

GUIDELINES for SUSTAINABLE EVENTS

within the

INTERREG MED COMMUNITY

Context

The present Guidelines aim to support the Interreg MED horizontal and modular projects to integrate sustainability criteria in the organization of their project events.

Annually, the Interreg MED community is organizing hundreds of national and regional events – round tables, seminars, conferences, workshops etc. These events, sometimes reuniting thousands of persons, have an important environmental impact, such as natural and material resource consumption, energy use, and waste generation. For example, accordingly to the French association [ADEME](#), a one day event with 1000 people consumes 100 kg of paper (the equivalent to two trees and 30000 liters of water), 200 kWh energy (the equivalent to 3 years of light by a 15 w ecological bulb) and generates 500 kg of waste (meaning 1.5 times the average waste produced by one person in one year). Therefore, the integration of sustainability criteria in the management of these events will enable the Interreg MED projects to “*walk the talk of sustainability*”, by directly and systematically contribute to the sound development of the Mediterranean area, including the protection of its resources.

The sector of events organization is exposed to large public coverage and is a hub of networks and partnerships. The integration of sustainability criteria in the events might furthermore contribute to the promotion and uptake of these values within / by a large palette of MED stakeholders and the general public.

Last, the integration of sustainability criteria in the organization of events represents a complex thematic action, requiring various types of environmental know how, tools and experiences. This sector can therefore represent a good experimentation ground to bring together and combine the various approaches of the Interreg MED projects from all thematic communities.

The environmental impact represents the most visible challenge of sustainability in the sector of events organization, reason for which the first edition of the present Guidelines focuses solely on it. However, when planning an event, Interreg MED projects are encouraged to deploy a systematic, holistic approach of sustainability and consider also social, economic and good governance issues, such as:

- Social aspects: insure the respect of decent working conditions, including the health and safety of workers, comprising for the sub-contracted companies; respect of human rights; safe personal data management; provide accessibility to the event for disabled people; promotion of interculturality, active citizenship, social innovation and participatory citizenship;
- Economic aspects: use of social and circular economy products and services; maximization of the impact on the local economy; promotion of local attractions and amenities; insure the cost efficiency and sustainability of the event;
- Good governance aspects: financial transparency of the event; communication of ethical values and principles; stakeholder engagement across the event lifecycle.

The integration of sustainability criteria in the organization of events within an organization should be a *managerial long time approach*, based on the following principles:

- the integration of the events sustainability efforts within the larger organizational sustainability strategy;
- the engagement of the member teams in the elaboration, implementation and evaluation of the policy;
- the continuous improvement of the performances, based on PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) principles.

The present Guidelines emerged from two synergic documents elaborated by two Interreg MED thematic communities: Green Growth (Axis 1) and Biodiversity protection (Axis 3). They are based on the theoretical and practical experiences of the coordinators of the two communities, from MED recommendations and other sustainable events tools such as the UNEP guidelines. Feedback support has been received from their peers in the following community projects: Renewable Energy, InnoBlueGrowth, Efficient Buildings and Sustainable Tourism (April 2018).

Additional resources are provided at the end of the document.

The present Guidelines will be constantly updated based on the inputs of projects representatives and various stakeholders.

A ONE DAY EVENT WITH 1000 PEOPLE GENERATES:

> 100kg of paper = 2 

> 30.000 liters of 
= 41 years of drinking  consumption for one 

> 200 kWh = 3 years of public lighting
with a 15w 

> 500 kg of  = 1,5 the 
generated by 1  in 1 year

How about yours?

data accordingly to "Guide pour des manifestations responsables", Gironde Conseil General (with the support of ADEME)

A) PLANNING THE EVENT

General considerations

- ✓ Consider if a webinar or a video conference could be organized instead of a meeting, and aim at recording and disseminating digitally for those that could not attend
- ✓ Try to organize several events together / back to back to meetings to maximize sustainability, minimizing travel impact and costs
- ✓ Select places certified with eco-labels (for example, EU Eco-label), having environmental management standards (ISO 14001, EMAS) or green buildings certifications (for example, LEED)

Venue and accommodation

✚ Energy consumption

- ✓ Select locations with access to natural light, in order to avoid the use of artificial light or that use low energy light bulbs
- ✓ Select locations with power plants using renewable sources (e.g. wind, solar, geothermal, etc.)
- ✓ Select locations with natural ventilation

GRASPINNO tools from the [Green Growth community](#) can help local authorities in designing green public procurement processes for buildings refurbishments to reduce their energy consumption, in preparation of your next event!

✚ Waste management

- ✓ Provide the proper infrastructure for the collection of waste (paper, glass, plastic, metal, food waste, etc.) and ensure that it is recycled
- ✓ Use suitable recycling containers in accommodation rooms and meeting rooms.
- ✓ There are many good, sustainable alternatives to plastic items; avoid the use of plastic in meetings and you will make a significant step towards reducing the environmental impact. Make your event plastic free!

✚ Natural resources management

- ✓ Ensure the endowment of the location with devices for the reduction of the water flow
- ✓ Avoid disposable products in the toilets (the toilets must be equipped with soap and fabric towels to dry the hands)
- ✓ Encourage the use of low environmental impact cleaning products (e.g.: EU eco-label)
- ✓ Follow the accommodation recommendations for guests regarding the possibility of delayed swapping of rugs and towels, and thus contribute to saving energy and water.

Water is becoming a scarce resource that needs to be valued and jointly managed. [WETNET](#) is promoting new governance models to preserve Mediterranean rivers and wetlands and [ECOSUSTAIN](#) is working on water quality monitoring for ecosystem based management. These projects are part of the [Biodiversity Protection community](#).

- ✓ Look for an accommodation provider that complies with environmental guidelines (Ethics and guidelines for sustainable tourism) and ask that the hotel's food and beverage service meet the same criteria in accordance with the guidelines for sustainable tourism
- ✓ Ensure the venue is equipped with reusable dry-mark erasable boards or blackboards instead of paper flip charts. Ensure “non-toxic” markers are used
- ✓ Provide free Wi-Fi access and/or computers with internet access in the venue for better access to online documentation

[CASTWATER](#) project developed an online tool for SMEs to monitor, compare and self-assess water efficiency status and efforts. [BLUEISLANDS](#) develops guidelines to support the implementation of islands seasonal waste management plans. These projects are part of the [Sustainable Tourism community](#).

✚ Management, labelling and logistics:

- ✓ Check if there is any certification in sustainable management of the establishment (there is multiple stamps that can turn surroundings to criteria of building, of sustainable tourism, of environmental management, etc.)
- ✓ Work with local suppliers (for example, with products of vicinity / km. 0 in the service of restoration, excursions to know the suppliers, descriptions of origins to the menus)
- ✓ Provide information on the reduction and compensation of the carbon footprint, especially before the event to the attention of the participants (paragraph included in the invitation)
- ✓ Educate the customer with good environmental practices to put in place during its stay, both in the accommodation and outside
- ✓ Inform the participants on the services of transport of the destination, prioritising the criterion of low environmental impact
- ✓ Make sure there is tele-conferencing and video-conferencing equipment available
- ✓ Adapt the size of the meeting room to real needs
- ✓ Consider organizing your event during the low-season, and/or to less-visited places outside the mass touristic routes, where the Mediterranean identity is defended and enhanced. In this case, make sure that the public transport connections are available in order to reduce the carbon footprint

[CONSUME-LESS](#) project of the Sustainable Tourism community is providing a list of criteria to obtain the CONSUMELESS certification of sustainable accommodation

[ALTERECO](#) project of the Sustainable tourism community develops a tool for calculating the carrying capacity of overcrowded cities and finds alternative routes.

Optional:

- ✓ Provide specific information to discover the natural and cultural heritage of the destination (offering tourist products with storytelling, doing take part to the tourist of the experience, etc.)

- ✓ Collaborate with projects linked to the local community (campaigns with social purposes, take part in the social life of the community, objects lost to NGO's, etc.)

Transportation:

- ✓ Select location for its accessibility, direct flights and rail connections
- ✓ Ensure easy access (walking distance) to public transport of the venue and accommodation
- ✓ Recommend accommodation options situated as close as possible to the conference facilities (walking distance or reachable by public transport)
- ✓ Design a "transport responsible" within the team to optimize the transport of persons and goods
- ✓ Encourage participants to share transport means with other participants whenever the meeting organizer does not provide transfer to the venue
- ✓ Encourage participants to select trains and airlines using CO₂ offset programs and consider CO₂ compensation instruments.
- ✓ Provide clear instructions to participants on appropriate public transport and/or walking arrangements from point of arrival or departure (railway station, airport) to the venue, accommodation, town center, etc.
- ✓ Do periodical questionnaires concerning travel options of participants and goods (including place of origin)
- ✓ Negotiate partnerships with public transport operators from the city to propose special lines for the event location
- ✓ Measure your carbon footprint (for example, by using www.climate.org or www.ademe.fr/bilan-carbone) after each event to show the efforts of continuous improvement.
- ✓ Car pollution emissions on an annual basis represent an average of three times its weight. If you need to use a car, go for the green way of driving. This can save up to 40% in fuel consumption.
- ✓ Slow down the speed! Increasing driving speed from 120 km / h to 130 km / h rises fuel consumption to 1l / 100km.
- ✓ Use air conditioners in vehicles with consideration. The use of air conditioning in the vehicle increases consumption up to 35% in urban areas and up to 20% in highways.
- ✓ Reduce the need for transport by using tele and video conferencing.

Communication

- ✓ Reduce the amount of paper and transport by using email, phone and web news (working documents, as well as agenda and other logistical information are sent by email in advance to participants)
- ✓ Ensure the use of recycled / Eco-label / FSC - PEFC paper for all the printed materials provided to the participants

- ✓ Avoid participants packs or ensure that they are produced locally with recycled / reused material
- ✓ Use printers with low energy consumptions
- ✓ Divide responsibility among people. Authorize someone to check if the lights are turned off, the heating is working only when it is necessary, etc.

Environmental education

- ✓ Inform the participants concerning the sustainability efforts deployed within the event (information letter, posters, short live presentation, web section, etc.)
- ✓ You can create a transport information sharing notice board on your website. On business trips, walk as much as possible, ride a bike, share transport or use public transportation.

B) FOOD AND DRINKS, CATERING

1) Food products

- ✓ Inform the caterer on the exact number of participants and is able to reevaluate at relative short notice the quantities needed to avoid waste
- ✓ Use organic / ecological, and bulk catering solutions
- ✓ Serve seasonal fruit and vegetables, and fair trade products for certain categories (coffee, chocolate, sugar, tea, etc.)
- ✓ Ensure balanced menus, with minimal quantities of meat and avoid the beef in the menu
- ✓ Make sure you offer at least one vegetarian option
- ✓ Avoid "goodies"
- ✓ Whenever possible, use tap water served in jugs or in glass bottles instead of plastic single-use bottles. When this is not possible, give preference to large size containers
- ✓ In case fish, marine or aquaculture foods are served, the species should not be endangered and certified as caught or produced using sustainable measures. More info on the WWF website or on www.seafoodchoices.com
- ✓ The management of the non-consumed food is realized by organizations developing for example "last minute" markets (if legislation

[CAMARG platform](#), [MADRE approach](#), [PEFMED tools](#) and [ARISTOIL certification](#) from the Green Growth community can help you identify local urban producers and suppliers to optimize the picking and delivery of seasonal, low environmental footprint and tasty food products!

Fishermen's hands on experience of the sea and fishing, combined with scientific knowledge and a good legal framework is fundamental for the fate of the Mediterranean Sea. [FishMPABlue2](#) and [CONFISH](#), from the Biodiversity Protection community, seek the involvement of fishermen in fisheries management in protected areas to ensure sustainability of marine resources.

[MEDFEST](#) is aiming to diversify Mediterranean tourist destinations through the sustainable valuation of local culinary resources

allows), in order to distribute the excess food and avoid waste

- ✓ Rationalize the transport of goods and materials, by using local ones and by proposing systems of “truck pooling”
- ✓ Ensure with the catering service not to provide disposable cutlery and similar (dishes, glasses, straws, etc.), and guarantee the use of conventional / multi-use cutlery, dishes and glasses, preferably made of glass, ceramic, or biodegradable and compostable plastic
- ✓ Encourage the use of recycled food waste as compost for plants
- ✓ Avoid aluminum foil
- ✓ Avoid single-use products and plastics
- ✓ Avoid products with a lot of packaging. It will reduce carbon emissions and transportation weight, lowering energy consumption and waste disposal costs.
- ✓ The purchase of local goods and services supports the local economy and preserves jobs.

[MedSeaLitter](#) and [PlasticBusters MPAs](#) are working on monitoring protocols for floating and ingested litter to protect biodiversity at basin and local scales and [Act4Litter](#) in the Biodiversity Protection community is working on measures to preserve natural ecosystems from marine litter in Mediterranean Protected Areas.

Did you know that plastic items are on the top of the marine litter list?

C) DEVICES AND ACCESSORIES

Electronic devices

- ✓ Use electronic devices (PC, video projectors, photocopiers, etc.) with low energy consumption, low emissions and low noise (for example, Energy Star labeled)
- ✓ Reduce energy consumption of devices by turning them off when no longer needed (avoiding using the stand-by function)
- ✓ Choose a venue that offers a free WIFI access to allow participants to access to electronic support documents necessary for the event

Badges

- ✓ Use reusable badges, made from recycled paper and other recycled material
- ✓ Provide a dedicated area for participants to return material to be re-used or recycled (badges, documents...)

Event kits

- ✓ Disseminate publications mainly electronically through the website and social media. Printing of publications should be foreseen only if strictly necessary and with a clear dissemination plan
- ✓ Print all materials on recycled or eco-labeled paper, on both sides, using vegetal inks, and by maximizing the use of space

- ✓ Provide folders, pencils and notebooks (if really considered necessary) made of recycled paper / materials
- ✓ Print locally the publications within eco-friendly labeled printing companies to minimize transportation impact and cost
- ✓ Reuse banners and posters, by avoiding tailor made ones with date/place/name of the event

LINKS

- UNEP publications and website

<http://www.unep.fr/shared/publications/pdf/DTIx1141xPA-GreenMeetingGuide.pdf>

- The EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme EMAS

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/index_en.htm

- ICLEI publications and website

<http://www.iclei-europe.org/topics/sustainable-events/>

- European green office website

<http://www.eugreenoffice.eu/en/>

- Ecolabels by product

<http://ec.europa.eu/ecat/>

- Interreg MED guidelines on greening and social inclusion

<https://interreg-med.eu/toolbox/reference-documents/programme-manual/>

- ISO 20121 sustainable events organization standard:

<http://www.iso20121.org>

You can find more information about all the projects and thematic communities of the Interreg MED programme in the website: <https://interreg-med.eu/>

Be part of the solution – we all add up!

This checklist intends to be a practical tool to have next to you when organizing a meeting and make sure you address these 11 minimum requirements to organize greener events:

CHECKLIST



- 1.** Have you requested your catering service to avoid single use items?
- 2.** Have you requested your catering service to serve local food and seasonal fruit and vegetables, and to avoid endangered fish species?
- 3.** Have you avoided bottled water and plastic glasses for the meetings or when not possible, are you using large size bottles and compostable or recyclable glasses?
- 4.** Have you agreed with your printer to use certified/recycled/chlorine-free paper?
- 5.** Have you devoted a critical thought to the documents that need or do not need to be disseminated as hard copy?
- 6.** Have you chosen a venue which offers a free WIFI access to allow participants access to electronic support documents necessary for the conference?
- 7.** Are you providing reusable or recyclable identification badges?
- 8.** Are you avoiding unnecessary goodies?
- 9.** Have you looked at meeting venues offered by project partners and near public transport?
- 10.** Have you provided information on how to reach the venue by public transport?
- 11.** Have you informed the participants about the green aspect of your event?
E.g. through a paragraph in the invitation"