

Organising IIOA Conferences more sustainably

Ideas to consider when organising an IIOA Conference (no strict requirements)

IIOA Council encourage future Local Organising Committees to have a section on sustainability in their proposal

Main Goal: Raising awareness about sustainability issues

Maximising positive and minimising negative social and environmental impacts

IIOA Conferences – becoming more sustainable



[Conference venue](#)



[Catering](#)



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Conference venue



- Relatively easier to implement
 - Efficient use of energy (heating/cooling).
 - Consider walking distances from and to events.
- Using existing infrastructure
 - Existing sustainable conference venue (local, social, eco).
 - University project, e.g. architecture faculty.
 - City / region sustainability projects.

Catering



- Vegetarian (at least in the main conference and with good quality food).
- Utilise local/regional produce.
- Strategies to minimising food waste
 - Serving again or just having it available all day - need to consider perishables.
 - Give left-overs to local shelters or similar authorities.
- No single use plastic.
- Water stations for re-filling bottles.
- Fruits rather than individually packed snacks.
- List of restaurants/cafes with sustainable food/business concept/social entrepreneurs.

Accommodation



- Find local accommodations that actually pursue sustainability issues:
 - Eco-friendly
 - Local social initiatives
 - List on website
- Avoid large international hotel chains (unless they are known for their sustainability strategy, pay fair wages and willing to promote sustainability).
- Preferably within good walking distance to Conference venue, or easy with local transport.

Travel



- Minimise air travel (probably the most difficult)
 - Show train connections to large international airports, e.g. it is possible to book flight plus train when flying into Amsterdam/Frankfurt and most of Europe can be reached within a few hours by train from those cities.
 - Encourage the use of video-conference facilities, live internet streaming, where possible, e.g. for keynote speeches.
- Allow for carbon-offset paying in the Conference fee
 - Voluntary (some organisations already do it).
 - Free amount / fixed amounts?
 - Hidden cost, will just be in the "green conference fees".
 - Easy calculators, e.g. atmosfair.
 - Choice of organisation - focus on local green cause based organisations or international organisations.

Conference organisation



- Paperless:
 - App 😊
 - Redesign the programme to be printed.
- Minimise plastics, paper and metal use (not everyone needs pen and notebook).
- Reusable name tags - bring your own name tag (to every conference).
- Sorting waste.
- Conference give-aways
 - Is it really necessary?
 - Sustainable:
 - Consider packaging of the present.
 - Consider local sustainable business as a provider.
 - Organic cotton products.
 - Donations in the participants name, e.g. handouts of "The good chocolate" that planted a tree (which was done at the COP21).

Experiences from past IIOA Conferences

Juiz de Fora, Brazil 2018



Examples of the initiatives undertaken:

- **Gift given to the participants:** The set of coffee strainer and the coffee beans are provided by local sustainable producers. With this activity we also have the opportunity to have an impact at the local economy in a sustainable way.
- **Use of plastic cups, plates and cutlery:** There was no use of plastic cups, plates and cutlery during all the coffee breaks, lunch time and dinner. We also used filters of waters for everyone that wanted to refill his or her bottle.
- **Dairy corner during the coffee breaks:** During all coffee breaks, we had a “Dairy corner”. The products from that part of the buffet were provided by local producer that employs local employees and also have best practice in terms of sustainability of its production.
- **Food:** Every day the left-overs were donated to charity organisations. During the coffee breaks, lunch time and dinner we have the vegetarian option. For cultural reasons and to respect this issue, we also had to have meat on the menu.
- For further information:

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Experiences from past IIOA Conferences

Glasgow, Scotland 2019 - Part one of three



A range of initiatives to off-set some of the climate impact of the Conference were undertaken as well as giving Conference attendees choices/options, where appropriate.

- **Choice of Conference venue and its environmental credentials:**
 - Approx. 50% of the construction spend was with SMEs, majority based in the west of Scotland.
 - Constructed using an innovative concrete technique called 'slip form' to construct the lift and stair cores, which has rarely been used in Glasgow City Centre.
 - 80% of construction waste was recovered and recycled. None of the waste removed from the site during construction was sent to landfill.
 - 15% of the material used during construction was derived from recycled content.
 - Trees recovered from the TIC site have been replanted at primary schools and community gardens in Glasgow.
 - Photovoltaic panel array installed on the roof is one of the largest in the Glasgow area. TIC is designed to use 50% less heating energy than Scottish building regulation requirements.
- **Secondary travel** from Glasgow Airport to the Conference Venue was minimal - 15 minutes to the city centre by taxi.

Experiences from past IIOA Conferences

Glasgow, Scotland 2019 - Part two of three



- On registration, each attendee was asked for a GBP 5.00 donation as a **voluntary contribution** to be forwarded to organisations based in Scotland whose remit is to pursue green causes. The following organisations were selected:
 - Energy Action Scotland (fuel poverty focus) - www.eas.org.uk
 - Woodland Trust in Scotland - www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/about-us/where-we-work/scotland
- The Chair of the LOC (Sanjiv Mahajan) personally contributed to doubling the amount raised through the voluntary contribution process. IIOA successfully raised £530, which doubled amounted to £1,060 and presented to the two organisations at the Conference Dinner.
- The **venues of the events** (Conference itself, Civic Reception, Conference Dinner and Young Researcher's Night) were selected based on quality, wow factor and the close proximity of each other, all within five minutes walking distance, eliminating almost all transport costs.
- A **range of accommodation** was block booked with discounts well in advance and provided to all attendees close to the Conference Centre, all within seven-eight minutes walking distance. Again, eliminating almost all transport costs and also a good health dimension linked to this aspect.
- Through the Conference days (not evenings), for the morning, lunch and afternoon breaks, various selections of light, delicious food were served but **meat items were avoided**. This formed a massive environmental related saving.

Experiences from past IIOA Conferences

Glasgow, Scotland 2019 - Part three of three



- Food provided at the Conference events were predominantly **based on Scottish produce**, further reducing the impact on the environment.
- Every meal was evaluated on various basis including quality, variety, taste, value for money and **keeping food wastage to a minimum** - any leftovers were provided to staff, students and a local body for the homeless.
- **No use of plastic cups, plates and cutlery** during the whole Conference.
- **Water filling station** available at the Conference venue, if preferred.
- **Conference bag and contents** reflected various environmental features:
 - Official Conference Programme made from sustainable sources and could be recycled itself.
 - Flyers made from 100% recycled paper.
 - Inks used in the Official Conference Programme and flyers were eco-friendly and vegetable based.
 - Bag and inks used for the logos were based on eco-materials.
 - Re-usable travel mug, plastic cover for badges, etc.
- For further information:

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Carbon offset possibilities

International organisations:

- www.plant-for-the-planet.org/en/support/carbon-neutral-event
- www.atmosfair.de/en/
- www.coolearth.org
- www.myclimate.org

Local organisations:

- Juiz de Fora, Brazil
 - www.sosma.org.br/en/
- Glasgow, Scotland
 - www.eas.org.uk
 - www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/about-us/where-we-work/scotland

This is not an exhaustive list, we will add more when we become aware or get recommendations.

Further reading

- UNEP Sustainable Events Guide
<https://www.greeningtheblue.org/sites/default/files/Sustainable%20Events%20Guide%20May%2030%202012%20FINAL.pdf>
- Copenhagen Business School Sustainable Event Guide
<https://services-webdav.cbs.dk/doc/CBS.dk/Companies/sustainable-event-guide-2019.pdf>
<https://cbswire.dk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Sustainable-Events-Guide.pdf>
- GIZ Guide – Sustainable Event Management
<https://reporting.giz.de/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2019/03/GIZ-Guide-to-Sustainable-Event-Management.pdf>

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More ideas?

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