

Guidelines for Sustainable Event Management at Karlsruhe Institute of Technology

As of: Juli 2024



PREFACE

Definition of Sustainability

Sustainability is a principle of action for the use of resources which aims to ensure the preservation of the natural regenerative capacity of the systems involved.

- Sustainability involves ecological, economic, and social concerns.
- Sustainability is a dynamic process and not every small measure will „save the world“. The important thing is to implement climate-friendly measures and to keep at it.
- A sustainable event minimizes negative environmental impacts, takes social needs into account, and promotes economic and social sustainability in the region.

Why Were These Guidelines Developed?

As KIT – The Research University in the Helmholtz Association, we contribute to sustainable development through our scientific findings. As an employer and a publicly funded organization, KIT also has a social mandate to fulfill its responsibility towards the environment.

With this guide, we – KIT’s Event Management – would like to draw attention to sustainable events at KIT. It serves to take concrete measures to organize events in a sustainable manner.

The spectrum of fields of action to be considered ranges from travel and the consumption of energy, water, and paper to considerations for minimizing waste. The environmentally friendly procurement of goods and services is another important aspect.

Environmental Management at Major Events

Events with hundreds or even thousands of participants pose a great logistical challenge for the organizers. Selective measures are often not enough. Instead, a comprehensive overall concept is usually required that is suitable for taking into account all the direct and indirect environmental aspects described in this guide.

Services at KIT

With your decision of hosting your event at Karlsruhe Institute of Technology and/or using KIT’s relevant services, you have already taken a big step towards sustainability. Learn more about the certified and ecological offers at KIT and include them in your plans for your congress, event or trade fair appearance!

¹ The voluntary European environmental management system EMAS, which is based on an EU regulation and was amended in 2009 [↗](#) (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme, Regulation [EC] No. 1221 / 2009 of November 25, 2009, Official Journal [EC] No. L 342, p. 1) provides event organizers with a suitable framework for defining both internal responsibilities at the various levels and environmental objectives, implementing the measures in a controlled manner and presenting their environmental performance to the public and other interested parties with the help of an “environmental statement”.

FOUR PHASES

Phases 1 to 4 are about planning (defining fields of action - looking at the value chain - assessing suppliers and service providers - arranging for participation), specifying fields of action 1 to 11 (page 4 ff.), implementation with your guests, and follow-up (determining the carbon footprint of the event and offsetting it if necessary).

We recommend that you actively work with the Federal Environment Agency's detailed checklists right from the planning phase.

Phase 1: Planning Your Event

Planning is essential for sustainability. You will have to make many decisions that are crucial for the environmental and social impact of the event. In addition to setting goals, you also integrate environmental and social aspects into budget, personnel, and procurement planning.

Phase 2: Specifying the Details

The detailed organization of the event takes place during the concretization phase. Event rooms, hotels, and locations for the social program are selected according to sustainable criteria. The number, size, and equipment of the rooms should correspond to the requirements and the number of participants. Sustainability criteria are taken into account when procuring products and services and awarding contracts to event agencies.

Phase 3: Implementation

This is where the quality of the preparation in the previous phases will be proven. The main task now is to implement the measures defined in these phases, i.e. to optimize the consumption of energy, water, materials, and other resources, to separate the waste and recycle/dispose of it appropriately, and to collect the data required for subsequent evaluation.

Phase 4: Follow-up

In the follow-up phase, data will be evaluated, effectiveness analyzed, and the calculated CO2 emissions offset.

ELEVEN FIELDS OF ACTION

At KIT, the following eleven fields of action are considered to be relevant for the environmentally friendly and socially responsible organization of events.

1. **Mobility**
2. **Venue and Accommodation**
3. **Catering**
4. **Energy, Water, and Air Conditioning**
5. **Procurement of Products and Services**
6. **Giveaways and Temporary Structures**
7. **Cleaning and Waste Management**
8. **Communication**
9. **Enabling Participation**
10. **Gender-mainstreaming**
11. **Evaluation and Compensation**

The individual fields of action are presented in detail and suitable measures for achieving the objective of this guide are described.

Give preference to venues, hotels, caterers, suppliers, and service providers that have a proven track record of sustainable business practices.

1. Mobility

The participants' travel activities usually present the most significant environmental impact. Therefore, the highest effort should go into the reduction of traffic-related pollution.

Measures

- Please check if your event can be held virtually.
- Always offer your guests and speakers the option to participate virtually as well.
- Use synergies with other events by interlinking events with similar topics and groups of guests.

- Choose venues and accommodations that are easy to reach by public transportation and where the principle of short distances generally applies.
- Choose times for your event that allow participants to travel to and from the event easily by public transport.
- Provide information on the use of environmentally friendly means of transport (explicit information on this in the invitation and on the event website: directions and route descriptions as well as timetable information for rail and local public transport, draw attention to well-functioning timetable apps).
- Ask participants on the event website or app which means of transport they plan to use to travel to the event and how many kilometers they will be covering, with reference to subsequent CO2 offsetting.
- Create incentives for the use of public transportation, e.g. by offering combined tickets (admission ticket to an event also includes free use of public transportation to and from the event).
- Organize a shuttle service that is as emission-free as possible for the routes between the hotel, conference venue, and arrival and departure points (train station, airport).
- Short distances can be done on foot. Alternatively, as the organizer, you can provide bicycles or cooperate with a bicycle rental system.
- Offer bicycle parking spaces or provide car parking spaces for a charge only.
- Mark no-parking zones, barriers and access restrictions in the countryside so that only existing parking spaces are used.

2. Venue and Accommodation

When selecting venues and hotels, environmental management systems and the criteria of related fields of action (e.g. arrival and departure, supply, waste management, accessibility) are taken into account. Accompanying events are also designed to be as environmentally friendly as possible.

Measures



- Look into event venues and hotels from a sustainability perspective (use special portals if necessary).
- Pay attention to the possible use of daylight and lighting control for presentations.
- Avoid excessively heated meeting rooms in winter (no more than 19 degrees Celsius) and excessively cooled meeting rooms in summer (no more than 6 degrees difference to the outside temperature).
- Pay attention to certification when choosing a venue or accommodation.²
- Select venues and accommodation as close to each other as possible.
- Organize accompanying events with consideration of environmental and social criteria (include environmental and social projects where appropriate).

3. Catering

Catering should be seasonal, regional, fair, and organic. Meat and fish should be avoided completely wherever possible. Even small measures such as optimal quantity calculation and adding food to the buffet as required or using smaller plates and portion sizes reduce food waste.

Measures

- Always offer seasonal, regional, vegetarian, and vegan dishes.
 - Offer products from fair trade (e.g. coffee, tea, cold drinks) and from organic farming.
 - Offer tap water in glass carafes.
 - Make sure that your caterer uses food that has been transported in an environmentally friendly manner. Especially produce from heated greenhouses and goods transported by air should be avoided.
 - • In exceptional cases, if meat and/or fish is to be included in the catering offer, select products that come from organic farming and meet high animal welfare standards. When selecting fish, make sure that no products from endangered stocks are included in the range.
- Cooperate with local suppliers. Opt for predominantly vegetarian dishes and light catering.
- Use reusable dishes and cutlery as well as glasses and returnable glass bottles.
 - Make sure you use environmentally friendly paper products (e.g. napkins certified with the „Der Blaue Engel“ (The blue angel) environmental label).

² Environmental labels, such as EMAS registration  or the European Ecolabel , can help with the selection of hotels and conference buildings. Locations with these labels are particularly suitable, as hotel operators and event organizers must provide evidence of compliance with environmental requirements. The existence of an environmental or energy management system in accordance with the ISO 14001 and ISO 50001 standards also proves that the operators of the hotel or event venue are concerned with their environmental impact.

- Avoid food waste through good participation management with realistic figures and consider the needs of the target group in order to avoid an oversupply of food and thus food waste. A small participation fee may be an option to reduce the no-show rate at events that are meant to be free of charge.
- Distribute leftover food to guests and/or staff in appropriate storage containers.

4. Energy, Water, and Air Conditioning

When organizing events, the aim is to achieve the greatest possible energy efficiency and energy savings. This applies to heating, air conditioning, cooling, and event technology.

Responsible use and measures to reduce wastewater pollution, e.g. the use of biodegradable cleaning agents, are important for protecting water resources.³

Measures

- Book venues and hotels that use green electricity.
- Use energy-efficient devices and IT with „Der Blaue Engel“ (The blue angel) environmental label certification.
- Take meter readings before the event in order to be able to determine consumption quantities afterwards. Document consumption levels after the event.

However, organizers are limited in their energy-saving measures by the fact that existing conference buildings and hotels can generally hardly be structurally altered and that ecological materials were rarely used during construction. However, if these certificates are available, they are decisive for the selection of the conference venue and the conference building.

5. Procurement of Products and Services

Before every new purchase, it is important to consider whether the product or service is absolutely necessary for the successful implementation of the event. Sustainable solutions and providers should be chosen for all necessary products and services.

Obtain a clear overview of the social and ecological standards of your event service providers.

Measures

- Check whether a purchase is necessary at all.
- Check whether the demand can also be met by purchasing used products or by renting them.
- Procure reusable components and systems.
- Avoid substances that pose a risk to the environment and raise health concerns. Book energy-efficient event technology.
- Do you need floral decorations on tables or on the stage? Use seasonal and regional fair trade and organic plants.
- Choose recyclable or reusable transport packaging (reusable cases and racks instead of plastic film) and optimize travel routes and the frequency of goods and material deliveries.

³ With regard to the procurement and use of environmentally friendly cleaning agents, please refer to the „Procurement of Products and Services“ field of action.

- Arrange with the service provider that they will prepare and present a transparent overview of the personnel deployment times in order to be able to take social aspects (e.g. fair wages and working conditions) into account when procuring services.⁴
- Make sure backpacks and cloth bags are made from sustainable materials and produced sustainably. It should be possible to reuse them sensibly after the events.

6. Giveaways and Temporary Structures

The most sustainable guest gift or giveaway is the one that is not produced in the first place. Event participants are also always consumers who enjoy a gift for a short time. In the long term, however, such products are usually not used any further as they are not needed.

Due to their resource-intensive nature, temporary structures (e.g. pavilions at major events) should be avoided. If their use cannot be avoided or if the construction of an exhibition stand is planned, attention should be paid to the use of durable, recyclable materials, among other things.

Measures

- Refrain from offering gifts and giveaways to guests.
- If there is no other option, opt for environmentally and socially responsible and fair trade products. Procure gifts and giveaways that bear the „Der Blaue Engel“ (The blue angel) environmental label or the EU Ecolabel or meet their criteria.
- Give preference to retractable pens and pencils made of cardboard, papier-mâché or wood from sustainable forestry.

- Search for alternative locations so that you don't need temporary structures.
- Ensure the use of recyclable building materials (e.g. no use of wood protection paints, use of certified wood, no use of PVC, use of products certified with the „Der Blaue Engel“ environmental label).
- Rent essential components or store them for reuse. Use expandable systems.
- Make sure you are guaranteed complete dismantling in order to avoid permanent surface sealing and soil damage.

7. Cleaning and Waste Management

When managing waste, the following principle applies: Reduce, reuse, recycle. The aim is to conserve resources and support circular economy.

Measures

- Book a cleaning company whose cleaning agents bear the „Der Blaue Engel“ (The blue angel) environmental label or the European Ecolabel.
- Inform the cleaning company about the separation system on site.

⁴ Public procurement law offers extensive opportunities to procure sustainable products and services. Procurers have a wide range of tools at their disposal to check sustainability criteria (e.g. life cycle cost calculator, quality labels, EMAS, energy efficiency label). When formulating the technical specifications, the award criteria, and the contract performance conditions, reference may be made across the board to certain quality labels such as the „Der Blaue Engel“ (The blue angel) environmental label or the European Ecolabel. In addition, quality labels can also be required as proof (Section 34 VgV / Section 24 UVgO). Section 13 of the Federal Climate Change Act stipulates an obligation to give preference to the most climate-friendly products and services in public procurement. This offers procurers good arguments and opportunities to weigh up climate-friendly products in all phases of procurement.

Extensive information on the environmentally friendly procurement of products and services, in particular product group-specific guidelines, can be found on the German Environment Agency's procurement info website [🔗](#), for example.



- Offer a return system at the event (e.g. for name badges) and inform participants about waste separation.
- Minimize packaging waste, e.g. by using reusable packaging and ordering in large containers if the contents are used up.
- Set up waste collection points for separate waste collection, especially for paper, organic waste, glass and lightweight packaging. Label the waste collection points in several languages.
- When disposing of residual waste, make sure that you comply with the requirements of the Recycling and Waste Management Act and the Commercial Waste Ordinance.

8. Kommunikation

Sustainable branding is not just for global corporations, but also works on a small scale. If sustainability goals are communicated in advance, this is an incentive to actually achieve the set goals.

KIT uses an online-based multitool for paperless guest management.

Measures

- Designate a central contact person who will be available before and during the event to answer questions on sustainability.
- Communicate the goal of holding the event sustainably (e.g. with the invitation, on the conference website or event app).
- Reduce paper consumption through digital invitation and event management (electronic dispatch of invitations and handouts).
- Avoid using elaborately printed brochures and instead offer them exclusively for download or in an event app.
- During the event, communicate agendas and information exclusively via screens and smartphones in an event app.
- If printouts for advertising (flyers, posters) are unavoidable, use recycled paper and estimate the print run conservatively to reduce paper consumption.

9. Enabling Participation

Accessibility is an important social aspect in the organization and implementation of events. Only by taking into account the needs of people with disabilities can they participate independently and actively. Accessibility means even more: It means participation regardless of the place, time, and nationality of the participants.

Many of KIT's venues are barrier-free. We have experience with sign language, transcription, and digital simultaneous translation.

Measures

- Make sure your websites and text documents are barrier-free.
- Make your event accessible for persons using a wheelchair, persons with another mobility problem, a visual impairment, a hearing impairment, and deaf persons.⁵ Inquire about the needs of participants and contributors in advance.
- Offer live translation of presentations and panel discussions into sign language, a transcript of the spoken word, as well as simultaneous translation into English and into all languages relevant for the auditorium if needed. Inquire about the needs of participants and contributors beforehand.

10. Gender-mainstreaming

Being the organizer of an event, you can contribute to gender equality by using gender-equitable language and by inviting experts in a balanced gender ratio.

Measures

- Prepare invitations, conference documents, and other texts in gender-neutral language and imagery.

- When selecting speakers, presenters, and booked artists, make sure that there is a balanced participation of men and women.
- Ensure work-life balance by offering childcare on site or in the immediate vicinity. Inquire about the needs of participants and contributors in advance.

11. Evaluation and Compensation

Every area of activity in the planning and implementation of an event, from the necessary travel to the consumption of energy, water, and paper, causes emissions. Voluntary compensation is the final step in a commitment to climate protection in order to at least compensate for unavoidable emissions.

Measures

- Collect data on the impact of your measures. Evaluate the meter readings, estimate the food waste.
- Document the volume of traffic and the participants' choice of means of transportation.
- For compensation, the amount of climate-impacting emissions from a particular activity must first be calculated. Various CO₂ calculators can be used for this, including those of the German Environment Agency (UBA). One credit stands for one reduced or avoided ton of carbon dioxide equivalent (t CO₂-eq.)
- Make a note of possible improvements for future events.

⁵ Further detailed information in German on organizing barrier-free events can be found in the checklist for barrier-free events from the Bundesfachstelle Barrierefreiheit (German federal working group for accessibility) [↗](#) or the brochure „Gestaltung barrierefreier Tagungen, Seminare und sonstiger Veranstaltungen“ (Organization of barrier-free conferences, seminars, and other events) of the Deutsche Gesetzliche Unfallversicherung e. V. (registered association for German statutory accident insurance) [↗](#) with a detailed checklist.

CONTACT PERSONS AND CHECKLISTS

Do you have any questions about sustainability at events in the context of this guideline?

Please direct your inquiries to the Event Management Department of the Campus Services Business Unit. We will be happy to advise you on the topics of sustainable mobility to the location, event venues and hotels, catering and restaurants, sustainable products for events, accessibility, sign language and transcription, as well as evaluation and CO2 compensation.

Contact

Nina Haeming, Campus Services

Event Management

Email: nina.haeming@kit.edu

Phone: +49 721 608-29055

Website: [↗](#)

Further Contact Persons at KIT

Waste Management and Consulting:

Franziska Reinardt-Köttig

Email: franziska.reinardt-koettig@kit.edu

Phone: +49 721 608-25137

Website: [↗](#)

Accessibility:

Nina Haeming

Email: nina.haeming@kit.edu

Phone: +49 721 608-29055

Website: [↗](#)

Procurement of Sustainable Products and Services:

Frank Willmert

Email: frank.willmert@kit.edu

Phone: +49 721 608-25323

Website: [↗](#)

Catering:

Helmut Kirchner

Email: helmut.kirchner@kit.edu

Phone: +49 721 608-25055

Website: [↗](#)

Printing on Environmentally Certified Paper:

Adrian Dickhoff

Email: adrian.dickhoff@kit.edu

Phone: +49 721 608-25040

Website: [↗](#)

Sustainable Give-aways from the KIT Campus Collection:

Anke Schoemperlen

Email: anke.schoemperlen@kit.edu

Phone: +49 721 608-41162

Website: [↗](#)

Cleaning:

Martin Smolorz

Email: martin.smolorz@kit.edu

Phone: +49 721 608-48874

Website: [↗](#)

Leitlinie zur gendergerechten und inklusiven Sprache und Bildsprache (Guideline for gender-appropriate language and visual imagery – German only): Website [↗](#)

You and your guests can book the **Deutsche Bahn event ticket**, which will take you to Helmholtz Association events and visitors to KIT's events, on this website (German only). [↗](#)

Checklists

We recommend the checklists [↗](#) from the German Environment Agency's Guidelines for Sustainable Event Organization.

Sources:

KIT bases its adapted recommendations for action on the German Environment Agency's Guidelines for Sustainable Event Organization (as of August 2020) [↗](#). Further sources are the project description of the School of Sustainability (KIT-ITAS), the handout „Sustainability Management in Non-University Research Organizations“ (LeNa) in cooperation with the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, Helmholtz Association, and Leibniz Association, and the study „Meetings and Conventions 2030: A study of megatrends shaping our industry“ by the Institute for Futures Studies and Technology Assessment (IZT) on behalf of the GCB German Convention Bureau e.V.

Contact

Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT)
Campus Services (CSE)
Viktoria Fitterer
Phone: +49 721 608-28760
Email: viktoriam.fitterer@kit.edu
www.cse.kit.edu

Translated by:
International Affairs, Translation Services (INTL)
Veronika Zsófia Lázár

Layout and Composition:
Media Production, Media Design (CSE)

Issued by

Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT)
President Prof. Dr. Jan S. Hesthaven
Kaiserstraße 12
76131 Karlsruhe, Germany
www.kit.edu

Karlsruhe © KIT 2024