		

<b>Step 7: Are you sharing environmental awareness?</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Minimum requirements</b>		
Communicate the sustainability of your event (e.g. involve participants and stakeholders, follow-up communication)		
<b>Advanced options</b>		
Implement a sustainable event management system (e.g. ISO 20121) or environmental management schemes (e.g. EMAS), directly or via suppliers/sub-contractors		



## Step 0: Is a physical meeting/event necessary?

<b>Minimum requirements</b>
Reflection on the need to hold a physical meeting/event.
Replacement of a meeting (if relevant/appropriate) by an audio/video conference or webinar, possibly supported by additional corporate solutions for collaboration.
<b>Advanced options</b>
Use of a sustainable event management system (e.g. ISO 20121) or environmental management scheme (e.g. EMAS) internally or by suppliers/contractors.



The preliminary stage, before planning any Commission event, should include a short reflection on whether a physical meeting is really necessary, and the optimal duration of the event. Many meetings can easily be replaced by audio/videoconference alternatives.

There are several corporate solutions for collaboration available<sup>4</sup> (e.g. My IntraComm Collaboration, CONNECTED, Yammer, Wikis, CIRCABC) offering multiple possibilities for exchanging documents and working together on the compilation of a common document, and holding virtual meetings which can also include external participants (e.g. webinars through the BT software).

There are currently more than 600 videoconference studios and meeting rooms available in Commission premises, and options for video/audio conferences and/or webinars via internet from almost any Commission workstation<sup>5</sup>. For example, an upcoming deployment of 'Skype for the office'<sup>6</sup> with seamless videoconferencing will be available for everyone in the Commission from his/her PC.

Once the need for a physical meeting has been assessed, consider using a sustainable event management system (e.g. ISO 20121) or environmental management system (e.g. EMAS), via the contractors/suppliers who are organising the event for you. All the steps listed in the rest of this guide should be followed either internally or by the contractor.

*The 'Digital Workplace of the Future' could actually be here already.*

## Step 1: Is the venue sustainable enough?

<b>Minimum requirements</b>
Easy access by public transport, bike/walking and availability of secure bike parking facilities
Energy efficient building
Waste selective collection and recycling system in place
Additional ICT facilities available allowing virtual (remote) participation
Limited customization of room needed: (a) Limited transportation necessary for equipment and persons and (b) Pre-set meeting room layout (rather than customized room, which implies use of additional resources)

<sup>4</sup> <https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/together/Pages/welcome.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cc.cec/itservices/en/content/video-conferencing-meeting-rooms>

<sup>6</sup> <https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/news/AuQuotidien/Pages/ucc-skype-for-the-office.aspx>

## Advanced options

Venue with an environmental management system in place (e.g. EMAS)



Selection of the right venue is of paramount importance for the overall environmental impact of the event. The location should be easily accessible by public transport and other less-polluting modes like cycling and walking, and should have adequate secure bicycle parking facilities. Preference should

be given to energy efficient buildings that maximise the use of daylight and are managed in an energy-efficient manner. Needless to say, that ideally advanced waste collection and recycling systems should already be in place. Additional ICT facilities, such as videoconferencing and webstreaming, can significantly reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and save time and money.

Moreover, when organising an event the first decision concerning the venue should be taken with care. If an existing venue does not require any customization at all, it should be selected as a preference. Customization of spaces for very short events requires intensive use of transport and removal companies, meaning additional environmental impact.

Lastly, you should consider the overall management of the venue, for example procurement and cleaning policies. If the venue is within EMAS registered premises, this should ensure that actions are in place to reduce its environmental impact.



### Useful to know:

At present **92%** of all Commission premises in Europe are EMAS registered! This includes all office buildings in Brussels, the majority of the buildings in Luxembourg, all JRC sites across Europe, and DG SANTE-Grange. This means that they are managed following energy-efficient practices and implement extensive waste management. And of course, they have parking spaces for bikes (depending on the current demand by the users) and some have even charging stations for e-vehicles!<sup>7</sup>

*The selection of your event's location determines more than half of its overall environmental impact!*

## Step 2: Are the printed and promotional material sustainable?

Minimum requirements
Use of on-line promotional tools (e.g. on-line registration, on-line communication material and resources)
No use, or limited and optimised use, of printed promotional material (e.g. eco-friendly design & printing)
Avoid and limit distribution of promotional gadgets and gifts (e.g. minimise the number and include eco-friendly criteria)
Request the minimum office supplies, choose them recycled, rechargeable and made of natural

<sup>7</sup> Charging stations for electric vehicles are currently available in Brussels at DM28, as well as 122 additional charging points available in in B-28, BERL, BU25, CHAR, CSM1, F101, J-79, LX46, MAD0, NOHE, ORBN and OVER.

material, collect them after the event for future use
Re-use conference materials from past events for the same purpose (e.g. stands, general banners)
<b>Advanced options</b>
Re-use conference materials from past events for different purpose (e.g. old banners turned into bags)



Less is more...! The design of the communication of your event should include a reflection on the optimal use of natural resources. This means avoiding or limiting the use of printouts, and thinking well in advance about what printed promotional material (brochures / leaflets / posters) is

really needed to ensure that it is really effective. For example, on-line registration and electronic pre- and post-meeting communication and resources are recommended, as well as the use of reusable banners (with a generic title and space to add removable stickers with more specific information). If it is really necessary to print documents, try to use eco-friendly printing, e.g. use ecolabel paper, print double-sided, and try to reduce the text and number of pages as much as possible.

The distribution of gadgets, promotional material, bags and gifts should be avoided if possible, or minimised, and they should be produced with sustainable materials (recycled or organic) and serve a useful purpose. If possible, you should also consider products from local social economy projects. Lastly, conference materials from past events could be re-used for the same purpose (e.g. stands, general banners) or a different purpose (e.g. old banners made into bags).

Similar rationales apply to office supplies: you should think "What are my real needs?" and request as few articles as possible and with the least impact on the environment. Priority should be given to reusable and fully recyclable articles, such as rechargeable recycled marker pens, to solvent-free glue and correction fluid, and consumables made of natural material rather than plastic (pencils rather than ball pens). In case supplies are provided internally you should collect them after the event and return them to the office supply stock of your service for future use. When paper and printouts are supplied externally, remember to request recycled paper or paper made of a mixture recycles fibres and virgin fibres originating from sustainable forests.



### Did you know?

The Commission has a framework contract for turning its giant banners into hand-made recycled handbags. For example, we used one giant banner from the Berlaymont building to make 276 hand-made panniers for Commission service bikes. See the video on the afterlife of Commission banners<sup>8</sup>.

More information: [OIB-RE3-EMAS@ec.europa.eu](mailto:OIB-RE3-EMAS@ec.europa.eu)

*You would create a bigger impression on your participants if they were to receive "less".*

<sup>8</sup> [https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/staff/Documents/buildings-transport/environment/emas/EMAS\\_The%20recycle%20stories\\_Banners.wmv](https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/staff/Documents/buildings-transport/environment/emas/EMAS_The%20recycle%20stories_Banners.wmv)

### Step 3: Are the 3 Rs applied? Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

<b>Minimum requirements</b>
Minimise waste (e.g. avoid and if not possible reduce printed material and gadgets, packaging, single-use items, food waste)
Recycle waste via an appropriate system of waste sorting, collection and recycling
<b>Advanced options</b>
Organise a 'zero waste' event



The 3 Rs principle (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) should be considered in all aspects of the event's design, organisation and follow-up communication. This easy-to-remember summary of the waste hierarchy sets the order of priority to consider: first reduce, i.e. avoid (where possible) or minimise material throughout; then reuse, i.e. find a second useful life; and finally, ensure the materials are recycled. For example, minimising printed material, reducing packaging and single-use items, and avoiding ordering more food and drinks than are actually needed are

among the key recommendations that help minimise waste generation.

As regards recycling, an appropriate system of waste sorting, collection and recycling should be in place (as it is already the case in all EC-premises), while promotional materials made of recycled goods are highly recommended. Lastly, you may set the bar even higher by trying to organise a 'zero waste' event. Zero Waste is a philosophy that encourages redesign of resource life cycles so that all products are reused. No trash is sent to landfills or incinerators. The process recommended is one similar to the way that resources are reused in nature. Zero Waste Europe<sup>9</sup> ([www.zerowasteurope.eu](http://www.zerowasteurope.eu)) fosters development of the concept in Europe and organises activities to promote it.



*The 3 Rs is the roadmap for waste-conscious events.*

### Step 4: Is the catering sustainable?

<b>Minimum requirements</b>
Choose seasonal (and/or organic) food and drinks
Offer a larger choice of plant-based food options
Prevent food waste and avoid single-use items (e.g. use reusable cutlery and crockery, drinking water in jugs)
<b>Advanced options</b>
Propose a full vegetarian or vegan menu, as well
Give extra points in the selection procedure to certified caterers applying environmental management schemes (e.g. EMAS)
Explore food donations of leftover food in collaboration with the catering sub-contractor (when possible).

<sup>9</sup> Zero Waste Europe connects and supports a vibrant network of 30 national and local NGOs promoting the Zero Waste strategy as a way to make Europe more sustainable.



The significant environmental impact of our food choices is becoming more and more evident, since the environmental impacts of meat and dairy are higher than of plant-based dishes (see FAO report 2013<sup>10</sup>). When planning the menu for your event, the first meaningful choice is to opt for a healthy and balanced diet, with moderate meat content and seasonal (and/or organic) products. A well-planned menu

with a wider variety of plant-based food can be nutritionally balanced and tasty (as demonstrated by the success stories in the annex), while having a reduced impact on climate change and offering benefits for participants' health, as evidenced by several international studies (including EPIC). Moreover, all health guidance documents (such as from the World Health Organisation) are underlining the need to eat more fruit, vegetables, legumes, nuts and whole grains while reducing saturated and hydrogenated fats.

If possible, opt for drinking tap water by choosing refillable carafes and glass containers and/or ask your participants to use the water fountains (gradually being installed in most buildings in Brussels), thus avoiding needless disposable plastic bottles and unnecessary waste. Avoid wasting food by determining the exact number of participants a few days before the event, by sending a reminder to all participants to confirm their presence at any lunch/social activities. Currently, food waste generated during the food preparation of in EC- restaurants is collected and used for the production of electricity via biomethanisation process in Brussels and in Luxembourg, while is used for the production of compost donated to local farmers in Ispra. Donating leftover food that has not been served is a complex issue for the Commission in Brussels owing to the need to respect the health and food safety standards<sup>11</sup>. However, such options may be further explored by the event organisers in close collaboration with their catering sub-contractors on case-by-case basis.

**Please recycle your empty paper cup in the special bin**

More information on My Intracomm Commission's Pledge for the Oceans

You can also use your own washable cup

Overall, considering other types of waste, avoid single-use disposable items and opt for reusable dishes, cutlery and crockery. Lastly, if possible, while choosing your caterer you may consider organic, and Fair Trade products and/or whether they implement specific environmental management schemes (e.g. EMAS). To avoid having no candidates to the call of tender, you may simply add this criterion as bonus point in the award criteria. The catering contractor should also manage food waste responsibly (i.e. separate recyclable items, to be sent for recycling, and food waste, to be sent for anaerobic digestion or composting). Terms of reference for



<sup>10</sup>The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations report on Livestock's Long Shadow (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/018/i3437e/i3437e.pdf>).

<sup>11</sup> EU Food Donation Guidelines by DG SANTE (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2017:361:TOC>)



bigger events are the right place to define what you expect in terms of catering, e.g. sustainable and a wider variety of plant-based, which will in turn define the choice of caterer.

**Did you know?**  
 As announced by First Vice-President Timmermans at the 'Our Oceans' conference in October 2017, the Commission has phased out all single-use plastic cups in its buildings in Brussels. Plastic cups have progressively been replaced by recyclable paper cups. As part of the process, the Commission is placing new, specific bins for the paper cups in all buildings, close to each vending machine, water fountain and in the cafeterias. You will recognise them easily from the round holes on the top. This is where you should discard your empty cups, so they can be recycled.

But this is only the beginning...  
 As decided in the EMAS Steering Committee in January 2017: *'To fight waste and promote sustainability, the Commission should avoid using single-use items, including plastics where possible. Corresponding actions will be incorporated into the EMAS management system, enabling their implementation in an organised and sustainable manner. The Commission will study and implement actions to reduce or remove single-use items, particularly from catering, meetings and conferences.'*

*What event participants put on their plates tells a lot about what kind of host you are.*

**Step 5: Are the accommodation & transport for participants environmentally friendly?**

<b>Minimum requirements</b>
Recommend accommodation close to the venue and easily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling
Information on sustainable commuting provided to participants (e.g. maps, timetables)
Recommend that participants use more sustainable modes of transport (e.g. train instead of air travel)
<b>Advanced options</b>
Choose certified hotels that apply sustainable operations (e.g. Green Key, EU Ecolabel) or an environmental management system (e.g. EMAS)
Recommend that participants offset the GHG emissions from their travel



The accommodation recommended for your participants should be close to the venue or well connected by public transport. Ideally, it should be possible for participants to walk or cycle to the venue, so the hotels you recommend should make bikes available to their guests or be located close to a public bike sharing station. Unfortunately, this is more complex for the remote EC-sites (e.g. Ispra). In this case, a combined shuttle service could be organised for the event participants to minimize the environmental impact from their transport.

Hotels that implement energy and natural resources efficiency policies, advanced waste management schemes, sustainable catering and ecological cleaning practices should be preferred. International and EU standards, such as the EU Ecolabel for Tourist Accommodation, EMAS or Green

Key<sup>12</sup> may provide further guarantees that the accommodation meets high environmental standards. Large hotel chains may more easily accommodate large number of guests and provide high-quality and often environmentally certified services. However, smaller hotels that have good environmental performance and implement corporate social responsibility policies may have an additional important benefit to both the environment and local communities.



Participants should be provided with clear and visible information about how to reach the conference venue on foot, by bike or by public transport, or even by carpooling and car sharing (ideally of hybrid and electric cars), including maps, timetables and practical information. You could suggest that they choose more sustainable modes of transport wherever possible, for example, train instead of air travel. They may also be interested in compensating for the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from their travel. Several schemes such as Atmosfair (see [www.atmosfair.de](http://www.atmosfair.de)) calculate the amount of GHG emissions generated by flights and determine a monetary amount that the travellers can pay to compensate them. There are different ambition levels when it comes to GHG emissions' compensation schemes, the CDM<sup>13</sup> gold standards being the strongest. The donations are used to finance ecological projects, which compensate their emissions.

#### Did you know?

Travganic (<https://travganic.com/>) one of the first global green travel web databases has recently promoted EMAS and the EU Ecolabel as a way to identify accommodation committed to sustainability. Another booking portal that allows filtering by green labels (including EMAS and the EU Ecolabel) is BookDifferent (<https://www.bookdifferent.com/en/>).

*Getting to the venue is as important as being there.*

#### Step 6: Are social aspects considered?

<b>Minimum requirements</b>
Require companies to apply eco-friendly procedures when performing the contract, or to employ staff in a socially-conscious manner (e.g. complying with safety and labour rules), even among sub-contractors (e.g. catering, accommodation)
<b>Advanced options</b>
Select fair trade products (e.g. promotional material and gadgets)

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is about organisations taking responsibility for their impact on society and acting in an ethical and transparent way that contributes to the health and welfare of society. While the main focus is enterprises, we also have an interest in how we interact with the communities which surround us.

<sup>12</sup> The Green Key award (<http://www.greenkey.global/>) is a leading standard of excellence in the field of environmental responsibility and sustainable operation within the tourism industry according to the strict criteria set by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE).

<sup>13</sup> The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) is one of the Flexible Mechanisms defined in the Kyoto Protocol (IPCC, 2007) that provides for emissions reduction projects which generate Certified Emission Reduction units (CERs) which may be traded in emissions trading schemes.



During the organisation of conferences and events, socio-economic aspects could be considered in addition to environmental ones. For example, select local eco-aware companies or social economy enterprises among the sub-contractors that employ staff in a socially-conscious manner (e.g. complying with safety and labour rules, employing disadvantaged/long-term unemployed) for your event organisation (e.g. catering, family-run accommodation);

request food that is seasonal (and/or organic), preferably plant-based; make sure that any seafood served is properly labelled, and, if possible, prefer organically farmed seafood; if possible, select fair trade products as promotional material and gadgets, thus empowering small-scale producers with limited market access.

#### Did you know?

The Commission has a Corporate Social Responsibility Adviser in the Health, Wellbeing and Working Conditions Directorate (DG HR.D), together with fit@work, EMAS, health and safety at work, and the medical services. CSR refers to our mandate to care for each other within the Commission; and for people in the communities which surround us.

*Caring about local communities is also part of organising an event.*

### Step 7: Are you sharing environmental awareness?

<b>Minimum requirements</b>
Communicate the sustainability of your event (e.g. involve participants and stakeholders, follow-up communication)
<b>Advanced options</b>
Implement a sustainable event management system (e.g. ISO 20121) or environmental management schemes (e.g. EMAS), directly or via suppliers/sub-contractors



Of course, if you have introduced environmental and sustainability criteria into the design and organisation of your event, you should further promote it! Inform your participants and other stakeholders about your practices via your usual communication channels in order to promote the sustainability of your event and engage those involved.

It is important to provide information during the event itself on why and how it is made more sustainable, by means of short speeches by the host or organisers, and promoting all sustainable initiatives at the event's website. References to international reports providing objective figures on climate change and the impact of our daily choices can also be interesting and reliable sources of information (see references at the end of the guidelines). It is also a good idea to ask participants for feedback about their participation in the making the event more sustainable, for instance how many of them returned their badges at the end for reuse/recycling. This may be done either via a quick feedback station at the exit or a questionnaire asking if they were aware of / supportive of / enthusiastic about / or (even) annoyed by the greening efforts.

Ideally, monitoring and reporting indicators should be set in advance, in order to quantify achievements, benchmark weaker areas, and set targets for future improvements. Following the



event, your success stories should be shared (e.g. post a 'sustainable' conference report on the website). By promoting the 'sustainable' service providers involved, you offer them visibility, which acts as an incentive for them to continue acting sustainably, while inspiring others to follow their example.

Lastly, as already presented in step 0, in order to further enhance the validity of your sustainability statement, you may choose to implement a sustainable event management system (e.g. ISO 20121), either directly or via relevant contractors/suppliers responsible for the organisation of your event. As an alternative to the event management system, suppliers and accommodation providers can also have in place an environmental management system (e.g. EMAS).

### Did you know?

Through the Commission's environmental management system (EMAS), we monitor our environmental performance on an annual basis, e.g. energy consumption, paper consumption, waste generation, waste sorting, GHG emissions, so by taking sustainable measures during the design and organisation of your event, you directly contribute to the improvement of our environmental performance. For further information, please see the Commission's latest Environmental Statement available on Europa<sup>14</sup>.



### Useful to know:



Since 2017, there is an **Interinstitutional Green Public Procurement (GPP) Helpdesk**, coordinated by the European Parliament. It is open to all Commission services, as well as to 7 other EU Institutions. The helpdesk can answer your GPP inquiries, provide customised support with development of green tender specifications, help market research on new sustainable products and services, give access to best-practices grouped in an interinstitutional database and offer presentations to EU staff about greening the purchases of goods and services.

Contact via e-mail: [gpp-helpdesk@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:gpp-helpdesk@europarl.europa.eu) and Tel: +32 78 480949

*Promoting your sustainable event may inspire others to follow your example.*

## Further reading

### Sustainable events

- European Commission – Joint Research Centre, 2015: Best Environmental Management Practice for the Public Administration Sector, 589p: <http://susproc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/activities/emas/documents/PublicAdminBEMP.pdf>
- Danish EU Presidency Sustainability Report, 2012: <http://www.sustainableeventsdenmark.org/danish-eu-presidency-sustainability-report>
- Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB), 2015: *Guidelines for the Sustainable Organisation of events*, 56p: [https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/sites/default/files/medien/376/publikationen/guidelines\\_for\\_the\\_sustainable\\_organisation\\_of\\_events\\_bf.pdf](https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/sites/default/files/medien/376/publikationen/guidelines_for_the_sustainable_organisation_of_events_bf.pdf)
- Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), 2011: *How to organise sustainable meetings & events in Brussels: A practical guide*, 12p: <http://www.iclei-europe.org/fileadmin/templates/iclei-europe/files/content/Brussels/bxl-greenmeetings-guide.PDF>

<sup>14</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/emas\\_registrations/emas\\_in\\_the\\_european\\_institutions\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/emas_registrations/emas_in_the_european_institutions_en.htm)

- Singapore Tourism Board, 2013: *Sustainability Guidelines for the Singapore MICE Industry*, 32p: [http://www.visitsingapore.com/content/dam/MICE/Global/downloads/STB\\_sustainability\\_guidelines\\_manual\\_november\\_2013.pdf](http://www.visitsingapore.com/content/dam/MICE/Global/downloads/STB_sustainability_guidelines_manual_november_2013.pdf)
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 2009: *Green Meeting Guide 2009 – Roll out the green carpet for your participants*, 69p: [http://www.iclei-europe.org/fileadmin/templates/iclei-europe/files/content/Topics/Sustainable\\_Events/GreenMeetingGuide.pdf](http://www.iclei-europe.org/fileadmin/templates/iclei-europe/files/content/Topics/Sustainable_Events/GreenMeetingGuide.pdf)
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 2012: *Sustainable events guide - Give your large event a small footprint*, 104p: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/pdf/Buying-Green-Handbook-3rd-Edition.pdf>

### Green Public Procurement (GPP)

- European Commission, DG Environment, 2016: *Buying Green! A handbook on green public procurement* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), 80p: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/pdf/Buying-Green-Handbook-3rd-Edition.pdf>
- Barcelona City Council (Ajuntament de Barcelona) - Department of the Environment, 2010: *Guide to organising more sustainable congresses*, 68p: <http://www.uab.cat/servlet/BlobServer?blobtable=Document&blobcol=urldocument&blobheader=application/pdf&blobkey=id&blobwhere=1277793252550&blobnocache=true>
- Expo 2015 S.p.A. – Milano, 2014: *Green Procurement Guidelines*, 44p: [http://www.expo2015.org/archive/cs/Expo/1398463952547/LGP\\_GreenProcurement%20July%202014\\_ENG.pdf%3Bfilename\\_%3DUTF-8"LGP\\_GreenProcurement%20July%202014\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.expo2015.org/archive/cs/Expo/1398463952547/LGP_GreenProcurement%20July%202014_ENG.pdf%3Bfilename_%3DUTF-8)

### Sustainable catering

- European Commission, DG Environment, *GPP criteria for Food & catering*<sup>15</sup>: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/eu\\_gpp\\_criteria\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/eu_gpp_criteria_en.htm)
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) - Office for Sustainability: *Guide to sustainable catering - Zero Waste Planning Guide Chapter*, 8p: [http://web.mit.edu/workinggreen/docs/sustainable\\_catering\\_guide.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/workinggreen/docs/sustainable_catering_guide.pdf)
- Queensland Health, Metro South Health Service, Nutrition Promotion Unit, 2010: *Catering for the environment – How to create an environmentally friendly event*, 11p: <http://www.ecofriendlyfood.org.au/media/pdf/Catering%20Guidelines.pdf>

### Additional useful references

- Bund-Bundesländernetzwerk, 2009: *Green Events – Austria*, 13p (in German): [https://www.google.be/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0ahUKEwj\\_37r\\_1ZnTAhXkAcAKHeyNAYUQFggjMAE&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bmlfuw.gv.at%2Fdam%2Ficr%3Afd9eebd-870a-4b72-9e93-50d08958a079%2FNewsletter\\_20Bund\\_20Bundesl\\_ndernetzwerk\\_Nov2009.pdf&usq=AFQjCNHCl-J9bZ\\_6NPz9-4svuRqZdADGAQ&sig2=eXvswMg5G9SpgSX8ASs85A&bvm=bv.152174688,d.ZGg&cad=rja](https://www.google.be/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0ahUKEwj_37r_1ZnTAhXkAcAKHeyNAYUQFggjMAE&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bmlfuw.gv.at%2Fdam%2Ficr%3Afd9eebd-870a-4b72-9e93-50d08958a079%2FNewsletter_20Bund_20Bundesl_ndernetzwerk_Nov2009.pdf&usq=AFQjCNHCl-J9bZ_6NPz9-4svuRqZdADGAQ&sig2=eXvswMg5G9SpgSX8ASs85A&bvm=bv.152174688,d.ZGg&cad=rja)
- Brussels Environment (IBGE), 2016: *Meetings go Green*, 24p (in French): [http://www.beci.be/media/uploads/public/\\_custom/Meetings\\_Go\\_Green\\_FR\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.beci.be/media/uploads/public/_custom/Meetings_Go_Green_FR_WEB.pdf)

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Page 11: Photo by Rosanna Maiolino, 'Daily food, daily garbage' photo exhibition, hosted by the European Commission (2010-2011).

<sup>15</sup> New criteria are expected during 2018-2019.

## Annex: Examples of best-practice and eco-tips

### *Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA+) Launch Event & sustainable aspects of the conference*

Interview with Meropi Panelli - Policy Officer, DG DEVCO

#### Tell us about the Launch Event of the Global Climate Change Alliance

The Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) is an EU flagship initiative through which it supports the world's poorest and most vulnerable countries in tackling climate change. Since 2007, GCCA has supported 51 programmes across 38 least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS) and eight regions of the world to build low-carbon, climate-resilient societies. Holistic and integrated approaches include setting up climate-resilient eco-villages and nature-based solutions to climate change adaptation ([www.gcca.eu](http://www.gcca.eu)).

At the launch event of the new phase of the GCCA+, on 29 October 2015, the Commission (i.e. DG DEVCO, which administers the funds on behalf of the EU) demonstrated that it 'walks the talk' and provided a living example of a concrete action for the planet.

#### What can you tell us about the measures taken to reduce the carbon/climate footprint of the launch event?



We took every possible measure to reduce the carbon/climate footprint of the launch event: we minimised the use of paper in the conference kit; most documentation was provided on a USB key (for future use). We reduced as much as possible the provision of gadgets and promotional material, and finally all materials provided were sustainable. Paper for notepads was recycled and certified; we included this information on the front page of the pads. Pens were made of biodegradable plastic. We used cloth conference bags. We avoided plastic water bottles: water was served in glass flasks with proper glasses. Participants' travel carbon footprint was offset via an NGO that invests the revenues in funding projects focused on reducing global climate change. Last but not least, the catering of the event was plant-based, local, organic or fair trade. By serving a vegetarian lunch to 150 participants we saved the equivalent emissions of around 600 km of a mid-sized petrol car (compared to a 40% meat-based buffet). This made a big contribution to the reduction of the environmental footprint of the event.

We also took care in communicating the measures taken. We included the attached leaflet entitled '*A concrete action for the planet*'<sup>16</sup> in the conference kit. We prepared a PowerPoint with these measures and asked the event moderator to announce them to the audience. We included a green-clip with these measures at the end of each video produced from the event – the main event video and several videos with interviews of the speakers and participants:

- EU launches GCCA+ to tackle climate change in developing countries: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKfxVAHzftM>
- GCCA Bhutan
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bha9GrPEXP4>

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.gcca.eu/sites/default/files/Holako/gcca\\_launch\\_a\\_concrete\\_action\\_for\\_the\\_planet-2.pdf](http://www.gcca.eu/sites/default/files/Holako/gcca_launch_a_concrete_action_for_the_planet-2.pdf)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bha9GrPEXP4>
- GCCA Mozambique: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SqF0jrj9c0>
- GCCA Chad: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpAGymoln7I>

### What are the lessons learned from this experience?

We have overcome a number of challenges and learned a lot! First, we realised that our contractors had limited knowledge and experience of organising sustainable events. We had to coach them and keep an eye on every detail. For example, they offered a very limited choice of eco-friendly materials in their product catalogue. They proposed a USB key made of biodegradable plastic, but it had a recycled aluminium coating that severely compromised its environmental footprint, as the aluminium industry is very energy intensive. They had no experience of how to offset the participants' travel (although it was in the terms of reference), nor how to calculate the CO<sub>2</sub> savings from the vegetarian catering. Another challenge was the fully vegetarian catering. The awareness of the chef of the hotel/conference venue was limited. I am grateful to my colleague, Josick van Dromme, that although from a different unit, she stayed with me until midnight to coach the chef of the hotel! Everything went well; the participants were very pleased with the high quality of the food, both in terms of nutritional balance and taste.

We shared our experience, communication materials and lessons learned with colleagues within DG DEVCO and other departments, e.g. the EMAS office, DG MARE and DG NEAR, and we are pleased to see that a compelling climate of change has been created towards greener events in the Commission. This guide will serve as a catalyst to this end. The inclusion of suggestions for 'standard' requirements in the terms of reference for procurement of event organisation services will be very useful. More ambitious terms of reference for the Commission's catering services would be another step forwards and EMAS could play an instrumental role there as well.

Little things can make big differences; this guide is further evidence that the European Commission cares about the planet. My best wishes for a broad uptake.

### **EU Maritime Day & sustainable aspects of the conference**

*Interview with Ioannis Sakiotis - Information and Communication Officer, DG MARE*



#### **Tell us about European Maritime Day (EMD)?**

It started in 2008. It is an annual event which gathers the European maritime community to raise the visibility of maritime sectors and support an integrated approach to maritime affairs.

#### **What can you tell us about the greening process?**

DG MARE has been traditionally oriented towards sustainability, so from the beginning of the organisation of the EMD conference, there was a

drive from both the European Commission and the host cities to use environmentally friendly materials, e.g. proper dishes and glasses for catering (instead of plastic ones), notepads from recycled paper and cotton bags for goodies.

That was a good start but in recent years, we noticed increasing interest among colleagues and participants to push for more sustainable choices. So starting with EMD 2013 in Valletta, we prepared specific guidelines in order to get a more sustainable event (biodegradable pens, organic

cotton bags, notepads from recycled, chloride-free paper). Over the years our 'cahier des charges' has become increasingly demanding in terms of sustainability. Today we apply every recommendation in the book.

### **What is the biggest challenge facing the organisers of a sustainable event?**

You have to keep your eyes on the ball. This year in Poole, at a coordination meeting one month ahead of the event, it turned out that there would be no room to set out the warm and cold buffets provided for in the contract, so the caterer offered to organise plastic lunch boxes instead. We insisted on using biodegradable corn starch boxes and we got them, together with special bins for the disposal of the leftovers and the lunch boxes. The content of the bins were directed to a compost-making facility after the conference.

### **Have you ever had any bad surprises?**

[Laughing] You know how it goes: you plan every detail of your event, your venue is within walking distance of most hotels, your USB sticks are certified plastic-free, and you have organised an airport shuttle to avoid individual taxi rides. Then you find out that the 1 200 spiral notepads you ordered are individually wrapped in plastic. At other times shape will defeat purpose: at EMD 2017 we had drinking fountains – to this day the most sustainable solution for drinks. The problem was that the recyclable paper beakers were so tiny that they could only hold one sip of water. And you could not even put them down: they were cones. But every failure is a lesson and this is why this guide is a terrific idea.

### **Have you ever pushed your sustainable agenda too far?**

Yes and no. This year we did not include a printed list of participants in the bags, since it was available online. People complained because a list like that is a useful networking tool. Rather than revert to printed lists, for next year we are looking at a networking app that will have participant emails.

### **What other sustainable events does DG MARE have in store?**

Of course we try to apply these principles to all our events. For example, we organised the 2017 edition of the [#OurOcean](#) conference in Malta for the first time. One of the key topics is marine pollution, i.e. essentially plastic. This means that we had to be absolutely exemplary on sustainability, and we were!

### ***Green Tips from a Green Week Organiser***

*Interview with Pam Weir - Green Week Coordinator/Campaigns and Events Team, DG Environment*

### **Pam, tell us about Green Week?**



It's the biggest annual European event to focus on environmental challenges and the EU policies that address them. There are events all round Europe, but it centres on a conference in Brussels. This year's theme was 'Green Jobs for a Greener Future', looking at trends in the employment situation for green industries around the EU.

We've been organising the conference for about fifteen years now, so it's quite a smooth machine. Since the



beginning, we've always tried to make it as environmentally friendly as possible. So the contracts have an environmental dimension built in from the outset, and contractors are expected to provide a green service.

A sustainable service covers everything from the conference materials to the catering. Overall, it means ensuring they concentrate on reducing waste and using resources as efficiently as possible.

**What does that mean in practice?**

For an organiser, it's really about keeping an eye on the practical things. The programme is printed on recycled paper, we try to recycle all waste, and we make sure that the proper recycling bins are prominently displayed. We try not to have paper versions of publications, and we encourage exhibitors to provide information on USB sticks or to use web links to their information instead of bringing printed brochures.



It also means fewer freebies being given away at the exhibition and ensuring that such things are made from materials that are recycled or that can be recycled. The badges are all reusable, and we ask participants to return their lanyard when they leave, so it can be used again at another event. They can return their delegate bag as well if they want, and as we don't have the year or the title printed on them, we can use them again next year.

**Is the food sustainable too?**

It's not all lettuce, but a lot of it is organic. It's also sourced locally. If there are any leftovers, they are sent to a charity that provides food for homeless people. We also use solid plates, cups, glasses and cutlery, rather than disposables, and we ask the caterers to serve water in jugs, rather than in plastic bottles.

**What about transport?**

Half the participants come from Belgium, and whenever it's practical, we encourage people to travel by train. The whole thing is webstreamed, so that cuts down on unnecessary journeys. And as there are satellite events taking place in other Member States, people don't always have to make the trek to Brussels. Although they'll miss the buzz. And the sustainable food!

**Eco-tips from SCIC on conference organisation**  
*Interview with Nele Fassnacht - Conference Organisation, DG Interpretation*

**SCIC is domain leader for conference organisation at the Commission. What do you do to make events more sustainable?**



There are a number of things we typically tell our client DGs from the start – for example that printing lots of paper which typically ends up in the rubbish bin is not a good idea! We also make

colleagues aware that our framework contract for promotional items includes a lot of sustainable options.

We like promotional items and things like roll-ups or other sign posting to be generic, for example with just the name of the DG and policy or Commission logo on them, without indication of the date or place. This makes it easier to use any leftover items for other events or for next year's event, if it takes place every year.

Procurement is another case in point: in our catering calls for tender we usually ask for proper drinking glasses, porcelain mugs and metal cutlery rather than plastic material. Not just because of sustainability concerns - honestly, the way an event looks and feels is too important to let it be spoilt by throw-away items.

We also ask caterers to give us as late a deadline as possible for confirming quantities, to reduce waste.

### **Are there any new things you are planning to do in the area of greening?**

Absolutely! There are a lot of new projects we are working on, and greening of events will play a role in many of them.

Our unit is setting up a network of conference correspondents which will meet for the first time this autumn. The network will give us an opportunity to present to colleagues what we are doing to make events more sustainable, but more importantly, to learn what other great things are being done by Commission colleagues that we haven't thought of yet, and to spread this knowledge far and wide.

On a more practical level, we have a whole series of new framework contracts that will be drafted soon, and where we will have to make sure that the services and products we are asking for are environmentally friendly.

Carbon compensation of participant or speaker travel is one example where we are only just starting to see how we can offer this as part of our services.

### **Any tips for event organisers?**

Consider environmental concerns as an incentive to find a better solution, not as a limitation. Putting documents on-line means less paper waste, but also more flexibility for deadlines and is more in line with the image we as a modern, paperless administration would like to convey. What's not to like?

Asking people to confirm their presence and reducing catering quantities if there are cancellations does mean a bit of extra work, but it also saves you some money. There are many other examples like this.

If you are enthusiastic about organising a sustainable event and if you offer solutions rather than pointing out problems, people will buy into your efforts. And don't forget to tell participants about all the good things you are doing for the environment!

