



Greening your conference

Planning an official and environmentally friendly event may be challenging when you do not know where and how to start. This Newsflash will review some existing guides published by different European ministries that encourage event organisers to think about the environmental, economic, and social impacts involved, from the beginning to the end of the event organisation. This will ensure that your future events are as green as possible.

The French guide, published in cooperation with three different ministries, adopts a technical and very detailed analysis on how to organise a carbon neutral conference. The approach is based on three different examples depending on whether the conference is of national, regional, or international scale. The amount of greenhouse gas emissions are related to the kind of the event that is being organised and thus event parameters are clearly listed by field, i.e. catering, transport, accommodation, and waste. In the beginning of the guide, case studies are provided that show that 99% of total emissions for an international conference come from transportation. Other examples used in the guide explain precisely how the choice of a venue or non-seasonal fruit for your menu will affect your total emissions. The rest of the publication elaborates on the methodology to accurately calculate the carbon footprint of your event with ready to use GHG emission factor sheets that can be found in the annexes.

The British DEFRA guide is divided into seven different sections dealing with environmental and other impacts in the field of transport, venue, catering, preparation, social wellbeing, raising awareness, and evaluation. In terms of transportation, small efforts can result in significant results, such as finding a meeting place that is easily accessible by public transportation, or choosing an accommodation not far from the venue. The guide also proposes forwarding information on the event via the internet and providing electronic files with conference related documents to save paper. A venue that complies with environmental standards (such as ISO 14001) is also strongly suggested by the DEFRA guide.

"As each event is different, there is no one rule that everyone can apply. Therefore the guide contains a range of simple options to make event management more sustainable and gives tips on how to organise, save money and get the most out of your attendees."

Matt Jackson SD Programme, DEFRA





The German and Austrian guides published by the UBA and the Lebensministerium consider similar aspects as the DEFRA guide, but also include a special section on water use and host gifts, as well as on social aspects such as gender mainstreaming. In addition, both guides provide worksheets for each topic which describe how you can improve the environmental performance of every step in the event management process. These worksheets also include practical internet links for any kind of "green service" from emission offsetting, to procurement of green products, and bike rental. They also rank the different measures to be undertaken according to their environmental benefits.

Moreover, the Austrian Lebensministerium and the Ökologie-Institute launched the "Green Events Austria" initiative. Together they organise pilot projects, and conferences on "Green events". The initiative also supports the creation of networks and publishes articles in magazines specialised in event organising. The 2008 European Soccer Cup and the Innsbruck Fair and Congress were part of the initiative.

References:

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- Leitfaden für die umweltgerechte Organisation von Veranstaltungen, Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und Reaktorsicherheit, April 2008, available on: <http://www.umweltdaten.de/publikationen/fpdf-l/3459.pdf>
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For more information on "Green Events Austria", please follow: www.greeneventsaustralia.at



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