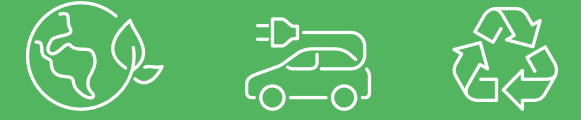


# Guide for the production of sustainable events.





# Introduction



Event Organisers



IFEMA MADRID would like to launch a public guide for any event organiser who, like us, feels the need to plan sustainable events in order to jointly reduce the impact we have on our planet.

We work in a sector that requires a great deal of movement, preparation and planning, transport of people, material, ephemeral set-ups, etc., and can thus have a major impact in terms of sustainability. Therefore, in order to turn that impact into a positive one, we are sharing this guide, based on our experience of more than four decades in the sector, to complement those previously published for exhibitors and visitors.

Before we begin, we would like to discuss with you the consequences of organising an event without taking sustainability into account. What are the possible consequences?

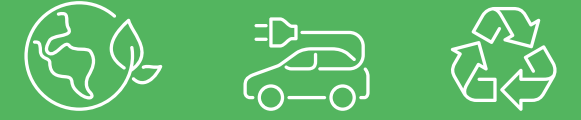
- Exponential waste production
- High consumption of natural resources (energy, water, paper and food)
- Safety risk for participants
- Noise and light pollution.
- Negative economic and social impact.

**Are you willing to allow all this to happen because of your event and do nothing to mitigate it? If not, this is the perfect guide to use as a reference.**



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# 1. Choice of location.





This is the first question you must ask yourself: where do I want to organise my event? Well, here we have to consider several factors: do I have my own location or not? Am I an event agency and does my client want a specific area? Am I the organiser of the event and have I already decided where to hold it? Does the space chosen meet the needs for the smooth running of the event?

We will try to answer these questions below:

- If you want your event to be sustainable, you should also try to **choose a venue that is sustainable**. If not, it will be more difficult.
- If you have the advantage of having your own space and your company has a clear commitment to sustainability (sustainability management focused on continuous improvement, technical measures in place, etc.) you will have no problem.
- If you have to select a venue for your event and you want it to be sustainable, make sure that **the venue you choose has sustainability** measures in place. We list some of the items you should demand: *see pages 38-39 Annex I "Exhibitor's guide to sustainable participation"*.

- You can also ask the owners of the venue about its **achievements in terms of sustainability**: (here are some of them) reduction in waste production, percentage of waste recycling, reduction in CO2 emissions, measurement of the carbon footprint of its facilities, treatment of surpluses, donations it has made, level of accessibility of the facilities, whether it has 100% certified renewable energy contracts and/or whether it has certifications based on international standards such as ISO, etc. If they do not answer you clearly, they may not be as sustainable as you may have thought.
- You will also have to consider other aspects related to the suitability of the space for your event, which will have an impact on its degree of sustainability:
  - **Suitability of the size of the facilities for your requirements.** Using larger, non-adaptable spaces, for example, will result in unnecessary wasteful consumption.
  - **Location in relation to the origin of most of your clients.** In this case, you can encourage the use of public transport or offer shared transfers as a way of minimising impact.



# 2. Preparation.







**The first step to follow is to take sustainability into account throughout the whole process of creation and planning.**

**To this end, we outline three starting points below:**

- **Sustainable options for exhibitors:** In terms of booth models, promoting digital marketing and communication actions, offering them suitable alternatives for the treatment of the waste and surpluses they produce, etc. Becoming their allies from the outset.
- **Implementing sustainable regulations for exhibitors and visitors:** Be prepared to set certain limits and your clients will undoubtedly appreciate this as part of your commitment. It is also always useful to draw up a small guide for all participants, reminding them of the importance of their actions and commitment.
- **Planning the sustainability actions to be implemented in the event:** Regardless of the fact that new ideas may arise during the course of the event, you should set goals from the very beginning. You must be prepared to commit yourself in a clear and measurable way. The SDGs can serve as a reference when setting your key sustainability goals.



**With regard to the planning of different aspects of the event, it is essential to take certain concepts into account from this early stage:**

- **Accessibility at all levels:** in addition to the venue being accessible, if you hire public transport (buses, vans, etc.), it must be accessible to people with special needs. You can also make your website accessible and implement actions to ensure that, during the event, there are sign language translators, that videos are subtitled, or that all booths have a ramp, etc. Signage should include Braille and take into account the needs of autistic people. And, of course, you must comply with legislation regarding reserved spaces in halls and auditoriums.
  - **Remote attendance:** in addition to the necessary face-to-face factor for the holding of a fair, it is important to enable the possibility of remote attendance in some way. In this way, the event will also be accessible to anyone with travel problems (physical, legal, economic, etc.) and the environmental impact of their visit will be practically zero.
  - **Planning measures to reduce energy consumption:** With regard to **electricity consumption**, booths can be required to have LED lighting and regulations can be established to ensure that the lights are switched off at the end of the day's events. Furthermore, the venue must be required to have LEDs in its infrastructures. Respecting timetables, as we will mention later, will be another effective measure to keep consumption under control. As regards **energy consumption** for air conditioning (hot or cold air, as appropriate), the venue must have some kind of measure in place to control the temperature to ensure that the limits established by law are not exceeded.
  - **Planning measures to reduce, reuse and recycle waste produced:** **By reducing and reusing materials**, you save money and gain in efficiency, producing less waste. Together with the preparation of the fair, it is essential to devote an important section to the planning of waste management in the different stages, leaving nothing to improvisation, covering all needs and informing our clients of the plan.
- Here are some ideas in this regard:
- **Offer and use booths or parts of the booth** with lighter materials, which can be easily dismantled and reused.
  - Promote digital advertising, minimising the use of **banners/posters**, or, if they are necessary, using reusable ones.
  - Print only essential **merchandising and graphic design material**, or do not throw away any surplus and reuse it because its content or type of material allows it.
  - Use rented **furniture** (shelves, tables, chairs, etc.) or decoration materials (natural or artificial plants, etc.), which are returned and reused by the rental company.



**Recycling the waste** that you cannot avoid producing during the **assembly and dismantling phases** is the next step. The organiser of an event should require all assemblers involved to sort the waste they produce and manage it in compliance with current waste legislation and recycle it.

Furthermore, the venue must offer a sorted waste removal service (carpet, wood, paper-cardboard, plastic-packaging, etc.), which can be used by the fitters, and must ensure that, if the waste produced by the fitters is correctly sorted, it will be recycled. The venue could penalise all fitters who do not correctly sort the waste they produce.

**Carbon Footprint measurement, reduction and offsetting:** You can calculate the carbon footprint of each of your events and try to reduce it gradually. You can even offset part or all of your carbon footprint. If you decide to offset your carbon

footprint, you should do it with official projects, so that you don't get taken for a ride. This is something you should decide at this stage to ensure the necessary measurements.

**With regard to the partners you will be working with on the project, it is essential that they share your concerns and commitment. To this end, we provide some guidelines to bear in mind as regards suppliers:**

- **Suppliers of materials/products (promotion, merchandising, packaging, posters, etc.) or services (cleaning, assembly, etc.):**
  - As far as environmental issues are concerned, you can ask these suppliers for documentation verifying that the raw materials they use or supply have sustainable certifications (such as FSC, PEFC, or similar) and/or are made of recycled materials, or that the companies that manufacture them have environmental management certificates and make such suppliers your first choice. You should also ask if the goods can be transported in low or non-polluting vehicles, and cal-

culate the distances involved. Finally, you can make it a requirement for suppliers to reuse packaging in the entry and removal of goods and not to use plastic fillers.

- As far as social issues are concerned, you can contract certain decoration or gardening jobs with special employment centres and promote the hiring of local suppliers, thus helping the region's economy and avoiding unnecessary transport.



# 3. Assembly.





Assembly is a particularly important stage in terms of waste production and consumption, which can be uncontrolled if there are no clear regulations. Furthermore, there may be alterations in safety levels. Our recommendations to ensure that as an organiser you remain committed to sustainable development are as follows:

– **Establish regulations in this regard:**

It is important to take measures to minimise possible damage and reduce negative impacts, but it is just as important, if not more so, to establish regulations in this regard and ensure that all the people who attend your venue during the event are aware of them. You should not pass this responsibility on to your exhibitors: you must find a way to ensure that all fitters and suppliers are aware of the regulations and comply with them. The following should be some of the contents of these regulations:

– **Safety:**

There must be no loopholes as regards safety measures, both in terms of ensuring all companies' documentation is in order, as well as the use of personal protective equipment. It is also necessary to ensure that all existing regulations regarding work at heights, etc. are complied with.

In addition, areas can be delimited within the assembly areas and precise timetables can be established for the arrival of transport, entry of goods, etc. This will reduce the accumulation of people and movement, which will undoubtedly also reduce the risk of danger.

There should be a Preventive Activities Coordinator when several companies are working in the same space at the same time, in order to organise the safety measures for all participants.

– **Chemicals:**

Where possible, the use of non-hazardous chemicals should be recommended (e.g. water-based rather than solvent-based paint, natural rather than synthetic inks, etc). Flammable chemicals shall be prohibited because of the risk involved.

– **Consumption:**

Establishing precise assembly schedules and demanding compliance with them guarantees the control of consumption in terms of lighting, air-conditioning, etc. Likewise, a rational use of the different machinery should be promoted in order to ensure that it is not used for longer than strictly necessary.



– **Waste:**

The organisation, in its preparation phase, has already ensured that it will use sustainable materials as far as possible and will avoid single-use materials. In this section, a waste sorting plan should be put in place, offering the fitters the possibility to sort waste. It is advisable to set up several clean points, strategically located, perfectly identified and with sufficient collection times. It is important to offer the possibility of storing the packaging so that it can be used in the removal of material, thus ensuring that it will not become waste.

– **Awareness-raising:**

Awareness-raising should not be neglected at any time. You should bear in mind the fact that many people are sharing your facilities and can be recipients of your messages. It is also the best way to ensure that they behave appropriately.

Spare no expense in signposting and reminding them of the important aspects we have just mentioned. It is important to plan an orderly and consistent communication campaign capable of engaging your clients in this respect.

Finally, awareness-raising is always more effective if it is incentivised. You can therefore establish bonuses to benefit hauliers who use low-emission vehicles or reward booths that have sustainable electrical installations.

And let's not forget the most important thing: your staff, the people who serve your clients during the event, must be the main standard-bearers for the cause of sustainability.





# 4. Entry of goods.





The entry of goods is an important moment in terms of sustainability. Although you might think that you have passed the assembly period, when the installation of ephemeral architecture produces the greatest quantities of waste, it is no less true that there are several conditions that make this stage a moment to be taken into account:

- Firstly, these are usually **shorter periods**, so everything should be much better planned.
- The time of opening is approaching, so any problem will require an immediate solution, which is not always consistent with maintaining sustainable behavioural criteria.

This should prompt us not to lower our guard, which should not be difficult as many of the recommendations have been carried out previously, during the assembly period:

- **Tight entry schedules** in order to avoid collapses or waiting times (minimising consumption).
- **Generalised work schedules** in halls, communicated and applied to avoid excessive consumption.
- Facilitate **waste sorting**.

In order to raise awareness among your clients, it is important to remind them of two important points:

- The prior planning of the goods to be exhibited in order to avoid the return of some of them once the booth has been set up, thus avoiding unnecessary journeys.
- The importance of saving and taking care of the packaging so that it can be used for the removal of parts. In this respect, it is important for the organisers to provide a suitable place for this purpose or offer the possibility of accessing this service.

Finally, one aspect that must not be forgotten: **safety**. The fact that the individual protection measures are fewer than during assembly (no helmet is required), or that no construction work is being carried out on the site, does not mean that we should lower our guard or forget the need to ensure a safe environment in a space where a large number of people are gathered.





# 5. Holding of the event.





Now comes the most important moment, the opening of doors, the holding of the event, during which our clients are going to spend time together in a specific venue, with the main aim of doing business, transmitting and sharing know-how, updating their knowledge, etc. How can you ensure that sustainability is not overshadowed by other, more pressing concerns? Well, by making it easy for them:

- **Communication** will be more important than ever, so you must not lower your guard:
  - Display clear signage about what your sustainability commitments are, the ones you would want your clients to share with you.
  - Do not limit yourself when launching messages that you think are important, but do so in an orderly and consistent manner, specifying what the objective is in each case.
  - Briefly explain your sustainability initiatives (before and during the event, if possible, corroborating it with data at the end of the event). Help your clients to make theirs known.
- During the event, open a communication channel with your clients in which they can make their suggestions or report any negative situations they may encounter so that you can take action to correct them.
- A key message should always be to remind exhibiting companies to turn off the lights at their booths when they leave the exhibition site.
- **Waste.** More important than ever. The concentration of people is increasing and, consequently, so is the possible production of individual waste. It is essential to have a good structure that enables sorting.
- Transfer all the information to a **digital model**, avoiding as far as possible the use of maps, passes, etc.
- With regard to **safety**, it is necessary to maintain the same degree of strictness as in the previous stages, especially bearing in mind that the concentration is greater.
- **Timetables** must be strictly adhered to, thus avoiding excessive consumption.



# 6. Removal of goods.





After the event, it is important to take into account the removal of goods as well as the dismantling to ensure your event makes a difference in terms of sustainability.

- **Safety:**  
Bearing in mind that during this period there is a significant movement of people and materials, maximum safety measures must be taken. As we pointed out in the section on the entry of goods, the fact that the regulations are lighter than during assembly should not lead us to lower our guard.
- **Packaging:**  
If you have paid attention to what has been recommended in previous stages, your exhibitors will have kept their packaging so that they can reuse it for the the removal of goods. To go one step further, the organiser could offer a packaging service using sustainable materials through a logistics company. When contracting a logistics company, it is important to take into account the selection of KMO suppliers.

- **Transport:**  
It is important to establish sensible schedules that allow free circulation and avoid waiting times for pick-up vehicles. Moreover, in fairs where, due to the type of event and the behaviour of the product exhibited, there is not a significant return of material, exhibitors will be encouraged to use shared transport alternatives.

**Consumption:**

- Once again, timetables are a key factor in ensuring that unnecessary and uncontrolled consumption does not occur. Prior and repeated communication of these regulations is essential to ensure that participating companies have made their provisions in this regard and will be able to comply.

- **Waste:**  
The organisation must insist on the importance of sorting waste for correct recycling. In stages with high activity and limited time, it is necessary to stress these issues in view of the urgency to meet the deadlines. Therefore, we recommend increasing communication and the number of

clean points, making them more accessible to all those who are working in the hall at the time.

**Surplus/ Promotional material::**

- It is very important to bear in mind that a fair is going to produce a large amount of surplus, both in terms of food and other items, mainly promotional material (pens, notebooks etc.). Managing the organisation's own surplus is relatively simple and only requires foresight. It is more difficult to ensure that the exhibitor companies treat their surpluses appropriately.

For this purpose, collaboration from the organisers can be crucial (many companies are not local and those that are may not have the right contacts to be able to organise this work). The option would be to centralise the collection from the organisation, arranging points for the delivery of surpluses by the participants, previously informing them of their location and the material to be collected. These areas would be coordinated by NGOs, which would be the recipients of the products.



# 7. Dismantling.





This stage concludes the presence of different companies and people in the same space. It is the last phase of the process, but you must not lower your guard. All aspects that have been important throughout the process will continue to be important here.

— **Safety:**

The dismantling period is arguably more complex than assembly in terms of safety. Structures are dismantled without the order required in construction, and the space can easily accumulate structural debris and waste that hinders transit. It is essential to reinforce communication of the need to comply with safety regulations, as well as to ensure such compliance.

There should be a Coordinator of Preventive Activities when there are several companies in the same space working at the same time, in order to organise safety measures among all participants.

— **Waste:**

As in the previous stages, it is important to oblige the assembly companies to remove their waste. Penalising exhibitors who fail to do so can be an effective option.

On the other hand, it is advisable that, as organisers, you have planned what to do with your own waste (creation of ephemeral structures, carpeting, etc.). Reuse is the best option, so you should plan removal in such a way as to ensure the least possible damage to the material.

Should this option not be possible, the alternative would be recycling.

— **Consumption:**

Once again, we would like to remind you of the importance of establishing a timetable and sticking to it, with the aim of ensuring control of consumption.





# 8. Case studies.



As regards sustainability in the organisation of events, there are certain issues that are cross-cutting, i.e. that must be taken into account at different times during the organisation of the event or fair.

– **Catering:**

First of all, find out about the regulations that apply at the venue with regard to catering.

As far as **products and food** are concerned:

You are responsible for ensuring that the caterers you hire are safe and do not cause food poisoning. To do this, you must check that these companies comply with food safety legislation. A simple way to ensure this is by demanding that they have recognised certifications (e.g. certification of the company in the ISO 22000 standard or other equivalent certification, supplier audit carried out by a consultancy specialised in food safety, etc.).

For the proper management of such a delicate aspect, we suggest you follow these recommendations:

- Communicate the daily visitor forecast to the catering company to avoid producing unnecessary surplus food.
- Take into account food allergies and intolerances.
- Offer organic and/or locally produced products and/or products purchased from fair trade organisations. These products shall be duly labelled.
- Finally, vegan products should be offered, as people with vegan convictions may visit the event.







Regarding packaging and containers (cups, bags, cutlery, napkins, tablecloths, plates, bottles, single-dose coffee/sauces, any other single-use packaging)

We suggest you follow these recommendations:

- All packaging and containers used shall be suitable for food use.
- Prioritise the use of bulk dispensers or beverage jugs.
- Priority should be given to reusable materials (glass, textiles, etc.), avoiding single-use containers. If they have to be single-use, they must also comply with the following:
  - They must have a percentage of recycled materials in their composition.
  - They must be manufactured under certain environmental criteria (FSC, PEFC, recycled material in their composition, other environmental certifications, etc.).
  - It is recommended that the packaging used should have voluntary quality/food safety certifications such as IFS PACsecure, BRC Packaging, ISO 22000 or similar.

#### – **Transport and sustainable mobility**

Transport is one of the most important aspects, not only for the movement of visitors, but also for the other people involved in the organisation of the event (suppliers, employees, exhibitors, etc.).

During the event, there is constant movement of participants and clients. If you want to encourage sustainable mobility options and reduce the impact on transport, it is essential to offer alternatives. Here are some ideas:

- Encourage the use of public transport by repeatedly communicating the combinations available to reach the venue, before and during the event, in a general way in all the notes and individually in direct communications.
- Encourage carpooling, especially by employees of the same company. Study the possibility of contacting one of the existing applications to facilitate pooling.
- Implement an incentive plan (discounts, gifts, prizes, etc.) for employees who use public transport or other sustainable mobility alternatives for their journeys.
- Ensure, as far as possible, the existence of electric charging units in car parks to facilitate the use of electric vehicles.

- Provide, whenever possible, a shuttle bus service from the main hotels where participants are staying, making it easier for them to travel and thus avoiding the use of private vehicles.

#### – **Awareness-raising:**

The educational component is very important when it comes to raising awareness, and this is mainly achieved with facts, i.e. data.

To involve all stakeholders in the sustainability measures taken by the event organisation, it is necessary to implement effective and visible communication during all stages of the event, knowing at all times who will be the recipient of each of the communications, and using the appropriate channels for each one.

It would have a positive impact to conclude the fair by providing participants with information on the performance of the event in terms of sustainability, involving them in the results.

Promoting these actions also implies an obligation on your part to be accountable, and doing so in this way is a way of reminding them that you mean business. The best way to convince people is by example.



# 9. Conclusions.





Taking sustainability into account when organising an event is key to reducing the negative impact that the activity can have on society and the environment.

Although there are many proposals mentioned in this guide, the strategy is to gradually apply those that are possible depending on the type of event, and above all, to increase the number of sustainable actions in each event in order to identify improvements in terms of sustainability.

And of course, by involving all your stakeholders - clients, staff, suppliers, etc. - not only will it be easier for you to achieve results, but you will also be spreading the word about your commitment and multiplying your impact.

IFEMA MADRID provides you with this guide and is at your disposal for any other questions you may have regarding sustainability in the organisation of events.



# Feel the inspiration

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