



# GUIDELINES FOR A SUSTAINABLE EXHIBITION STAND







**THANK YOU FOR READING  
THIS GUIDE!**

Follow the steps outlined here to make your exhibition stand more sustainable and be a frontrunner in helping our sector reduce its carbon footprint. At the end, you can take a pledge and proudly showcase your efforts at the conference.

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This document is inspired by IMEX, a trailblazer in the sustainable events sector.



# WHAT IS THE GOAL OF THIS GUIDELINE?

- Provide tips on how to manage and reduce the waste
- Practical advice on how to lower the carbon footprint of your stand and exhibition staff
- Opportunity to make a positive contribution to an urgent cause and get recognition for your efforts

# EAIE'S SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development established the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a guide for action, a reference for organisations to frame their goals. The EAIE has signed the SDG Accord and has committed to three relevant SDGs - SDG 4 Quality Education, SDG 12 Responsible consumption and production and SDG 13 Climate Action. Our commitment to these goals underpins our actions and choices as an organisation.

Sustainability means being effective today without compromising the future and it includes the following:



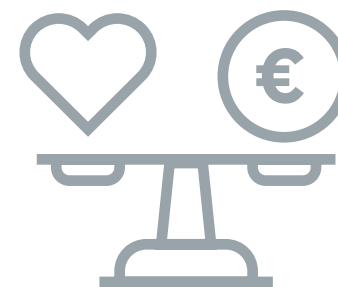
## **ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY:**

contributing to and promoting fair economic growth; supporting innovation and entrepreneurship; guaranteeing shared wealth



## **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY:**

committing to a rational use of natural resources and taking action for their renewal



## **SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY:**

promoting social justice and fighting inequality. Creating business growth while improving quality of life.



# REDUCE WASTE, THINK CIRCULAR

It is imperative that we as a sector continue improving our practices, rethink our waste and material production and change our way of working to prevent any more damage to the environment. This guide will give you practical tips on how to plan your exhibition stand materials and support your staff to be more sustainable in the following four steps.

**STEP 1:** Adopt a circular economy mindset with the help of the 9R framework

**STEP 2:**  
Build a sustainable stand

**STEP 3:**  
Commit to sustainable actions as exhibition staff

**STEP 4:**  
Sign the sustainability pledge

		Strategies	
Circular economy	Smarter product use and manufacture	<b>R0</b> Refuse	Make product redundant by abandoning its function or by offering the same function with a radically different product
		<b>R1</b> Rethink	Make product use more intensive (eg by sharing product)
		<b>R2</b> Reduce	Increase efficiency in product manufacture or use by consuming fewer natural resources and materials
Increasing circularity	Expand life span of product and its parts	<b>R3</b> Reuse	Reuse by another consumer of discarded product which is still in good condition and fulfils its original function
		<b>R4</b> Repair	Repair and maintenance of defective product so it can be used with its original function
		<b>R5</b> Refurbish	Restore an old product and bring it up to date
		<b>R6</b> Remanufacture	Use parts of discarded product in a new product with the same function
		<b>R7</b> Repurpose	Use discarded product or its parts in a new product with a different function
Linear economy	Useful application of materials	<b>R8</b> Recycle	Process materials to obtain the same (high grade) or lower (low grade) quality
		<b>R9</b> Recover	Incineration of material with energy recovery



STEP 2:

# BUILD A SUSTAINABLE STAND

# STAND DESIGN

**Discuss the options with your suppliers, ask questions, use the 9Rs framework to weigh all your options and push transparency. Think of the materials that are used in your stand design: where do they come from? Are they being reused over multiple events? If not, how can they be recycled? Do they follow any regulations or labels?**

## **MATERIALS**

**Wood** - When using wood or wooden elements for your stand, ensure:

- That it is FSC or PEFC labelled and/or
- That it has a certain percentage of recycled material and/or
- That you know how its reuse will be monitored long term

When the wood can no longer be reused, you must guarantee its transport to an authorised waste management facility for recycling, or you should arrange recycling through the exhibition venue.

**Aluminium** - When using an aluminium frame construction, ensure:

- That the manufacturer has an environmental management system certified to ISO 14001 or EMAS standards, or equivalent

- That it comes from manufacturers that use 100% renewable energy and/or
- That you reuse the aluminium and when it is no longer in use, that you take it to an authorised waste management facility for recycling.

Aluminium is indefinitely recyclable.

**Cardboard** - if your stand is made of cardboard, ensure:

- That it is FSC or PEFC labelled and/or
- That it has a percentage of recycled material

When no longer in use, you must guarantee its transport to an authorised waste management facility for recycling, or you should arrange recycling through the exhibition venue. Note that cardboard is often subject to fire safety regulations. Check with the venue before using cardboard.

**Textiles** - when using textiles, use:

- Textiles that have a recycled percentage (eg recycled plastic bottles, fishing nets, tyres, recycled polyester, cotton or wool) and/or
- Textiles made from organic materials (eg organic cotton, tree fibres, bamboo fibre, orange fibres, pineapple leaves, coffee grounds).

Seek out local organisations that can give textiles further use yourself, eg making bags, backpacks, clothing, tablecloths, wallets, mats, aprons or shoe soles. Reuse textiles in your own organisation, eg as padding or floor protection in your office.

# STAND DESIGN (cont.)

## SIGNAGE

- Design and word signage, hanging banner artworks and sub-exhibitor signage so that it can be stored and reused multiple times
- Do not use Bioflex, Vinyl or PET. Instead choose organic material that is compostable or at least biodegradable i.e. made from renewable raw materials, such as corn, cassava, potatoes or wheat
- Avoid foamcore; use Re-board or Falconboard instead
- When possible, use digital signage (eg when using digital signage for sub-exhibitors, it can also be used as a display for their promotional materials)

## FLOOR COVERING

- Prefer using carpet over wood floors as they can fully be reused over multiple events.
- When using wood floors, make sure to recycle the pieces that have been drilled into and cannot be reused. For the rest, ensure, it will not be thrown away and that your supplier is taking back the remaining wood floor to reuse it over multiple events.

## ACCESSIBILITY

- Ensure your stand is accessible to wheelchair users, by installing a bevel (or ramp for higher floors).
- Consider your stand layout and ensure wheelchair users can move around easily.

## LIGHTING

- Use efficient LED or similar energy-saving lighting

## WASTE ASSESSMENT

Please make sure to consider the materials that are used in your stand design to reduce waste in the first place. Use materials that

- generate less waste at the end of the material's life cycle, eg less volume or less weight
- can be reused at other exhibitions, eg stand construction materials
- can be recycled at authorised recycling facilities. Please see the venue recycling guide for information on what materials can be collected to be recycled at the venue.

If waste cannot be avoided please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Ensure that your stand constructor is aware of the kind of waste they will produce and that they are responsible for its management.
- Your stand builder and its staff should be briefed to comply with the level of separation set out below, and should send all waste, except for untreatable waste, to the labeled bins outside the venue for separated waste streams to embed recycling behaviour at the throwaway point.
- Your stand constructor must separate the waste generated by your stand into the following categories:
  - › Wood
  - › Glass bottles
  - › Cardboard
  - › Ordinary industrial waste
- Please note that disposing of the chemical waste such as paint, oil and hydrocarbons outside of their containers is strictly prohibited at the venue.
- Separating waste at source is vital. Contaminated waste, eg food mixed with paper, means all the waste goes to landfill.



# STAND DESIGN (cont.)

## BUILD-UP

### SET-UP PERIOD

- Follow the EAIE build-up schedule - working on your stand outside the set hours is not authorised as it directly affects the energy needed to keep the exhibition hall open and functioning
- Use efficient, low energy consumption equipment
- Turn off equipment when not in use or use a timer

### SAFETY

- All staff working on the set-up must use personal protective equipment
- You must comply with legal health and safety requirements, and any other rule or instruction from the organiser or venue (see [Exhibitor Manual](#))
- All equipment must undergo regular maintenance and safety checks

### CHEMICAL PRODUCTS

- Use non-hazardous chemicals with a low VOC rating eg waterbased paint instead of solvent based, and natural inks instead of synthetic

## PACKAGING BEFORE & DURING EVENT

- Make an accurate assessment of the materials needed for your stand design to reduce the need for transport and packaging, and to reduce waste
- Packaging should be kept to a minimum (eg reduce volume by eliminating unnecessary filling; reduce waste by reducing the strapping required)
- Source packaging that can be used both when taking materials to your stand and when removing them
- Packaging material (wood, cardboard *etc*) should be recyclable, made of recycled components and FSC or PEFC labelled
- Textile and metal strapping should be used instead of plastic
- Never use Styrofoam as it does not degrade or break down. It goes straight to landfill and leaches harmful chemicals into the environment

## WASTE

- Follow the waste guidelines agreed upon before the event – see section 'Stand design', 'Waste assessment'

## GRAPHICS

- Graphics represent a large part of the waste of an exhibition. To reduce your impact, opt for solutions that can be reused over multiple events or recycled.
- If you decide to order your graphics via the shop of Toddo, your wall graphics will be made of recycled PET bottles and PVC. After the event, the fabric and PVC are separated. The fabric is recycled into new yarns and the PVC turned into granules.
- If you order and MSD package or customised stand design with hard panels, ask about the possibility of storing some of your graphics to reuse them next year.

## DECORATION

- Use natural plants over plastic plants
- Choose potted plants over cut flowers. Rent your plants via the shop of Toddo, after the event they will go back to our supplier to be reused.
- If you get your own plants, and you are not reusing them after the event, plan their destination (eg donate them to a local social organisation)

# STAND DESIGN (cont.)

## BREAKDOWN

Breakdown, together with the set-up period, produces the most waste. Make sure your stand builder follows the waste guidelines previously agreed on and plan your packing.

## WASTE REDUCTION & SEPARATION

Although your exhibition stand can be set up and dismantled by your stand constructor, you must also take responsibility for the process to be carried out sustainably. Incorporate the actions below or ask your stand constructor to comply with them. Your goals are:

- Reduction of volume and weight of waste generated
- Recovery
- Waste separation

Particularly as time allowed for breakdown is very limited, planning is essential.

### Reduce the volume and weight of waste generated:

- When planning your participation, think of the benefits of producing a stand

that you can reuse at multiple events, not just for better sustainability, but also for cost efficiency. If the whole stand is being reused, follow the packaging and transport guidelines from section 'Build-up', 'Packaging before & during event'.

- If the whole stand is not being reused, consider partial reuse. Analyse stand components to determine whether there are any that can be reused (eg wood, aluminium, cardboard, screws, tarpaulins, lighting, wiring, carpets, plants etc). If materials will not be reused by your organisation find out if they can be donated. Textiles can be donated to social organisations to produce other materials/products (eg tarpaulins can be recycled to make bags), natural plants can be sent to local social organisations to be replanted. Unused food can also be donated.

### Recovery and waste separation:

- Ask your stand constructor what materials will be recovered. Often single-use laminate flooring can be recovered to be reused as underlay for new stands. Materials that

cannot be reused or have to be disposed of must be managed as waste.

- Stand constructors are responsible for the correct disposal of stand waste. They should comply with the level of separation described in section 'Stand design', 'Waste assessment'.

## PACKAGING DURING BREAK-DOWN

- See section 'Build-up', 'packaging before & during the event'

## TRANSPORT OF THE STAND

As far as possible, all stand construction materials, consumables and exhibition materials should be sourced from local suppliers. Any transport used should be low emission. Avoid air freight.

- Select the smallest vehicle to fit your load
- Use alternative fuel vehicles (natural gas, hybrid, electric etc) as much as possible
- Vehicles should use properly inflated, low rolling resistance tyres (A or B)
- Plan the most direct routes with the lowest congestion
- Reduce vehicle speed



## STEP 3: COMMIT TO SUSTAINABLE ACTIONS AS EXHIBITION STAFF



# PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS & CONSUMABLES

## CHOOSING YOUR PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

### Responsible consumption:

- Avoid surplus as much as possible
- Avoid single-use non-recyclable items
- Ensure paper or cardboard is FSC or PEFC labelled
- Ensure all materials are recyclable and have one or more recycled components
- Say no to plastic! Or if there is a plastic component, it should be biodegradable and made from renewable materials, such as corn, cassava, potatoes or wheat
- If you must have give-aways, consider more sustainable options that will not end up in a waste bin after the event, eg offer consumables or items that can be used and re-used multiple times.
- Create QR codes and make use of the online conference platform instead of printed information. If you must print, specify forest-friendly paper stock and non-toxic inks.
- Control the distribution of promotional material. If you can avoid it, don't print. Your objective is to promote your organisation, not

to fill up waste bins. If you must print, re-think your promotional materials, try and limit their size and weight.

- Exchange contact information digitally instead of printed business cards.

### Responsible purchasing:

- Choose local suppliers to support the local economy and reduce emissions
- Choose suppliers with socially responsible production methods, ethical and Fair-Trade sourcing to promote a social economy
- Choose suppliers that invest in R&D or start-ups to further innovation and entrepreneurship

### Responsible promotion:

- Consider making a charitable donation on behalf of stand visitors instead of give-aways
- Make sure there is a destination for unused material. You can deposit leftover notepads, pens, mugs, vases, stools *etc* in one of the charity boxes located in the exhibition hall.
- If there is surplus, package it and reuse at other events

- If materials cannot be reused or donated, make sure they are disposed of properly. You can see the waste separation guidelines in the section 'Stand design' and 'Waste assessment'.

### Responsible packing:

- Make an accurate assessment of the materials you'll need on your stand to reduce the need for transport and packaging, and to reduce waste
- Packaging should be kept to a minimum (eg reduce volume by eliminating unnecessary filling; reduce waste by reducing the strapping required)
- Packaging material (wood, cardboard *etc*) should be recyclable, made of recycled components and FSC or PEFC labelled
- Fillings should be paper or cardboard not plastic
- Textile and metal strapping should be used instead of plastic
- Never use Styrofoam as it does not degrade or break down. It goes straight to landfill and leaches harmful chemicals into the environment
- Do not use plastic film

# STAND CATERING

## STAND RECEPTIONS

Food consumption and treatment of surplus and waste are particularly important parts of a sustainable exhibition participation. Plan the amount of food and beverage ordered carefully, taking stand staff and participants into account and focusing on responsible consumption.

- Don't plate or unwrap food before needed. Once opened and offered to visitors, it cannot be donated
- When getting an external reception provider, pay attention to food miles. Offer organic and/or locally produced products and label them accordingly
- Don't include red meat on your reception without knowing its environmental impact. Offer white meat, cheese and other protein sources instead
- Think of vegetarian and vegan options for your reception
- Ask the catering company for glass, china and reusable cutlery. Avoid plastic cups and any other single-use plastic
- Don't mistake takeaway paper cups for recyclable cups. The inner lining is often

plastic making them non-recyclable. Specify china or 100% compostable cups. In the case of 100% compostable cups your supplier must be able to provide you with a compostable certificate. The cups made available by the EAIE in the coffee and catering areas are fully compostable.

- Don't use or offer single-use plastic water bottles
- If reusable catering packaging and containers are not available, single-use packs and containers must be made of natural fibres such as bamboo or corn starch, or at least be made of recycled materials and manufactured sustainably (eg certified under the ISO 14001/ EMAS international standard; labelled FSC or PFCE; labelled Ecolabel, AENOR Environment, Germany's Blue Angel, Norway's Nordic Swan, Natura 2000 product or EPD)



# BRIEF YOUR STAFF

## TRANSPORTATION

- Where possible, staff should travel by train.
- If travelling by plane, choose airlines that strive to reduce the environmental impact of their flights (eg more efficient planes, lighter planes, planes that emit less greenhouse gas, using compostable or glass containers rather than plastic on board, carbon footprint compensation schemes, recycling on board waste) and that collaborate with social organisations. Also consider making the most of your trip by visiting other partner or staying longer at your destination.
- At the destination, travel to your hotel and around the destination on public transport or conference shuttle buses. A public transportation card is included in the conference registration, you can pick it up together with your participant badge.
- Choose accommodation with an easy public transport route to the conference, or choose accommodation that has shuttle buses.
- If you use your own car, consider ride-share or car pooling to the venue.
- For car rentals, choose electric or low-emission cars

## WASTE

To understand what sustainability means and the impact of our behaviour, it's essential to have clear information. Before the event, ensure stand staff receives specific information about your organisation's commitment and how they can contribute to achieving it.

- As a guide, you can ask them to:
- consume natural resources responsibly - turn off taps, lighting and equipment when not in use
- immediately alert EAIE or venue staff of any leaks (eg water or gas)
- find out about the venue's separation and waste collection system

## MEALS & BEVERAGES

- Make use of the vegetarian lunches provided at the EAIE Conference.
- Ask staff to bring their own reusable water bottles and carry cups.







## STEP 4:

# SIGN THE PLEDGE

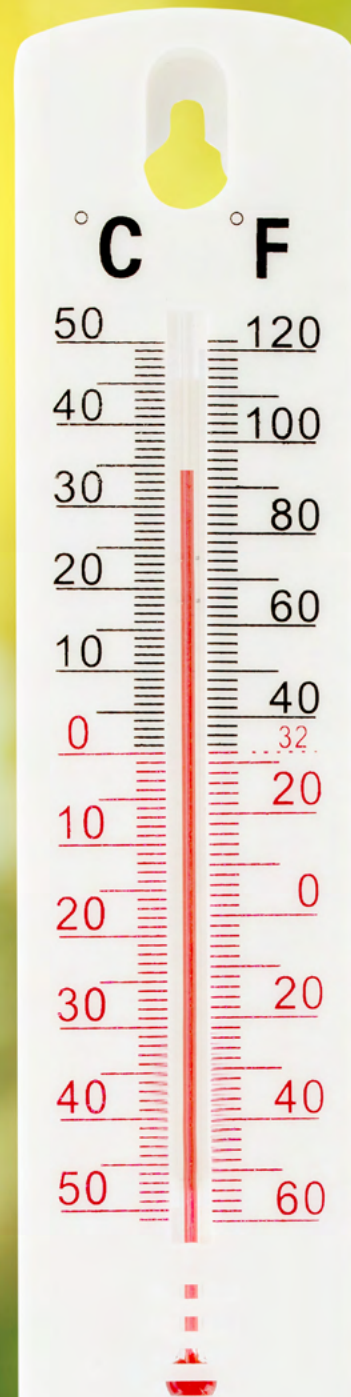
We encourage all exhibitors sign the Sustainable Exhibitor Pledge and support the EAIE's green goals. By committing to three simple actions, you can help us make a difference and reduce our environmental impact.

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### **SHARE YOUR LEARNINGS & THE PLEDGE:**

Be proud of your sustainability efforts and share your stories and achievements. Lead by example and champion your success! Make sure to share your sustainability efforts with the hashtag **#EAIEgreengoals**.

We'd love to hear about your best practices in sustainable exhibiting. If you'd like to share examples or new ideas with us, please reach out to [exhibition@eaie.org](mailto:exhibition@eaie.org).



NEW FROM 2024  
ONWARD!

# WHAT GETS MEASURED, GETS DONE

To track our progress and measure our impact, we are introducing a carbon calculator for Free Build stands. All Free Build stand constructors will receive a link to fill in stand details for the calculation after submitting stand design. Exhibitor staff can fill in the participant carbon calculator they will receive upon registering for the conference.

Thank you for making a positive contribution to our **#EAIEgreengoals**.