



Implementation

How to organise green sports activities and events

How sports impact the environment

Every action we do has an effect on our surroundings, no matter if we notice it or not. With that in mind some actions have more effect on the environment than others. Sports are not different; each sport impacts the environment differently depending on the sport. The last decades there has been more awareness of the environmental industry yet there has not been much change within the sports industry to combat it.

The UN addressed the important part that sports can have in the future of climate change with both the influences sports have in society and their own emissions. Sports are quite a vast area and vary quite a lot, that does not mean that only the highest emission sport should take responsibility and act. In every sport, actions can be taken to lower the emission of it, both on the professional level and amateur level. It is important when looking at professional sports to also look at the impact of the spectators as they count in the effect of the sport and that is why The Olympics in Rio had 3,6 million tons of carbon dioxide released in the atmosphere and 2,16 million at the FIFA World Cup in Russia in 2018.⁶ It is easy to focus only on the negative parts of sports and in general how we affect the environment. It is important though to look at the positive impact also. Sail of Change claims that outdoor sports increase the connection between people and the environment around them. This connection between people and nature has faded more and more with large quantities of populations living in cities with no daily interaction in green areas⁷.

Good practices

It is good to look at actions being done in the sports industry the last few years at the international level like the Olympics which have the goal of being carbon negative at the 2030 Olympics⁸. This shows that action is being done at the highest level of sports to combat the environmental changes but there are also actions being done at the local level. Some practices at the local level are represented by changes in the structures of sports clubs such as the Forest Green rovers, they changed the infrastructure of the club to be more eco-friendly⁹. Other clubs and industry had to change due to change in the climate like Las Vegas golf courses where with the lack of water supply, they changed grass to artificial grass to lower the water usage. All these actions are something other clubs can look at and adapt as their own in some part¹⁰.

For further information read the [Sport and Environment Training Package –Module 4](#).

⁶ [Youth Envoy- Environment Climate Change](#)

⁷ [Sports and Nature on the Same Team](#)

⁸ [Addressing Climate Change Through Sport, UN](#)

⁹ [Another Way- FGR](#)

¹⁰ [New golf courses can't use Colorado River water, Las Vegas board says](#)

The potential of sport for environmental engagement

The potential of sport engagement in environment preservation and sustainable development is highlighted in this section. Sport is recognized as an effective tool for achieving global goals, such as combating climate change and promoting social inclusion. The United Nations has adopted the Sports for Climate Action Framework, which aims to reduce emissions in the sports sector and raise climate awareness. The International Olympic Committee has also played a key role in promoting sustainable development through sports.

Sport and sustainable development goals (SDGs)

Sports can contribute to various Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including health and well-being, gender equality, quality education, sustainable development, social inclusion, and peace and justice. Additionally, sports can have significant environmental potential, such as promoting green infrastructure, sustainable transportation, waste reduction, energy efficiency, conservation and restoration, and green innovation.

To achieve sustainable development through sports, collaboration and partnerships among various stakeholders are essential. Sport organisations, authorities, and other stakeholders should develop sustainability strategies focusing on sustainable practices, community engagement, and inclusivity. Policies that incentivize collaborations and partnerships, as well as the participation of all stakeholders, are crucial for accelerating progress towards sustainable development through sports.

Sport environmental initiatives

Sport environmental initiatives have gained momentum, with organisations like the International Olympic Committee, UEFA, and Sport and Sustainability International (SandSI) and others, leading the way. Efforts are being made to reduce the environmental impact of sports events and venues, promote sustainability in the sports industry's supply chain, and mobilise fans and athletes to support sustainable communities.

Environmentally friendly planning of sports infrastructure is important to minimise the environmental impact. This includes site selection, sustainable design, green landscaping, water and waste management. By implementing sustainable practices, sports facilities can reduce their environmental footprint and promote sustainability.

When planning sports infrastructure in nature and built-up areas, factors such as the resilience of the natural area, traffic connection, and organising activities in a way compatible with nature and the environment should be considered. Providing adequate and attractive sports facilities in built-up areas can help reduce the need for transportation and promote physical activity among residents.

Overall, the potentials of sport green involvement in sustainable development are significant, and efforts are being made to harness the power of sports to address global challenges and create a more sustainable future.

For further information read the [Sport and Environment Training Package – Module 5](#).

Planning and Implementation of green sports events

Sustainability is a process, not a status; in fact, most aspects of the sports sector may never reach a point of true environmental sustainability. Consequently, environmental sustainability is understood as a commitment to consistent progress toward Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by reducing the carbon footprint and engaging meaningfully in the sports sector's ongoing efforts to mitigate environmental risks, especially the ones of sports events.

In this chapter, can be found tips and guidelines that can be applied when working on funding, venue and supplies selection, transportation options, and your event communication. Keep in mind that these ideas are intended to get you started, so the lists are not all-inclusive.

Getting started

Before getting deeper into your organisational plan, it is important to know and understand the value of promoting a sustainable event, the “why's” that will lead your decisions and actions. These “whys” can be better understood by examining the connections between:

- a. your stakeholders' interests and expectations,
- b. the major sustainability issues related to your sport and your event,
- c. the relevant risks and opportunities.

Engaging **stakeholders** (i.e., individuals or groups that have an interest in any decision or operation related to your event, like local authorities, sponsors, athletes, media, NGOs, and suppliers, see previous chapter for and insight) in a two-way conversation and an open dialogue constitute one of the most effective ways of preventing setbacks by collaborating with them, establishing a common ground and creating solutions. So, list the stakeholders that:

- a. influence the way you manage your event,
- b. have significant expertise to share,
- c. are most likely to be affected by your actions, listen to them, integrate their comments in your action plan and publicly acknowledge their contribution.

For the identification of the **sustainability issues** related to the potential economic, environmental and social impact of your event, you are encouraged to:

- Think about the goals of your event and the main activities required,
- Ask yourself and your team about the necessary resources, the venue, the transportation, the waste management afterwards, the economic value and its distribution, and the impact on the host community,
- Then, share your ideas and get feedback from the relevant stakeholders you have already engaged in your event.

Finally, you have to assess the potential sustainability **risks and opportunities** related to the operation of your event/activity which can be:

- Strategic, e.g., damage to reputation,
- Financial e.g., attracting sponsors,
- Natural and “force majeure” e.g., fire, floods, boycott/strikes,

- Operational e.g., logistics, safety, sites.

Green recommendations for sports events

After mapping your stakeholders, your needs, challenges and opportunities, you should have a brief idea of how to approach your event. This section aims to provide you with green recommendations for key aspects of an event. Try to keep in mind that the lists below are not exhaustive and you may have to adapt the ideas to best suit your sports event.

Site and Venue

- Choose existing sites and venues where possible,
- Implement a no-smoking policy,
- Use biodegradable cleaning products,
- Limit the use of vehicles on-site by securing safe parking lots nearby,
- Reduce and prevent noise through signage, respect by-laws, training and inspections,
- Respect local culture and heritage and avoid using spaces with environmentally sensitive ecosystems.

While picking the venue ask yourself:

1. Is it centrally located? Athletes, officials and spectators should have short and/or convenient commuting distances.
2. Is it serviced by accessible public transportation?
3. Is it safe and secure for participants, organisers, employees and the community?
4. Is it accessible to all participants (e.g., wheelchair accessible)?
5. Is the necessary venue and equipment already in place?
6. Is there evidence of a sustainability policy in place and use?

Transportation

- Provide spectators and athletes with information, guidelines, education and incentives to use public transportation services.
- Liaise with the local public transportation authorities to ensure sufficient, affordable and effective modes of public transportation.
- Provide information and maps of paths and cycle routes.
- Offer supervised bike parking or put in place a bike lending initiative during the event.
- Use low-emission shuttle vehicles, hybrid and electric cars during your team's transportation.

Food and Beverages

- Promote and support healthy diets with healthy and low-impact choices (e.g., fruits, vegetables, grains, and other fresh, low-sugar, low-sodium, trans-fat-free, and unprocessed food).
- Remember to provide safe drinking water at all event sites and venues by equipping the venue with water-saver taps.

- Respect athletes' special dietary requirements.
- Source from fair-trade, organic, seasonal, local and regional sources as much as possible.
- Distribute food with biodegradable, recyclable and/ or minimum packaging.
- Provide compostable or collapsible cups instead of plastic ones.

Energy and Waste management

- Operate site and venue lighting, cooling and heating optimally.
- Reduce water usage and use water from renewable sources.
- Include stormwater capture and reuse; low-flow toilets and no-flow urinals.
- Buy what you absolutely need.
- Consider what you provide to competitors and whether it can be replaced by plastic-free alternatives. One option is to provide a practical item (e.g., reusable water bottles) for competitors to take away, rather than an object for display (e.g., a medal).
- Waste that cannot be avoided should be reused, recycled or sent for composting.
- Keep the site and venue litter-free through efficient use and placement of garbage and recycling bins.
- Prepare stickers to aid the visibility of the separate waste and recycling bins.
- Donate clothing and equipment to local sports, community organisations, or second-hand shops.
- Ask caterers to donate unused food to local shelters.

Funding and Supply chain

- Seek sponsors with the commitment and capability to help achieve sustainable sport events (e.g., low waste and low carbon solutions, ethical sourcing and sustainable operations).
- Identify organisations in your community that are working on climate action to find opportunities for collaboration.
- Make sure that your suppliers conform to national/European codes of conduct (the EU Code of Conduct on Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices can be found [here](#)).
- Use local organisations for temporary jobs, volunteers and contractors and ensure a fair wage system.
- Collaborate with local enterprises and those that support diversity and people with diverse backgrounds.
- Discuss with your sponsors how best to ensure a plastic-free and sustainable vision is maintained while still promoting their businesses.

Communication and Dissemination

- Choose a few focused messages and use them throughout the event. Be careful not to “greenwash”, by overusing terms and images that are not accurate or overselling an organisation’s environmental practices.
- Implement electronic systems for event registration, communications, finances, and certificates of attendance where possible.
- For the evaluation process, create QR codes that will lead to online evaluation tools (e.g., Google Forms) and will be available in certain spots in the venue.

- Avoid unnecessary paper, flyers, and mail-outs.

For further information read the [Sport and Environment Training Package – Module 6](#).

How to implement sports events in nature combined with environmental reflection

When we organise sports events, usually we follow a structured way of organisation that tends to be the same at every sports event. For example, you may have a standardised method to organise a football game or a running race. However, is the environmental impact of the sports event considered in that method? Probably not, but there is always space for improvement on that.

Organising green sports events and activities is important, not only for the sports club and associations, but also and mostly for the participants, amateur athletes, young people and their families. Raising awareness on environmental issues and on the link between sport and environment, educate and pass knowledge and information to young people, their families, amateur athletes, it is of fundamental importance in order to spread the green message at multiple levels. Especially when it comes for young people, the sooner they get this knowledge the bigger the impact will be in the future at both small a large scale.

Organising sports events combined with environmental reflection is thus a way to raise awareness on environmental issues, in this case acting at participants' level.

In order to organise sport events in nature combined with environmental reflection, it is advisable to incorporate the following questions in the event's organisation:

- What can be the impact of your sport in the environment?
- How the sports events that need to be organised for your activity, can influence/change/disrupt the natural environment?
- What should I change in my practices in order to have limited environmental impact while organising, implementing and finalising sports events?

In addition, the Green League Model suggests that sports events could include **the sports activity & one educational and experiential learning component** that will bring group reflections on how to reduce sports' impact on the environment while directly living that particular environment.

During the sports practice, you can draw participants' attention to specific environmental challenges or features related to the sport they are practising. Following the sports activity, **non-formal education and reflection activities on the surrounding environment** can take place e.g.:

- discussions in a circle on forest environment,
- explanation of the role of that ecosystem for the environment,
- reflection on the pollution caused by the sports event,
- brainstorming on how to preserve the environment when practising sport,

- group discussion before or after the sports event e.g., running race, within your club/team to reflect on the environmental impact of your event; ways of improvement; and actions to be considered for the next sports event you will organise,
- reflection on the role of the ecosystem/s in our daily life and the way that anthropic actions may impact on their functioning.

Finally, these questions and methods are indicative actions that sports organisations and sport professionals could do in order to implement sports events with environmental reflection. You may have other innovative ideas also that could be used!

How to organise sport events combined with environmental actions

The organisation of sporting events, combined with sustainable activities, helps bring young people closer to nature so that they can become aware of the importance of caring for the environment, in any area and ecosystem. Sport is in fact an essential element in transmitting the values of environmental protection in an enjoyable and fun way, which has the power to involve young people in an active and conscious manner.

These types of activities can be organised with a wide range of different age groups from all social and cultural backgrounds. These activities also attract, not only sport lovers, but also people who care about environmental issues. Moreover, implementing activities that combine sports with environmental actions, not only increase awareness on the importance of preserving the environment and protecting it, but at the same time, these serve as physical activities that are good for health.

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Therefore, combining sport and environmental actions provide a double positive impact, on one side on environment protection and on the other side on human beings' health and wellbeing.

Sport and environmental mini-tournaments

Organising sports competitions and mini-tournaments that include good environmental practices, promotes healthy, fair and inclusive competition. Indeed, it is necessary to work together to create a clean environment before starting, with the cleanliness of the playing space, and with the knowledge that no litter should be thrown during the tournament, results in less fatigue at the end of the tournament. The sports events, in fact, can be accompanied by clean-up activities at the venue, both before the event and after its conclusion. In this way, participants will be more aware that taking care of the environment reduces the effort to make it clean again and at the same time, they give the "example", being the audience watching what they are doing and so spreading the message that it is important to not have a negative impact on the environment we are in.

There is a high flexibility in organising such sport competition; the type of sport and the period of competition organisation can be chosen according to environmental factors, available venues and the interests of the young people involved. Of course, it should be kept in mind that, in order to combine mini tournaments and competitions with environmental actions, the sport should be played in an outdoor environment, anyway, it is not mandatory to be in some natural place, also our cities deserve to be kept clean, since what we leave in the streets or sidewalks, may arrive to the ocean or to forest and wood through rain flows or windy days. Therefore, doing the activities inside cities, can also

provide more environmental awareness to people, making people reflect on the fact that also small actions in one place can have big negative impacts far away.

Combining the competitive funny side of the sport and the environmental actions and critical thinking is a good way to learn while practising and having fun. For this reason, in this case it is that the chosen activity is a team-sport: football, volleyball, basketball, handball, cricket, water polo, rugby, etc... so as to also create a sense of collaboration, a group that is running toward the victory, not only by winning the competition, but also by cleaning-up the environment. To do so, a hybrid scoring system that counts not only sport points but also environmental points, needs to be foreseen (see next paragraphs on “hybrid scoring system”).

Sport and environmental relay races

The relay races are another example of combining sport and environmental action; in this case, the sense of group, community and collaboration is given by the fact that a relay race encourages cooperation between the young people involved. In addition, thanks to the relay race format, the idea that the action of one person has consequences on the actions of other persons, is underlined.

This type of activity is inspired by the 'Plogging' discipline (pick up trash while jogging), preceded by a waste collection activity and using the collected waste bag as a symbolic baton to be passed. The message being conveyed is the enhancement of good environmental practices that 'add up' to the purely competitive score.

In the case of combining sports with environmental actions, the relay races will see a winning team, that will not be the first to finish the race, but it will be the combination of waste collection and best scores (see paragraph on “hybrid scoring system”).

The planned activity is a 'race' but can be adapted to the availability of the venue: it can be organised on road, land, water, in different modes and at any time of the year.

Hybrid scoring system

When organising sport tournaments and relay races combined with environmental actions, as mentioned in the previous paragraphs, it is important to foresee a scoring system that combines points for both, to emphasise both actions: the sporting and the environmental one.

The hybrid scoring system is a proposed system, designed to combine environmental actions and sports results, where each team receives both “green points” and “sport points”.

The hybrid scoring system could be based on:

- Awareness Video messages (i.e.: 1 “green point” for each video published)
- Trash bags (i.e.: 1 “green point” for every filled bag)

The final score in this way will be calculated considering sport points (i.e.: number of goals in football) + green points. Follow examples to give an idea of how it could be done.

TEAM SPORTS - Final score = Sport points * Green points

Example: Volleyball match

	RED TEAM	YELLOW TEAM
MATCH SCORE	3	2
VIDEO PUBLISHED	5	9
FILLED BAGS	2	2
FINAL SCORE	$3 * (5+2) = 21$	$2 * (9+2) = 22$

The example shows that even if the red team won the match, the final winner is the yellow team, due to the green points collected.

NB: If one of the 2 categories is “0”, the final score will correspond to the actually scored points.

RELAY RACES - Final score = final time of the race – (n° of bags * ½ second)

Example:

	RED TEAM	YELLOW TEAM
TIME	57 sec	56 sec
FILLED BAGS	4	1
FINAL SCORE	$57 - (4 * 0,5) = 57 - 2 = 55$	$56 - (1 * 0,5) = 55,5$

The example shows that even if the yellow team won the match, the red team is the final winning team because collected more trash.

The final scores will be calculated after the end of the competitions, in order to declare the winning team for each category.

Types of Action

Sports associations at the local level represent the foundation of the entire sport. Bringing together and representing a large number of people enables clubs and gives them the opportunity to influence local and wider politics to adopt appropriate policies and measures, as well as promoting and implementing environmentally friendly activities and encouraging a positive attitude of participants and general public towards the environment.

We highlight three forms by which sport clubs at the local level can reach these sustainable goals.

1. Awareness Raising activities,
2. Events and sport activities,
3. Infrastructure.

Awareness Raising activities

Public awareness is important to increase enthusiasm and support, stimulate self-mobilisation and action, in order to achieve common goals. Raising political awareness is important as policy makers and politicians are key actors in the policy process of adaptation.

The ultimate aim of such awareness raising activities is to achieve long-term lasting behavioural changes of individuals and organisations. It aims to ensure that all relevant stakeholders understand the issue and take action to respond properly.

Awareness raising activities sport clubs can perform include, but are not limited to:

- **Sport club policy**
Adopt guidelines and formulate rules for the operation of your club and all members, which will be aimed at the implementation of all activities and programs of the association, so that environmental protection measures will be taken into account.
- **Regular awareness campaigns**
Several times a year, organise activities where you draw attention to environmental protection issues. You will increase the effectiveness of the campaign by using various means of communication: press, informational posters (using recycled paper or e-posters), eco-T-shirts, social media, public debates, etc.
- **Website and social media**
Design a website that reflects your environmental orientation, use social media and your networks to distribute your messages. Organizing social media contest may also be great way to raise awareness.
- **Speak outs**
As part of your activities, address your members and the public, highlight the issue of environmental protection and call for action.

Some examples:

[Climate ADAPT](#)

[Ecosphere+](#)

[SportandDev](#)

Events

Sports events and regular sports training activities are the basic way through which sports associations can realise the guidelines of environmental protection and actually implement environmental protection measures and stress the use of greener resources.

Successful implementation of any program requires planning. To get your program green, you need to plan for the following:

- Targeted measures
The measures that you can address with your program and activities can relate to general environmental protection, preservation of clean water, renewable energy sources, reduction of the carbon footprint, reduction of waste, etc.
- Stakeholders
For a successful implementation, wider support is needed: volunteers who will do the necessary work, financial supporters who will provide the necessary financial and material support, media supporters who will ensure the necessary promotion, transport that will be environmentally friendly, waste management, use of environmentally friendly materials (e.g., paper cups) etc.
- Implementation
Depending on the goal of the program/event and the target group, it is necessary to choose the place of the event or program that will ensure the greatest impact and visibility.

Communicate the purpose and goals of the program/event appropriately.

Provide eco-friendly choices, e.g., transport, recycling bins, etc.

Define how to measure the effects and present the results.

Some examples:

[Responsible sports events](#)

[SFORAE](#)

[Going green: How to host an eco-friendly event](#)

Infrastructure

Sport infrastructure plays a crucial role in sport. Most modern sports require some kind of infrastructure (e.g., athletic stadium, basketball hall, etc.) without which the sport cannot be played. Even sports that can otherwise be practised in nature require some kind of space arrangement (e.g., cross-country skiing, motocross, kayak/canoe, etc.).

Caring for the environment starts at the local level. Bringing together and representing a large number of people also gives clubs a great influence in the local and wider environment and gives them the opportunity to influence local and wider politics to adopt appropriate policies and measures.

Sports organisations and associations thus have an exceptional opportunity and, at the same time, a duty to influence the placement and construction of sports infrastructure at the local level. The key factors that associations can highlight are:

- Planning of sports infrastructure- From placement in the room to the use of environmentally friendly materials and construction methods,
- Use of energy efficient measures- From the installation of renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar, to the use of environmentally friendly energy consumers, such as energy efficient lighting, heating and cooling,
- Water use and waste management,
- Transport accessibility- Placement of infrastructure in a space that enables easy and quick (short) access and use of environmentally friendly forms of transport (bicycle, foot) and public transport.

Some examples:

[Green Technology tips](#)

[Sustainable infrastructure](#)

[Strategic Policies for Sustainable Infrastructure](#)

[How to Design a Sustainable Sports Facility](#)

Principles and goals

The goals that we want to achieve through green sport on a general level are linked to the principles of the implementation of the event, which refer to the goals of the event itself.

Principles of Green Sport

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) established an international environmental treaty to combat "*dangerous human interference with the climate system*", in part by stabilising greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. It was signed by 154 states at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), informally known as the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June 1992.

Sport is, beside the fashion industry, the sector where climate action initiatives were initiated. Uniting behind a set of principles, sports organisations and their communities have created an initiative by collaborating in order to position their sector on the path of the low carbon economy that global leaders agreed on in Paris: Sports for Climate Action¹¹.

Five principles have been set out to which the participants of Sport for Climate Action will adhere:

1. Undertake systematic efforts to promote greater environmental responsibility,
2. Reduce overall climate impact,
3. Educate for climate action,
4. Promote sustainable and responsible consumption,
5. Advocate for climate action through communication.

Goals:

1. Reduce the environmental footprint of sporting activities and events,
2. Create sustainable operations to support sporting events and training,
3. Reduce the carbon footprint associated with sport-related travel,
4. Retail and merchandise sales,
5. Promote sustainability (communicate the issues along with the solutions).

Principles of Green Sport events

Safety

The safety of all participants, attendees, and staff should be a top priority in green sports activities and events. This may involve implementing safety protocols and emergency plans, providing adequate medical services, and ensuring that all facilities are safe and well-maintained.

Inclusion

¹¹ [Sports for Climate Action, UN](#)

Green sports activities and events should be inclusive and welcoming to all participants, regardless of their background, race, gender, or ability. This may involve providing accessible facilities, promoting diversity and inclusion in all aspects of the event, and creating a welcoming and respectful environment for all attendees.

Equality

Green sports activities and events should promote equality and fairness in all aspects of the event. This may involve ensuring that all participants have equal access to resources and opportunities, promoting pay equity, and promoting diversity and inclusion.

Collaboration

Green sports activities and events require collaboration between different stakeholders, including organisers, participants, sponsors, and the community. Collaboration can help to promote sustainability, safety, inclusion, and equality. This may involve working with local businesses to source sustainable products, partnering with community organisations to promote inclusivity and diversity, and collaborating with government agencies to promote safety and regulatory compliance.