

LUGANO CONVENTION & EXHIBITION

CITTÀ DI LUGANO, EVENTI E CONGRESSI

MANUAL FOR THE SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATION OF EVENTS

Guidelines for organizing sustainable local, national, and international events based on the Global Destination Sustainability Index* (GDS-Index) and the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

* The Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS-Index) is a destination-level program that measures, evaluates, and improves the sustainability strategy and performance of tourism and event destinations. Its purpose is to inspire, engage, and enable destinations to become more regenerative, thriving, and resilient places to visit, meet, and prosper.



Città di Lugano
Eventi e congressi
www.lugano.ch

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals defined by the United Nations



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:
www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/

PURPOSE OF THE MANUAL

The sustainable organization of events is a topic of great interest for the City of Lugano, particularly for its convention and event facilities managed by **Lugano Convention & Exhibition**.

Each type of event organized in our destination presents an opportunity for learning and interaction, generating many positive impacts on our region. However, like any human activity, events also have a considerable environmental impact.

The purpose of this manual is to promote among industry professionals the ability to design events

with sustainability in mind. The main objective of this document is to provide a useful, practical, and easy-to-implement guideline for anyone wishing to organize an event of any type and size.

Specifically, this manual presents ideas and concrete examples of the destination Lugano to make events more sustainable from ecological, economic, and social-ethical perspectives. Throughout all stages of the event organization, it is possible to reduce negative impacts while increasing positive outcomes for key stakeholders (participants, the local community, and the surrounding environment).

DEFINITION OF A SUSTAINABLE EVENT

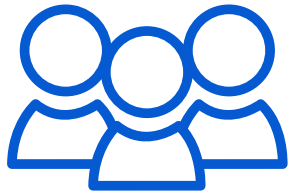
An event is defined as sustainable when it is “designed, planned, and executed in a way that minimizes negative environmental impacts and leaves a positive legacy for the hosting community” ([UNEP 2009 - United Nations Environment Programme](#)).

The management of a sustainable event takes place alongside the event planning process by considering various sustainable alternatives for every environmental, economic, and social aspect. Sustainable management can be applied to any event: from an international congress to a regional-scale event, from training courses to large ceremonies.

THE CITY OF LUGANO AND SUSTAINABILITY

The City of Lugano, committed to implementing the [United Nations 2030 Agenda](#), promotes sustainability through local projects and actively engages the community in the [#LUGANOSOSTENIBILE](#) project. This commitment is reflected in the activities of **Lugano Convention & Exhibition**, which aligns these initiatives with the aim of creating a more resilient and inclusive future, especially within its event venues, such as the Palazzo dei Congressi.

THE THREE COMPONENTS OF SUSTAINABILITY



SOCIAL COMPONENT

Sustainable events foster local economic growth and job creation, which also benefit society at large. In particular, sustainable events prioritize qualified and/or certified suppliers who ensure fair treatment and respect for workers' rights, as well as responsible products sourced from social cooperatives or local suppliers (zero-kilometer products). Moreover, charitable organizations and foundations can be involved in various aspects of event planning.



ENVIRONMENTAL COMPONENT

Event organization involves the use of energy and material resources, which consequently impacts the environment—whether through air pollution, global warming, waste generation, or the consumption of renewable and non-renewable resources. However, positive impacts can also occur, such as raising environmental awareness through campaigns during the event or showcasing ecological products offered by the organizers. In this way, participants increase their environmental awareness and can replicate these practices in other events or daily life.



ECONOMIC COMPONENT

Events typically generate an economic benefit for the local community, derived from the direct demand for goods and services for the event, as well as indirect demand from participants for transportation, accommodation, dining, shopping, etc. This increased demand naturally results in positive impacts on the local economy and employment.

WHY IT IS BENEFICIAL TO ORGANIZE EVENTS SUSTAINABLY

Being responsible and sustainable means realizing, implementing, and most importantly, informing the audience about the results achieved while promoting a culture of sustainability. Among communication and marketing tools, events are unique situations where awareness can be raised on pressing issues.

ADVANTAGES OF MAKING YOUR EVENT SUSTAINABLE

- Improved experience and sustainability capabilities
- Cost reduction through the rational use of energy and products
- Reduction of the event's carbon footprint
- Mitigation of risks associated with event management
- National and international recognition of sustainability efforts
- Engagement and satisfaction of participants
- Increased appeal to potential investors and sponsors
- Improved image of the event and brand
- Contribution to the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda

CHECKLIST FOR A SUSTAINABLE EVENT

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1. SUSTAINABLE EVENT ORGANIZATION

The event organizing team is the first step toward realizing a sustainable event, which it includes: the event program (contents, guests, and speakers), permits and paperwork, choice and management of suppliers, sponsorships, communications, invitations, event administration, and budget management. In collaboration with the organizing team, it is essential to seek and adopt solutions and behaviors that can increase event sustainability from the very beginning.

THERE ARE MULTIPLE ASPECTS AND FACTORS THAT, WHEN CONSIDERED IN ADVANCE, ALLOW FOR THE REALIZATION OF A TRULY SUSTAINABLE EVENT. HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES:

- Preliminary ecological decisions: from materials for the administrative tasks to participant giveaways, the choice of using digital versus printed information (e.g., eco-friendly paper, etc.)
- Criteria for selecting suppliers
- Separate waste management
- Informing and involving collaborators on every aspect (from the use of materials to green mobility for various transfers, etc.)

EVENT SUSTAINABILITY MANUAL

This tool, developed primarily for event organizers, offers a comprehensive guide for organizing any type of event. In addition to explaining our values regarding sustainability, the manual provides practical advice on how to make every aspect of the event— from planning to execution— as sustainable as possible. We also highlight good practices that **Lugano Convention & Exhibition** promotes and implements in its event and congress venues as examples.



2. IMPORTANCE OF A SUSTAINABLE VENUE

The event location is crucial, not only for achieving the event's objectives but also because its selection is visible to all participants. Therefore, both its quality and organizational aspects will be evident.

HERE ARE SOME CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING A LOCATION:

- Easily accessible venues, ideally connected to public transportation
- Venues and partners with sustainable management practices: use of eco-friendly products, waste sorting, energy-saving policies, etc.
- Nationally and internationally recognized sustainability certifications
- Venues and facilities that also consider social integration, such as accommodating the needs of differently-abled persons

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN LUGANO

The Palazzo dei Congressi and its adjacent venues are well connected to the public transportation network of the City of Lugano. Located in the city center, close to major services such as hotels and restaurants, they are easily reachable on foot or by public transport. This allows Lugano as a destination to reduce or eliminate the need for transfer services for event delegates and participants.

Additionally, thanks to the [Ticino Ticket](#), guests staying in hotels, youth hostels, or campsites can use public transportation for free not only in Lugano but across the entire Canton of Ticino. This is a valuable benefit, especially for tourism and event participants, as they can use public transport for free during their entire stay and receive discounts on lifts, boat trips, and major tourist attractions.



SUSTAINABLE VENUE

Lugano Convention & Exhibition is particularly sensitive to sustainability, having achieved important milestones. For example, the energy needs of the Palazzo dei Congressi are based on sustainable sources: [Biogas Basic](#) (5% biogas) and renewable electricity with the project [Tiacqua](#). Both sources are supplied by the [Aziende Industriali di Lugano \(AIL\) SA](#). The choice is for renewable energy sources: Biogas is a renewable energy source generated by fermenting organic waste, while Tiacqua is hydroelectric energy produced mainly by Ticino-based power plants.



WASTE MANAGEMENT

Waste sorting is essential for promoting environmental sustainability. The Palazzo dei Congressi, in close collaboration with the *Divisione Spazi urbani* of the City of Lugano, implements a strict waste separation system, ensuring efficient recycling of materials. Dedicated areas are available for sorting paper, plastic, aluminum, and organic waste, which are properly disposed of to minimize environmental impact. The [PET Recycling Switzerland Association](#) annually certifies the Palazzo dei Congressi for its environmental efforts.



NO LITTERING

The Palazzo dei Congressi is dedicated to preserving Parco Ciani, the green park surrounding it. During major events, thanks to collaboration with the *Divisione Spazi urbani e Verde pubblico* of the City of Lugano, there is an increased presence of waste bins and frequent emptying of trash containers. Lugano actively promotes awareness against littering and proudly carries the [#NO-LITTERING](#) brand.



CERTIFICATIONS OF LUGANO CONVENTION & EXHIBITION

To align its facilities with international sustainability standards, the Palazzo dei Congressi has obtained Level I of the [Swisstainable](#) certification and is working towards acquiring the [ISO 20121 certification](#), which will guide us in this ongoing sustainable development process.

Our goal is to raise greater awareness and understanding of the importance of sustainability among all our stakeholders.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

We actively work with our clients, suppliers, and event participants.

Starting from a survey about sustainability, focusing on its importance and areas for improvement, we set the goal of reaching the third and last level of Swisstainable. In this regard, we have initiated certification through [ISO 20121](#), which will guide us in this ongoing sustainable development process.

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ACCESSIBILITY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The Palazzo dei Congressi actively collaborates with [Pro Infirmis](#) e [OK:GO](#), two organizations dedicated to assessing and evaluating building accessibility, providing people with disabilities with accurate information about it. In the case of public events organized by the City of Lugano, we also offer content translation into sign language.



3. CHOOSING RESPONSIBLE SUPPLIERS

An event not only involves participants, speakers, and guests, but also a wide range of goods and service providers. Often, organizers operate with limited budgets, and decisions regarding suppliers are primarily influenced by the price/quality ratio. However, the sustainability of an event is also influenced by the ability to integrate sustainability criteria when choosing suppliers.

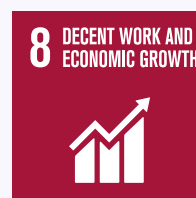
WHEN CHOOSING SUPPLIERS, IT'S IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING FACTORS:

- Have they implemented a sustainable management system for their services (preferably certified according to ISO 20121)?
- Have they implemented an environmental management system (preferably certified according to ISO 14001)?
- Are their operational sites close to the event venue to reduce emissions and consumption due to the transportation of staff and materials?
- Do they adequately address social aspects (fair contracts with workers, anti-discrimination efforts, inclusion of staff with disabilities, etc.)?
- Do they prepare a sustainability report covering social, economic, and environmental aspects?
- Do they adhere to an internal ethical code that is publicly visible (e.g., on the company's website)?
- Do they prefer eco-certified products or those with ethical and social certifications?

LIST OF LOCAL SUPPLIERS

On our website www.luganoconventions.com, we provide a list of local service suppliers accredited by **Lugano Convention & Exhibition**. The list is categorized by service type and is continuously updated.

[List of accredited local service providers](#)



4. FOOD & BEVERAGE

Among the various service provider choices, the selection of catering is particularly important. Choosing food and beverages that are environmentally friendly and socially responsible is a key step in improving the sustainability of an event. To achieve these goals, it is essential to select a catering service or restaurant well in advance, ensuring it aligns with the event's sustainability policies.

LOCAL CATERING

Catering services can have a significant environmental impact. To mitigate this, it is recommended to choose a catering company located near the event venue, as this will reduce CO₂ emissions from the transportation of goods and staff. Additionally, it provides participants with the opportunity to taste local dishes, thus promoting the region where the event is held.

WATER

It is preferable to use tap water, distributed in eco-friendly bottles provided to participants or served in glass pitchers. This avoids the use of plastic bottles and the subsequent production of waste.

PLATES, GLASSES, CUTLERY

Opt for catering that uses washable and reusable tableware. If the event does not allow for this, choose disposable plates, glasses, and cutlery made from biodegradable and compostable materials, allowing for the use of a single waste bin for food scraps, packaging, and utensils.

MENU SELECTION

It is advisable to prioritize organic food and beverages in the event menu, while also highlighting local specialties such as certified short-chain products. This choice promotes the region's gastronomic tradition, reduces transportation costs, and lowers emissions. It is also important to select seasonal products, which are often cheaper and of higher quality. Finally, it is essential to provide options for vegetarians, vegans, those with gluten intolerance, and people with food allergies.

FOOD WASTE MANAGEMENT & RECYCLING

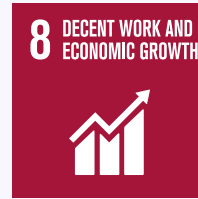
Food management is crucial for the sustainability of the event. First, it is important to prepare an appropriate menu and calculate the required amount of food with the catering service to avoid waste. A growing practice is to prepare fewer plates than the number of participants. One could also consider using lunch boxes, pre-packaged meals for participants. If properly prepared, unused boxes could be donated at the end of the event (e.g., for free) to charitable organizations that help families in need. Finally, it is essential to agree with the catering service on how leftovers will be managed, possibly for composting or alternative energy production.

CATERING & SUSTAINABILITY

A recent survey of accredited catering companies at the Palazzo dei Congressi revealed that:

- The majority have implemented a sustainability plan related to the use of local products, minimizing food waste, and training employees on sustainability.
- All caterers practice waste reduction and management, adjust their product offerings according to the seasons, offer food options for those with intolerances, and use biodegradable cleaning products.
- Most catering companies normally avoid excessive portions to minimize waste and recycle food by donating unused lunch boxes to charitable organizations.

[List of accredited local catering services](#)



DRINKING WATER AND REUSABLE BOTTLES FOR EVENT PARTICIPANTS

To promote more sustainable water consumption and reduce the use of plastic bottles, the Palazzo dei Congressi, in collaboration with [Bluwater SA](#) and [AIL SA](#), has launched an initiative to provide local, natural water free of charge to event participants through special dispensers.

These dispensers offer both still and sparkling water and include a system for cleaning the users' reusable bottles.

This sustainable solution is available not only at the Palazzo dei Congressi but also at Asilo Ciani and Villa Ciani, as well as any location with access to running water.



FROM FOOD WASTE TO CHARITY

At **Lugano Convention & Exhibition**, we are committed to reducing food waste and supporting our local community. For this reason, we actively encourage collaboration between event organizers, catering providers, and local social assistance organizations. At the conclusion of each event or at the end of each day of a conference, we offer organizers the opportunity to donate unused lunch boxes to people in need. This is done in coordination with local charitable organizations, such as [“Un cuore a tre ruote”](#), which uses Piaggio APE vehicles to distribute food and essential items to families and individuals in need. This initiative not only helps prevent food waste but also provides meals to those who need them most.



5. SELECTING SUSTAINABLE GADGETS

When organizing a sustainable event, the choice of a giveaway item (gadget) for participants becomes particularly important. The item should revolutionize the concept of an “attractive but mostly useless object,” instead being functional, useful, eco-friendly, and/or socially responsible.

HERE ARE SOME CRITERIA FOR SELECTING A SUSTAINABLE GADGET:

- **Utility:** The gadget should have a practical function and avoid being perceived by participants as “nice but useless,” thus increasing the amount of waste generated by the event. For example, an eco-friendly USB drive can contain all the conference documents (avoiding unnecessary printing), serve as a memento of the event, and be reused in the future.
- **Eco-compatibility:** Choose gadgets made from recycled materials or those with environmental product certifications. This helps reduce the event’s environmental impact.
- **Promotion of local products:** If the gadget is a food item, it should be certified (e.g., regio. garantie). This allows for the promotion of specialties from the area hosting the event.
- **Compliance with transport regulations:** For international events where a significant number of participants travel by air with carry-on luggage, ensure that the gadget does not fall under items prohibited on planes (e.g., liquids exceeding 100 ml, sausages for flights to countries that prohibit their import, exotic seeds and plants, etc.).

INCLUSIVE ACTIVITIES

Lugano Convention & Exhibition actively collaborates with the [Fondazione Diamante](#), which can produce personalized gadgets or gifts for speakers by creatively repurposing objects and recycled materials, offering food delicacies made in their laboratories (certified BioSuisse and/or locally sourced products), or gift baskets with products created in their facilities for sheltered employment. These are just a few examples of the numerous collaborations that can be made with foundations that promote the social inclusion of people with disabilities.



6. MOBILITY PLANNING

Mobility has the most significant environmental impact associated with an event: more than 95% of the CO₂ emitted in relation to an event is due to the means of transportation used by participants to reach it. This is an aspect induced by the event, but it is challenging to manage and something over which the organizer often has limited control.

HOW TO REDUCE TRAVEL-RELATED EMISSIONS

- Promote the use of more sustainable transportation methods, such as trains, which generate lower CO₂ emissions (measured in CO₂-equivalent emissions per kilometer traveled).
- Encourage the use of public transportation, as well as bike rental or bike-sharing services.
- Reduce the carbon footprint. Even with reduced emissions, every activity generates some CO₂. Therefore, it is possible to invest in climate protection initiatives. Many national and international nonprofit organizations provide tools, training, and in some cases, grants for projects such as local reforestation, renewable energy investments, and carbon capture and storage.
- If necessary, provide shuttles from the station/airport to the event venue to avoid individual transfers. By communicating the shuttle schedules, routes, and stops in advance through appropriate communication channels, their use can be optimized.

ELECTRIC BUSES AND BOATS

The City of Lugano is actively promoting sustainable transportation. From the innovative transformation of the historic Motonave Ceresio 1931 into an electric boat, the first of its kind in Switzerland, to the planned 2025 inauguration of the TPL Line 5, the first line of electric articulated buses, Lugano is at the forefront of green solutions, contributing concretely to the fight against climate change and projecting the city towards a eco-friendlier future.



BIKESHARING

The bike-sharing service provided by [PubliBike](#) is a convenient rental system available 24 hours a day. It allows users to borrow a bike from one bike-sharing station and return it at another, providing a practical and agile solution for getting around the city. Using this service reduces personal car usage, avoids traffic and parking problems, and improves air quality and quality of life. The bicycles, designed specifically for bike-sharing, are lightweight and easy to handle, available in both mechanical and electric versions, with aluminum frames. Currently, this service has 116 bike-sharing stations in the Sottoceneri area, with a total of 750 bicycles, half of which are electric.



EFFECTIVE CLIMATE PROTECTION

Lugano Convention & Exhibition advises turning to recognized and accredited organizations in Switzerland, such as [MyClimate](#), a national non-profit organization involved in climate protection projects. The first step toward a sustainability strategy is to calculate your CO₂ footprint. Upon request, the Palazzo dei Congressi can provide information and estimates regarding the energy consumption of your event.



7. COMMUNICATING YOUR COMMITMENT

Depending on the communication tools used and the different target audiences, the communication objectives of a sustainable event are primarily to:

A. Inform and update, both the event participants and the various stakeholders involved at different levels in the organization (clients, suppliers, sponsors, public and private institutions, social media followers, local population, etc.) should be kept informed and updated.

B. Engage and motivate, encourage participants' awareness and involvement by sharing knowledge on sustainability aspects and fostering a “win-win” culture, starting from the idea that “together we create a sustainable event.”

ONLINE COMMUNICATION:

- Timely updates of the website with not only event details but also information on sustainability policies and expectations (e.g., CO₂ reduction, energy savings, local food sourcing, etc.).
- Active storytelling on social media before, during, and after the event.
- Developing a legacy from the event by reflecting on innovative aspects or gathering feedback for future improvements through surveys, dedicated social media groups, etc.
- Responding promptly to comments and questions on social media to maintain open dialogue and build an active community around the event.

OFFLINE COMMUNICATION (NON-DIGITAL):

- Limit printing as much as possible to avoid paper waste. Whenever possible, prefer electronic formats.
- When printed materials are necessary (brochures, signage, banners, staff t-shirts, catalogs, etc.), prefer local printing companies and environmentally conscious businesses.

PROMOTION VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

Lugano Convention & Exhibition utilizes its social media channels and the [INSIDE newsletter](#) to share information and updates on sustainability. This strategy, alongside platforms like www.luganosostenibile.ch, helps reach a wider audience and encourages dialogue about sustainability-related issues.



8. EVENT SUSTAINABILITY ACCREDITATION

Organizing a sustainable event requires a significant effort, which is not always fully recognized and appreciated in terms of communication and by the stakeholders and audience involved. On the other hand, many events claim to be “green,” even though in practice they are not sustainable or fail to meet specific standards. This can risk creating a boomerang effect: disappointing expectations and resulting in counterproductive communication. For this reason, an increasing number of organizers, promoters, and event suppliers are choosing to

adhere to new ethical and behavioral standards developed internationally. These standards are designed to ensure and communicate the sustainability efforts invested in producing sustainable events. In Switzerland as well, there are organizations, companies, and non-profit entities that specialize in consulting, evaluation, and even certification of sustainability based on various internationally recognized standards (e.g., ISO 20121, ISO 14001, SA 8000, etc.).

TIPS FOR CERTIFICATIONS:

- Identify the most relevant certification label for your company, considering both your industry and the relevance to your target audience.

CERTIFICATIONS

As **Lugano Convention & Exhibition**, we have joined Switzerland Tourism’s sustainability strategy, which aims to promote a culture of sustainability among all companies and organizations active in the tourism and events sector. The certification issued is Swisstainable, and the Palazzo dei Congressi has already obtained Level I. Additionally, through the program offered by [EXPO-EVENT](#), we aim to achieve [ISO 20121 certification](#) (goal: 2024). This certification is an international standard that provides guidelines for the sustainable management of events, enabling us to reach the third and final level of Swisstainable.



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