

GREENING THE YOUTH SECTOR

Sustainability Checklist



Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



EUROPEAN UNION



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Environmental awareness and thinking sustainably are part of a continuous process of learning, innovating and (re)creating.

We hope you find the checklist helpful in your journey in making the best choices for yourself and the planet.

CHECKLIST SUMMARY

TEAMWORK

- ☐ Present the checklist to the team.
- ☐ Design the own approach together.
- ☐ Agree with participants which principles shall guide the work carried out at the meeting.

ACCOMMODATION & VENUE

- ☐ Check for **green certification** (e.g. in the hotel industry one can look for **Green Globe** or **Green Key** certification).
- ☐ Choose a venue that has an energy and water conservation programme (such as a recycling and waste minimisation programme, sustainable heating systems, etc.).
- ☐ Find out if there are water fountains available.
- ☐ Co operate with local social economy initiatives (co operatives, foundations, social enterprises) instead of big, commercial, for profit enterprises.
- ☐ Choose venues where workers' rights are respected and where there is re-investment in the local community.
- ☐ Provide hygiene products with a low environmental impact ("Eco-label") or, better, natural products, and using as little packaging as possible.
- ☐ Transportation using private motor vehicles should be limited during events. This means the accommodation should be either in the same place/as close to the meeting venue as possible or easily accessible by public transportation.

- ☐ Maximise the use of natural light.
- ☐ Remind participants to turn off lights and taps when they are not in use.
- ☐ Reuse material from previous events. To do so, make a list of single-use materials (decorations, non-reusable name tags, etc.)
- ☐ Hold the meeting outdoors (if the weather allows).
- ☐ Cleaning: use environmentally friendly products for cleaning and washing up (look into making your own cleaning products, e.g. vinegar, lemons or baking soda).
- ☐ Use air conditioning or similar cooling/heating systems as little as possible.
- ☐ Avoid unnecessary heating of meeting rooms or other spaces.
- ☐ Do not change towels and sheets every day.

FOOD & CONSUMABLES

- ☐ **Go local:** Using regional products helps minimise environmental pollution by avoiding transportation. To reduce food miles, seek to buy food from “eco farms”, small-scale, local agriculture holdings or local markets.
- ☐ Prefer **organic** food, or that produced without pesticides.
- ☐ **Go seasonal:** Seasonal fruit and vegetables help minimise environmental impacts because they do not require heated greenhouses or freezing (note: it is worth keeping in mind the carbon footprint of producing the food sourced).
- ☐ **Go plant-based:** Consider introducing a policy to make all the organisation’s activities vegetarian or vegan by default to help reduce events’ negative environmental footprint. (When preparing an activity, ask participants: “Do you require meat?” rather than “Do you require vegetarian catering?”) If non vegetarian meals are required, favour organic, locally produced food.
- ☐ **Make it tasty:** When choosing a venue or caterer, make sure they know how to prepare nutritious and tasty vegetarian meals.

- ☐ Provide local seasonal fruits, nuts or baked goods as snacks.
- ☐ **Communicate:** Explain to participants the reasons behind the decision to serve vegetarian meals (e.g. in an information sheet sent to participants in advance or as a short session during the activity).
- ☐ Promote the use of ceramic or glass plates for food preparation and serving.
- ☐ Minimise packaging.
- ☐ Encourage hosts and participants to use refilling systems for existing recycled packaging.
- ☐ If using take-away food services, ask for reusable or compostable crockery and cutlery. Styrofoam packaging should be avoided.
- ☐ Use glass or ceramic cups for drinks and buy drinks in glass bottles instead of TetraPak or plastic.
- ☐ Encourage (and remind) participants to bring their own water bottles (mention this ahead of the event).
- ☐ Some countries are fortunate enough to have clean, drinkable tap water. Find out if that is the case at your venue.
- ☐ Provide a reusable, individual glass for the whole event.
- ☐ Use paper tape for people to write their names on their cups, enabling reuse. Avoid plastic cups and bottles!
- ☐ Request that no bottled water be served.
- ☐ **Be mindful of packaging:** Food and drinks made available during meetings should be as packaging-free as possible and glass is to be favoured over plastic.
- ☐ Calculate the number of participants to avoid buying unnecessary products. Ask vendors to accept the return of unused products.
- ☐ Seek out possibilities to compost food waste or feed it to animals.
- ☐ Clearly label recycling bins (organic, paper, glass, plastic, metals, etc.) and place them in strategic, accessible and visible places (close to the food, close to an exit, etc.)

- ☐ Donate leftovers (using apps such as **Karma**, **Olio**, etc.)
- ☐ Reusing is always preferable to recycling and should be prioritised. (Recycling itself consumes energy. In addition, in some countries a relatively small amount of waste is actually recycled, even if it had been placed in recycling bins).

TRANSPORT

- ☐ Public transport should always be favoured over private, motorised vehicles. Provide information to participants ahead of an event about public transport. Offering them a free ticket for local public transport is a great incentive!
- ☐ Whenever public transport is not available, efforts should be made to group people in shuttles or create shared spreadsheets with arrival times so participants can share a ride.
- ☐ Provide equal opportunities for people with disabilities taking public transport; make sure to include accessibility information.
- ☐ Go digital and avoid travel altogether for short meetings. Evaluate what activities could be hosted online and balance face to face with digital activities. Consider mixing online and face to face participation.
- ☐ Encourage low-emissions transportation. If travel by air cannot be avoided, use the airline's carbon compensation scheme or a carbon emissions offset programme such as **Climatecare** or **Carbon Footprint**.
- ☐ Pack as light as possible and avoid bringing unnecessary items because increased luggage weight requires higher carbon emissions to transport.
- ☐ Combine multiple reasons for travel. If possible, extend trips so they fulfil multiple purposes.
- ☐ Use bicycles or similar non-motorised vehicles during the event.
- ☐ Avoid flights! Encourage travel by bus, train, eco-friendly ship (sailboat), car-share or bicycle as these have smaller carbon footprints. Night trains are also an option for some destinations.

- ☐ Avoid printing tickets when travelling – use online versions.

PRINTING & PAPER

- ☐ Go paperless: only print documents when necessary.
- ☐ Use a smartphone application to share meeting agendas and other documentation.
- ☐ Ask document recipients whether they wish to have paper versions before printing them (a lack of response can be interpreted as consent to be given an electronic version only).
- ☐ Instead of printing copies for all participants, display general information in a visible place in large print.
- ☐ Use overhead projectors to display meeting agendas or point participants to electronic versions of the information. Avoid printing copies of documents that will only be used once.
- ☐ Print on both sides of the paper to minimise waste.
- ☐ Edit documents before printing to decrease the number of pages (cut unnecessary text, use narrower margins, etc.)
- ☐ Use flip charts economically, writing on both sides.
- ☐ Instead of using plastic nametags, use paper tape and write participants' names on it with a marker, or make name badges using recycled card.
- ☐ Plan how to collect event materials and inform participants accordingly (e.g. place a box in a visible location collect and recycle badges and lanyards (if they are used at all) at the exit).
- ☐ Avoid colour printing.

WELCOME PACKS & PROMOTIONAL GIFTS

- ☐ Choose promotional materials that participants can continue using after the activity has ended.
- ☐ Order from eco-friendly suppliers.

- ☐ Buy supplies made of recycled or renewable materials.
- ☐ Favour refillable pens.
- ☐ Pencils are a good alternative if bought from a sustainable source.
- ☐ Make notebooks by hand from recycled materials or buy notebooks that use recycled paper from an ecological supplier.
- ☐ Consider do-it-yourself promotional items as a get together activity and allow your participants to create souvenirs on the spot from eco friendly materials.
- ☐ Favour natural materials.
- ☐ Encourage participants to support locally produced, natural material crafts and products as gifts.
- ☐ Encourage participants to buy second-hand or upcycled products.

BUYING FAIRTRADE

- ☐ Use goods that are fair and local. When buying goods from abroad, opt for Fairtrade tea, coffee and chocolate or sugar (www.fairtrade.net gives details of local Fairtrade organisations).

REDUCING THE DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

- ☐ Limit projector and laptop use; turn them off when not in use to save energy.
- ☐ Set monitors to automatically use standby mode even after a short period of inactivity.
- ☐ Reduce average screen brightness.
- ☐ Delete data stored in the cloud once they are no longer needed, as keeping them online consumes energy.
- ☐ Optimise files sent by email by compressing them or reducing their resolution.

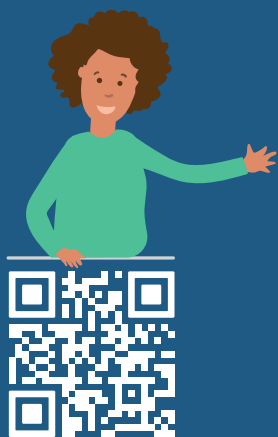
- ☐ When sending large files, select a file hosting service that uses a download link on a website (e.g. WeTransfer, Google Drive or OneDrive). This prevents the file from being stored on multiple servers.

EDUCATION

- ☐ Include a session about environmental protection, environmental activism and/or sustainability in the event programme.
- ☐ Invite local small-scale producers and/or vegetarian/vegan influencers to speak at courses and lunch seminars.
- ☐ Organise a social evening to watch educational films or documentaries (e.g. **Films for Action**, **Seaspiracy** and others).



CHECKLIST SUMMARY



Do you want to know more about
our work on climate change and
sustainability?



@eucoeyouth



<http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int>
youth-partnership@partnership-eu.coe.int

The Member States of the European Union have decided to link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.

<http://europa.eu>



EUROPEAN UNION

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

www.coe.int

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