

GREENING THE YOUTH SECTOR

Sustainability Checklist



Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



EUROPEAN UNION



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Sustainability Checklist

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* In accordance with sustainability guidelines, we encourage you to use this document as a PDF and to refrain from printing it unless for accessibility reasons.

* Throughout the document, the terms “green”, “sustainable”, “eco”, “environmentally conscious” and “environmentally friendly” are used interchangeably and are considered to be the same.

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BACKGROUND:

CLIMATE, YOUTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS



The climate crisis is having a profound impact on humanity: biodiversity loss, deforestation, water scarcity, natural disasters, pollution, species extinction and the overall degradation of Earth's ecosystems affect lives worldwide. Researchers have also found that, since the effects of climate change are so far-reaching, they will compromise achieving most of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as those relating to poverty, hunger, health and well-being, education, water and sanitation, and peace and justice (Sanson, Hoorn and Burke 2019).

A recent briefing “Responding to the health risks of climate change in Europe” by Lancet Countdown and the European Environment Agency (2021) highlights that weather and climate extremes in Europe increase the spread of infectious diseases, droughts and wildfires (for example, more European countries suffered from wildfires in 2018 than previously recorded). Meanwhile, worldwide, the **UN Refugee Agency** (n.d.) estimates that due to increasing intensity and frequency of extreme weather events, around 20 million people are forced to leave their homes and migrate each year.

The 2015 Paris Agreement notes that climate change is “an urgent and potentially irreversible threat to human societies and the planet” (The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2015). It is therefore not surprising that European institutions have recognised that the well-being of our planet is dependent on ensuring both human rights and a healthy environment for future generations.

A healthy environment is a precondition for the preservation of life on our planet and, therefore, for the very enjoyment [...] [of] rights and liberties under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights. [...] [The] Council of Europe has a key role to play in mainstreaming the environmental dimension into human rights and pursu[ing] a rights-based approach to environmental protection.”

Declaration by the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe
(Council of Europe 2020a)

YOUTH AND CLIMATE

There are around 142 million young people in Europe (Eurostat, 2020) and around 1.21 billion worldwide (United Nations 2020). Climate crises affect both their mental and physical health. Researchers have documented widespread troubling psychological reactions to the climate crisis (Sanson, Hoorn and Burke 2019), as well as negative effects on physical health, including exposure to environmental toxins and related illnesses (Sheffield and Landrigan 2010). All this does not go unnoticed – in a survey of more than 10 000 young people, climate change was the most cited issue facing the world (Amnesty International 2019).

Although many young people and youth organisations have acted intentionally to address environmental issues since the creation of civic movements, the most widespread global climate protests and action began in 2018. Following the authorities' failure to adequately act on the challenges caused by the climate crisis, then 15 year old Greta Thunberg from Sweden started the Skolstrejk för Klimatet (“School strike for the climate”). What began as a lone initiative evolved into the largest mass protest for action on climate in history, which included over 2 500 events in over 163 countries on all continents and sparked the development of mass youth climate movements, such as Fridays for Future (Barclay and Resnick 2019).

..... DID YOU KNOW?

- In 2017, following deadly fires in Portugal, seven young people sought a ruling from the European Court of Human Rights to force 47 countries to stop further fossil fuel extraction.

- In 2018, the Colombian Supreme Court ruled in favour of 25 youth plaintiffs arguing that deforestation in the Amazon threatened their rights to a healthy environment.

- Following a complaint by nine climate activists, Germany's Constitutional Court ruled that the country's 2019 Climate Protection Act must be improved.



DID YOU KNOW?

CLIMATE CHANGE AND INEQUALITIES: FROM EUROPE'S POOREST TO THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Climate change has a disproportionate impact on marginalised and vulnerable communities because those with the fewest resources are the least capable of adapting to climate related changes (United Nations 2020). Overall, environmental racism – the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on people of colour – must be addressed if we are to move towards environmental justice. For example, in the United States, research has shown “race to be more important than socio economic status in predicting the location of the nation’s commercial hazardous waste facilities” (Bullard et al. 2007). Meanwhile, the recent report by the European Environmental Bureau (2020: 4) concludes that “European policymaking does so far not adequately address the strong correlation between the location of environmental burdens, the lack of environmental services and the ethnic background of the most impacted residents.” It describes how historical and systemic discrimination pushes Roma communities towards marginal, polluted areas:

“Roma [people are][...] disproportionately affected by environmental burdens, such as pollution and environmental degradation stemming from waste dumps and landfills, contaminated sites or dirty industries. The consequences are devastating health impacts ranging from infectious diseases to mental health issues.”



Image 1: Screenshot of a tweet promoting Rankin, J. (2020). Roma suffer under EU's 'environmental racism', report concludes. *The Guardian*.

When it comes to global inequalities, the intensification of extreme weather events and other climate change effects are generally greater in the global south, where the majority of young people live. For example, the resolution on “climate refugees” by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (2019) notes that an estimated 200 million people would be displaced globally by 2050 because of climate change. The resolution also recognises that the “industrialised member States of the Council of Europe carry a particular responsibility to the countries of the global South” affected by human-made climate change and has called for enhanced co ordination, mediation and funding with non-European partners.

WHY SHOULD WE FEEL RESPONSIBLE?

“We are not living beyond our means. We are living at the expense of others.”

(Lessnic 2019)

The current global economic system heavily relies on privilege and unequal relations: people and resources in the global south are exploited to feed the consumer habits and lifestyles of those in the global north (Heiba 2021). This method of offshoring environmental damage to other regions (i.e., having them clear their forest in the name of exports) has come to be known as “climate colonialism”.

As an example, the European Union imports 40%¹ of its products – including crops, meat and coal – from abroad (World Bank 2019) and therefore exports much of its carbon emissions to economically poorer nations. While policy makers discuss methods to attain development justice and mitigate the effects of the climate crisis (i.e., through technology transfer), it is essential to become more aware of the impact that consumption in Europe has on the rest of the world.

¹ Import of goods and services expressed as % of GDP.

In addition, efforts are needed to ensure that while society moves towards carbon neutrality, no one is left behind and social rights are upheld. Tackling the climate crisis requires not only restraint, but also building a vision for the future that ensures a good quality of life for all within the planet's capacity to sustain humanity.

While one may make efforts towards environmentally conscious consumer choices on the individual level, it is critical to advocate for governments and businesses to act responsibly towards the environment as well. Notably, 100 corporate and state-owned entities account for 71% of global industrial greenhouse gas emissions (Griffin 2017). To protect the environment, a systematic change and increased financial accountability and regulation of the largest polluters, especially multinational organisations (who often possess strong lobbying power to influence decision making), are needed. In addition, developing sustainable systems of production, transportation, and agriculture, which would make it easier for everyone to live ecologically, could also benefit the planet's flora and fauna.

It is therefore paramount for the youth sector to not only support activities raising ecological awareness, but also to create a framework that makes it easy for participants in educational activities to make environmentally conscious choices.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The impact of climate change has received attention from European policy makers at both the EU and Council of Europe, as well as from youth organisations and networks across their respective member states.

EUROPEAN UNION (EU)

The EU is planning a series of initiatives to protect the environment and boost the green economy. The most notable of these is the European Green Deal, a bloc wide goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2050. If this is achieved, Europe will become the first climate-neutral continent (European Commission 2019). Lauded as Europe's "**man on [the] [M]oon moment**" (Deutsche Welle 2019) for its breakthrough by some, and criticised for **giving in to corporate interests** by others (Corporate Europe Observatory 2019), the European Green Deal takes some important steps in

the right direction. At the time of writing, the European Council and the European Parliament have reached a provisional agreement regarding the centrepiece of the deal – the European Climate Law, which makes the goal of reaching net zero emissions in 2050 legally binding.

Also among the European Union's priorities is ecological recovery, addressed in the **EU Biodiversity strategy for 2030**, which has a wide range of aims, including increasing organic farming and reducing pesticide use by 50% by 2030, protecting forests, creating green spaces in cities and planting 3 billion trees by 2030 (European Commission 2021b).

- The global population of wild species has fallen by 60% over the last 40 years and 1 million species are at risk of extinction (European Commission 2021b).



DID YOU KNOW?

When it comes to youth-focused action, Erasmus+, the EU's flagship programme with an estimated budget of €26.2 billion to support education, youth and sport, will be a key instrument for the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes on climate change and sustainable development. Since the environment and climate change are among its five priorities, Erasmus+ plans to give priority funding to initiatives that “through education, training, youth and sport activities [...] enable behavioural changes for individual preferences, cultural values and awareness for sustainable development” and thus encourage organisations to “incorporate green practices in all projects through an environmental[ly] friendly approach [...] and to come up with alternative greener ways of implementing their activities” (European Commission 2021a).

INTERNATIONAL GREEN STANDARDS:

- The EU's Eco-management and Audit Scheme (**EMAS**) (European Commission 2009), aims to help companies and organisations to evaluate, report, and improve their environmental performance.
- **ISO 20121** offers guidance and best practices to help manage activities and control their social, economic and environmental impact (International Organization for Standardization n.d.).

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Council of Europe has been at the forefront of the human rights-based approach to environment protection and has set standards, notably the **European Convention on Human Rights**², the **Bern Convention on the conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats**, and the **European Social Charter**. These standards and other follow-up resources (i.e., the **Manual on Human Rights and the Environment**) have been successfully invoked to make progress on environmental issues in Council of Europe member states and to provide guidance for various human rights monitoring bodies. The Council of Europe also adopted a **Joint Declaration on human rights and the environment by the outgoing and incoming Presidencies of the Committee of Ministers** in 2020 (Council of Europe 2020b). When it comes to action at a local level, the **Congress of Local and Regional Authorities** has set environmental challenges as one of its key priorities and works to guarantee communities the right to be consulted and involved in the development of strategies for a healthy environment.

I find it encouraging that the sense of an impending emergency has galvanised many people around a variety of initiatives to demand rights related to a clean and healthy environment, notably by exercising their freedom of speech and assembly. Most striking at the moment is the mobilisation of youth worldwide who, like Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, are demonstrating in great numbers at the “Fridays for Future”.

Dunja Mijatović, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (Council of Europe 2019)

The Council of Europe has also made significant efforts to engage with and provide spaces for young people to address the climate crisis. For example, **Compass: Manual on Human Rights Education with Young People** includes a section on the environment and provides educational resources that can be used when working with young people during training. Meanwhile, the Council of Europe’s **World Forum for Democracy 2020-2021** was devoted to democracy’s contribution to environmental protection.

In addition, to support efforts to put climate change and its impact on young people on the international political agenda, the Council of Europe’s Youth Department has undertaken various steps to promote ecologically neutral or positive

² Although the European Convention on Human Rights does not at present explicitly include the right to a healthy environment, the court has ruled on around 300 environment-related cases.

projects to support initiatives aiming to “green” the youth sector. These include the **Consultative meeting "The climate crisis, young people and democracy"**, the establishment of a task force on greening the youth sector by the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ), and resources such as the European Youth Foundation’s **Guidelines towards Environmental Sustainability for projects** (2014). The European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest have also implemented a range of initiatives to ensure sustainable and green activities, such as Meatless Mondays in Budapest, the use of non disposable cups and cutlery, the introduction of water fountains in the centres, and providing bicycles to participants, to name a few.

The EU-Council of Europe youth partnership has developed several resources, including the **T-KIT on Sustainability and Youth Work** (EU-CoE youth partnership 2018) and the analytical paper **Disobedient youth: Lessons from the youth climate strike movement** (Gorman 2021). The youth partnership, in collaboration with the CMJ’s task force on greening the youth sector, is currently working on the development of greening and sustainability guidelines for youth centres. The following sustainability checklist was initiated within this framework and can be used by youth organisations as well as policy and decision makers when funding sustainable projects and investing in sustainable youth initiatives.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The sustainability checklist has been developed to serve as a set of guidelines for the youth sector at large. It is based on a desk review of existing literature, guidelines, policy documents from the EU and the Council of Europe and recommendations and checklists from various youth organisations across Europe, including:

- Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations (**Alliance**)
- Climate Students Sweden (**Klimat studenterna**),
- Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (**CCIVS**)
- Eriyca and Eurodesk
- **Erasmus Student Network** (ESN International, ESN Portugal, Social Erasmus ESN Spain)
- International Young Naturefriends (**IYNF**)
- University of Zurich (**UZH**)
- Youth and Environment Europe (**YEE**)

- World Organization of the Scout Movement (WSC)
- Youth for Exchange and Understanding (YEU)
- Zero Waste Fest (ZWfest).

Data was also collected through personal exchanges with representatives of the youth organisations listed above, and from a focus group consultation and discussions with 15 youth organisations that are recipients of European Youth Foundation grants:

- Alliance of European Voluntary Service Organisations (Alliance)
- Association des États Généraux des Étudiants de l'Europe (AEGEE-Europe)
- Information and Documentation Centre on Racism, Ecology, Peace and Non-Violence (ANTIGONE)
- International Federation of Liberal and Radical Youth (IFLRY)
- Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIIVS)
- Federation of Young European Greens (FYEG)
- Europiamo ETS
- International Young Naturefriends (IYNF)
- Projekte Vullnetare Nderkombetare (PVN)
- Service Civil International (SCI)
- Youth for Exchange and Understanding (YEU)
- Young European Federalists (JEF Europe)
- Young Friends of the Earth Europe (Young FoEE)
- YMCA Europe
- European Scout Region of the World Organisation of the Scout Movement (WOSM - Scouting in Europe).

Representatives discussed sustainable practices in their organisations and made valuable contributions for the draft sustainability checklist. The final version has been adjusted to include their feedback and suggestions.

VARIED STRATEGIES FOR GREENING THE YOUTH SECTOR

Youth networks that proactively seek to be environmentally conscious employ a variety of approaches. These can be grouped under the following categories:

a) Written/formalised

A significant proportion of networks or organisations that are integrating green practices in their activities have developed guidelines, checklists and rules to ensure the sustainability of their own projects and events. In some cases, these are treated as recommendations, whereas in others they are established rules that are part of statutory documents and/or internal procedures (e.g. regulating what type of travel or food can be reimbursed). Overall, this helps to establish a comprehensive approach in implementing and measuring how successful given organisations are in “going green”.

b) Informally agreed

In some youth networks, ensuring environmentally friendly and sustainable projects and meetings is a part of the internal informal agreement. A representative of one youth organisation surveyed said: “It's an internal agreement that we are trying to be sustainable and we are communicating it to host organisations, but we don't actually have it on paper in any strategy.”

c) Focused on external guidelines

Some youth networks stated that across most events, there are too many variables for event organisers to check. Therefore, they found that a single checklist would either not be comprehensive or would be too generic. For example, a representative from the European Youth Forum said: “A much more reliable process that we use internally looks at sustainability more generally and all our events are now compliant with ISO 20121 and EMAS rather than looking at a checklist.”

d) Participant-focused

Some youth organisations encouraged participants to self-evaluate. For example, Youth for Exchange and Understanding (YEU) have internal “eco” guidelines and checklists whereby participants can self assess the extent to which they have followed green practices.

To mainstream environmentally responsible practices, some organisations recommend inserting green incentives into the evaluation criteria. For example, ERYICA and Eurodesk (2020) suggest that applicants could be asked to explain whether they intend to take green measures in their projects and thereby receive extra points (in such cases, the applicants should be provided with relevant information to help prepare their strategy).

Clearly, the ideal checklist cannot be implemented in all cases. The compliance rate can depend on multiple external factors, including practices in the project location, the team's capacities and the group of young people one is trying to reach. However, having a checklist can be useful in maximising the approach to be environmentally conscious and can help suggest tools for self-evaluation and reflection. It should be noted that the aim of this checklist is not to impose additional hurdles, but to share best practices (to be adapted to local circumstances) of sustainable event preparation to make it easier to lead environmentally conscious activities. Overall, the checklist should be viewed flexibly and adopted on a voluntary basis.

SUSTAINABILITY CHECKLIST

“Thinking green” is a continuous process, requiring creativity and adaptability while making the best choices for the future of humanity and our planet. It is hoped that additional guidance and references can help youth event organisers with this process.

TEAMWORK

Note: Decide with the team which principles make sense in the given context, considering the groups of young people being engaged.



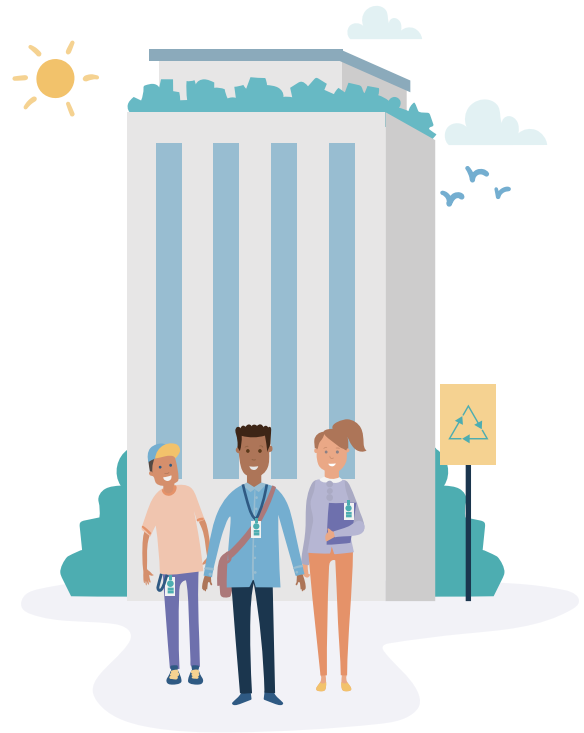
To ensure efficient strategies for organising sustainable activities, it is important for the whole team to be engaged.

Present the checklist to the team.

Design the own approach together.

Agree with participants which principles shall guide the work carried out at the meeting.

ACCOMODATION & VENUE



Note: It is important to check ethical code of the company that owns the venue and to make sure it covers both sustainability and labour issues (some businesses marketing themselves as “green” may still provide poor labour conditions for their staff).

CHOOSING THE VENUE

Check for **green certification** (e.g. in the hotel industry one can look for **Green Globe** or **Green Key** certification).

Choose a venue that has an energy and water conservation programme (such as a recycling and waste minimisation programme, sustainable heating systems, etc.).

Find out if there are water fountains available.

Co operate with local social economy initiatives (co operatives, foundations, social enterprises) instead of big, commercial, for profit enterprises.

Choose venues where workers’ rights are respected and where there is re-investment in the local community.

Provide hygiene products with a low environmental impact (“Eco-label”) or, better, natural products, and using as little packaging as possible.

Transportation using private motor vehicles should be limited during events. This means the accommodation should be either in the same place/as close to the meeting venue as possible or easily accessible by public transportation.

If no such places are available, contact the venue to discuss what energy saving measures can be implemented.

SUSTAINABLE VENUE EXAMPLE:

Mundo-b, Brussels. The Brussels Sustainable House, also called **Mundo-b**, is a project initiated by a set of NGOs that worked together to ecologically renovate a building to establish their offices and venue space in a sustainable environment. It has many shared spaces, an educational garden with its own composting facilities and an organic cafeteria called **Kamilou**, which supports young people back into employment.

USING THE VENUE

Maximise the use of natural light.

Remind participants to turn off lights and taps when they are not in use.

Reuse material from previous events. To do so, make a list of single-use materials (decorations, non-reusable name tags, etc.)

Hold the meeting outdoors (if the weather allows).

Cleaning: use environmentally friendly products for cleaning and washing up (look into making your own cleaning products, e.g. vinegar, lemons or baking soda).

Use air conditioning or similar cooling/heating systems as little as possible.

Avoid unnecessary heating of meeting rooms or other spaces.

Do not change towels and sheets every day.

FOOD & CONSUMABLES



SUSTAINABLE EATING

Diet is a key way of contributing to sustainable development. The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2018) concluded that vegan and vegetarian food and reducing food waste are effective methods to mitigate global warming. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the livestock sector generates more greenhouse gas emissions than transport. It is also a major source of deforestation (when land is cleared to grow animal feed), and water pollution (from waste, antibiotics and hormones, chemicals from tanneries, fertilizers and pesticides used for feed crops) (FAO 2006). Lastly, common industrial animal farming involves gruelling conditions, animal suffering and large scale death.

Demand-side mitigation potential | GHG mitigation potential of different diets

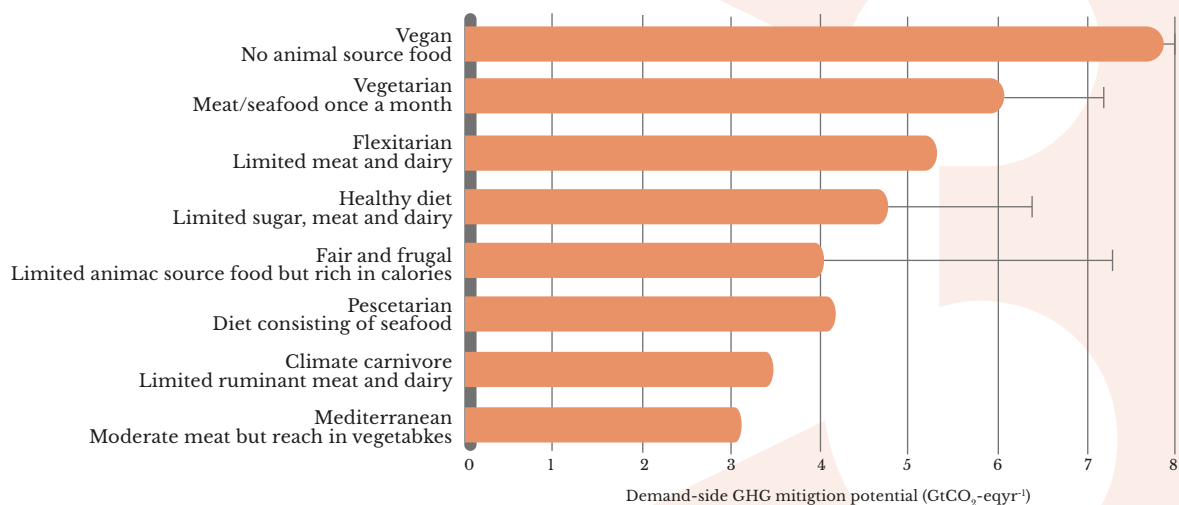


Figure 1. . Diet preferences and CO2 emissions (Dunne 2020)

Figure 1 shows that a global switch to veganism would deliver larger emissions savings than any other dietary shift. The steep reduction in emissions would partially stem from large amounts of land being freed up from its current use for livestock and their feed and that could be used to plant forests capable of reducing CO₂ in the atmosphere (Dunne 2020). For example, 77% of soy production, a major deforestation culprit, goes towards feeding animals and generating dairy products (Ritchie 2021). Meanwhile, industrial scale soy production often relies on powerful pesticides, which pollute water and cause health problems in people living nearby (Wasley 2009).

Receiving nutrition directly from plants could significantly reduce the land needed to supply humanity with the same amount of protein (in comparison to plants being fed to animals, which need to consume much larger quantities). According to George Monbiot, Guardian journalist and UN Global 500 Award winner for outstanding environmental achievement:

“This might seem counter-intuitive, but were we to eat soya rather than meat, the clearance of natural vegetation required to supply us with the same amount of protein would decline by 94%. Producing protein from chickens requires three times as much land as protein from soybeans. Pork needs nine times, beef 32 times.” (Monbiot, 2015)



Image 2: Greenpeace activists paint "Stop deforestation" on a cargo ship from Brazil carrying soybean meal "to denounce the lack of action by [the] French [G]overnment on the question of imported deforestation", 7 June 2021.

Photo: Simon Lambert/Greenpeace

Tropical forests capture significant amounts of carbon emissions from the atmosphere. Reports estimate that livestock production is responsible for around 80% of deforestation in the Amazon (World Wide Fund For Nature n. d.), where rainforests are burnt and indigenous people put at risk to create space for cattle ranching. Among the biggest importers of Brazilian beef are Hong Kong, the European Union, China and Egypt (Brazilian Beef Exporters Association 2017).

DID YOU KNOW?



While food production has a significant effect on our environment, when reflecting on sustainability overall it is important to consider food and cultural sovereignty. First coined by the International Peasants' Movement **Via Campesina** in 1996, food sovereignty is “the right of Peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.”

Since relationships with their traditional foods cannot be separated from their cultures, languages, social life, spirituality, and total identity (Carmen 2016), “vilifying” one type of food cannot bring answers for sustainable development. Food sovereignty advocates have fought to protect traditional practices, as they too exist in opposition to the larger food industry as sustainable and locally sourced forms of nourishment:

“Real food is produced sustainably and ethically; [...] Most of the livestock industry in the West does not fall under this standard. But real food also does not include plant-based foods grown with labor violations.” (Keselj 2020)

While intensive animal farming is unsustainable, there are ways to improve consumption patterns, such as eliminating or reducing the amount of animal products in diets, focusing on a short food supply chain (eating locally produced food), and eating more seasonal, organic food.

PROTECTING THE OCEANS AND THE CLIMATE

In contemporary Europe, it has become increasingly challenging to find locally caught fish. Meanwhile, industrial fishing methods significantly contribute to environmental degradation and the death and decline of marine animals (Pacoureaux et al. 2021). For example, bottom trawling and long lining often clear the ocean floor, destroy coral reefs and kill thousands of dolphins, sea turtles, sharks, and other “by-catch” (PETA n.d.). In addition, the latest assessment by the FAO (2020) has shown that the world's marine fish populations continue to decline and only 6.2% are neither “fully fished” nor “overfished”. In parallel, fish farming also contributes to negative environmental effects. Parasites give rise to problems that frequently force certain aquaculture operators to use strong antibiotics and hormones; these are not only unhealthy in large quantities but are also currently suspected to increase antibiotic resistance in humans (Lockwood 2017).

When it comes to vitamins, fish cannot produce omega-3 by themselves, but obtain it from eating algae. Algal oils are more environmentally friendly and are less likely to be contaminated (Windwood 2015).



DID YOU KNOW?

Go local: Using regional products helps minimise environmental pollution by avoiding transportation. To reduce food miles, seek to buy food from “eco farms”, small-scale, local agriculture holdings or local markets.

Prefer **organic** food, or that produced without pesticides.

Be aware that a lot of imported food is associated with human rights violations and environmental degradation. Examples include: land clearance for oil palm plantations in **Indonesia** (Human Rights Watch 2019); negative effects on food security in **Bolivia** due to international demand for quinoa (Yu 2019); extortion of avocado farmers in **Mexico** (Lavelle 2018); food traded from occupied territories (i.e., the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2020) published a list of **112 businesses** that contribute to violation of human rights against Palestinian people), etc.

Go seasonal: Seasonal fruit and vegetables help minimise environmental impacts because they do not require heated greenhouses or freezing (note: it is worth keeping in mind the carbon footprint of producing the food sourced).

Go plant-based: Consider introducing a policy to make all the organisation’s activities vegetarian or vegan by default to help reduce events’ negative environmental footprint. (When preparing an activity, ask participants: “Do you require meat?” rather than “Do you require vegetarian catering?”) If non vegetarian meals are required, favour organic, locally produced food.

Make it tasty: When choosing a venue or caterer, make sure they know how to prepare nutritious and tasty vegetarian meals.

Provide local seasonal fruits, nuts or baked goods as snacks.

Communicate: Explain to participants the reasons behind the decision to serve vegetarian meals (e.g. in an information sheet sent to participants in advance or as a short session during the activity).

Promote the use of ceramic or glass plates for food preparation and serving.

Minimise packaging.

Encourage hosts and participants to use refilling systems for existing recycled packaging.

If using take-away food services, ask for reusable or compostable crockery and cutlery. Styrofoam packaging should be avoided.

Use glass or ceramic cups for drinks and buy drinks in glass bottles instead of TetraPak or plastic.



TIP: To find "eco farms" in a given area, try the WWOOF website or search for "organic farming" online to find locally produced organic food.

WATER

Encourage (and remind) participants to bring their own water bottles (mention this ahead of the event).

Some countries are fortunate enough to have clean, drinkable tap water. Find out if that is the case at your venue.

Provide a reusable, individual glass for the whole event.

Use paper tape for people to write their names on their cups, enabling reuse. Avoid plastic cups and bottles!

Request that no bottled water be served.

ZERO WASTE, RECYCLING AND COMPOSTING

Recycling (which admittedly is not available everywhere) should be done carefully, which implies an effort to raise awareness among participants. Materials should be separated to facilitate processing.

Be mindful of packaging: Food and drinks made available during meetings should be as packaging-free as possible and glass is to be favoured over plastic.

Calculate the number of participants to avoid buying unnecessary products. Ask vendors to accept the return of unused products.

Seek out possibilities to compost food waste or feed it to animals.

Clearly label recycling bins (organic, paper, glass, plastic, metals, etc.) and place them in strategic, accessible and visible places (close to the food, close to an exit, etc.)

Donate leftovers (using apps such as **Karma**, **Olio**, etc.)

Reusing is always preferable to recycling and should be prioritised. (Recycling itself consumes energy. In addition, in some countries a relatively small amount of waste is actually recycled, even if it had been placed in recycling bins).

TRANSPORT



Public transport should always be favoured over private, motorised vehicles. Provide information to participants ahead of an event about public transport. Offering them a free ticket for local public transport is a great incentive!

Whenever public transport is not available, efforts should be made to group people in shuttles or create shared spreadsheets with arrival times so participants can share a ride.

Provide equal opportunities for people with disabilities taking public transport; make sure to include accessibility information.

Go digital and avoid travel altogether for short meetings. Evaluate what activities could be hosted online and balance face to face with digital activities. Consider mixing online and face to face participation.

Encourage low-emissions transportation. If travel by air cannot be avoided, use the airline's carbon compensation scheme or a carbon emissions offset programme such as **Climatecare** or **Carbon Footprint**.

Pack as light as possible and avoid bringing unnecessary items because increased luggage weight requires higher carbon emissions to transport.

Combine multiple reasons for travel. If possible, extend trips so they fulfil multiple purposes.

Use bicycles or similar non-motorised vehicles during the event.

Avoid flights! Encourage travel by bus, train, eco-friendly ship (sailboat), car-share or bicycle as these have smaller carbon footprints. Night trains are also an option for some destinations.

Avoid printing tickets when travelling – use online versions.

PRINTING & PAPER



Go paperless: only print documents when necessary.

Use a smartphone application to share meeting agendas and other documentation.

Ask document recipients whether they wish to have paper versions before printing them (a lack of response can be interpreted as consent to be given an electronic version only).

Instead of printing copies for all participants, display general information in a visible place in large print.

Use overhead projectors to display meeting agendas or point participants to electronic versions of the information. Avoid printing copies of documents that will only be used once.

Print on both sides of the paper to minimise waste.


Edit documents before printing to decrease the number of pages (cut unnecessary text, use narrower margins, etc.)

Use flip charts economically, writing on both sides.

Instead of using plastic nametags, use paper tape and write participants' names on it with a marker, or make name badges using recycled card.

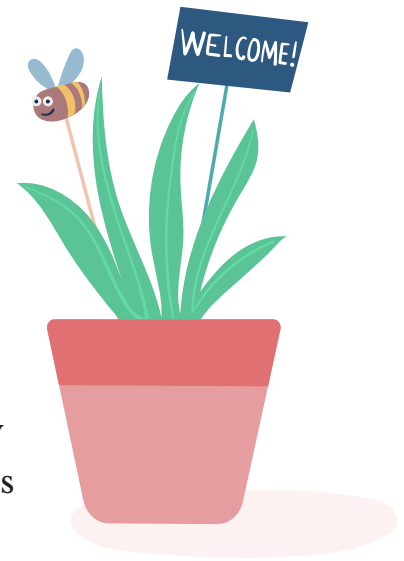
Plan how to collect event materials and inform participants accordingly (e.g. place a box in a visible location collect and recycle badges and lanyards (if they are used at all) at the exit).

Avoid colour printing.

 **IDEA:** Organise a competition for the most sustainable journey to the event (i.e., who has travelled the furthest in the most sustainable way).

WELCOME PACKS & PROMOTIONAL GIFTS

Promotional materials distributed to participants should be eco friendly as well as having a valuable function (i.e., reusable cups/bottles, ecological soap, etc.) and will not be discarded immediately after the event. It is worth carefully considering whether welcome packs and promotional gifts are even necessary.



Choose promotional materials that participants can continue using after the activity has ended.

Order from eco-friendly suppliers.

Buy supplies made of recycled or renewable materials.

Favour refillable pens.

Pencils are a good alternative if bought from a sustainable source.

Make notebooks by hand from recycled materials or buy notebooks that use recycled paper from an ecological supplier.

Consider do-it-yourself promotional items as a get together activity and allow your participants to create souvenirs on the spot from eco friendly materials.

Favour natural materials.

Encourage participants to support locally produced, natural material crafts and products as gifts.

Encourage participants to buy second-hand or upcycled products.

ESN ADVICE: “Inform your attendees before, during and after the event about your eco-choices. [...] By explaining them positively, you will show your commitment as a responsible organisation. Ensure that your participants can be part of the story by empowering them and encouraging them to contribute (e.g. bring your water bottles, it’s a plastic-free event!)”

BUYING FAIR TRADE



Cotton is among the commodities most often produced using child labour and forced labour in at least 18 countries (European Commission 2020) and makes heavy use of pesticides (Cubie 2006). Projects supporting youth rights in Europe should ensure that promotional t-shirts have not been sewn in conditions that do not respect human rights. One way to address this challenge is to buy locally from trusted companies that use Fairtrade certified fabrics from organic cotton, hemp, linen or bamboo.

Fairtrade is a certification that ensures growers from low income countries are paid a guaranteed minimum price for their product, workers receive fair wages, health and safety standards are complied with and there is no forced or child labour.

Use goods that are fair and local. When buying goods from abroad, opt for Fairtrade tea, coffee and chocolate or sugar (www.fairtrade.net gives details of local Fairtrade organisations).

Note: as with organic, food not labelled as Fairtrade is not necessarily produced and traded unfairly, it may just not be certified. It is therefore advisable to buy locally from trusted organisations.

REDUCING OUR DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

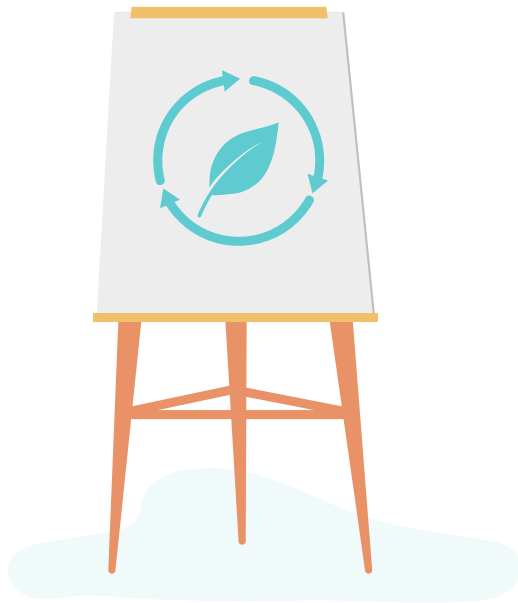
Going digital can appear to be a way of limiting waste and, by extension, carbon footprints. However, new technologies are a considerable source of pollution, too.



Sending 65 e mails is roughly equivalent to driving 1km in a car. Indeed, it is estimated global e mail usage generates as much CO₂ as having an extra 7 million cars on the road (ScienceFocus 2020). According to some estimates, the carbon footprint of gadgets, the internet and the systems supporting them account for about 3.7% of global greenhouse emissions (similar to that of global air travel!) and is mainly caused by high-income countries (The Shift Project 2019). Below are some tips to reduce an event's digital footprint and energy use:

- Limit projector and laptop use; turn them off when not in use to save energy.
- Set monitors to automatically use standby mode even after a short period of inactivity.
- Reduce average screen brightness.
- Delete data stored in the cloud once they are no longer needed, as keeping them online consumes energy.
- Optimise files sent by e mail by compressing them or reducing their resolution.
- When sending large files, select a file hosting service that uses a download link on a website (e.g. WeTransfer, Google Drive or OneDrive). This prevents the file from being stored on multiple servers.

EDUCATION



As stakeholders in the sustainability debate, young people deserve a say in environmental politics. Environmental challenges abound, several of which require government regulation, changes in practices and increased accountability for multinational corporations in Europe and worldwide. Nonetheless, environmental awareness is an integral part of active citizenship; taking action to implement sustainable solutions in one's own projects can actively contribute to the planet's well being.

Include a session about environmental protection, environmental activism and/or sustainability in the event programme.

Invite local small-scale producers and/or vegetarian/vegan influencers to speak at courses and lunch seminars.

Organise a social evening to watch educational films or documentaries (e.g. **Films for Action**, **Seaspiracy** and others).

Environmental awareness and thinking sustainably are part of a continuous process of learning, innovating and (re)creating.

We hope you find the checklist helpful in your journey in making the best choices for yourself and the planet.

CHECKLIST SUMMARY

TEAMWORK

Present the checklist to the team.

Design the own approach together.

Agree with participants which principles shall guide the work carried out at the meeting.

ACCOMMODATION & VENUE

Check for **green certification** (e.g. in the hotel industry one can look for **Green Globe** or **Green Key** certification).

Choose a venue that has an energy and water conservation programme (such as a recycling and waste minimisation programme, sustainable heating systems, etc.).

Find out if there are water fountains available.

Co operate with local social economy initiatives (co operatives, foundations, social enterprises) instead of big, commercial, for profit enterprises.

Choose venues where workers' rights are respected and where there is re-investment in the local community.

Provide hygiene products with a low environmental impact ("**Eco-label**") or, better, natural products, and using as little packaging as possible.

Transportation using private motor vehicles should be limited during events. This means the accommodation should be either in the same place/as close to the meeting venue as possible or easily accessible by public transportation.

Maximise the use of natural light.

Remind participants to turn off lights and taps when they are not in use.

Reuse material from previous events. To do so, make a list of single-use materials (decorations, non-reusable name tags, etc.)

Hold the meeting outdoors (if the weather allows).

Cleaning: use environmentally friendly products for cleaning and washing up (look into making your own cleaning products, e.g. vinegar, lemons or baking soda).

Use air conditioning or similar cooling/heating systems as little as possible.

Avoid unnecessary heating of meeting rooms or other spaces.

Do not change towels and sheets every day.

FOOD & CONSUMABLES

Go local: Using regional products helps minimise environmental pollution by avoiding transportation. To reduce food miles, seek to buy food from “eco farms”, small-scale, local agriculture holdings or local markets.

Prefer **organic** food, or that produced without pesticides.

Go seasonal: Seasonal fruit and vegetables help minimise environmental impacts because they do not require heated greenhouses or freezing (note: it is worth keeping in mind the carbon footprint of producing the food sourced).

Go plant-based: Consider introducing a policy to make all the organisation’s activities vegetarian or vegan by default to help reduce events’ negative environmental footprint. (When preparing an activity, ask participants: “Do you require meat?” rather than “Do you require vegetarian catering?”) If non vegetarian meals are required, favour organic, locally produced food.

Make it tasty: When choosing a venue or caterer, make sure they know how to prepare nutritious and tasty vegetarian meals.

Provide local seasonal fruits, nuts or baked goods as snacks.

Communicate: Explain to participants the reasons behind the decision to serve vegetarian meals (e.g. in an information sheet sent to participants in advance or as a short session during the activity).

Promote the use of ceramic or glass plates for food preparation and serving.

Minimise packaging.

Encourage hosts and participants to use refilling systems for existing recycled packaging.

If using take-away food services, ask for reusable or compostable crockery and cutlery. Styrofoam packaging should be avoided.

Use glass or ceramic cups for drinks and buy drinks in glass bottles instead of TetraPak or plastic.

Encourage (and remind) participants to bring their own water bottles (mention this ahead of the event).

Some countries are fortunate enough to have clean, drinkable tap water. Find out if that is the case at your venue.

Provide a reusable, individual glass for the whole event.

Use paper tape for people to write their names on their cups, enabling reuse. Avoid plastic cups and bottles!

Request that no bottled water be served.

Be mindful of packaging: Food and drinks made available during meetings should be as packaging-free as possible and glass is to be favoured over plastic.

Calculate the number of participants to avoid buying unnecessary products. Ask vendors to accept the return of unused products.

Seek out possibilities to compost food waste or feed it to animals.

Clearly label recycling bins (organic, paper, glass, plastic, metals, etc.) and place them in strategic, accessible and visible places (close to the food, close to an exit, etc.)

Donate leftovers (using apps such as **Karma**, **Olio**, etc.)

Reusing is always preferable to recycling and should be prioritised. (Recycling itself consumes energy. In addition, in some countries a relatively small amount of waste is actually recycled, even if it had been placed in recycling bins).

TRANSPORT

Public transport should always be favoured over private, motorised vehicles. Provide information to participants ahead of an event about public transport. Offering them a free ticket for local public transport is a great incentive!

Whenever public transport is not available, efforts should be made to group people in shuttles or create shared spreadsheets with arrival times so participants can share a ride.

Provide equal opportunities for people with disabilities taking public transport; make sure to include accessibility information.

Go digital and avoid travel altogether for short meetings. Evaluate what activities could be hosted online and balance face to face with digital activities. Consider mixing online and face to face participation.

Encourage low-emissions transportation. If travel by air cannot be avoided, use the airline's carbon compensation scheme or a carbon emissions offset programme such as **Climatecare** or **Carbon Footprint**.

Pack as light as possible and avoid bringing unnecessary items because increased luggage weight requires higher carbon emissions to transport.

Combine multiple reasons for travel. If possible, extend trips so they fulfil multiple purposes.

Use bicycles or similar non-motorised vehicles during the event.

Avoid flights! Encourage travel by bus, train, eco-friendly ship (sailboat), car-share or bicycle as these have smaller carbon footprints. Night trains are also an option for some destinations.

Avoid printing tickets when travelling – use online versions.

PRINTING & PAPER

Go paperless: only print documents when necessary.

Use a smartphone application to share meeting agendas and other documentation.

Ask document recipients whether they wish to have paper versions before printing them (a lack of response can be interpreted as consent to be given an electronic version only).

Instead of printing copies for all participants, display general information in a visible place in large print.

Use overhead projectors to display meeting agendas or point participants to electronic versions of the information. Avoid printing copies of documents that will only be used once.

Print on both sides of the paper to minimise waste.

Edit documents before printing to decrease the number of pages (cut unnecessary text, use narrower margins, etc.)

Use flip charts economically, writing on both sides.

Instead of using plastic nametags, use paper tape and write participants' names on it with a marker, or make name badges using recycled card.

Plan how to collect event materials and inform participants accordingly (e.g. place a box in a visible location collect and recycle badges and lanyards (if they are used at all) at the exit).

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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The Member States of the European Union have decided to link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.

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