Sustainable Event Planning

Strategies for avoiding and reducing environmental pollution

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Content

Introduction

The ongoing climate crisis is forcing us to rethink all areas of our lives. This also includes events, the sustainability of which is becoming increasingly important for visitors. The *atmosfair CO_2 event calculator* is a tool that you can use to calculate the emissions of your event. We have also created this guide to help you keep event emissions as low as possible. True to the principle of "first avoid, then reduce and finally offset", this document guides you step by step through individual aspects of event planning and offers practical recommendations to minimize the ecological footprint of your event.

This document is based on well-founded sources and best practices in the field of sustainable event planning. It has been prepared in line with the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection's Guidelines on Sustainable Event Organization[1] published in 2020, the German Development Cooperation's (GIZ) Guide - Sustainable Event Management[2] published in 2018 and the Green Events Guide[3] published in 2019 by the Carbon Trust, an organization focused on promoting sustainability in business, government and the public sector.

The structure of this guide is based on the individual steps in the *atmosfair CO_2 event calculator* to enable you to plan intuitively and effectively. Not all suggestions will be relevant to your event. Consider all the options and decide for yourself which aspects you can implement in your individual event circumstances. By using our calculation tool at the same time or afterwards, you can also visualize the successes in the form of CO_2 savings. You will achieve the greatest success if you use this guide even before the actual planning of your event. By taking our advice into account at an early stage, you can avoid emissions from the outset and thus fundamentally an-

chor sustainability in your event planning. In addition to the focus on CO_2 emissions, which can be determined in detail using the *atmosfair CO_2 event calculator*, our guide also includes other crucial sustainability aspects that are important for the comprehensive ecological orientation of your event. Our goal is to provide you with the tools to make responsible and conscious decisions that not only ensure the immediate success of your event, but are also designed to minimize its environmental footprint.

Why sustainable events?

- Supporting climate protection by contributing to global environmental goals.
- Reducing costs by increasing efficiency (e.g. in energy and consumption), reducing waste and buying local.
- Raising environmental awareness among participants and stakeholders.
- Improving institutional image through sustainable practices.
- Promoting innovation and change in the event industry.
- Strengthening local communities by supporting regional economies.
- Promoting health by providing healthy food and clean environments.

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1 *Guidelines on Sustainable Event Organisation | German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conversation and Nuclear Safety*

2 *GIZ-Guide-to-Sustainable-Event-Management.pdf*

3 *Green-events-guide.pdf (windows.net)*

Read more

➜ Guidelines on Sustainable Event Organisation | German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conversation and Nuclear Safety

➜ Guide – Sustainable Event Management | GIZ

➜ Green Events Guide | Carbon Trust

➜ Nachhaltiges Veranstaltungsmanagement nach ISO 20121 | GUTcert (in German)

Arrival & Departure

Mobility, i.e. the arrival and departure of participants and local mobility on site, often causes up to 70% of an event's emissions[1], making it a significant factor in its environmental impact. So how can you keep emissions from this key aspect as low as possible? We address this question in the following section.

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1   *CO_2 offset events - Carbon Footprint calculation - atmosfair*

Check List Arrival & Departure

1. Definition of a sustainable event framework

❑ Consider the possibility of virtual meetings before planning physical attendance.

❑ Choose venues that are well connected to the public transport network.

❑ Set event times that allow stress-free use of rail and local public transport for arrival and departure.

2. Concsious choice of means of transportation

❑ Before planning air travel, consider using the train as a more environmentally friendly alternative.

❑ Give preference to direct flights for necessary air travel.

❑ Promote bicycle use and carpooling as more ecological transportation options by providing rental bicycles, information on bicycle routes and coordination options for carpooling.

❑ If a flight is unavoidable, give preference to economy class over business or first class.

❑ Investigate the possibility of converting the company fleet to electric vehicles or providing electric vehicles for staff for business trips and event visits.

3. Incentive creation for visitors

❑ Provide information about environmentally friendly transport options by including clear travel instructions and public transport connections in the invitations.

❑ Create incentives to use sustainable means of transport through offers such as combined tickets that include admission and public transportation.

❑ Ensure that the venue has charging stations for electric vehicles.

❑ Organize a shuttle service with low-emission or zero-emission vehicles to and from collective parking spaces.

❑ Provide paid parking spaces to encourage the use of public transport.

4. Organization of the traffic flow

❑ Determine the expected traffic flows per mode of transport to avoid bottlenecks.

❑ Provide sufficient collective parking spaces to relieve local traffic.

❑ Clearly mark traffic and parking guidance systems to enable intuitive navigation.

❑ Make parking bans and access restrictions clearly visible.

Read more

➜ Sustainable Mobility | German Federal Environment Agency (2020)

➜ Nachhaltige Mobilität gestalten und fördern | German Federal Government (2022) (in German)

➜ Sustainable mobility concept EURO 2024 | German Federal Environment Agency (2023)

Overnight Stay

The latest data from the German Federal Statistical Office impressively shows how significant greenhouse gas emissions from overnight stays are. In 2020, a remarkable 742,000 tons of CO_2 equivalents were attributable to accommodation services alone in the tourism sector in Germany[2]. This corresponds to 6.3% of the tourism industry's total emissions and is almost twice as high as the emissions resulting from the entire rail, shipping and rental vehicle sectors in this industry combined. This section sheds light on how conscious decisions regarding accommodation can not only ensure the comfort of guests, but also guarantee a stay with the lowest possible emissions.

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2   *[Tourismusbezogener Energieverbrauch, Ausstoß von Treibhausgasen und Rohstoffeinsatz - Statistisches Bundesamt (destatis.de)](destatis.de)*

Overnight Stay

1. Selection of environmentally friendly accommodation

❑ Prioritize hotels with environmentally friendly management. Look for accommodation that is validated and registered by EMAS or bears the European Ecolabel.

❑ Use booking portals to search specifically for hotels that meet sustainability criteria.

2. Location and accommodation

❑ Provide accommodation close to the event location to avoid unnecessary travel and the associated emissions.

❑ Encourage private accommodation through a swap market or similar to reduce hotel stays.

3. Exemplary review of the accommodation's commitment to sustainability

❑ Does the hotel have environmentally friendly transportation options, such as charging stations for electric vehicles, (e-)bike rental or shuttle services to public transport hubs?

❑ How sustainable is the hotel's room décor, e.g. in terms of bed linen, furniture, reusable tableware, ecological hygiene products?

❑ Does the hotel rely on local sourcing of food and does it donate surplus food?

❑ Does the hotel invest in green infrastructure such as solar panel installations, water recovery and recycling systems?

Read more

➜ EMAS – Audited environmental management system

➜ EU Ecolabel

➜ Nachhaltiges Wirtschaften in Hotellerie und Gastronomie | DEHOGA Bundesverband (2016) (in German)

➜ Nachhaltigkeitszertifizierungen im Überblick | Tobphotel (2022) (in German)

➜ Green Key criteria and explanatory notes Hotels & Hostels | Foundation for Environmental Education

Catering

When it comes to catering during an event, it is not only the quality and selection of food and drink that play a key role, but also their impact on the environment. For example, the production of some foods (e.g. those containing meat) has an above-average impact on the climate and natural ecosystems. In addition, around a third of all food produced for out-of-home consumption ends up as waste[3]. This represents an enormous waste of resources and pollutes the environment both through the production of food and its disposal. This section shows specific steps you can take to manage your catering responsibly while offering participants a pleasant and delicious dining experience.

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3   German Federal Environment Agency, 2016: Development of tools to prevent food waste, UBA-Texts 85/2016, p. 65, *Development of tools to prevent food waste | Umweltbundesamt*

Check List Catering

1. Selection of the catering service provider

❑ When choosing a catering service provider, make sure that they comply with the quality standards of the German Nutrition Society (DGE).

2. Selection of products

❑ Provide products from organic farming and fair trade and use certified products (Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), Fair Trade, etc.)

❑ Use seasonal and environmentally friendly transported food and avoid products from heated greenhouses and food that is delivered by air.

❑ Give preference to vegan and vegetarian dishes in the catering offer.

❑ If meat or fish is offered as an exception, choose products from organic farming and with high animal welfare standards.

❑ Avoid using small portions and packaging units (e.g. sugar, milk, etc.)

❑ Offer drinking water from pipes in carafes. Use reusable bottles for all other cold drinks.

❑ Use environmentally friendly paper products, such as unbleached filter paper and sanitary paper made from recycled material with an environmental seal.

3. Reduction of food and other waste

❑ Use reusable crockery, cutlery, and glasses. If necessary, this can be achieved with a deposit system.

❑ Alternatively, ask participants to bring their own food and drink containers and reward them for doing so.

❑ Buffets can be wasteful as some options are inevitably more popular than others. Instead, create a menu and ask your attendees for their food preferences before the event.

❑ Strive to obtain the most accurate guest count as early as possible, ensuring that the portions provided are ample to prevent any excess.

❑ Use packaging that reduces or avoids waste.

❑ Label food at the buffet clearly (including allergens) to prevent mistakes.

❑ Sensitize the serving staff for environmentally conscious portioning.

❑ Organize the distribution of leftover food to charitable institutions in compliance with hygiene regulations.

4. Separation of waste

❑ Ensure separate collection of kitchen waste.

❑ Collect old cooking oil from deep fryers separately.

5. Awareness creation

❑ Inform your guests about sustainable products and practices that are implemented and served. This promotes understanding and awareness of sustainable food.

Check List Catering

Read more

➔ The German Nutrition Society (DGE)

➔ Umweltcheck | DEHOGA (in German)

➔ Klimafreundliche Ernährung: fleischreduziert, vegetarisch oder vegan | Umweltbundesamt (2023) (in German)

➔ Nachhaltiges Wirtschaften in Hotellerie und Gastronomie | DEHOGA (2016) (in German)

➔ Deutschland, wie es isst - der BMEL-Ernährungsreport 2023 | BMEL (2023) (in German)

➔ Healthy Diets From Sustainable Food Systems | The EAT-Lancet Commission on Food, Planet, Health

➔ Mein Essen - Unser Klima | Federal Agency for Agriculture and Food (2024) (in German)

➔ Klimafreundliche Ernährung: fleischreduziert, vegetarisch oder vegan | Umweltbundesamt (2023) (in German)

➔ 6 Pressing Questions About Beef and Climate Change, Answered | World Ressources Institute (2022)

➔ You want to reduce the carbon footprint of your food? Focus on what you eat, not whether your food is local | Our World in Data (2020)

➔ Unsere Reports und Paper | Nutrition Hub (in German)

Venue

The choice of venue plays a crucial role in the environmental impact and success of an event. A carefully selected venue can not only improve the sustainability of the event, but also have a positive impact on the guests' participation experience. In Germany, the operation of buildings is responsible for around 35% of final energy consumption and around 30% of CO_2 emissions[4]. This underlines the importance of a conscious choice of venue. This section will help you to select a venue that optimally meets both the ecological requirements and the logistical needs of your event.

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4   *Energiesparende Gebäude | UBA (in German)*

Check List Venue

1. Buildings and energy consumption

- ❑ Select conference buildings taking into account their energy consumption, ideally those with EMAS registration or the European Ecolabel.

- ❑ Give preference to conference buildings that use electricity from renewable sources, such as green energy providers.

- ❑ Give preference to energy-efficient heating systems such as heat pumps or district heating instead of conventional gas heating systems.

- ❑ To maximize energy efficiency at events, it is advisable to take the following measures in consultation with the owners or managers of the conference building where possible:

  - ❍ The heating temperature in meeting and conference rooms should be limited to a maximum of 20 degrees Celsius.

  - ❍ The room temperature should be lowered at night to save energy.

  - ❍ When cooling, ensure that the inside temperature is no more than 6 degrees below the outside temperature.

  - ❍ Use daylight and optimize lighting, sun protection and ventilation to maximize energy efficiency.

- ❑ Use IT equipment and printers or multifunctional devices that meet the Blue Angel criteria, as well as freezers, refrigerators and dishwashers of the highest efficiency class.

2. Waste avoidance

- ❑ Minimize packaging waste by using reusable packaging and ordering in bulk packaging to optimize consumption.

- ❑ Implement take-back systems and promote reuse, for example of name tags.

- ❑ Use recyclable products and packaging made from recycled materials, such as recycled cardboard for cardboard packaging.

- ❑ Pay attention to the entire life cycle of necessary marketing materials and favour digital solutions such as event apps or websites for the dissemination of information such as agendas and participant lists in order to reduce paper consumption.

- ❑ Consider using e-ticketing to reduce paper waste and the ink and energy required for printing.

3. Waste separation

- ❑ Set up waste separation stations for effective separation of paper, organic waste, glass and lightweight packaging and ensure clear labelling, especially for international events.

- ❑ Inform all suppliers and the operating company about the separation system and involve cleaning companies.

- ❑ Ensure that suppliers take back their packaging.

Involve your audience!

Encourage the active participation of delegates and event attendees to make a significant contribution to saving resources. By providing clear instructions and guidance within the venue, participants can learn how to effectively save electricity, water and energy. Calling for the conscious use of resources motivates each person individually to make a positive impact on the environment. Motivate environmentally conscious behaviour that will last beyond the duration of the event and leave a profound impact.

VENUE

4. Disposal

❑ Dispose of packaging waste in accordance with the German Packaging Act.

❑ Recycle separately collected waste such as paper and organic waste on your own responsibility in accordance with the provisions of the Circular Economy Act.

❑ Dispose of residual waste via public waste management authorities in accordance with the provisions of the Circular Economy Act.

5. Handling water

❑ Use water sparingly, for example by using water-saving devices in kitchens and canteens.

❑ Point out water-saving devices in sanitary facilities (e.g. taps with sensors, water-saving toilets with cisterns or flush valves) and thus promote environmental awareness among participants.

❑ Use biodegradable cleaning agents to reduce the impact on wastewater.

Read more

➜ Audited environmental management system | EMAS

➜ Blue Angel – The German Ecolabel

➜ Circular Economy and Safeguard the Environmentally Compatible Management of Waste | Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conversation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (2022)

➜ Umweltcheck | DEHOGA (in German)

➜ Green Key criteria and explanatory notes Conference Centres | Foundation for Environmental Education

➜ Enhancing energy efficiency in buildings | Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (2023)

➜ Gebäudeenergiegesetz (GEG) | – Federal Ministry of Housing, Urban Development and Construction (2023) (in German)

Transport of Goods

The transportation of goods is an essential part of the logistics of events and contributes significantly to the overall environmental impact. In Germany, more than two thirds of freight is currently transported by road [5]. A more sustainable alternative is rail transport, which is not only the safest but also the most environmentally friendly mean of transporting goods. Rail transport causes around 80% less CO_2 emissions than road transportation[6]. Shifting the transportation of goods to rail and other more environmentally friendly means of transportation such as ships is therefore a decisive step towards reducing the ecological footprint of freight transport and making an important contribution to sustainability.

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5   *Indicator: Environmentally friendly freight transport | Umweltbundesamt*

6   *Eco-friendly freight transport (dbcargo.com)*

Check List Transport of Goods

1. Environmentally friendly choice of suppliers

❑ Give preference to local suppliers and materials to avoid long transport routes.

❑ Favour transport companies that are certified for their environmentally friendly practices, such as those with an ISO 14001 environmental management certificate.

2. Sustainable procurement

❑ Procure products and use services that fulfil the criteria of the Blue Angel eco-label or the European Ecolabel.

❑ Refrain from using give-aways.

❑ Ensure that all products are reusable.

❑ Favour regional, local and seasonal products.

3. Sustainable means of transport

❑ For large quantities of materials or equipment, use means of transport such as rail or ship, which are more efficient and environmentally friendly than road transport.

❑ For road transport, choose low-emission vehicles such as electric vehicles, hybrid vehicles or those that run on alternative fuels.

4. Planning and efficiency

❑ Calculate the transport of goods carefully to avoid unnecessary journeys.

❑ Plan how materials and equipment can be returned or reused after the event to minimise waste and avoid additional journeys.

❑ Monitor transport activities to collect data on emissions and efficiency. Use this data to further optimise future events

5. Digital alternatives

❑ Wherever possible, use digital alternatives. Instead of physical materials such as brochures or catalogues, use digital formats that are accessible online.

Read more

➔ Indicator: Environmentally friendly freight transport | German Federal Environmental Agency (2024)

➔ Straßen entlasten: Bausteine für umweltfreundlichen Güterverkehr | NABU (in German)

➔ Umweltfreundlichere Transportwege für den Güterverkehr: Was ist denkbar? | mdr (2022) (in German)

➔ Klimaschutzinstrumente im Verkehr: Hebel zur Gestaltung eines treibhausgasneutralen und umweltschonenden Güterverkehrs | Umweltbundesamt (2022) (in German)

➔ Indikator: Umweltfreundlicher Güterverkehr | Umweltbundesamt (2023)

➔ Green Deal: Greening freight for more economic gain with less environmental impact| European Commission (2023)

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