

Guide to organising an environmentally friendly event

Tallinn is one of the forerunners of the green transition in Estonia: the economy and ways of life here affect the well-being of the entire population of the country. Our plans and actions are driven by responsibility for the future. This guide helps to minimise the environmental impact of events in Tallinn and ensure a positive experience for participants.

To get the most out of the guide:

- think the activities through in the event planning phase and involve a sustainability specialist if necessary
- work with both event organisers and partners
- share the knowledge and experience gained in organising the event and give us feedback

Target group of this guide

The guide is primarily intended for anyone organising public events in Tallinn. The guide also contains useful information for anyone else involved in organising events, for example:

- waste handlers
- mass caterers
- suppliers
- production and installation teams
- tourism businesses
- representatives of communities and voluntary associations

Activities

The guide is divided into seven chapters by activity:

1. Waste minimisation and recycling
2. Materials and a green supply chain
3. Catering and drinking water
4. Transport
5. Energy and resource efficiency
6. Respecting the community and the environment
7. Communication

1. Waste minimisation and recycling

When organising an event, follow these three principles:

- Avoid using unnecessary materials and items (e.g. do not use disposables and produce unnecessary printed materials).
- Reuse items (e.g. dishes, name tags and lanyards).
- Recycle materials (e.g. collect waste so that it can be recycled).

Requirements

- At the event, waste must be collected separately by the organiser, traders and participants.
- At a minimum, bio-waste, packaging, cardboard/paper, mixed municipal waste and deposit packaging (if generated at the event) must be collected separately.
- Waste containers or frames used at the event must be marked in Estonian (and foreign languages, if necessary) and with a [pictogram](#) in the correct colour:
 - brown (bio-waste)
 - yellow (plastic and metal packaging and beverage cartons, etc.)
 - green (glass packaging)
 - blue (paper and cardboard)
 - grey (mixed municipal waste)
 - green (deposit packaging)
 - red (hazardous waste, e.g. electronic cigarettes)
 - distinctive from other waste (e.g. masks, cigarette ends)
- A collection point (e.g. a box) for reusable eating utensils and cutlery must be clearly distinguishable from waste containers.
- Separately collected waste must be handed over to a [waste handler with an environmental protection permit](#). The organiser of a public event must submit documents proving the transfer of waste and the quantities collected by type (e.g. in the AKIS public event permit application portal after the event).
- Waste segregation and separate collection facilities must be provided for event organisers at a permanent venue location.

Recommendations

- Install information boards and [signs](#) by the waste containers explaining the separate collection of waste. Use the same marking colours and pictograms that are used on waste containers and frames.
- Find green ambassadors (volunteers, youth brigade members, students, etc.) to supervise the separate collection of waste at the collection point.
- Use a waste container that is also the respective colour (e.g. a yellow container for collecting packaging and a green container for collecting tare, etc.). The required colours are given above.
- Appoint a person to organise separate collection of waste.

2. Materials and a green supply chain

As an event organiser, help to keep materials and goods in use for as long as possible and minimise waste in the product life cycle. You can do this by preferring:

- local or organic produce
- environmentally friendly companies
- eco-labelled products

Requirements

- Visitor badge holders and lanyards must be reusable. At the end of the event, the name badges and lanyards must be collected and to be reused at the next event.

- Decorations must be reusable or their materials recyclable. If possible, the plants used as decoration should be rented or potted flowers should be used, using local products where possible.
- Paper materials (invitations, printed materials, etc.) must be partially or completely replaced with electronic alternatives. Inventory, materials and other supplies should be ordered in moderate quantities to minimise surplus. The paper used must have an [eco-label](#).
- Cleaning products used (e.g. hand soap, tissue paper) must have eco-labels.
- Avoid over-packaging of goods, souvenirs, gifts, etc.
- Share as few souvenirs and gifts as possible. If it is necessary, opt for local products (e.g. food, experiences) or reusable items where possible.

Recommendations

- Use labels and teaching and training materials whose design and materials allow them to be reused.
- Think through the journeys related to organising the event to avoid unnecessary fuel consumption. Use refillable containers instead of disposable ones (e.g. disinfectant and soap dispensers).

3. Catering and drinking water

The availability of high quality food and clean drinking water is an essential part of organising an event. As food production has one of the greatest environmental impacts, it is important to think about environmental friendliness in relation to catering.

Three important ways to do this:

- reduce food waste
- increase the proportion of plant-based, local and organic food
- reduce food and beverage packaging waste

Requirements

- Food and beverages may only be served with reusable utensils (e.g. plates, bowls, drinking cups) and reusable cutlery (e.g. knives, forks, spoons, chopsticks, drinking straws). The recycling system needs to be well thought out and return points for reusable tableware and cutlery need to be clearly marked.
- Food, additives and seasonings (e.g. salt, sugar, cream) may not be served in small packages.
- Avoid food waste:
 - leftover food must be donated or made available to organisers and customers for taking home in reusable containers
 - when serving food and drinks, the number of participants and their needs must be taken into account; for example, do not serve all food and drinks at once (leave ca 10% unserved) and supplement as needed
- Make sure that at least one of the meals is plant-based or vegan. If possible, beef should be avoided.

Recommendations

- Encourage participants to bring their own reusable drinking bottles, utensils and cutlery. Ensure the possibility to rinse dishes at the event.
- Avoid serving bottled water. Make clean tap water available free of charge and provide a way to refill bottles. Also place water taps near food areas.
- Fill drinking glasses and open bottles only at the visitor's request.
- Prefer local herbal teas and honey and fair trade coffee, tea and sugar.
- Prefer caterers who offer food made from local and/or organic ingredients. Whenever possible, prefer soft drinks and alcoholic beverages produced in Europe.
- At least 50% of the food in the menu must be plant-based and vegan.

4. Transport

To reduce CO2 emissions due to transport, think about how participants and service providers can get to and from the event and how to encourage environmentally friendly modes of transport.

Requirements

- Participants should be informed about how to get to the event by bicycle or public transport and where the parking areas are to avoid congestion. All information and marketing material should include a recommendation to come to the event on foot, by bike or using public transport.
- When choosing a venue, it must be easily accessible by foot, bicycle and public transport.

Recommendations

- Open a bicycle parking area (or several) at or in the immediate vicinity of the venue that is guarded or where bicycles can be locked.
- Find ways to implement the "Park and Ride" service in your neighbourhood.
- Run special buses or trains.
For those coming from foreign countries, share information about the possibilities of compensating the climate impact of (air) travel.

5. Energy and resource efficiency

At the event venue, energy is used mainly for lighting, audiovisual solutions, heating, cooling, ventilation and cooking. Use innovative energy saving solutions and energy from renewable sources to reduce energy use.

Requirements

- Waste of resources (e.g. electricity, water, gas) must be avoided during the preparation and during the event itself. In the event of a multi-day event, the use of electricity at the venue must be reduced to a minimum during non-visiting hours.
- A permanent electrical connection must be used instead of temporary generators (if the venue allows for it).

Recommendations

- Opt for electricity from renewable energy sources if possible.
- When ordering special transport, prefer vehicles with low CO2 emissions (e.g. gas buses and buses compliant with the Euro 6 emission standard).
- At the event, use the most energy-efficient equipment and to the least extent possible.
- Use fixtures that reduce the possibility of wasting resources (e.g. handwashing stations with pumps or timers, lighting with motion sensors).
- Prefer venues that have the [Green Key environmental label](#) or that use renewable energy.

6. Respecting the community and surroundings

An environmentally friendly event respects the interests of organisers, suppliers, speakers, participants and local residents. By being involved, the organiser can ensure that everyone is satisfied with the event.

Requirements

- The venue (including the landscape) must be in the same good condition after the event as it was before.
- The movement and parking of vehicles must be organised in such a way that it causes minimal disturbance to local life.
- The owners of the surrounding properties must be informed about the event and related circumstances (e.g. traffic management changes and other changes) at least one week in advance.
- Sound and light pollution related to the event must be minimal (e.g. light installations must be used instead of fireworks and leaving the event venue at full lighting all night is not allowed).

Recommendations

- Involve the local community in the organisation of the event by offering them, for example, participation as volunteers or green ambassadors, discounted admission, trading opportunities or the opportunity to introduce the cultural heritage of the region.

7. Communication

The success of an environmentally friendly event is guaranteed by a common understanding of the rules and their necessity. In order for the event to be successful, it is necessary to give all participants an overview of the rules for organising an environmentally friendly event in a timely and understandable manner, based on the role of the participant.

Requirements

- Environmental protection rules must be available to visitors in plain language and publicly available on the website of the event or in an information channel available to visitors at least one week before the event.
- Environmental protection rules must be communicated to partners and traders when signing cooperation agreements, so that the partner or trader is able to fully comply with the rules.

- Environmental protection rules must be introduced both in public communication channels and on site during the event (e.g. signs, signboards, explanation by the host of the day).

Recommendations

- Remind the production and installation teams, partners and traders of the rules of organising an environmentally friendly event immediately before and during the event.
- Where possible, ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities.