

# Checklist for Sustainable Events



Purchasing, Partnerships,  
Infrastructure and Energy



Waste  
Management



Food



Communications



Equality  
and Diversity



International  
and Domestic Mobility



Local Mobility  
and Accommodation

## Introduction

For several years now, EPFL has been committed to integrating sustainability into its practices, including events management.

As part of this strategy, Mediacom Events (MEV), the EPFL sustainability team Durabilité EPFL and the Catering and Shops Unit (RESCO) have created a checklist to help you organise sustainable events. This is regularly updated based on experience reports collected by a monitoring group.

The measures and recommendations set out in this document apply to events organised by EPFL, student associations and external organisations on the various EPFL sites as well as off-site events involving the institution.

## Prior considerations

A sustainable event is an event that **adopts practices aimed at minimising its environmental impact and works towards diversity and social and cultural inclusion.**

A sustainable event plays a direct or indirect role in raising awareness or educating people about sustainability.

**Key Steps**

**Defining Objectives, Measures and Actions**

Using the checklist, set SMART objectives (see box below), measures and sustainable actions for your event. Based on the number of objectives, break them down into obligatory, achievable and ideal categories. Sustainability must be taken into account by organisation teams at all stages of the project life cycle (see Figure 2 below). Do not forget to conduct a debrief after your event to assess whether the objectives, measures and sustainable actions were achieved. Identify approaches for improvement to build into your future events and share your findings.

**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



## Appoint an Officer

If your organisation allows, appoint a sustainability officer for your event to the committee or organisation team.

## Consult your Suppliers and Partners

Let your various suppliers and partners know you wish to hold a sustainable event and work closely with them so they can assist you in this approach.

## Identify Resources

Research and consult the different internal and external resources at your disposal – such as:

1. [Kitmanif](#) for the canton of Vaud
2. [Manifestation verte](#)
3. [EPFL sustainability website](#)
4. [Recommendations for sustainable travel for work](#)
5. [ADEME sustainability documents](#)



## 1. **Purchasing, Partnerships, Infrastructure and Energy**

It is important to consider the impact of every purchase or consumable involved in your event. Your event location should also be accessible to all potential audience members. With regard to access for people with reduced mobility, the [EPFL site plan](#) will help you indicate appropriate access routes.

Carefully assess your needs in terms of purchasing and infrastructure to avoid overconsumption or unnecessary purchases; prioritise borrowing or hiring ([the 5 Rs approach](#)).

Compare supplier bids taking into account their environmental impact ([label](#), transport, origin of raw materials such as for T-shirts, direct impact such as for chemical toilets, waste produced).

Consider the profile of your audience and adapt associated services accordingly (childcare, rest spaces, medical station, baby changing and breastfeeding room, facilities for people with reduced mobility, bicycle parking, etc.).

Opt for electronic equipment that consumes little energy and limit its use.

Choose companies or establishments to assist with your event that share the same values in terms of social and environmental responsibility.

Ask your partners to supply reusable banners or promotional materials or to appear on your website to limit the use of single-use promotional materials.

### Did you know?

- Several campus associations loan out equipment for organising events ([AGEPoly Truffe](#), [Balelec](#), etc.).
- Only a fraction of EPFL's electricity is sourced from its solar power station (3%). So it is important to limit consumption as much as possible.
- EPFL's proximity to Lake Geneva does not just have a visual and aesthetic impact. The lake's waters help heat and cool the campus using no fuel and almost no gas.



## 2. **Waste Management**

At EPFL, waste management is based on two approaches: reducing the amount of waste produced on campus and increasing recycling rates. [Find out more.](#)

Aim for a zero-waste and zero-plastic event (for reusable tableware, see the section on food).

Request stands and layout materials that are reusable or made using recycled or recyclable materials.

Set up waste sorting spaces, including during installation and dismantling and in the staff areas. Use the ecopoints supplied by EPFL. Work with EPFL caretakers to maximise efficient treatment of waste, particularly for large events.

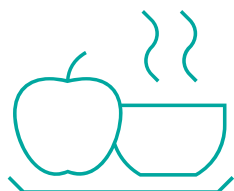
Reduce packaging and material distributed to audiences to the absolute minimum necessary.

Collect, reuse or recycle objects given out to the audience (pens attendees do not wish to keep, notepads, badges, lanyards). Keep them for a forthcoming event or donate them.

Use the EPFL campus network to borrow materials from other organisations or associations or offer your materials to other individuals on campus after your event.

### **Did you know?**

- The recycling rate for EPFL waste management is currently 70% (2021).



### 3. Food

Food is one of the main sources of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and has an impact on many different areas of the environment (climate, water, biodiversity, soil, etc.). Several actions taken by the Catering and Shops Unit (RESCO) promote the adoption of sustainable food-related practices.

#### Obligatory measures:

Apply the measures set out by the 20/30 strategy:

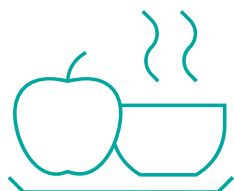
- Requirement to make 50% of the dishes on offer vegetarian.
- No single-use tableware. [MOLOTOV](#) provides a reusable tableware hire service.
- Food origin requirements:
  - Swiss fruit and vegetables, apart from exotic fruits
  - 100% Swiss meat
  - Certified marine fish (MSC, ASC or Friends of the Sea)
- Provide allergy information and details on where the food was sourced.
- It is not permitted to use force-fed duck and goose products, including foie gras, duck breast, thighs, gizzards, etc.
- Only use eggs or egg-based products from Swiss free-range hens.
- Follow the seasonal produce [calendar](#).
- Do not use products containing monosodium glutamate (MSG) (such as sauce, stock, soups or crisps, etc.) or palm oil (such as spreads).

Provide free drinking water fountains.

Depending on the size of the event, prioritise bottle refill dispensers (beer and non-alcoholic drinks) rather than single-use bottles.

Plan quantities in advance to keep leftovers to a minimum. Arrange service in a way that avoids food waste (e.g. buffet service, reduce plate size, plan predefined portions).

Plan a strategy for managing any food waste (such as [Too good to go](#), involve social initiatives and associations such as [Castor Freegan \(EPFL\)](#), [Table suisse](#), or give it to the student community).



### Optional measures:

Offer vegan alternatives, offer vegetarian/vegan meals only.

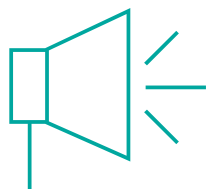
Offer local craft drinks.

Document your choices and experiences – purchases, sales, waste – and share the information.

### Did you know?

- EPFL has committed to increasing its vegetarian and vegan food offering. [Find out more.](#)
- Campus restaurants are required to apply the 20/30 strategy. Their teams can help you offer outstanding sustainable catering. Check out the [campus restaurants.](#)





#### 4. **Communications**

Communications are a key aspect of any planned event. Here, efforts can be introduced in substance (communicating on actions put in place and raising partners' awareness on sustainability challenges) and in form (developing more eco-friendly and inclusive communications).

Use more inclusive language in your written materials ([documentation](#)).

Use your event as a platform for raising awareness by openly communicating the measures you take and the behaviour you wish your audience to adopt.

Highlight exhibitors or attendees who get on board. Offer more visibility (on the website, for instance) for people who have specifically adhered to these measures.

Use sustainable communications: limit yourself to the absolute minimum required (undated banners can be used from year to year, no staff T-shirts, or if necessary: second-hand T-shirts, or if this is not possible, T-shirts made with organic or Fairtrade cotton, etc.).

Take an understated editorial approach on your website (limit the use of videos and excessively large images online, etc.).

Inform your communications partners that you wish to reduce your use of print materials and ask for advice.

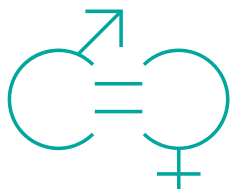
Choose suitable means of communication while considering their environmental impact.

If a competition or prizes are planned, prioritise sustainable gifts that are sourced, for instance, from local makers or highlight specific sustainability initiatives, certified products or green gifts. Even better, prioritise intangible awards based on an experience (a meal, visit, class, etc.).

Consider environmental and social criteria when choosing products (publicity gifts, fabrics, promotional items, print materials, signs, etc.).

##### Did you know?

- Some innovative and sustainable campaign materials can also complement your communications plan, such as [Working Bicycle](#).



## 5. Equality and Diversity

At EPFL, people from a very wide range of cultural, social and academic backgrounds work and study together. Diversity is a strength. Diversity and equal opportunities are a key aspect of EPFL's development and excellence policy. This requires a respectful environment of mutual understanding that allows everyone to achieve their full potential, whatever their gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background or disability. This is the only way for members of the EPFL community to interact, collaborate and achieve outstanding results together and individually. Events organised by EPFL must guarantee that this approach will be part of the planned activities.

Ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are entrenched in your event objectives.

Assess your event against the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion, in terms of assigning roles in the organisation, speakers and the audience, and prioritise gender equality and representation for minority or marginalised groups.

Actively tackle situations conducive to harassment or discrimination. Find out about the tools and [support available](#) for witnesses and those who have experienced harassment or discrimination at EPFL.

Perform a risk analysis and take appropriate measures depending on the type of event (information for attendees, staff training and awareness, etc.).

Use your event as a platform for raising awareness by openly communicating the measures you are taking.

Use [inclusive language](#) principles in your communications.

### Did you know?

- The EPFL Compliance Guide contains a chapter called “Equality, diversity, respect” that goes into more detail on these issues, including legal definitions.
- You can contact the [Equal Opportunity Office](#) to find out more and learn about the support available.
- Several labels and charters exist that can help you deal with these issues in your events:
  - [La Charte Aretha](#)
  - [Association We Can Dance iT](#)
  - [La Charte La Belle Nuit](#)



## 6. International and Domestic Mobility

Mobility is usually the main source of an event's greenhouse gas emissions. Reduce the impact of events-related mobility by promoting sustainable modes of transport.

Prioritise or promote appearances via video conference. EPFL and the SwissTech Convention Center have world-leading digital tools at their disposal.

Assess the possibility of centralising international conferences at continental hubs to avoid long-haul flights.

Ask attendees and presenters in Europe to avoid flying whenever possible.

Take the train to destinations in Europe and across Switzerland.

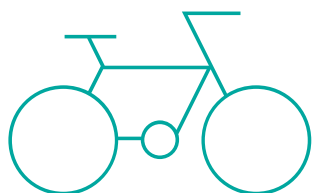
If air travel cannot be avoided, prioritise:

- Direct flights over indirect flights
- The most environmentally efficient airlines based on the [Kayak](#) ranking
- Economy or economy+ classes over business and first class

Set up a carbon offsetting system with local players.

### Did you know?

- A short-haul flight produces an average of 394.5g CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in comparison to a train journey, which generates around 5.4g of CO<sub>2</sub> for the same trip.
- At EPFL, commuting and professional mobility are responsible for 40% of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. That's why EPFL has developed a [mobility plan](#) containing measures specifically promoting active, shared and renewable-energy modes of transport.



## 7. Local Mobility and Accommodation

Several sustainable modes of transport for reaching the Ecublens campus are available. As revealed by the results of the 2021 survey on EPFL mobility habits, around 80% of commuters use public or non-motorised transport.

### Obligatory measures:

Encourage the use of public transport or sustainable modes of transport such as cycling or walking to the event.

- Some bike hire or sharing services offer a temporary subscription for the duration of the event.
- On the Ecublens, Sion and Fribourg campuses, you'll find self-service [PubliBike](#) bike stations, while you can use bikes from [Donkey Republic](#) in Neuchâtel and Geneva. The EPFL community may benefit from discounts on some subscriptions from these two operators.
- Possibility of requesting special transport tickets for conference attendees.

For large-scale events, set up partnerships with public transport, train and/or bus operators.

Check that specific bicycle parking (permanent or temporary) is available and inform attendees.

Some cities offer public transport tickets when booking a hotel room. Find out if this applies to your location. In Lausanne, for example, you can check the Mobilis website or go to the TL counter on campus.

Plan your schedule around public transport timetables.

If appropriate, set up a car-sharing system.

Also assess the impact of transporting materials and equipment for your event. To reduce this, you can use the fleet of [cargo bikes](#) available on campus.

Prioritise accommodation close to the event location or near a public transport connection. (The two hotels near the Lausanne campus are the SwissTech Hotel and Starling Hotel).

Prioritise use of public transport instead of bus or motor vehicle hire.

Do you have any questions or other tips or issues to share with the EPFL community?

Feel free to get in touch by email at [events@epfl.ch](mailto:events@epfl.ch)