

HOW TO ORGANISE A SUSTAINABLE EVENT

SHARE, SHARE, SHARE - BUT DO NOT PRINT ;)



SOCIETY AND THE ENVIRONMENT INTEREST GROUP

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WHY MAKE YOUR EVENT SUSTAINABLE ?

A lot of the work within AEGEE is based on the fact that we believe to have an **impact**. We all aim at making Europe a little bit more **borderless**, a little bit **less unequal**, at developing our potential to the fullest and at spreading **Eurooptimism**. We dedicate our time and work hard to see big and small things happen. The purpose of this guide is to help you and your local to have an impact and to make your event more sustainable.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SUSTAINABLE EVENT ORGANISATION?

Sustainability encompasses not only environmental but also social and economic aspects. Therefore, your event should be economically feasible, strive for social justice and of course the environment should always be in the back of your head.

WHY DO WE EVEN HAVE TO DO THIS?

Well, more and more people see the impact of climate change in the world and start to believe in the seriousness of the problem. In fact, many reports (like the IPCC report) emphasize the importance of policy as well as lifestyle changes in order to contain the harmful effect of the changing climate.

Moreover, also AEGEE started tackling the topic by adding sustainability to the organizational part of the Strategic Plan 2017-2020.

Now you know about the why and this guide will be the answer to the question of **HOW**.

NOW, WHAT CAN WE DO BY ORGANIZING A SUSTAINABLE EVENT?

So the effort you are making and the impact you will have will not be limited to the event itself but your participant will recognize and appreciate your work. They will not only take home some good memories but also some ideas and thoughts about your more sustainable event which they might incorporate in their day-to-day life and in their own local. So you can really encourage participants to establish more sustainable habits and lifestyle choices.

Moreover, putting an emphasis on sustainability does not necessarily mean putting higher expenses on your budget. In fact, some steps we are introducing might even make your event cheaper or cost nothing at all. So just give it a try and make your treasurer happy.

TRANSPORT DURING THE EVENT

Transportation during events is something which you will often have to deal with as an organizer, and here are some tips to make it more sustainable. First off, unfortunately, travelling is almost always 'bad', so the first tip is **avoid it!** Perhaps you can use the same location, or a location closer by to hold the same party, workshop, or whatever you have thought off!



WALKING BUSSES

The most sustainable, healthy, and cheap way of travelling is walking! It seems obvious, but take a second look at your transportation.

- You can often walk further than you would think is comfortable when you're planning.
- Make it a fun game, where participants have to perform certain challenges.
- Can it be part of a city tour? Perhaps you can see a different part of the city during multiple walking tours.

BICYCLES

Cycling is another option for a sustainable transportation alternative. Perhaps your city or country has a national infrastructure, or there's a rental place around? Some tips below:

-Think about safety! Not everywhere is suitable for cycling, and not all participants know how to ride a bicycle in the middle of Rome.

-It is a possibility that the price of a bicycle for a longer time for such a group is cheaper than other alternatives or an arrangement can be made with the rental place.

-Go and bike outside of the city, see some of your natural surroundings which you are trying to protect.



TRANSPORT DURING THE EVENT

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Lastly, public transportation, one of the most available types of transportation. You have probably already thought of this, so below some tips which might help to make them more sustainable:

-Try to get a discount. Many forms of government, or businesses, won't mind giving you a discount for more sustainable transportation.

-Electrically powered transportation is usually better than the other alternatives

-Usually trams, and trains are more sustainable than busses.

-Boats are horrible, avoid them at all cost!

-Planes are even worse, avoid them while you're boeing in their general direction.

TRAVELLING TO ANOTHER CITY

Sometimes, e.g. during travelling summer universities, you have to travel to another city. Most of the same tips apply here as for the public transport section, but there's a few extras:

-Make use of the Flixbus discount. Ask your participants for a code if you don't have enough.

-Hitchhiking becomes a viable option, so make it a game and point your participants in the right direction! Give them enough time, and it will become a fun, unique part of their holidays. Consider transporting luggage through other (sustainable!) methods.



WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING

Did you know that the amount of **waste generated** has tripled since 1960? The problem is that it did not only triple but it needs to be produced in the first place and when you dispose of it it needs to go somewhere. It does not only end up in the ocean but also on landfills which take up space. However, we are running low on the space needed to dump our waste. Moreover, processing all that trash releases carbon dioxide which is significantly contributing to climate change. Admittedly, we all struggle with keeping waste to a minimum but it is quite obvious that something needs to change in order to keep our oceans clean and our air fresh. Not only does rethinking our waste management reduce greenhouse gas emissions but it can also help to save money and energy. Here is how you can do it!

CHECK OUT THE WASTE ATLAS:
[HTTP://WWW.ATLAS.D-WASTE.COM](http://www.atlas.d-waste.com)
AND FIND OUT MORE ABOUT WASTE
GENERATES AND MORE!



WASTE PYRAMID

We often think that recycling is the solution when it comes to waste. But a quick look at this waste hierarchy pyramid will tell you recycling is not the key but not generating waste in the first place.

WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING

GET INFORMED

Waste management differs among countries and often even among regions or municipalities. So first of all you need to get familiar with the rules of your local's city.

- Check out the city's website or of the company managing the garbage collection.
- Make sure that everyone in the organizing team is informed and can answer questions of the participants.
- On the arrival day you can also tell the participants how to sort the trash properly. Put it on the same list as everything else that is really important and that participants need to know for the duration of the event.
- Save this information so you don't have to start all over again for the next event



Of course, you also need to provide enough bins so everyone also has the possibility to sort the trash. If you want to remind the participants throughout the event you can put up signs over the bins, maybe with a short explanation (be it a visual guide or pictures) how to sort properly or just with a sentence like 'Dont forget to sort'.

But what do you do if there is no system in place?

> Check for a recycling facility that you can bring your plastic, aluminium, glas, paper and other waste to. So basically it is the same approach: inform yourself, inform the participants and sort properly. All that is left to do is to bring everything to the facility.

Organic waste can be brought to a communal garden that has a public compost. Check out if you have something like that close-by.

WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING

PLATE SHARING OR BRING YOUR OWN...

The daily meals are one of the main aspect of each AEGEE event with up to 3 meals and coffee breaks a day. In case you have some storage space for the belonging of your AEGEE local we highly encourage you to invest once in plates and cutlery. In the beginning it might seem like a bigger investment but it will for sure pay of. They can be used for years and you never have to think about buying disposable goods ever again.

Find some space to stock > Calculate average number of participants > Buy plates and cutlery > cook delicious meals > wash the dishes > Repeat the last two steps infinitely

If you don't have any room to store plates and cutlery, borrow it from the student association next door or ask your participants to bring their own plates, cups and spoons. If we bring sleeping bags, mattresses, our toothbrush and drinks for the European Night, bringing a thin plate, a small cup and a spoon should not be a problem. If they do not travel by plane, they can even bring a knife and a fork.

For the rest you can provide the participants with it. If you do so, maybe some organizers can bring a set of cutlery from home and lend it to the participants or if that is not possible at least try to reuse the cutlery as often as possible.

GOOD

REUSE DISPOSABLE PLATES AND CUTLERY
AS OFTEN AS POSSIBLE

BETTER

LET PARTICIPANTS BRING THEIR OWN
PLATES AND CUTLERY

BEST

PROCURE YOUR OWN PLATES AND CUT-
LERY IN YOUR LOCAL FOR PARTICIPANTS TO
USE DURING THE EVENT

WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING

FOOD PACKAGING

Nowadays, food often comes in plastic wrapping. About one-third of an average dump is made up of packaging material and by 2050, the ocean will contain more plastic by weight than fish. For one event it is not too much you might think but with the huge number of events AEGEE has throughout the year it really adds up. Think about all the SUs in summer or five days of Agora with 800 people. So try buying in bulk and on farmers markets with your own bags. What might seem like a small step for a local is a giant leap for humankind.



Not only during European Night is sharing caring. Sometimes travelling does not allow bringing a lot so participants tend to buy travel size products to bring to your event. If you have the possibility you can provide large bottles of hygiene products (like shampoo, toothpaste,...) and tell your participants in advance so they don't need to buy small plastic bottles to bring.



Moreover, tap water is not drinkable in the whole network. If that is the case, instead of giving out bottles water you can look for big water tanks in order to reduce plastic. Maybe you can even get a cooperation with a local shop started.

LEFTOVERS

Calculating the amount of food you need for each meal can be a challenge and often you end up having leftovers.

- Serve the leftovers at the next meal. Someone who enjoyed the meal might be really happy about an additional portion.
- Tell your team to bring containers so they can take the leftover home. They can enjoy them as a post-event meal or put them in the freezer.
- Check if you have a local foodsharing community so you can make someone else happy.
- Consider bringing the leftovers to a institution that give the food to people in need. Maybe it is a little detour but for sure some people will be really grateful for the food they get.

Whatever option you choose, we are sure that you will make some bellies happy, be it the next day or after some time in the freezer.

FOOD CONSUMPTION

SMART CHOICES

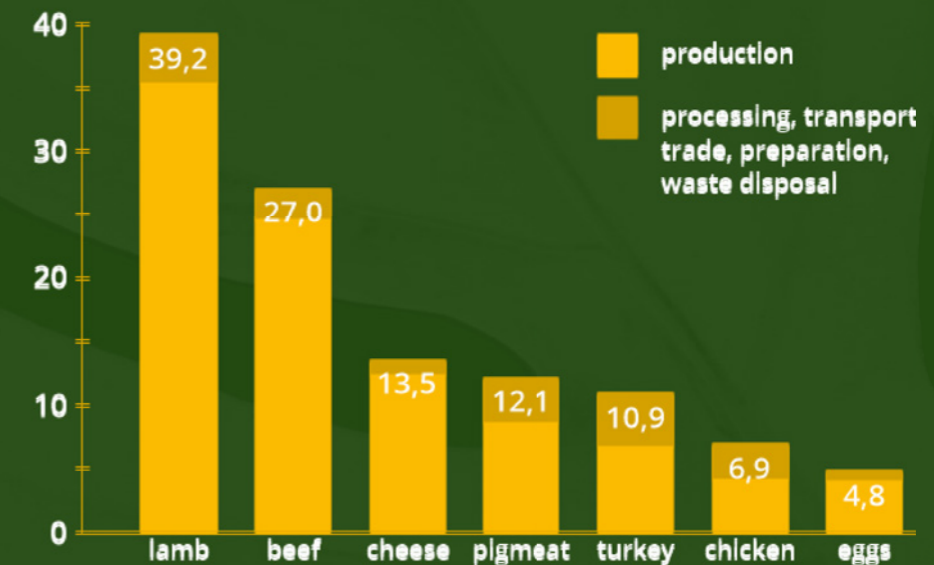
There are several ways of reducing the CO₂ emissions of your food. This can be done through choosing food...

- with less need for water (e.g. Avocados need a lot of water)
- with less resourceressource needs to mature (e.g. a chicken needs less resources than beef)
- with less transportation due to local and seasonal fit
- with less difficult production processes (unprocessed food)
- which is vegetarian (due to less emissions and less water usage)

One of the main ways of making food more sustainable is lowering the amount of meat or even animal products in general. But even if you are not used to that, continue reading, because there are several advantages and ways to do so, as it doesn't necessarily have to make your life harder.

In fact, meat dishes are usually more expensive than vegetarian dishes, which means you can actually save money. Another great advantage of vegetarian food is that it spoils less quickly and needs less cooling, which leads to less hassle for you and also less risk for spoiled food or even food poisoning. Any reduction of meat or dairy products has great effects, as the same amount of meat causes 20 kg of CO₂ emissions while the same amount of cheese only emits 10kg and vegetables even only 2kg.

Kilograms of CO₂ equivalent per kilogram of meat



FOOD CONSUMPTION



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Encourage your participants in your event description already to subscribe as vegetarians to do something positive for the environment. It will also save you costs.

You can even set vegetarian food as the “default option” which people have to actively change if they want meat.

- Even the people subscribed as meateaters don't need meat every day and whenever they do it doesn't need big portions. Consider for example a curry, where you reduce the amount of meat to 60-80g or potato goulash with bacon instead of a normal goulash.

- No experience with vegetarian cooking? Check out our vegetarian recipe booklet with lots of easy recipes especially for events with many people and a limited budget. ([link](#))

- Make a fun challenge out of it. E.g. one main organizer will shave bold if 60% subscribe as vegetarian.

To keep greenhouse gas emissions and costs low it is also recommendable to buy food that is seasonal and grows in your area. Transport of food only accounts for 11 % of greenhouse gas emissions, but it is still worth avoiding them.

Whenever you get catering, don't forget to ask if the food can be delivered in big packages instead of single portions. That reduces the garbage and allows hungry people to ask for more and others to ask for less in order to avoid food waste.

The biggest and easiest way to avoid additional emissions is to never hand out water bottles or cups of water. Is the water in your country not drinkable? Then look into getting big water tanks. They are usually delivered by the provider and lead to no plastic waste, as they can be refilled. And people can bring their drinking bottle to lunch, in fact they will have it with them all day anyway.

PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

Promotional material is not only a lot of physical equipment that has to be brought to the event and waste that has to be taken care of after, but also a relevant contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. Paper, plastic-containing stickers and even gimmicks are not always necessary and often get left behind as suitcases are too full anyway.



PAPERLESS FAIR

What about providing access to a laptop at your table at the fair?

Motivating people to add you on social media or collect their emails (mind GDPR-requirements) to subscribe them for your newsletter. Thereby, you are not only saving material, but also have the chance to reach people again.

PROMO-VIDEOS INSTEAD OF PROMO-WASTE

No one at an Agora has time to read messages on stickers or flyers and most of the material provided doesn't fit in the luggage and ends up being thrown away. Why not use a promotional video during plenary or fair. Typical music and pictures of your city trigger several senses. Instead of offering your sponsors to add leaflets to the welcome bag, offer advertisement on a screen, your website, social media or through a video during plenary.

PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

NO NEW SHIRTS

People like AEGEE shirts, that's true, but not everyone likes the same design and not everyone needs more than 5 AEGEE shirts per year. Why not either let people decide if they actually want a shirt and then let them pay a small price for better quality, so they can also use the T-shirt for more than 2 years.

Or even better, let people bring one of their old shirts so they can design a logo of the event together and even collect signatures from everyone, if they want.

This kind of upcycling not only decreases your costs, but makes shirts more personal and memorable while allowing a creating shirt-designing workshop at your event where you can go wild with spraying logos and designing stamps and patterns together.

SKIP OR REDUCE THE WELCOME BAG

We all have a lot of cotton bags at home. Why not avoid the bag, as it will be thrown away with a likelihood of 90 % anyway. Instead add an additional counter to the welcome desk with little baskets for each gimmick and leaflet of your sponsors. People can then at the counter choose which gimmicks to take and which to leave.

This causes:

less garbage in the gym, because participants chose the material they take

a nice table at the entrance showing all your sponsors to everyone and allowing sponsorship fotos.

your sponsors can take left-over promo-material back for their next event.

ACTIVITIES

PAPERLESS ACTIVITIES

AEGEE involves a lot of activities where we have to write down all of our brilliant ideas, only for all of those things to be thrown away later. Avoid paper waste with the following tips:

- Use a black- or whiteboard to make notes during group meeting or brainstorm sessions
- Have someone on hand with a device to take short minutes, instead of handing out papers
- Recycle used paper! You can use old posters, minutes, agendas, etc. for many activities, so give your old paper recycle pile a second life. Think of using these for the gossip box, brainstorm sessions, or tasks around the city where they need to write information down.

PARTY THEMES

Themed parties at AEGEE events are almost standard practice and always provide a good laugh, unfortunately it is also has a large impact on the environment. The fashion industry is the second most polluting industry in Europe, and has no intrinsic motivation to provide their customers with long-lasting products. The industry barely recycles, as less than 1 percent of materials are recycled. Over the recent decades, society has been wearing their clothes for less and less time before it is discarded. The production of clothing has had a major impact on our oceans and rivers, as toxic waste, and chemicals are not properly taken care of and the production of clothing takes a ridiculous amount of water.

Now, how do you find alternatives for this? The trick is to try and think of themes for which your participants do not need to buy new items. Either they already own the necessary items or you can motivate them to get as creative as possible, e.g. by having a competition for best recycled party outfit or most sustainable outfit!

ACTIVITIES

FACE-PAINT/GLOW-IN-THE-DARK

HAVING A PARTY WHERE YOU PROVIDE FACE-, BODY-PAINT, OR MARKERS FOR YOUR PARTICIPANTS WILL ALLOW THEM TO EXPRESS THEIR CREATIVITY ON EACH OTHER AND SERVES AS A FUN PRE-PARTY!

FORMAL

MOST PARTICIPANTS HAVE GOT SOME FORM OF FORMAL ATTIRE IN THEIR CLOSET, GET YOUR PARTICIPANTS TO DRESS UP IN THEIR MOST FANCY. REMEMBER THAT SOME PEOPLE MIGHT NOT HAVE THE POSSIBILITY OR DESIRE TO BRING AN ENTIRE SUIT OR DRESS THOUGH.

TRASHY

DRESS UP IN TRASH! YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY; ONE PERSON'S TRASH IS ANOTHER'S BEAUTIFUL AEGEE PARTY OUTFIT.

RAINBOW & COLORS

ALMOST EVERYONE HAS GOT THE MOST BASIC COLOURS IN THEIR CLOSET SOMEWHERE, LET THEM BRING THEM! THESE PARTIES COULD ALSO INCLUDE PARTIES, SUCH AS THE TRAFFIC-LIGHT PARTIES, WHERE PEOPLE WEAR A CERTAIN COLOUR TO SHOW THEIR RELATIONSHIP STATUS (RED, ORANGE, GREEN, PURPLE) OR LOVE FOR AEGEE (BLUE).

AEGEE STYLE

TELL YOUR PARTICIPANTS TO BRING THEIR MOST CRAZY AEGEE-SHIRT, OR CHALLENGE THEM TO WEAR THE MOST AMOUNT OF DIFFERENT AEGEE CLOTHING AT THE SAME TIME.

BE CREATIVE

THERE'S A LOT YOU CAN THINK OF, BUT THE CENTRAL MESSAGE IS THAT YOU CAN MOTIVATE YOUR PARTICIPANTS TO GET AS CREATIVE AS POSSIBLE AND MAKE THEIR OWN OUTFIT, WHILE NOT BUYING ANY NEW ITEMS FROM STORES.

GOING THE EXTRA MILE

Yes, it is unlikely that people will take the bus from Brussels to Samara or Izmir. Who ever cannot do so, why not consider doing something sustainable instead?

There are great websites where you can calculate the emissions your travel is causing and pay for an equivalent amount of trees to be planted. There are even other small organisations started by young people which AEGEE has cooperated with in the past, like Plant for Planet . Planting trees is not as good as avoiding greenhouse gas emissions but they reduce their effect.

OPTIONS

But there are also free ways to make your CO₂-footprint smaller and your hand-print of positive action bigger.

Why not engage in a local organisation that aims to change politicians minds on more sustainable city policy. Your own municipality often seems small, but the this lowest political level is actually the one where the most change can be made. Have you ever thought about talking to your major or district council members. As they are not used to young people being politically active, you will be surprised about the impact a talk with them will have.

Why not start a cleaning activity where you organise a group of people for cleaning the park or forest. This will stop plastic from contaminating water and ground and additionally serve as a great promotion activity for AEGEE.

MOTIVATE YOUR PARTICIPANTS

TRAVEL TO EVENT

Every events starts with participants arriving in your city. How should they do that? Ideally not by plane. Flying is by far the most carbon-intensive way to travel. This makes convincing your participants (where possible) to use a different means of transportation the most climate-effective thing you can do. Encourage your participants to look for alternatives (bus, train, hitchiking).

Making other travel means more attractive:

Remind your participants of the AEGEE-discount information with them (www.aegee.org/discounts)

Thinks about making an award for your “most sustainably travelling participant” and promote that beforehand

What do you do if flying is really the only option?

Encourage your participants to...

...compensate for the ecological footprint of their flight

...take direct flights as take off and landing are generating 25 % of carbon emissions of the entire flight

...check before flight whether your airline is using better fuels

PROMO MATERIAL / STICKERS

If you have never found an AEGEE sticker somewhere attached to you have you ever really been to an AEGEE event? We know that stickers and promo material are partly identification and promotion for locals. Nevertheless, you see way too often that stickers are sticking somewhere or simply laying around on the floor. In the end, they are thrown out.

So maybe motivate your participants to not bring too many stickers and to not put and throw them everywhere. If participants want to exchange and collect stickers that's cool. If not, that's also cool.

PREFORMULATED LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS - TO BE COPY PASTED IN INCOMING EMAIL

Dear participant,

We are trying to make our event more sustainable and we are working hard on the organizational part. To make it a real success we need YOUR help.

First of all, we would like you to bring:

...

...

...

Moreover, keeping promotional material to a minimum also contributes to a sustainability conscious event. Stickers and co. often end up in the trash which is unfortunate and not the purpose of it. However, if they are distributed with awareness and make an addition to a AEGEE Passport, definitely feel free to hand them out. ;)

Lastely, we want to remind you that the event does not begin right here but already on your way to our beautiful city. Often we take the plane when it is not 100% necessary. So keep the AEGEE Flixbus discount (www.aegee.org/discounts) in mind when you travel and check out if you have suitable alternatives to flying. Nevertheless, avoiding the plane does not work for everyone. In this case opt for a direct flight as take off and landing are generating 25% of carbon emissions of the entire flight or also check if you can compensate the CO2 of your flight.

We are looking forward to see you!

Let's make this event a little bit greener!



SOCIETY AND THE **E**NVIRONMENT **I**NTEREST **G**ROUP