

Checklist for a sustainable EPFL event



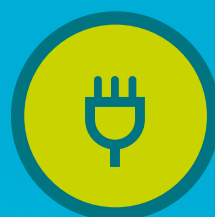
Purchasing
& facilities



Food & beverages



Marketing



Energy



Funding, sponsorships
& partnerships



Equal
opportunity



Waste
management



In-country
& international travel



Local transportation
& accommodations



Introduction

Sustainability is a priority at EPFL. The School has recently introduced an ambitious strategy in order to support the fight against climate change with the preparation of a bold [Climate & Sustainability Action Plan](#). Across EPFL, efforts have been stepped up in recent years to incorporate sustainability into everything we do – including the events we hold.

At Mediacom Events (MEV), we've teamed up with EPFL's Sustainability Unit and EPFL's Catering and Shops Unit (RESCO) to develop this checklist and help you plan a sustainable event.

This checklist applies to all events held by EPFL groups – such as research labs and student associations – either on or off campus, as well as events that non-EPFL groups hold on an EPFL site.

What is a sustainable event?

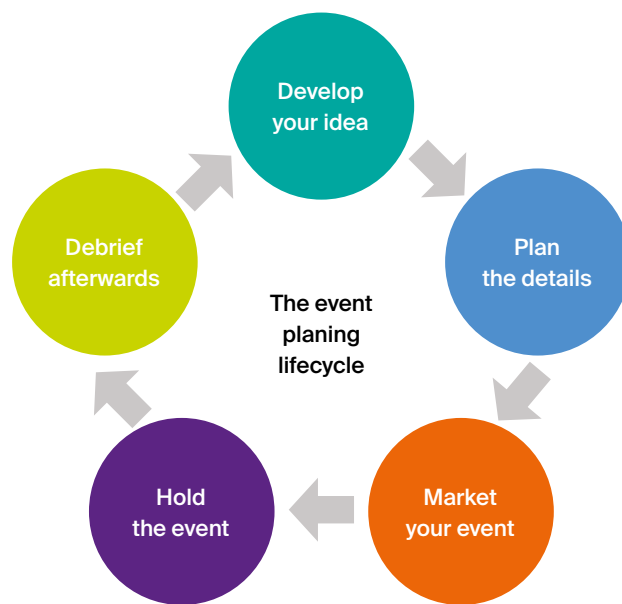
A sustainable event is one that's designed to minimize its environmental impact and deliver benefits to society and the local economy. It's also one that builds awareness and informs the community about sustainability-related issues.

Steps in planning a sustainable event

First, use this checklist to set sustainability-oriented SMART goals for your event (see Figure 1) and outline the corresponding measures you'll need to take. If you have a lot of goals, group them into "required," "doable" and "ideal." Be sure to follow the guidelines in EPFL's Climate & Sustainability Action Plan. Sustainability is something you should consider across the entire lifecycle of your event (see Figure 2). Once the event is over, we suggest you debrief with your organizing committee to see how effective your approach was and the extent to which you achieved your goals.

SMART goals

| Specific | Mesurable | Attainable | Realistic | Time-bound |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| The goal is simple and easily understood | The goal is quantifiable and tied to a performance indicator | You have the resources to reach the goal | The goal can be reached within the various constraints | You have set a deadline for reaching the goal |



If possible, appoint someone from your organizing committee to be in charge of sustainability.

Tell your suppliers and service providers that you want to hold a sustainable event, and work closely with them to help you achieve your sustainability goals.

Do some online research to see what EPFL and external event-planning resources are available. Here are a few:

1. The Canton of Vaud's [Kitmanif](#) (in French)
2. [Manifestation verte](#) (in French)
3. EPFL's [Sustainability Unit website](#)
4. EPFL's [sustainable travel guidelines](#)

Sustainability checklist by category

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>1. Purchasing & facilities</p>  | <p>2. Food & beverages</p>  | <p>3. Marketing</p>  |
| <p>4. Energy</p>  | <p>5. Funding, sponsorships & partnerships</p>  | <p>6. Equal opportunity</p>  |
| <p>7. Waste management</p>  | <p>8. In-country & international travel</p>  | <p>9. Local transportation & accommodations</p>  |



1. Purchasing & facilities

You should consider the carbon footprint of every item you buy or service you pay for. For instance, at EPFL we use only FSC-certified, 100% recycled paper and have established a [sustainability policy](#) for many of the goods and services we purchase through calls for tenders.

The venue you choose for your event should be accessible by everyone. EPFL's campus map shows areas that are designed specifically for holding events with disabled access.

Carefully **calculate** the products, services and facilities you'll need, to avoid purchasing too many or unnecessary things.

Select **sustainable equipment** whenever possible, such as dry toilets instead of chemical ones.

Think about the needs of your attendees by **adapting the facilities and services** during the event, such as child care, rest areas, a first-aid station, a lactation room, a diaper-changing room and services for the disabled.

Ask your suppliers for information on where they source their products, so you can make sure to **buy responsibly**. You can also check online resources for selecting sustainable suppliers, such as the [Swiss government's purchasing guidelines \(in French\)](#).

Make sure your event is **accessible** to all, including people with reduced mobility.



2. Food & beverages

The food industry is one of the largest CO₂ emitters and impacts the environment in various ways (e.g., the climate, water, biodiversity and soil).

There are many things you can do to source food and beverages sustainably. Here are some ideas.

Tell your caterer you want to hold a sustainable event and see what they suggest. A list of caterers on the EPFL campus is available [here](#).

Limit or where possible remove processed foods and foods with a large carbon footprint.

Offer menus including at least 50% of vegetarian options with a part that is totally vegan

Use **local** ingredients, **seasonal** produce and **fair-trade** products whenever possible.

Provide **water fountains** at your event, if possible connected to the municipal water supply (rather than using large plastic bottles).

Offer **locally sourced and produced** beverages and **limit non-renewable containers**.

Avoid serving coffee made using capsules.

Serve food in a way that **minimizes waste**. For instance, you could set up a buffet where guests are served, use smaller plates or offer individual portions.

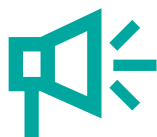
Choose options like finger food that **reduce the amount of packaging** required.

Avoid using plastic containers and disposable dishes and cups. Instead, use [returnable or reusable](#) ones.

Plan out how you will handle **food waste** once the event is over. One idea is the [Too Good to Go](#) app.

Did you know?

- EPFL has committed to providing more [vegetarian and vegan options](#) at its restaurants.



3. Marketing

Marketing your event is an important step in the event-planning process. Here too, you can take concrete action to promote sustainability in terms of both what you communicate (i.e., highlight the sustainability steps you're taking and build sustainability awareness among the partners you work with) and how (i.e., through low-carbon, inclusive communication channels).

Use your event as an **awareness-raising platform**. Openly promote the sustainability measures you've adopted and the efforts you'd like to see from participants.

Consider giving an **awards to participants or exhibitors who follow the sustainability guidelines** at your event. You could also reward sustainability-minded individuals through a ranking system or by showcasing them on your event website.

Use **sustainable marketing materials**, such as digital signs and posters, banners with no date so they can be reused, and staff T-shirts made from organic, certified and/or fair-trade cotton. You could also look into innovative, low-carbon ways to promote your event, such as with [Working Bicycle](#).

Use **digital communications** whenever possible. This could include creating a smartphone app for your event, posting the event program online and not printing out posters and flyers.

If you will be giving out gifts or prizes during your event, **choose sustainable ones** that support the local economy, such as artisanal and environmentally friendly products.

Use socially and environmentally responsible criteria when selecting your marketing materials (e.g., giveaways, T-shirts, promotional items, printouts and signs). One useful resource is the [Swiss government's sustainable purchasing guidelines \(in French\)](#).



4. **Energy**

EPFL is one of the biggest energy users in Vaud Canton. We have committed to meeting the [Swiss government's climate targets](#) of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 50% (from 2006 levels) by 2030 and becoming carbon neutral by 2050.

Don't leave windows open unnecessarily during the cold winter months.

Be sure to turn off all electrical equipment and devices (projectors, computers, coffee machines, etc.) whenever you leave a room, even if you're just taking a break, to save energy.

Did you know?

- EPFL's electricity comes in part from its solar park, but this production is not enough to cover the needs.
- Efforts are currently being made to optimize the energy efficiency of campus buildings. The beautiful views aren't the only advantage of having our campus near Lake Geneva. We also use the lake water for our [heating and cooling system](#).



5. **Funding, sponsorships & partnerships**

Holding a sustainable event is a collective effort. It requires working with all partners to map out socially and environmentally responsible measures to take.

Sustainability also extends to financial considerations.

Before working with a partner company from the private sector, check out the company's CSR initiatives and track record ¹. This could include looking into working conditions at the company and evaluating its performance in terms of human rights, the environment and fighting corruption.

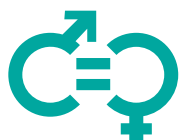
Look for companies and organizations that have **the same sustainability values** as the ones you want to promote through your event.

Try to find out how **the company or organization is funded**.

¹ The Swiss Federal Council set out its commitment to responsible business conduct in its 2020–2023 CSR Action Plan, as adopted on 15 January 2020. [More information](#).

Ask sponsors to provide **reusable banners and promotional materials**. Suggest they display their logo on your website, as opposed to distributing items that can be used only for the event and will be thrown away once it's over.

Consider **partnering** with public transportation operators, providers of clean-energy systems and other companies offering low-carbon products and services that can help make your event more sustainable.



6. Equal opportunity

Equal opportunity is an integral part of EPFL's development and excellence policy. One goal of our new Vice Presidency for Responsible Transformation is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live up to their full potential regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin or any disability. This is a fundamental principle that all EPFL events must adhere to.

Make sure that diversity – with regard to gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin or disability – is **incorporated into your event's goals**.

Carry out a gender **equality assessment**. Several tools and methods are available, such as the [AFNOR certification process](#).

Actively identify and eliminate any situations at your event that could lead to harassment or discrimination. If you are a victim of harassment or discrimination, or witness such behavior, you can get help [here](#).

Use your event as a **platform for building awareness**, and communicate openly about the equal opportunity measures you have adopted.



7. Waste management

Waste management at EPFL involves both reducing the amount of waste we produce on campus and recycling more of the products we use. [Learn more](#).

Aim for a **waste-free, plastic-free** event (see our tips under Food & beverages).

Minimize the number of items, including paper, that you hand out.

Avoid flyers and **printed signage** (see our tips under Marketing).

For documents that must be printed, be sure to use **recyclable paper and print on both sides**. Carefully calculate how many copies you need, so you don't print too many, and don't use paper clips or staples. Try not to use a lot of different colors in your marketing documents.

Select booths and other display materials made out of **recycled, recyclable or reusable materials**.

Provide **recycling bins** for different kinds of waste, including in staff areas and while people are setting things up and taking them down. Here you can use the EcoPoints on the EPFL campus. Coordinate with EPFL's facilities management department, especially if you'll be holding a large event, so that your waste is managed as efficiently as possible.

Distribute as few materials to participants as possible, and minimize the use of packaging.

Recover, reuse or recycle items you hand out to participants, such as pens they may not want to keep, notepads, badges and access lanyards. You can use them at your next event or donate them.

Contact other event organizers and associations at EPFL to see if they can lend you the equipment and materials you need or if they'd like to borrow your equipment and materials once your event is over.

Did you know?

- The recycling rate at EPFL reached 70% in 2020.



8. In-country & international travel

Travel is usually the biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions for an event. You can take steps to reduce these emissions by encouraging cleaner and greener forms of transportation.

Make it possible for speakers to give their **talks by videoconference** so they don't have to travel.

Speakers and participants who will be traveling can use [routeRANK](#) to plan a low-carbon trip.

Ask speakers and participants coming from elsewhere in Europe to **avoid flying if at all possible**. If they must fly, suggest they offset their carbon emissions through programs like [My Climate](#).

Did you know?

- Two-thirds of EPFL's carbon emissions come from business travel and commuting to and from our campuses. EPFL has therefore adopted a "[mobility plan](#)" to encourage sustainable transportation methods and cover some of the cost of public transit passes for its employees.



9. Local transportation & accommodations

There are several sustainable options for getting to and from our Lausanne campus. The 2019 survey on transportation habits at EPFL showed that around 80% of commuters use public transportation or another clean travel method.

Encourage participants to use **public transit or sustainable transportation options** such as biking or walking to attend your event. Some bike-rental and bike-sharing services offer a flat rate for use during a given event.

If you are holding a large event, consider asking local bus and train operators if they would like to be an event partner (see our tips under Partnerships).

Check if your venue has bicycle parking stations, and if so, let participants know.

For speakers and participants coming from abroad, suggest hotels that are within walking distance of the event. Two hotels near the Lausanne campus are the SwissTech Hotel and Starling.

Some cities offer free public-transportation passes to guests staying at a local hotel. You can check whether that's true at your venue. For events in Lausanne, visit the [Mobilis website](#) or the [TL desk](#) at the Esplanade on the Lausanne campus.

Take the **public transportation schedule into account** when deciding what time your event will start and finish.

You may want to set up a [car-pooling system](#).

Consider the **carbon emissions** from transporting equipment and materials to and from your venue.

Recommend hotels that are **near your event** or public transportation stops so as to make it easier for participants to use sustainable transportation.

When possible, **use trains** instead of renting a bus or other motorized vehicle.

If you have any questions about this checklist or would like more information about the topics covered, contact Mediacom Events. We'll put you in touch with the right person at EPFL.