

Headline 6.3 Events

1. Definition

Sport event organisers are facing increasing pressure to prioritise environmental sustainability in their operations, driven by the escalating impacts of climate change and the imperative to mitigate its effects. The vulnerability of sport events to extreme weather events like typhoons, floods, and snowstorms underscores the urgent need for sustainable practices throughout the event lifecycle. From the moment of bidding, awarding, and choosing event locations, considerations of sustainability must be integrated into decision-making processes to minimise ecological footprints and promote climate resilience.

The environmental impact of sport events is multifaceted, encompassing energy consumption, waste generation, transportation emissions, and habitat disruption. Recognising this impact, there is a growing recognition of the need to adopt sustainable practices across all facets of event planning and execution. Climate change-induced phenomena such as extreme heatwaves, storms, and precipitation events pose logistical challenges and safety concerns, requiring adjustments to event protocols to mitigate health risks for athletes, spectators, and staff. Furthermore, rising temperatures and changing climatic conditions may threaten the viability of venues and infrastructure, highlighting the importance of climate resilience measures.

ISO 20121 (2024), an international standard for event sustainability management, offers a comprehensive framework for addressing social, economic, and environmental impacts. Originally developed for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, ISO 20121 provides guidelines for understanding and managing sustainability issues throughout the event lifecycle. Beyond its environmental benefits, ISO 20121 also offers opportunities for commercial growth, allowing organisations to leverage sustainability credentials to enhance economic returns and attract new business. ISO 20121 aligns with the broader objectives of promoting sustainability and resilience in sport events and offers a tool for achieving environmental objectives while fostering economic success.

2. Ideal Scenario

Event organisers integrate sustainability principles throughout the event lifecycle, ensuring transparency and accountability from the awarding process to execution. Clear and publicly available criteria guide the selection of event locations and partners, emphasizing environmental stewardship.

Organisers implement measures to reduce emissions, enhance energy and water efficiency, and promote sustainable transportation, aiming to minimize the ecological footprint and protect natural habitats. Community engagement is key, with efforts to educate participants and local communities on sustainable practices, ensuring a positive legacy beyond the event.

Pursuing ISO 20121 certification, organisers establish systems for continual improvement, managing social, economic, and environmental impacts. Regular performance reviews and stakeholder feedback help refine the sustainability strategy, ensuring it remains relevant and effective.

Sustainability is embedded in the organisational culture, fostering continuous improvement and shared responsibility for environmental stewardship. Transparency is maintained in decision-making and public disclosures, while the procurement strategy is aligned with contract management to efficiently achieve sustainability goals, supported by a strong governance framework.

3. Risks

- Reputation damage for the event organizer and the host city through negative perceptions among stakeholders, including participants, athletes, sponsors, and the public.
- Non-compliance with environmental regulations can result in fines, penalties, or legal liabilities, increasing the financial burden.
- High operational costs due to inefficient resource use, waste management challenges, and the need for retroactive environmental mitigation measures.
- Limited sponsorship opportunities and reduced financial support for the event as sponsors seek to align themselves with environmentally responsible events.
- Public backlash for disregarding sustainability concerns.
- Legal and regulatory risks in case of failure to comply with environmental laws, permits, and regulations, potentially resulting in delays, fines, or even cancellation of the event.
- Contribution to environmental degradation through increased carbon emissions, waste generation, habitat destruction, and resource depletion, exacerbating ecological harm and undermining the event's legacy.
- Missed opportunities for innovation, cost savings, and operational efficiencies that could enhance the event's long-term viability and competitiveness.
- Host cities and countries that do not prioritise sustainability may be overlooked for future hosting opportunities as stakeholders, including international sports federations, prioritise sustainability criteria in their selection processes.

4. Instruments and key elements

<i>Instruments</i>	<i>Key elements</i>
Comprehensive Climate Neutral Event Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Comprehensive assessment to identify and quantify sources of greenhouse gas emissions. ● Setting emission reduction targets. ● Encompasses all aspects of event planning, implementation, and post-event activities. ● Implement robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms to track progress throughout the event lifecycle.
Stakeholder Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engage and collaborate with stakeholders to reduce carbon emissions and work towards a carbon-neutral legacy. ● Forge partnerships with environmental organisations, academic institutions, and industry associations.

<p>Guidance for event organisers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and distribute a clear, detailed sustainability strategy for event planning. • Ensure guidance is presented clearly and concisely, with easy-to-follow instructions. • Provide scalable, level-specific guidance to event hosts based on their implementation capabilities.
<p>Impact assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider carbon emissions, energy and water consumption, waste generation, and impact on natural habitats and biodiversity. Consider factors such as venue selection, transportation logistics, resource use, and waste management practices. • Consider the event's role in promoting positive social outcomes and addressing social issues or inequalities. • Assess the event's long-term legacy and lasting effects on the host community, economy, environment, and society.

5. Good practice examples

Example “Sustainability Strategy”

Organisation: UEFA

Description: The UEFA EURO 2024 Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Strategy for the 2024 UEFA European Football Championship has environmental performance as one of its cornerstones. Particular focus is placed on energy, mobility and waste. Through targeted investments and measures the ambition is to contribute to the tournament’s legacy, in full alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals. Across the three pillars environment, social, and governance the strategy lays out Action Plans defining areas of action, topics, targets, activities and KPIs. All of the pillars contribute to the SDGs. For the environmental dimension, the strategy aims to catalyse action in collaboration with the tournament stakeholders, make substantial investments and raise awareness among football fans on the importance of environmental protection. Actions are distinguished in the areas of climate action, sustainable infrastructure and circular economy.

Further information:

https://editorial.uefa.com/resources/0283-187d07f19a7c-cf029e488faa-1000/uefa_euro_2024_esg_strategy.pdf

<https://www.oeko.de/en/news/press-releases/sustainability-strategy-for-euro-2024-shows-that-environmentally-friendly-sports-events-are-possible/>

Example “Online Tool for Sustainable Sport Events”

Organisation: DOSB

Description: Within the Green Champions 2.0 project an online portal for sustainable sport events has been developed. The portal is based on a document entitled “Green Champions for Sports and the Environment. Guidelines for environmentally friendly large sports events”. That target audience includes

event organisers seeking information about concrete actions for planning and executing sustainable sports events. There are downloadable checklists and plenty of opportunities to customise the actions according to the nature of the planned event. The portal offers actions across the topics: construction and resources, traffic and noise, catering and merchandising, nature and landscape, water, sustainability management, energy and climate protection, waste, economic and social aspects.

Further information: [Sportgroßveranstaltungen: Home \(green-champions.de\)](https://www.green-champions.de)

Example “Event Guide”

Organisation: NOC Denmark

Description: This guide, developed with insights from recent publications on sports events, serves as a practical tool for decision-making in event planning and management. It addresses the entire lifecycle of products, from inception to disposal or recycling, with the aim of minimizing waste, pollution, and refuse. Emphasizing the 6 Rs—Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Replace, Recycle, Remind—the guide outlines initiatives aligned with these principles to ensure sustainable practices throughout the event's lifecycle. Each section illustrates how these fundamental concepts are integrated into proposed strategies, helping you achieve environmental sustainability in your events.

Further information: [4254337_dif_guide-om-baeredygtige-events_engelsk_k4.pdf](https://www.nocdenmark.dk/4254337_dif_guide-om-baeredygtige-events_engelsk_k4.pdf)

Example “Online Tool for Sustainable Sport Events”

Organisation: Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games

Description: Paris 2024 has introduced a specialized "climate coach" for sports events to assist employees in minimizing both their personal and professional carbon footprints. This initiative outlines the strategy for achieving sustainability and ensuring a long-term positive impact for the 2024 Games, detailing the implementation process and the broader environmental objectives.

Further information: [Home - Climate Coach \(coachclimateevenements.org\)](https://coachclimateevenements.org)

Example “Guidelines”

Organisation: Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI)

Description: These guidelines provide essential and practical information on sustainability for national federations, event organisers, and cycling stakeholders. They outline the UCI's commitment to sustainability, detailing its four key pillars and how cycling can contribute positively to a complex world. The guidelines offer an overview of sustainability principles, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals and ISO 20121, and practical steps for climate action. They include case studies, checklists of best practices for organising sustainable events, and tools to promote cycling and inclusion. While not exhaustive or mandatory, these resources help organisers plan effective sustainability programs tailored to local conditions. Additional support, including action plans and dedicated resources, is available on the UCI website.

Further information: [uci-sustainability-guidelines-fr-june-2021.pdf \(ctfassets.net\)](https://www.uci-sustainability-guidelines-fr-june-2021.pdf)

6. Steps to the next level

To level 2 ★★ “Emerging”	To level 3 ★★★ “Developing”	To level 4 ★★★★ “Established”	To level 5 ★★★★★ “Embedded”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the organisation’s leadership demonstrates a strong commitment to environmental sustainability in all aspects of event planning and execution. • Identify all stakeholders involved in the event and assess their importance, relevance, and influence to tailor sustainability efforts effectively. • Identify and choose appropriate tools or event-specific carbon footprint calculators to plan, measure, and manage the environmental impact of the event. • Evaluate potential influence points and opportunities for change throughout the event value chain to enhance overall sustainability. • Select event venues that are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a comprehensive strategy for environmentally sustainable events, integrating, amongst others, responsible procurement practices and effective waste management policies • Ensure the organisation’s sustainability policy encompasses all events, clearly defining responsibilities in event management with assigned roles communicated to all involved. • Establish appropriate sustainability objectives and targets at relevant functions and levels, ensuring alignment with overall event goals. • Measure your event’s carbon footprint to assess its environmental impact. • Make public commitments to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform a detailed carbon audit of the event to analyse emission factors and identify necessary actions. Use the results as a decision-support tool for real-time adjustments, ensuring that all stakeholders are involved in shaping the environmental strategy. • Broaden the environmental sustainability approach to encompass all dimensions beyond climate action and carbon footprint, including impacts on nature and ecosystems. • Identify and implement all legal requirements related to sustainability issues to ensure full compliance and avoid potential liabilities. • Create an annual overview and action plan for environmental sustainability, including events, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue ISO 20121 certification to demonstrate responsible event management. Implement a system for continual improvement to manage and control social, economic, and environmental impacts throughout the event supply chain. • Continuously review and enhance the environmental sustainability strategy by regularly analysing performance data, incorporating stakeholder feedback, and adapting to evolving environmental conditions to ensure relevance and effectiveness. • Integrate environmental sustainability into the organisational culture by embedding it as a core decision-making criterion,

<p>easily accessible via public transportation or rail connections to minimize travel-related carbon emissions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule meetings and events to enable arrival and departure by public transportation whenever feasible. • Assess the necessity of physical attendance for meetings and events, opting for online alternatives when possible, to reduce travel and associated emissions. • Adopt responsible purchasing policies to minimise the carbon footprint of promotional items and printed communications, eliminate single-use plastics and avoid distributing unnecessary giveaways. • Employ digital platforms for information dissemination and minimise physical 	<p>environmental responsibility by transparently communicating your organisation’s efforts to measure, mitigate, and reduce environmental impacts. Engage stakeholders actively in event planning and execution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives, and collect feedback from internal stakeholders through structured evaluation mechanisms to ensure ongoing improvement. Implement monitoring, measurement, analysis, and evaluation procedures to track progress. • Develop procedures for the collection, storage, and reuse of items to support sustainability goals, ensuring that resources are effectively managed throughout the event lifecycle. 	<p>presenting it to the board and management to secure ongoing engagement and alignment with organisational goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and support member organisations hosting events to integrate sustainability principles into their planning and execution processes, fostering a broader culture of environmental responsibility. 	<p>promoting a mindset of continuous improvement, and fostering a shared responsibility for environmental stewardship across all levels of the organisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain transparency in all organisational processes. This includes clearly defining decision-making criteria, justifying decisions such as bid proposal evaluations, and publicly disclosing major appointments. • Align the organisation’s procurement strategy with its contract management approach to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. Develop a robust procurement governance framework and assess the need for external expertise to address specific project requirements.
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