



# GREEN OFFICE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND SUSTAINABLE EVENT MANAGEMENT

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## WHAT IS A GREEN OFFICE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM?

Green office management system is a way of integrating environmental consciousness and climate action into daily practices and long-term planning of organisations. Employee members of the green team, of which one is assigned the role of a green officer, develop and maintain a system of environmental responsibility. At the same time employees are constantly trying to set goals and environmental policies in their own fields of work. Areas of greatest environmental impact differ from organisation to organisation. Be it mobility, electricity, waste, procurement, water consumption, furniture, **green office management system should focus on areas that create the largest environmental impact.**

Organisations that plan events should also aim for **sustainable event management**. Events are sustainable when they reduce environmental pollution and consumption of natural resources and at the same time leave a positive legacy in society. This can be applied to meetings, workshops, press conferences and bigger events. Organisations must pay attention to the elements that create the biggest environmental impact but also to the ones that they as organisers can influence the most - mobility of participants, procurement, catering etc.

## WHY IS GREEN OFFICE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM NECESSARY?

Working in offices has a certain environmental impact. Office electricity consumption creates CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Besides CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, office heating and employee transportation also create emissions of particulate matter. Office purchases of paper, information technology equipment and furniture create greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, have a significant influence on consumption of natural resources and negatively impact biodiversity. Waste, created in offices, contributes to GHG emissions from being incinerated or if disposed at landfills, additionally leads to environmental pollution. Consumed food creates GHG emissions and can impact loss of biodiversity. **Because of inevitable impact that office work has, all organisations that work in offices can and should try harder to reduce their impact on the environment.**

Organisations that incorporate green office management system set a positive example for others on all levels (organisations they work with, their employees, partners, suppliers, external co-workers, donators ...) and impact and motivate them to make more environmentally friendly decisions. Events are a **great communication tool** for showing commitment to a more sustainable society and in this way, inspire both event participants and organisations' followers to make changes in their daily lives. By incorporating principles of sustainable events' organisation, we also lower environmental and carbon footprint.



## HOW TO IMPLEMENT GREEN OFFICE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN AN ORGANISATION?

- **Ensure top-level commitment:** For an effective environmental management system to be developed and implemented, organisation needs commitment from the very top of the organisation.
- **Appoint a green office coordinator and a team:** Employees chosen for the green office team develop and maintain an environmental care system in their respective areas by constantly striving for improvements (e.g. performing environmental activities, educating others ...).
- **Identify/Review Environmental Aspects:** The first key task is identifying environmental impacts of the office, which helps to identify current levels of office environmental performance.
- **Compile an environmental policy and set environmental goals:** Environmental policy is the ultimate guiding environmental principle for each individual within the organisation/office. The environmental objectives and action plan must show how environmental performance will be continuously improved and developed in the future.
- **Train and motivate staff:** To ensure that all employees know the importance of environmental policy and objectives along with their roles in achieving them, it is important to nurture awareness raising and constant education.
- **Measure and monitor progress:** Measure and monitor performance of the office regularly. The environmental manager prepares yearly plans, performs and reviews tasks, is responsible for reporting ... It is suggested that organisations calculate their carbon footprint, since it makes it much easier to understand and monitor their progress.

### WHAT ARE SOME OF THE STEPS THAT ORGANISATIONS CAN TAKE TO REDUCE THEIR CARBON FOOTPRINT?

In areas where organisations are trying to reduce their environmental impact they should try and aim for **LESS** – less energy consumption, less purchasing, less waste ...

#### Heating

- Maintain the winter temperature in the office at a maximum of 21 ° C.
- Close windows consistently during the heating season.
- Reduce heating during the night, on weekends and public holidays.
- Ventilate offices in the winter with fully open windows for a short time, and in the summer early in the morning.

#### Mobility

- Create a mobility plan for the organisation.
- Encourage employees to come to work on foot, by bicycle or by public transport.
- Strive for reducing air travel, which is the most carbon-intensive way to travel.
- Encourage attendees of events to use sustainable modes of transport and prepare mobility plans for them.
- When possible, replace in-person events that require transport to / from a place with videoconferencing.



## Electricity

- Disconnect electrical appliances daily when not in use.
- Switch off lights in empty spaces consistently.
- Avoid unnecessary electronic communication and online storage of documents.
- Use air conditioning exceptionally and encourage working from home or from cooler locations when it is very hot.
- Adjust furniture placement according to optimal day light in order to avoid turning on the lights.
- When buying electrical appliances, choose ones with the best energy efficiency.
- Boil a precise amount of water when making beverages.
- Regularly remove ice from the freezer.

## Procurement

- Before making any purchases, think about their necessity and consider alternatives, such as renting and borrowing (e.g. printer).
- Use products with environmental certificates and socially responsible products and services.
- Reduce packaging and purchase products that produce minimal waste.
- Reduce printing and print working versions of documents using as little paper as possible (double-sided, multiple pages per sheet of paper, use again one-sided printed old office paper), use 100% recycled office paper with environmental label.
- Use recycled toilet paper.
- Use old or renovated wooden furniture, consisting of elements that can be replaced and supplemented.
- For employees and catering at events offer sustainable food, which follows 7 principles: mostly plant-based and organic, avoid food waste, choose seasonal and local ingredients (or from fair trade, if they are not produced locally), ensure that offered food is minimally processed and minimally packaged.
- Use ecological cleaners to clean offices, toilets and kitchenettes.

## Waste

- Avoid unnecessary printing and offering handouts at events.
- Collect applications for events to avoid food waste.
- Use reusable glasses, plates and cutlery at events and in the office.
- Take home / to the office leftover food from events.
- Hand over decommissioned computers, monitors and other electrical and electronic equipment to organisations that restore and donate them for socially beneficial purposes.
- Hand over completely used electronic equipment to collection centres, where they take care of the recycling of all still usable materials.
- Replace individual waste bins with waste separation system.



Most of the above can also be applicable to organisation of sustainable events. **Events are effective communication channels for sustainable practices in the areas of mobility and energy consumption, procurement, waste, catering.** Encourage event participants to achieve sustainable mobility by preparing mobility plans (by offering public transport schedules, listing nearby stations/bike stands), which are included in invitations to events. At events, environmentally-friendly practices (e.g. the origin of food) should be clearly marked. In speeches emphasize sustainable elements of the event. When explanation for certain measures (e.g. offering tap water, local food, less paper) is offered, there is usually less resistance to these small but important changes.

## COMMUNICATION

With all the efforts that have been put into reducing carbon footprint by implementing green office management and sustainable event organising, communication is one of the key actions that should not be forgotten. **Organisations should be transparent and openly communicate their purposes, goals, measures and accomplishments.** This is how commitment to reducing environmental impact strengthens while strengthening the positive image and reputation of the organisation. More importantly - in such a way, participants who encounter sustainable elements are influenced to possibly transfer them into their own daily lives. Organisations should communicate their green efforts everywhere (in all existing internal and external, informal and formal communication tools) **in order to report, raise awareness, educate and motivate.**

### Internal communication

**All organisation members should be made aware of the set goals, management system and behaviour that is encouraged in the office.** The staff should be adequately educated, trained and led through the practical steps and measures that apply in the general work of the office and their specific position.

Some examples of internal communication:

- Encourage knowledge transfer among all employees.
- Offer praise and constructive criticism to individual employees in the areas of green office management.
- Present carbon footprint of the organisation at internal meetings.

### External communication

The most important principle in the area of communication is **"walk the talk"**. This means only communicating what the organisation has actually achieved and not overstating achievements. Communicate impacts, not measures. It is also really important to avoid greenwashing.

**Some examples of external communication:**

- Post organisation's green office guidelines on organisation's website.
- Share organisation's carbon footprint in yearly reports that are sent out and published on the website.
- Share organisation's environmental efforts on social media, in newsletters.



It is important to make and emphasize small steps, but remember that this approach can also backfire. We must not let our efforts divert us from being critical of the greater global systems that is responsible for the greatest amount of GHG emissions and overall pollution.

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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [European Green Office Handbook](#)
- [Green Meeting Guide 2009](#)
- [GPP training toolkit](#)

## CONTACT INFORMATION



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