



## Guide – Sustainable Event Management

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Bonn, March 2018

# 'SHAPING SUSTAINABILITY TOGETHER AND IMPLEMENTING IT IN BUSINESS'

Driving sustainable development forward in the spirit of Agenda 2030 is not simply a task for the world community and its individual countries. If we are to achieve national and international goals, every company is called upon to contribute through sustainable corporate processes and responsible action – and for GIZ in particular, this is both a mission and an obligation.

Our commitment to sustainability must be realised at both corporate and performance levels of the company. Numerous self-commitments, such as GIZ participation in the United Nations Global Compact and our commitment to its ten principles, lend weight to this aspiration. However, GIZ is also expected to lead the way as a sustainable company – and this is extremely important in terms of our credibility.

Events in particular offer enormous potential for making the concept of sustainability tangible in all its four dimensions of social responsibility, ecological balance, political participation and economic performance – and underlining corporate values through specific actions. Sustainable event management encompasses a multitude of possible measures in a total of seven fields of activity, such as conservation of resources in the fields of catering, mobility and building management – and many sustainable event management measures can be transferred directly to everyday office life, resulting in more sustainability in the company as a whole.

This guide introduces the topic of Sustainable Event Management and offers practical guidance, including a phase model which shows the task packages of sustainable event organisation in chronological order. This is followed by a more detailed description of the seven fields of activity. And last but not least, the guide provides practice-oriented checklists, which will give you a variety of references to each field of activity. You can take what is possible and relevant for your event from these checklists and add any other items that suit your specific purposes.

This document is based on the 2016 GIZ Navigator and the Guidelines for the Sustainable Organisation of BMUB (Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety) and UBA (Federal Environmental Agency) events. Checklists were drawn up and overviews of sustainable hotels, event rooms and catering companies for the Bonn and Eschborn locations were compiled. The checklists can be used individually for prioritising and for adding comments.

As it is neither possible to provide a complete list of all aspects at this point, nor to include all the diverse event formats and general conditions in detail, you should regard the guide as an encouragement to question familiar processes and procedures and to check them for sustainability aspects. In the scope of the fields of activity, the individual measures can also apply *mutatis mutandis* in the field structure. It depends on the country-specific context which measures are suitable. This should not mean more work, but instead should encourage more creativity. The integration of sustainable event management at GIZ is a process that should be designed together with the staff, enabling the guide to be continuously updated and supplemented through their practical experiences.

**This will help you to organise your event efficiently and effectively, and to design it in a climate-friendly and socially-compatible way, thus promoting our concept of sustainable**

## Do you have any questions or suggestions?

If so, please write to us at [sustainabilityoffice@giz.de](mailto:sustainabilityoffice@giz.de) or contact us personally.

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# PHASE MODEL

When organising and running events, sustainability aspects should be systematically included right from the start. Depending on the phase of the event organisation, different aspects are important:

## Phase I: Design

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The relevant stakeholders are to be identified in step 1. In step 2, possible potential for savings is to be analysed. In the third step, the extent to which sustainability aspects can be implemented is analysed. This analysis should address the principles of gender mainstreaming as well as the opportunities for participation and full access for persons with disabilities too. Successively building up the targeted goals or the number of measures from event to event can have a more motivating effect than taking on too much from the outset. It is not a question of addressing the fields of activity as comprehensively and completely as possible, but rather of focusing on implementing those aspects that are controllable and essential in the respective context.

## Phase II: Communication & Information

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Another important component is internal and external communication and information, not only with regard to stakeholders, but also with regard to the company's own documentation, and this aspect must be taken into account as early as the design phase, enabling information to be passed on at an early stage. Communication on sustainability aspects is also important for the acceptance of the approach. It is essential to inform not only guests about the specific measures, but also all of the stakeholders involved in an event, such as event personnel, etc.. This applies to events of all sizes. Information and criteria for selecting the venue, measures to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, etc. ensure a transparent event and raise the awareness of those involved. At the same time, it should also be openly stated where compromises have been made in order to prevent misunderstandings and to avoid being accused of 'green washing'.

## Phase III: Implementation

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How can sustainability be integrated as a cross-cutting theme on the day of the event? When staging an event, it is not only important to provide information about sustainability aspects in advance. It is also relevant to have a local contact person who can provide expert support for specific questions on the topic of sustainability. If the questions involve complex issues, they should be included in the follow-up to the event.

## Phase IV: Follow-up

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After the event, an evaluation should be carried out to help reflect on the essential and controllable aspects and to ensure comparability with other or recurring events. The names of providers and local stakeholders who have made a valuable contribution to sustainability should be forwarded to the Sustainability Office in order to include them in the overviews so that they can be used for future events. The satisfaction of the participants determined in terms of various sustainability aspects can also be used as an indicator for the design of future events.

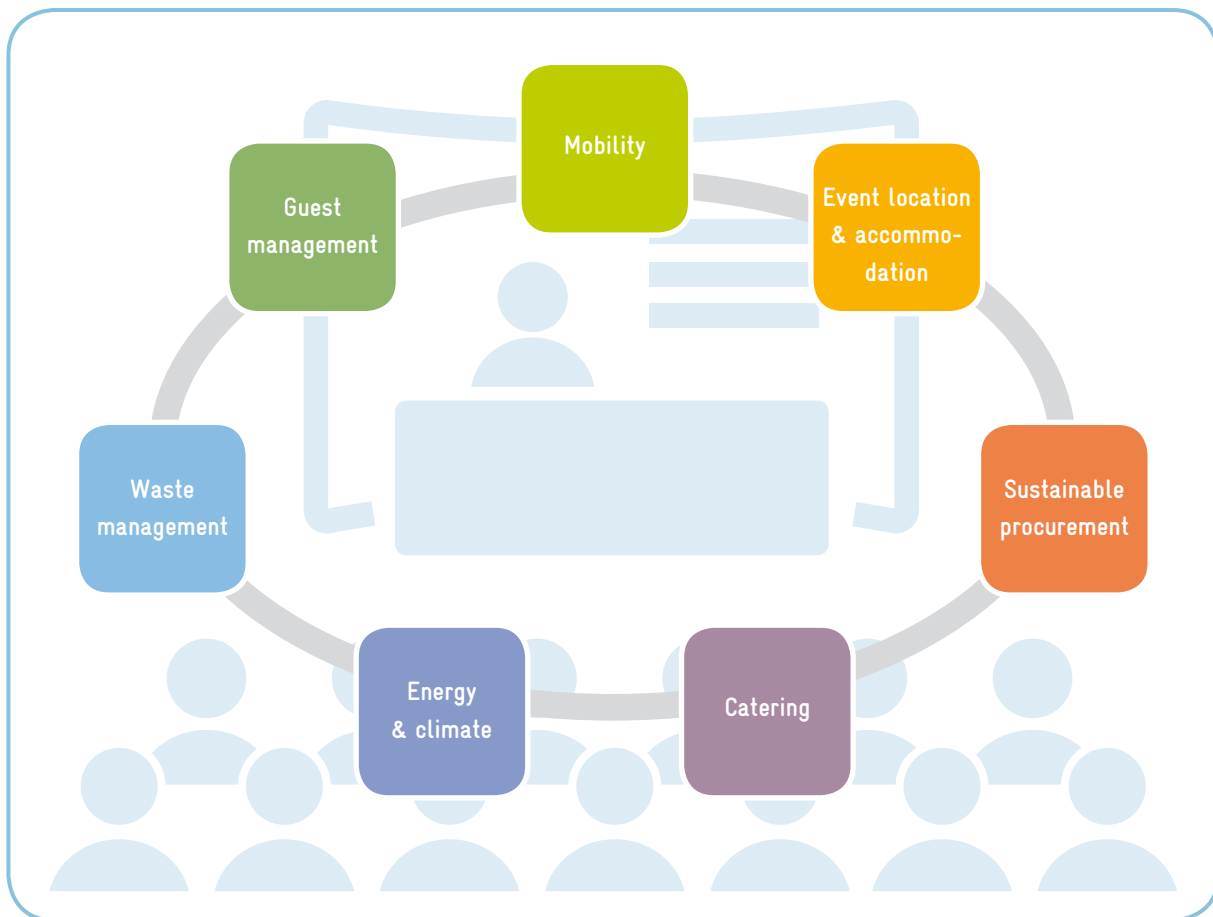
# FIELDS OF ACTIVITY

Sustainability plays a significant role in political and public debate, and it is also becoming more and more important at events, both for GIZ and for other stakeholders.

Video conferences and live streams can only partially replace face-to-face meetings. Conferences, specialist dialogues, annual meetings and major planning and monitoring meetings will continue to be held here in Germany and abroad – and this makes it all the more important to systematically integrate sustainability aspects into the planning process for all GIZ events at an early stage. The sustainability goals must be brought into line with the

content and formal requirements of the event. Events are like a business card of our company.

The fields of activity outlined below are illustrated by means of measures. The prioritisation represents the relevance and controllability of the measures. The 'Comments' column allows individual documentation to be entered.



## Guest management



For needs-oriented planning it is not only necessary to keep track of the feedback from the invited guests. It is also important to monitor the behaviour of the guests during the entire registration process.

The 'No-Show Rate'<sup>1</sup> can be calculated based on these experiences. Events can also be compared with one other on the basis of the no-show rates, general conclusions can be drawn from them and recommendations shared with colleagues.

Guest management			
Theme	Measure	Priority <sup>2</sup>	Comments
Information management	Disseminate information to stakeholders at an early stage	1 2	
	Make information material available digitally	1 2	
	Create a website for major events – the information can always be kept up-to-date	1 2	
	Create barrier-free access to conference materials, e.g. for persons with visual and hearing disabilities	1 2	
	Communicate the sustainable measures in the invitation and registration process as well as in the programme	1 2	
	Use digital advertising columns for information sharing instead of printed products	1 2	
	Guests	Create and use a stakeholder map	1 2
In digital participant management, enable feedback by email or via the website		1 2	
Remind already-registered participants that they can cancel (this will reduce the no-show rate)		1 2	
Use name tags that are reusable		1 2	
Use 'textile stickers' for a one-day event		1 2	
Follow-up	Reacquire badges and other materials e.g. via an incentive system, perhaps in the form of a competition	1 2	
	Determine perception and satisfaction electronically during and after the event, for example through electronic voting or electronic feedback forms	1 2	
	Electronic reporting	1 2	

<sup>1</sup> The No-Show Rate refers to the calculation of the numbers and refers to the persons who do not attend despite having confirmed their participation. For free events, a no-show rate of 40-60% can be expected.

<sup>2</sup> The priorities are based on the Guidelines for the Sustainable Organisation of BMUB and UBA Events, and on empirical data derived from event management – they are, however individually adaptable.

## Mobility

The participants will be on the road a lot during the event, as they may have to travel to and from the event itself, and commute between the event venue, their accommodation, the city centre, the airport and the railway station within the city or region where the event is being held. The length of the trips and the chosen means of transport will have an impact on the CO<sub>2</sub> emission and air pollution, and the guests' mobility behaviour will account for the lion's

share of the event's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. These environmental impacts can be reduced, however, by ensuring short travel distances, low-emission transport and a venue that is easily accessible. Think about how to avoid CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (and to compensate for them where necessary) at an early stage and communicate your ideas and suggestions in advance to the participants, providers and staff involved.



Mobility			
Theme	Measure	Priority	Comments
Planning	Check whether a face-to-face event is necessary – a virtual meeting might be an option	1 2	
	Ensure that the event location is relatively close to the participants	1 2	
	Consider public transport connections	1 2	
	Take international/national connections by direct flights into consideration	1 2	
	Plan short walking and cycling routes for arrivals and departures, and between the venue location and the participants' accommodation	1 2	
	Select event times that enable participants to arrive and depart by public transport	1 2	
	Arrival and departure	Provide information on the use of environmentally-friendly means of transport	1 2
Provide easily-understood route descriptions on how to reach the venue, possibly by integrating apps		1 2	
Set up shuttle services and let the participants know about them in advance		1 2	
Select sustainability-conscious providers for passenger transport		1 2	
Provide rental bicycles and address the safety aspects involved or refer the participants to relevant providers		1 2	
Create incentives for using public and environmentally-friendly means of transport		1 2	
Organise car-pooling and let the participants know about it in advance		1 2	
Check for German Railways' bargain offers (e.g. event tickets?)		1 2	
Install a link to a CO <sub>2</sub> compensation calculator in the registration form		1 2	
Local infrastructure	Use a guidance system to direct cyclists to the bicycle parking spaces	1 2	

## Veranstaltungsort und Unterbringung



**Event venues** and **accommodation** for the participants should be evaluated not only on cost and performance aspects, but also on social and environmental criteria. There are appropriate certifications for hotels and event venues that facilitate the evaluation of the premises – and

providers' information on their own internal sustainability management often shows their willingness and ability to implement sustainability-oriented measures.

Event venue and accommodation			
Theme	Measure	Priority	Comments
Avoid creating traffic	Select the venue and the accommodation as close to each other as possible	1 2	
	Ensure good connections to public transport	1 2	
Avoid overnight stays	No overnight stays, or as few as possible	1 2	
Selecting venue and hotel	Use sustainably-certified hotels and event venues (e.g. Environmental Management and Audit Scheme certification (EMAS), Green Certified, European eco-label, etc., etc.)	1 2	
	If no certification or the like is available, prepare action plans for the individual fields of activity	1 2	
	Ensure barrier-free access to the event venue and accommodation	1 2	
Event location	Unwinding and recreational opportunities for breaks and for the aftermath of the day's event	1 2	
	Event function rooms with sufficient daylight	1 2	
	Equipping the location (minimum amount of furniture etc. to be delivered)	1 2	
	Number and variety of seating options	1 2	
	Number and variety of washrooms, e.g. gender segregation, barrier-free access to toilets	1 2	
Hotel	Dispense with minibars	1 2	
Special regional features	Depending on the event venue, develop a regional and theme-specific concept	1 2	
	Advertise the region's attractions	1 2	
	Inform the guests about the cultural highlights on offer in the region	1 2	



## Nachhaltige Beschaffung

Environmental and social criteria must also be taken into account when procuring conference materials, decorations and other products, as well as when selecting service providers. Conference materials in particular are a simple and efficient starting point for making a statement about the sustainability of the event. Decorations can also support the theme of the event or reflect the cultural characteristics of the region, thus creating awareness of sustainability among the participants. When selecting products, you

must always be aware of the German Government's procurement guidelines, and sustainability aspects must be included as a minimum or award criteria in your invitations to tender. The **Sustainable Procurement Report** and the **Sustainability Compass** also provide guidance for sustainable procurement. If you don't select the services directly, but instead order them via the provider of the premises, ask the providers about sustainability measures practised by their service providers.



Sustainable Procurement			
Theme	Measure	Priority	Comments
Environmentally-friendly procurement	Procurement of products and services that meet the criteria for the 'Blue Angel' eco-label or the European eco-label	1 2	
	When selecting suppliers, take their level of competence in environmentally-oriented management into account	1 2	
Conference materials	Avoid paper, printing and postal services	1 2	
	If necessary, use 100% recycled paper (Blue Angel or equivalent) or paper from a certified source (Forest Stewardship Council, FSC) – and print on both sides of the paper in black & white	1 2	
	Dispense with give-aways	1 2	
	Ensure that all the products are reusable	1 2	
	Purchase regional, local and seasonal products	1 2	
	Use environmentally-friendly and/or bio-degradable (cleaning) products, ideally with product labels	1 2	
	Upcycling <sup>3</sup> of products	1 2	
Services	Include minimum or award criteria in the terms of reference (TOR)	1 2	
	Short travel distances for service providers or use of low-emission means of transport	1 2	
Decoration	Consider cultural particularities when decorating	1 2	
	Flower arrangements from the region, use seasonal products and comply with social standards	1 2	

<sup>3</sup> Upcycling means e.g. extending the life expectancy of a banner by recycling it as a bag or by donating it for other purposes.

## Catering



Successful catering is a quality feature of every event. Sustainable accents can also be set here, e.g. through regional and seasonal foodstuffs or a balanced range of vegetarian and vegan dishes. Organically-certified and

fair-trading products are not available everywhere, but the supply is still growing, and small local suppliers have often specialised in this niche.

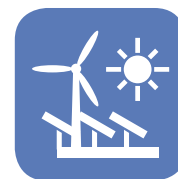
Catering			
Theme	Measure	Priority	Comments
Product selection	Needs-based quantities of food – note the no-show rate	1 2	
	Ask the caterer about their 'excess surcharge' <sup>4</sup> to avoid leftovers, because	1 2	
	Use fresh produce	1 2	
	Use regional, local and seasonal organic and Fair Trade foods	1 2	
	Use certified products (organic, Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), fair trade etc.)	1 2	
	Avoid using small portioning and packaging units (e.g. sugar, milk etc.) and disposable packaging	1 2	
Catering	Always offer at least one vegetarian alternative for the participants. Reduce the amount of fish and meat on offer	1 2	
	Offer a balanced range of food and drinks in the socio-cultural context, e.g. halal or vegan	1 2	
	When selecting the catering partners, check their compliance with the quality standards of the German Nutrition Society (DGE)	1 2	
	Develop a concept for dealing with leftover food, e.g. use best-residue boxes	1 2	
	Schedule enough coffee and snack breaks for relaxation, and provide lighter snacks during these breaks, such as seasonal fruit	1 2	
Drinking water	Provide tap water in decanters or water dispensers	1 2	
	Offer drinks only in glass bottles	1 2	

<sup>4</sup> Caterers usually calculate 30% more meals to be provided for than the expected number of participants.

## Energy and climate

The 'Energy and Climate' field of activity plays a crucial role as an overarching theme, e.g. in the mobility of the participants and the selection of conference buildings and hotels at the venue location. This independent approach is intended to underline and focus the organisers' attention on the environmental significance of the theme.

Climate-influencing energy consumption occurs when participants travel to & from the event and when they move from place to place on site. Heating, air conditioning, lighting and technology in conference buildings also consume energy.



Energy and climate			
Theme	Measure	Priority	Comments
Buildings, energy consumption	Consider energy supply and consumption when selecting conference buildings and hotels – orientation to an Environmental Management and Audit Scheme registration (EMAS) can help you with this	1 2	
	Energy-optimised air conditioning and heating technology (BMUB/UBA recommendation: do not heat conference rooms above 20°C and do not cool them down to more than 6°C below the outside temperature); lower the temperature in unused rooms	1 2	
Electricity	Procure electricity from renewable sources, e.g. green electricity providers, but if this is not possible, compensate by using e.g. Renewable Energy Certificate Systems <sup>5</sup>	1 2	
Equipment	Use energy-efficient equipment	1 2	
	Use equipment that meets the Blue Angel eco-label criteria	1 2	
	In the case of devices that are not used for example during breaks, either switch them to energy-saving mode or turn them off completely	1 2	
Climate-neutral events	Calculate event-related CO <sub>2</sub> emissions <sup>6</sup>	1 2	
	Determine event data together with the participants, e.g. as part of the management of participants or during the event itself	1 2	
	Compensate unavoidable greenhouse gas emissions by the event organiser or participants	1 2	
	Raise the awareness of the participants, e.g. by using signs	1 2	

<sup>5</sup> (RECS)

<sup>6</sup> This calculation can be supplied by numerous providers; examples are listed under 'Instruments' in the following links.

## Waste management



In this field of activity, the dual aim is to prevent or reduce the generation of waste and to ensure efficient waste separation. This applies to the conference location

(catering, conference materials) as well as to the hotel and the preparation phase (dissemination of handouts/conference documents).

Waste management			
Theme	Measure	Priority	Comments
Catering on site	Avoid small and disposable packaging, especially for milk, sugar, tea bags etc.	1 2	
	Use reusable plates and dishes, and reusable cutlery and glasses	1 2	
	Distribute leftover food to non-profit organisations or use best-residue boxes	1 2	
Packaging material at the conference venue	Minimise packaging – for instance use reusable products	1 2	
Waste separation and disposal	Demand that suppliers take back packaging	1 2	
	Select materials based on their reusability	1 2	
	Ensure that waste is disposed of in a proper and environmentally-friendly manner	1 2	
	Set up waste containers for collecting separate types of waste	1 2	
	Separate the different types of kitchen waste	1 2	
Water consumption	Provide information for participants e.g. on how to save water in washrooms	1 2	
	Use effective water management or measures to reduce tap water consumption, such as rainwater utilisation and water-saving taps	1 2	

# MEASURABILITY

**How do I measure the success of the approach? A qualitative and quantitative results assessment for sustainable events.**

What is the added value of an event if it meets sustainability standards?

This question has several facets: on the one hand, the organiser, in this case GIZ, presents itself as a company for which sustainability is a core business and as an organisation which takes this topic seriously, practising it in a measurable way. On the other hand, sustainable events demonstrably reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. And last but not least, these events help to make commissioning parties (clients) and guests aware of the topic of sustainability.

How can this be checked? On the one hand through hard and easily-measurable (quantitative) factors, including for example CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, which can be determined by means of a CO<sub>2</sub> calculator. However, soft factors that cannot be directly quantified are also important. One of these factors, for example, is the evaluation by guests and clients, which can be determined by means of a feedback form after the event.

At the end of the event, a balance sheet and brief documentation of the resources actually saved should be prepared and communicated. This can additionally sensitise and motivate the client and participants alike. For smaller events, only a few essential aspects need be noted.

Sustainable event management can always generate added value – regardless of whether the sustainability is measurable or not. The sustainable organisation of events contributes to the company's credibility.

**Sustainable event management is one of the goals in our 2016-2020 environmental programme: We promote sustainable event management within the company and we orientate our implementation of events to international standards.**

# FURTHER LINKS

## Further links to sustainable event management

### Guidelines and orientation

Guidelines for the Sustainable Organisation of Events (BMUB)  
Guidelines for the Avoidance of Food Waste in Catering (UBA)  
Sustainable Procurement Compass  
Seal clarity for sustainable purchasing  
Ramp-up.me: Planning full-access events  
Too good for the bin  
No-show rate

### Certification and standards

Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS)  
Fair trade tourism  
Fair trade products  
Global Compact  
Global Reporting Initiative  
International Labour Organization/Labour Standards

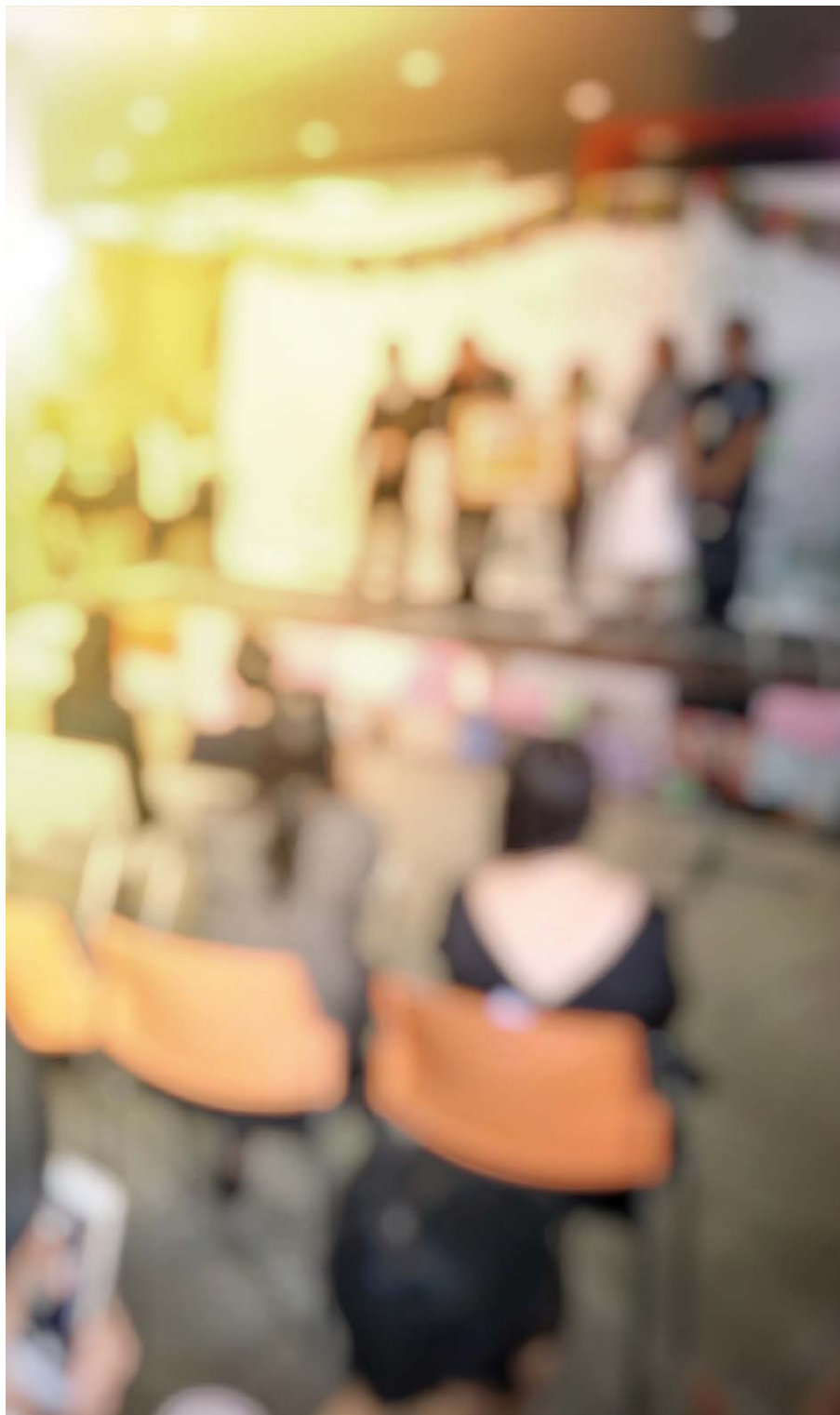
### Instruments

Online CO<sub>2</sub> calculator from the North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) Energy Agency  
myclimate event calculator  
Green Score Card  
Tools from the field structure  
Digital advertising columns

### Examples of sustainable events

Good practice: Stakeholder Day 2016  
Annual Conference of the Council for Sustainable Development





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