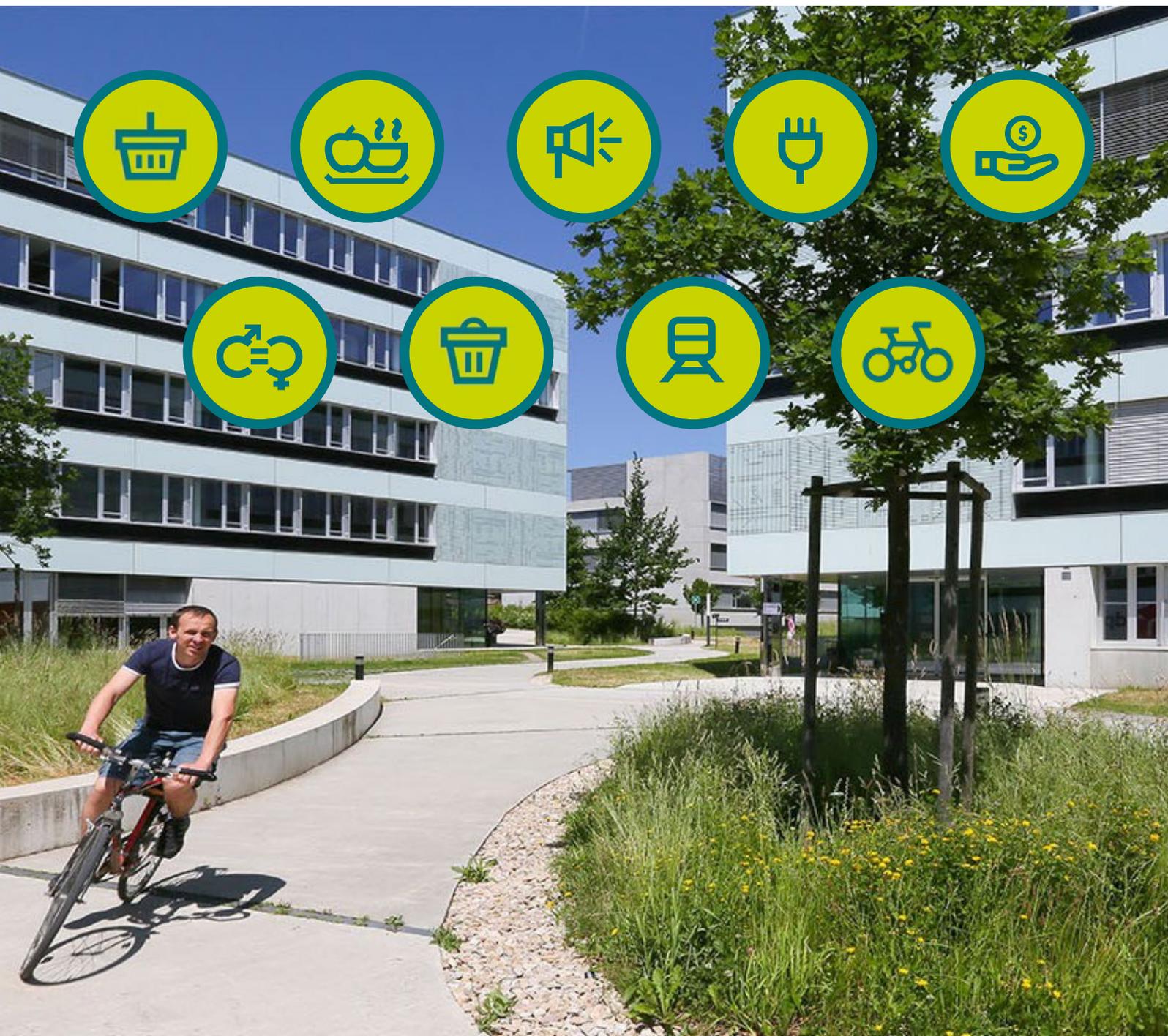


# Sustainable Event Checklist



## Introduction

Sustainability is a priority at EPFL.

The School has recently introduced an ambitious strategy in order to support the fight against climate change with the preparation of a bold **Climate & Sustainability Action Plan**.

At EPFL Innovation Park we follow the same strong ambition and support our companies with programs and tools to incorporate sustainability in their strategy and operations – including events.

*This sustainable event checklist can apply to any event held by EPFL Innovation Park companies either on or off the Park. This checklist is adapted from the [checklist](#) created by EPFL.*

What is a sustainable event?

A sustainable event is one that's designed to minimize its environmental impact and deliver benefits to society and the local economy. It's also one that builds awareness and informs the community about sustainability-related issues.

## Steps in planning a sustainable event

First, use this checklist to set sustainability-oriented SMART goals for your event (see Figure 1) and outline the corresponding measures you'll need to take. If you have a lot of goals, group them into "required," "doable" and "ideal." Sustainability is something you should consider across the entire lifecycle of your event (see Figure 2). Once the event is over, we suggest you debrief with your organizing committee to see how effective your approach was and the extent to which you achieved your goals.

### SMART goals

Specific	Mesurable	Attainable	Realistic	Time-bound
The goal is simple and easily understood	The goal is quantifiable and tied to a performance indicator	You have the resources to reach the goal	The goal can be reached within the various constraints	You have set a deadline for reaching the goal

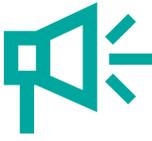
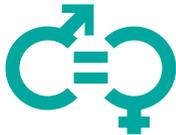


If possible, appoint someone from your organizing committee to be in charge of sustainability. Tell your suppliers and service providers that you want to hold a sustainable event, and work closely with them to help you achieve your sustainability goals.

Do some online research to see what EPFL and external event-planning resources are available. Here are a few:

1. The Canton of Vaud's [Kitmanif](#) (in French)
2. [Manifestation verte](#) (in French)
3. EPFL's [Sustainability Unit website](#)
4. EPFL's [sustainable travel guidelines](#)

Sustainability checklist by category

<p>1. Purchasing &amp; facilities</p> 	<p>2. Food &amp; beverages</p> 	<p>3. Marketing</p> 
<p>4. Energy</p> 	<p>5. Funding, sponsorships &amp; partnerships</p> 	<p>6. Equal opportunity</p> 
<p>7. Waste management</p> 	<p>8. In-country &amp; international travel</p> 	<p>9. Local transportation &amp; accommodations</p> 



## 1. **Purchasing & facilities**

You should consider the carbon footprint of every item you buy or service you pay for. For instance, EPFL uses only FSC-certified, 100% recycled paper and has established a [sustainability policy](#) for many of the goods and services purchased through calls for tenders.

Carefully **calculate** the products, services and facilities you'll need, to avoid purchasing too many or unnecessary things.

Select **sustainable equipment** whenever possible.

Think about the needs of your attendees by **adapting the facilities and services** during the event.

Ask your suppliers for information on where they source their products, so you can make sure to **buy responsibly**. You can also check online resources for selecting sustainable suppliers, such as the [Swiss government's purchasing guidelines \(in French\)](#).

Make sure your event is **accessible** to all, including people with reduced mobility.

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## 2. **Food & beverages**

The food industry is one of the largest CO<sub>2</sub> emitters and impacts the environment in various ways (e.g., the climate, water, biodiversity and soil).

There are many things you can do to source food and beverages sustainably. Here are some ideas.

Tell your caterer you want to hold a sustainable event and see what they suggest. A list of caterers on the EPFL campus is available [here](#).

**Limit** or where possible remove processed foods and foods with a large carbon footprint.

**Offer menus** including at least 50% of vegetarian options with a part that is totally vegan

Use **local** ingredients, **seasonal** produce and **fair-trade** products whenever possible.

When available use **water fountains** at your event, if possible connected to the municipal water supply (rather than using large plastic bottles).

Offer **locally sourced and produced** beverages and **limit non-renewable containers**.

Serve food in a way that **minimizes waste**.

Choose options like finger food that **reduce the amount of packaging** required.

**Avoid** using plastic containers and disposable dishes and cups. Instead, use [returnable or reusable](#) ones.

Plan out how you will handle **food waste** once the event is over. One idea is the [Too Good to Go](#) app.

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#### Did you know?

- EPFL has committed to providing more [vegetarian and vegan options](#) at its restaurants.



### 3. Marketing

**Marketing your event is an important step in the event-planning process. Here too, you can take concrete action to promote sustainability in terms of both what you communicate (i.e., highlight the sustainability steps you're taking and build sustainability awareness among the partners you work with) and how (i.e., through low-carbon, inclusive communication channels).**

Use your event as an **awareness-raising platform**. Openly promote the sustainability measures you've adopted and the efforts you'd like to see from participants.

Consider giving an **awards to participants or exhibitors who follow the sustainability guidelines** at your event. You could also reward sustainability-minded individuals through a ranking system or by showcasing them on your event website.

Use **sustainable marketing materials**, such as digital signs and posters, banners with no date so they can be reused.

Use **digital communications** whenever possible. This could include creating a smartphone app for your event, posting the event program online and not printing out posters and flyers.

If you will be giving out gifts or prizes during your event, **choose sustainable ones** that support the local economy, such as artisanal and environmentally friendly products (e.g. a reusable water bottle, a totebag, a candle, a mug, a planting kit, reusable gift wrapping, or a cutlery kit.)

Use socially and environmentally responsible criteria when selecting your marketing materials (e.g., giveaways, T-shirts, promotional items, printouts and signs). One useful resource is the [Swiss government's sustainable purchasing guidelines \(in French\)](#).

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#### 4. **Energy**

**Don't leave windows open** unnecessarily during the cold winter months.

**Be sure to turn off all electrical equipment and devices** (projectors, computers, coffee machines, etc.) whenever you leave a room, even if you're just taking a break, to save energy.

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##### Did you know?

- EPFL's electricity comes in part from its solar park, and part from the lake water for our [heating and cooling system](#). Unfortunately this production is not enough to cover all the needs.



#### 5. **Funding, sponsorships & partnerships**

**Holding a sustainable event is a collective effort. It requires working with all partners to map out socially and environmentally responsible measures to take.**

Sustainability also extends to financial considerations.

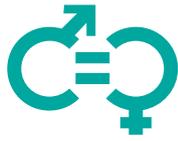
Before working with a partner company from the private sector, check out the company's CSR initiatives and track record <sup>1</sup>. This could include looking into working conditions at the company and evaluating its performance in terms of human rights, the environment and fighting corruption.

Look for companies and organizations that have **the same sustainability values** as the ones you want to promote through your event.

Try to find out how **the company or organization is funded**.

Ask sponsors to provide **reusable banners and promotional materials**. Suggest they display their logo on your website, as opposed to distributing items that can be used only for the event and will be thrown away once it's over.

<sup>1</sup> The Swiss Federal Council set out its commitment to responsible business conduct in its 2020–2023 CSR Action Plan, as adopted on 15 January 2020. [More information](#).



## 6. **Equal opportunity**

Make sure that diversity – with regard to gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin or disability – is **incorporated into your event’s goals**.

**Actively identify and eliminate** any situations at your event that could lead to harassment or discrimination.

Use your event as a **platform for building awareness**, and communicate openly about the equal opportunity measures you have adopted.



## 7. **Waste management**

**Waste management at EPFL involves both reducing the amount of waste we produce on campus and recycling more of the products we use. [Learn more.](#)**

Aim for a **waste-free, plastic-free** event (see our tips under Food & beverages).

**Minimize** the number of items, including paper, that you hand out.

Avoid flyers and **printed signage** (see our tips under Marketing).

For documents that must be printed, be sure to use **recyclable paper and print on both sides**. Carefully calculate how many copies you need, so you don't print too many, and don't use paper clips or staples. Try not to use a lot of different colors in your marketing documents.

Select booths and other display materials made out of **recycled, recyclable or reusable materials**.

Provide **recycling bins** for different kinds of waste, including in staff areas and while people are setting things up and taking them down.

**Distribute as few materials to participants as possible**, and minimize the use of packaging.

**Recover, reuse or recycle** items you hand out to participants, such as pens they may not want to keep, notepads, badges and access lanyards. You can use them at your next event or donate them.

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### **Did you know?**

- The recycling rate at EPFL reached 70% in 2020.



## 8. In-country & international travel

Travel is usually the biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions for an event. You can take steps to reduce these emissions by encouraging cleaner and greener forms of transportation.

Make it possible for speakers to give their **talks by videoconference** so they don't have to travel.

Speakers and participants who will be traveling can use [routeRANK](#) to plan a low-carbon trip.

Ask speakers and participants coming from elsewhere in Europe to **avoid flying if at all possible**. If they must fly, suggest they offset their carbon emissions through programs like [My Climate](#).

### Did you know?

- Two-thirds of EPFL's carbon emissions come from business travel and commuting to and from our campuses. EPFL has therefore adopted a "[mobility plan](#)" to encourage sustainable transportation methods.



## 9. Local transportation & accommodations

There are several sustainable options for getting to and from our Lausanne campus.

Encourage participants to use **public transit or sustainable transportation options** such as biking or walking to attend your event. Some bike-rental and bike-sharing services offer a flat rate for use during a given event.

Notice that our venue has bicycle parking stations. Let participants know.

For speakers and participants coming from abroad, suggest hotels that are within walking distance of the event. Two hotels near the Lausanne campus are the SwissTech Hotel and Starling.

Some cities offer free public-transportation passes to guests staying at a local hotel. You can check whether that's true at your venue. For events in Lausanne, visit the [Mobilis website](#) or the [TL desk](#) at the Esplanade on the Lausanne campus.

Take the **public transportation schedule into account** when deciding what time your event will start and finish.

Consider the **carbon emissions** from transporting equipment and materials to and from your venue.

When possible, **use trains** instead of renting a bus or other motorized vehicle.

Recommend hotels that are **near your event** or public transportation stops so as to make it easier for participants to use sustainable transportation.

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### Did you know?

- The SwissTech Hotel has put in place the "[Cause We Care](#)" program of the myclimate Foundation, which allows clients to make a voluntary contribution towards a climate-neutral stay. With a contribution of CHF 1 per overnight stay, clients support their sustainability measures and offset the CO2 emissions of their overnight stays and the SwissTech doubles the contribution.
- The SwissTech Hotel is also a member of the [OK:GO initiative](#) of the Swiss Barrier Free Association which makes accessibility information available to customers in order to facilitate travel planning for people with disabilities and seniors.
- It also participates in Switzerland Tourism's sustainability program [Swisstainable](#) and meets the criteria for Level II - Engaged.



*If you have any questions about this checklist or would like more information about the topics covered, contact [sustainability@epfl-innovationpark.ch](mailto:sustainability@epfl-innovationpark.ch)*

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