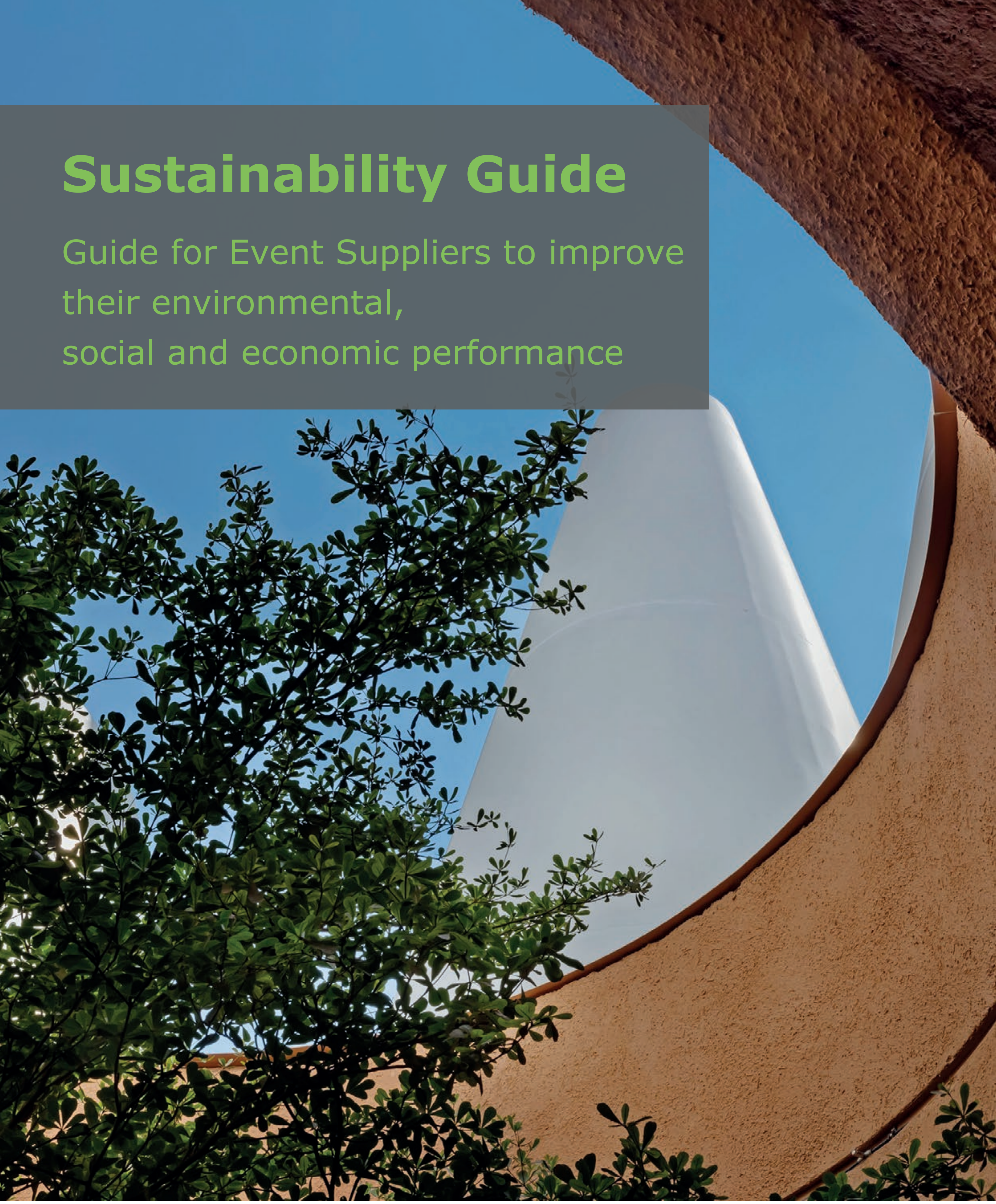
Sustainability Guide

Guide for Event Suppliers to improve their environmental, social and economic performance



Sustainability Guide

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Feedback
Sustainability is evolving and the documents we refer to in our Guide as well. We intend to revise it periodically and appreciate your observations and feedback on info@ages.international to continuously adapt and improve our Guide.

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Foreword

Daniel Cordey
AGES Chairman

The Chairman's thoughts

Sustainability is becoming an ever more important subject in all of our lives and unsurprisingly this increasing emphasis is mirrored in our sector, the events sector; as our members will readily recognise.

Now, we finally see a broad acceptance that we can no longer ignore the needs to control our consumption of finite resources, to maximise the positive effects and to minimise the negative effects of all that we do, whether viewed against economic, social or environmental perspectives. To all those who need more tangible motivations than good intentions the good news is that in the pages of this Guide you will find numerous examples of the many benefits that can be realised by businesses that improve their sustainability. And we can see, from observation and experience, that innovators, early adopters and the majority are making headway and even any laggards are coming to terms with their new reality too. They are recognising the unavoidable business need; to paraphrase Darwin, they must "adapt or die". Sustainability is thus becoming an essential competitive factor that cannot be ignored, whether for larger, medium-sized or smaller companies.

AGES also wants to make its contribution. Building on our "Statement on Sustainability", introduced shortly after our founding, we want to support our members. With recommendations and practical advice, this comprehensive guide will be an important tool for event suppliers aiming to improve their sustainability. Our motivation comes from the conviction that we can change something. The time has come for improvements and this path is an investment in the future.

David Stubbs
Sustainability Expert
AGES

The expert's message

Finally… It has been a long time coming – and there is still a long way to go – but it is hugely gratifying to see the massive shift towards sustainability across the event sector.

I cut my teeth on event "greening" at the 1997 Ryder Cup in Spain and the Sydney Olympics in 2000. Subsequently, heading up the sustainability programme at London 2012, I saw the broadening of scope to take in a much wider approach than purely environmental issues, and since then, through my work with a wide range of leading sports and event organisers, I am delighted at how the theme of sustainability has become mainstream across the sector. It has often felt slow, but looking back across the last 25 years, I can see progress that was unimaginable in those early days.

I no longer hear the question "why we should do this"; instead, the focus is on how. That in turn spawns many questions about how to get started, what to focus on, what level of ambition to aim for, what resources are required, what tools are available etc.

AGES members need to look at this in two ways. First, it is about the intrinsic importance of becoming more sustainable companies in your own right – everyone and every company and organisation needs to contribute to this critical theme. Secondly, as suppliers to the event industry, you need to be better placed to respond to client demand. This demand may be coming directly from clients (event organisers), but they too will doubtless be responding to similar pressures from public authorities, governing bodies, talent, commercial partners, broadcasters, media and the public.

Very simply, no ambitious company can afford to ignore sustainability – ambitious to prosper, ambitious to gain market share, ambitious for longevity and reputation, ambitious to do the right thing.

The starting point always comes down to leadership. Whatever the size of the company, it is the drive and engagement from top management that will be determinant. They will be the ones ensuring that sustainability is properly factored into decision-making and that you have the processes and resources in place to take things forward effectively.

From a client perspective they will typically be looking for three things from their suppliers: ability to report carbon emissions related to the services being procured, evidence that the goods or services to be supplied meet high sustainability standards, and evidence that your workforce and extended supply chain have decent working conditions.

Not every client will ask or expect these things, but a growing number will. Where sustainability credentials are a requirement, you need to be able to meet the demand. Where it is not explicit, your credentials may become a competitive edge.

Guides like this provide an important service to AGES members. The emphasis on a management systems approach is sensible, as that is one of the best ways for addressing sustainability in a logical order. However, the subject is too vast to cover every aspect in one manageable volume. Fortunately, there is a growing literature of quality references now widely available, and plenty of supporting expertise out there. Use this guide is a starting point and a pointer to further information and in return, please share what you learn. Sustainability is a common endeavour.

1. Introduction

In recent years, major international events have been viewed with ever more critical eyes. What are the needs and justifications for hosting the event, what is the ecological footprint of the event, what remains as a cultural or institutional legacy after the event? Do the investments make sense and who actually benefits from them? The general public is increasingly hungry for answers to these and many other questions and yet they frequently remain unanswered. And so, it is not uncommon for planned bids to host major events to fail when put to a public referendum.

The requirements of future major events and the expectations placed upon them have risen sharply over the years. Furthermore, these projects often attract considerable public attention both from citizens of the hosting city or nation and of the wider world. The proclaimed vision must be followed promptly by a deliverable and resilient plan that demonstrates real added value for society, be that regional development, innovations in mobility or in energy production, or a contribution to international understanding or human rights. This profound social change can be summarised in one term for the event industry; sustainability. Future events must become more sustainable, and by extension so must all those involved in the preparations and hosting of the event, including the service providers.

Improving sustainability starts with a clear commitment from the top management. More than simply seeing an imperative, they must perceive sustainability as an opportunity. To ensure that it does not remain just a vision, a clear and deliverable sustainability strategy is needed that is integrated into a comprehensive management system. This requires critical success factors, indicators, targets, initiatives and measures that operationalise the vision and translate the ambitions into tangible, measurable goals. Every organisation will need to develop its own sustainability program, customised to suit region, place, size and product offering, with a suitable management system to monitor and document their efforts.

1.1 Objectives of this Guide

This Guide aims to achieve a number of objectives, namely:

- To encourage and support service providers in the event industry to improve their sustainability performance and be better able to meet client requirements in this field;

- To explain the increasing importance of sustainability for the international event industry, providing high-level, introductory and contextual information;

- To inspire service providers to take on a leadership role, and

- To suggest a methodology to enable them to do so by undertaking a thorough assessment of their business practices and product offerings as well as to looking at the opportunities the implementation of sustainability will offer;

- To introduce a pragmatic methodology for determining a consistent, fit-for-purpose sustainability strategy and for incorporating the strategy in their management systems, and

- To provide additional guidance including references, explanations, checklists and practical advice.

1.2 Readership

Unlike our Practice Guide, "Planning, Procurement and Delivery of Temporary Infrastructure for Major Events", which was written for a broad readership of event organisers, building authorities and governmental bodies dealing with temporary infrastructure for events, this Guide on Sustainability is primarily aimed at our members and associate members.

This Guide is a non-commercial document and is also available to other, national, and international suppliers of temporary event infrastructure and hopefully encourage them to follow the path towards more sustainable business practices.

However, it also illustrates to other stakeholders, especially organisers and building authorities, what the event suppliers' industry is aiming for in terms of sustainability and how it is setting about achieving this goal.

1.3 How to use the Guide

We suggest, in the first instance, reading the Guide, from cover to cover, to gain an understanding of the subject matter and structure, and for the purpose of general orientation.

We have structured the Guide in two parts: a narrative section, chapters 1 – 6; and a technical part, Annexes A – C. In the narrative, readers will find a thematic introduction followed by a discussion around 'getting started' recognising that the first step is very often the most difficult. The narrative continues, providing advice on defining and developing a strategy, action planning, and reporting and communication. Throughout the chapters of the narrative, readers will find many references to specific information available in the annexes, such as to the PDCA – Cycle in chapter 4 "Implementing a Sustainable Management System" or will find practical recommendations highlighted in boxes in the same chapter.

In the technical part, the Annexes A - C, readers will find checklists, templates, reference documentation, methodologies or other tools to support the implementation of the process. Annex A includes some useful checklists and templates and in Annex B, the Guide groups all relevant normative documents on sustainability for the event sector, defines terminologies (so contributing to a better understanding and usage of the ISO 20121 standard) and complements the explanations contained in our Practice Guide mentioned earlier. In Annex C sets out some key information about the ISO 20121 Standard and how to use it. Finally, we include a Glossary at the back of the Guide to aid understanding of the key terms and abbreviations used throughout.

Members and associate members will also find additional information on sustainability in the relevant sector in the member login area of the Association's website.

1.4 The role of AGES

The Association of Global Event Suppliers is a committed, independent party and facilitator, which encourages its members to be more sustainable using this Guide. In addition, the association is prepared, as far as possible, to support its members or other interested parties in their efforts towards sustainability with information and advice. The guide is made available to its members free of charge.

The Association has endeavoured to provide its members with a simple and handy tool without claiming accuracy or completeness. Suggestions are welcome and the Guide will be updated as necessary.

The Association plans to develop further, targeted, practical advices to assist members in the implementation of their sustainability strategies. In the meantime, we suggest interested parties to consult the IOC's Sustainability Essentials series where they will find valuable information on the topic generally, and on specifics such as carbon footprinting, responsible sourcing or choice of materials.

1.5 Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Swiss Association Expo&Event, for providing its "Guide to a Sustainable Event Industry" as a valuable template, Dr. Rolf Schwery, an internationally recognized expert on sustainability, for adapting and further developing the document to meet the needs of our members.

We extend our thanks to David Stubbs, our expert on sustainability, for reviewing this publication and to Kirsten Henson, from KLH Sustainability Ltd, for her inspirational talk to our members, and to all other parties who have contributed to the preparation and publication of our Sustainability Guide.

2. Sustainable Event Industry

2.1 What is sustainability?

Nowadays, there are many definitions of sustainability, but all include the three pillars: economy, environment, and society. All aspects of value creation are attributed to the economy, including compliance, governance, and risk management. The environment includes all aspects concerning natural resources and interactions with nature while the social pillar includes all aspects that affect the way people live together such as equal opportunities, participation, and the freedom to shape one's own life. The pillars do not stand alone, but overlap.

The purpose of sustainability is always the same and is simple. It is about taking responsibility and finding better ways of doing things. "Sustainability encapsulates a long-term and future-facing purpose; it is about what we want to achieve and ensure we do not over-exploit resources to the extent that we diminish the quality of life of future generations", to cite a statement in the IOC Sustainability Essentials.

2.2 What is a sustainable event industry?

Humans have always been playful creatures. Coming together and experiencing something together is part of human nature. This became even more obvious during the pandemic, when events and gatherings of all kinds were banned for a long time. Life without such happenings is unimaginable, and since the pandemic at the latest, it has become clear that sharing an experience, exchanging ideas and celebrating is a privilege.

Events and all related activities do not just have positive effects over the short and long terms; there will also be some negatives. All large gatherings of people have an ecological footprint. It is logical, and indeed commendable, that the parties involved take responsibility for minimizing and eliminating any deficit between these negative and positive impacts. It may have become more demanding to organise an event, but this also represents an opportunity to change the image of events and the event industry for the future.

Sustainability in the event industry is more than applying the principles of the circular economy or avoiding so-called "white elephants", offering organic food, segregating waste, or including public transports in the entry ticket. A sustainable event industry is the one that works together for a more sustainable staging of events and that carries out all activities in a way that leaves the greatest possible positive impact with the lowest possible negative impact. Each actor in the event industry, whether organisers, sponsors, service providers or our association, shoulders a responsibility and takes on a duty. All should question what they have done so far and be prepared to constantly improve. Those who set strategic goals, adapt their management system, strengthen communication, measure, and monitor their activities, and take the needs of stakeholders seriously are the early adopters and all actors should aim to follow their lead.

2.3 How to become a sustainable supplier?

Many global event suppliers in the event industry are already applying sustainability principles and progressive organisations refer to their Environment Social and

Governance (ESG) strategy as the focus of their sustainability efforts. Still, it is an ongoing task which includes challenging old thinking, established business procedures or even previously profitable products.

It is understood that becoming sustainable is a process which requires determination and time. While change starts at the top, to succeed it must permeate all levels of a company. It is essential to integrate the defined sustainability principles and practices into the day-to-day operations.

The international service providers in particular are challenged on many different levels, with a set of key questions to answer. The operation and business process must be checked against all aspects of sustainability, such as the equipment used, the means of transportation, the logistic concept, the sourcing and procurement of materials, the workforce, and many more areas. And if the desired operational sustainability has been achieved, how to offer sustainable solutions to the organisers. For example, are existing seats that have already been used several times with a long transport route more sustainable than those specially produced at the venue? How to validate and document the efforts, to compare and market different sustainable solutions?

3. Getting Ready

Now we get to the body of our subject and in this chapter and the next we guide our readers through a systematic process. In the first place, the high-level work required of boards and executive leadership which is designed to establish the conditions for success (described in this chapter). We go on to set out the sequence of operational activities to define, design and implement a sustainability management system, which will be undertaken by the implementation team (see Chapter 4. Implementing a Sustainability Management System).

Starting the process may be the most difficult part. Some will realize the importance of developing a sustainability programme but may be unsure as to the potential benefits this will bring. The documents showcased in the previous chapter give a good overall impression of the subject but, specifically, what is important in my case? Where do I begin, and how do I overcome the inevitable barriers which I will encounter? And what might those barriers be? Everyone here is busy and there may be internal resistance to any new initiative questioning ways of working. Others may be concerned that they may be opening something of a 'Pandora's Box', may realise they alone cannot manage the process, or may feel that their contribution to solving such a big 'problem' will be insignificant. Table 1 on page 21 of the Introduction to Sustainability in the IOC's "Sustainability Essentials" series sets out some common reasons why organisations hesitate to implement sustainability and provides responses and solutions.

Also, parties may be tempted to look for a quick fix, to take short-cuts and to only seek low hanging fruits. Reducing waste, achieving greater energy efficiency or engaging with local community are certainly steps in the right direction, but such an approach perhaps illustrates a lack of real commitment to sustainability and may ignore the opportunities to reduce negative impacts from other elements of the organisation's or for any long-term repositioning.

We recommend all organisations adopt a holistic approach that addresses all relevant issues, risks and opportunities. Out the outset, it is necessary to recognise the time that will be necessary and allocate that time accordingly. The following chapters describe the thinking process and preparatory work that will help define a suitable vision prior to the development and implementation of the sustainability programme.

3.1 Situation assessment

It is important that the assessment of the current situation is comprehensive (covering all areas of sustainability and all areas of the business), well-founded and accurate. It will be the starting point for all further steps. In particular, for those companies beginning with the concept, strengths and weaknesses as well as possible risks and opportunities are determined from this. This analysis must include the need for action and, at the same time, allow for the identification of priorities.

For companies that have already started to address sustainability issues or have implemented related programmes or initiatives such as CSR, this survey is intended to identify any gaps or potential for improvement to reach a higher level. The key questions in this analysis are complex and concern both operational and strategic issues. Consequently, the assessment is not just a matter for an appointed expert or a designated person in the company, but for a carefully composed and knowledgeable team with representatives from all areas of the business. At operational level, consideration should be applied to themes sitting in under each of the three pillars:

- Environment: the impacts of products, services and operations on the environment;

- Social: how the company treats people, and

- Economic and governance: how the company is governed and the impacts on its people, customers and supply chains.

Some typical themes for consideration are exampled below.

Environmental

- What do we know about our waste production and what are our current efforts to reduce, recycle or reuse goods?

- What about the choices of materials and equipment we buy, maintain and use? Could we use natural products instead, or at least replace some of our products and materials with more eco-friendly solutions?

- How is our energy efficiency? How much energy do we consume in our business, could we consume less, and where does that energy come from i.e., could we replace energy from fossil fuels with energy from renewable sources?

Social

- How do our internal policies and contracts deal with topics like inclusion, integration or use of illegal drugs?

- How do our current policies deal with human development such as programs for skills management or training in the workplace?

- And our working conditions, e.g., are our places of work fully accessible for people with disabilities?

Economic and Governance Criteria

- What do we know about the origin and manufacturing of the materials and equipment we buy? Do we apply principles of responsible sourcing? How about child labour and slavery?

- How do we deal with the workforce or suppliers we contract to implement projects in foreign countries?

- Have we taken care to install fair business practice and policies, do we adequately assure compliance with our policies and practices, and do we train our employees accordingly?

Moving on to strategic, organisational or marketing areas, questions might include:

- Is our business model, or any of our established products at risk due to the new thinking of suppliers and clients?

- What are our competitors doing to become more sustainable? Are there benchmark companies we may learn from, or partner with?

- What resources can we allocate to develop and implement our sustainability program, and do we have in-house capabilities?

- What is the best timing for the organisation to implement the program, would it be suitable to do it step by step, and what might those steps be?

The issues listed in Annex A3 List of Issues and the guidance documents referred to will assist the assessment team to think through and pull together a structured and comprehensive list of questions

3.2 Identifying opportunities

When assessing the initial situation, the aim is not only to identify any shortcomings, gaps and/or potential for improvement, but also to discover the opportunities that can be opened up through improved sustainability. The assessment should therefore become stuck on the upcoming, possibly lengthy work for improvement, but rather focus on the perspective of a more professional, higher-quality market performance that will be appreciated and rewarded by the customers and stakeholders. Such opportunities might include:

Cost savings

The analysis and rethinking of existing business processes in planning and implementation, as well as on the handling of materials, energy consumption and more, will inevitably lead to potential for savings and/or higher efficiencies.

Commercial potential

A consistent focus on the sustainability of a company and its products will also lead to existing products or services being further developed or even newly developed. The existing range of services will modernise and thus have greater sales opportunities. Existing customers, who are themselves in a process of transformation, will welcome more sustainable solutions and reward these efforts. In addition, new partners can be won, or new markets opened up through the reorientation. The commitment towards sustainability will also help to build fruitful relationships with authorities and local communities.

Partnerships

A commitment to sustainability will often lead to technical innovations and/or new business models with suppliers and clients. Sustainability is looking long-term. Increasingly, organisers or brand owners invite their suppliers to enter into long-term partnerships to jointly develop new, more sustainable products or services. The Commonwealth Federation, for example, has developed a partnership program over three games cycles (12 years) which enables the parties to invest in people and products. Long-term relationships may take time to evolve, but once they are in play, the benefits are direct and substantial.

Attractiveness

In the competitive market environment occupied by the internationally active service providers, reputation and image play an important role, both with customers and with employees. A company that demonstrates and proves its sustainability efforts is likely to increase its attractiveness to both important groups. This should not be undervalued in the constant battle to attract junior staff and young talent. Younger professionals are very interested in and committed to sustainability issues. But increasingly investors and not least customers are also paying more and more attention to the sustainability credentials and performance of companies.

Legal compliance

Internationally active event organisers and clients of event suppliers often also have internationally valid terms and conditions and requirements, but these too must submit to locally applicable legislation. Also, most laws and regulations relating to sustainability tend to be local in nature, often varying considerably from one jurisdiction to another. For suppliers working across different countries this can be quite complex and challenging at the same time trying to understand which regulations or standards are applicable, and which are not. In such cases, it is helpful if the companies are committed to strict, internationally recognised sustainability regulations and it will put them in a better position in terms of identifying, understanding and anticipating regulatory requirements.

3.3 Creating the vision

Principles

Before formulating the sustainability vision or a statement of purpose, it is essential to validate the strategic goals of the company, rethinking when necessary, and to be clear about the envisaged focal areas. These focal areas will represent the principles of sustainability insofar as adopted by the company and might include, for example Inclusion, integrity, stewardship, and/or transparency.

Positioning regarding sustainability and the objectives cannot be detached from the existing vision of the owners or the company management. It must be an integral part of this vision. Only in this way can the sustainability vision be developed into a coherent strategy and ultimately lead to an action plan that is understood and supported by all those involved.

In other words, there should be one corporate vision which includes the company's position, goals and objectives regarding sustainability.

Crafting a vision

Following the analysis and evaluation of the initial situation including the economic environment, the market changes and the future opportunities, a vision, or a statement of purpose, i.e., a clear intention of what the company wants to achieve with respect to sustainability, can be crafted.

Ideally, this vision or statement should be a short and simple, values-based expression of the ambition and key objectives of the company. The strategy, outlined in the next chapter, will define the route to reaching the objectives and will form the basis to implement the programme.

The vision outlines the objectives and purpose of the organisation; it's reason for existing. Even though a high-level statement, it should be specific to your business, leave nothing open to interpretation. It is to be clear as to why you want to implement or improve sustainability and the objectives you hope to achieve through this approach. The vision is a strong statement demonstrating your ambition, not only directed to your clients, but primarily to your employees, shareholders and suppliers.

An example for a vision, or a statement of purpose to be more precisely, could be: *We believe that integrating sustainable practices into every phase of our operations is critical to minimising our impact on the environment and creating a better future for ourselves and the next generation. Reaching net zero and becoming climate neutral in our operations is what we aim to achieve with our climate strategy. In addition, we will develop and implement strategic initiatives in all three areas of Environment, Social and Governance.*

3.4 Paving the way

If any change is to be purposeful and successful, it needs not only a clear understanding and commitment to the cause, but also leadership, resources and expertise. This has to be recognised and organised at the outset. If this seems logical and no more than common sense, experience has shown us that this is not always the case. It must also be clear that the process is not just about generating ideas and creating a sustainability strategy, but about seeing those ideas through and implementing the strategy across the company and all those involved.

Leadership

In every organisation sustainability is a shared responsibility which needs to be integrated throughout the organisational structure and connected with suppliers and other stakeholders; but this will not happen without leadership.

Ideally, the organisation appoints a person who is interested in the topic and is valued internally, or even a team, depending on the size of the organisation. The board member responsible for sustainability should also be involved. In this way, the leadership is engaged, and the project receives the necessary support. Hiring an external professional manager can make sense in large organisations, but an external expert as a coach for the internal manager can be very useful and effective.

It is important that leaders identify with the project and participate in full. They must be role models and walk the talk; their actions and decisions must be aligned with the values and principles of the organisation. Becoming a truly sustainable company is largely an act of will. This entrepreneurial achievement requires good leadership. It is important to have clarity about how decisions are made and how the different departments work together. Sustainability has to do with common sense and keeping a holistic view. Issues that arise must be properly considered and decisions must serve the greater good.

This means that all decisions – e.g., a major procurement, travel or working conditions, etc. – must take into account the established sustainability criteria. This requires transparently communicated principles, guidelines or templates that apply to all managers and executive bodies.

Building up capabilities

In addition to the leadership and related committees, the necessary internal management and financial resources must be made available.

We learned that sustainability is a vast topic, affecting operational and strategical issues as well, still an experienced manager will lead such process successfully. It is important that the initial situation is assessed by internal staff, as they understand the company and its products and processes and will often know exactly where the weaknesses or gaps are. An appointed specialist or an external person, on the other hand, brings independence and can ask critical questions and also address unexpected or difficult areas. Of course, it is good if the outsider is a sustainability expert, but it seems even more important to us that this person has a good understanding of the company's business environment and has a lot of experience in facilitating such processes. This way, he or she can support the designated manager and his or her team with guidance and practical advice.

If external help is hired, it is advisable that it is engaged from the outset with the situation analysis and the formulation of the vision. For the implementation phase, this help can be called in again selectively, as needed. This person may also help to select a suitable auditor, should the company wish to become certified by a third party at some stage.

4. Implementing a Sustainability Management System

Having defined your vision or statement of purpose, and organized your resources and capabilities, the dedicated team can now get down to the work of implementing a sustainability program to achieve your objectives. Developing and implementing this will take time, because it will need to be fully integrated in your management system. The objectives, procedures, tasks, monitoring and reviews have to be put in place and become operational.

Knowing that companies may have their own methods for implementing new concepts, we chose to present the following simplified implementation in 6 logical steps. The described procedure and the tools are based on the ISO 20121 standard, so that the companies that decide on a subsequent certification have the work and documentation available. For that purpose and to provide further guidance, the corresponding PDCA-Cycles explained in Annex C1 How to use ISO 20121 are mentioned for each step.

It is important to allow sufficient time for the process and, as most companies in the events industry have a seasonal workload, to time the start so that capacity is available. A reasonable time span from preparation to the full integration in the management system is estimated from 6-12 months according to the chart below.

1	**Preparation and Initiation**	Approx. 1 month
2	**Stakeholder Engagement and Impact Analysis**	Approx. 2-4 months
3	**Identification of Material Issues**	Approx. 1 month
4	**Developing a Sustainability Strategy**	Approx. 1-2 months
5	**Elaboration of the Action Plan**	Approx. 1-2 months
6	**Embedding the Management System**	Ongoing

4.1 Preparation

Solid preparation before initiating the process is key to success. In this phase, relevant information and guidance is collected and distributed, analysed and understood, and discussions are held with the employees and the management team. A team or steering committee is constituted and a leader, with clearly defined roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, is appointed. Staff and other involved parties are briefed on the mission of the team and on their duties to collaborate with the team. The schedule for the implementation with milestones and the reporting to the management is set up, probably in outline, high level format in the first instance.

Everyone involved in the implementation process is comes together, whether for the first time or at the launch of the latest phase of the company's efforts. Open questions can be raised and discussed, and roles and responsibilities clarified. For the organisation attendees will include the responsible persons, company management, project managers and/or those responsible for communication. If appointed, the coach or external expert who will facilitate and guide the implementation will be introduced.

PDCA-Cycle:
P1 (4.2), P5 (5.3), P6 (6),
D1 (7.1-7.3)

The aims of this meeting are to share knowledge about sustainable event management, to bring all participants up to the same levels of understanding, to formulate a first set of relevant topics to be considered, and to identify the key stakeholders to be consulted.

> Recommendation: It may be valuable for the company to identify companies in its business environment who have already experienced a certification and ascertain whether a representative from one of those companies could coach your sustainability team at the beginning or during the process. In addition, a target-orientated survey (employees, key clients, etc) may provide valuable information about how to proceed and develop the initiative.

4.2 Engaging with stakeholders & impact analysis

Stakeholder engagement, also discussed in the Practice Guide – Planning, Procurement and Delivery of Temporary Infrastructure for Major Events, Part I – General Information, is one of the most important steps in identifying and understanding issues and discovering opportunities. Stakeholders' opinions and interests will play a significant role in a company's ongoing development, in terms of sustainability. The involvement of stakeholders is best achieved through dialogue (discussions, surveys, etc., see Annex A2 Methods for the dialog with stakeholders). Not only are the interests of the stakeholders determined, but also the TARGET and ACTUAL values. The aim of the dialogue is to identify the essential topics that the company should address. In addition to consulting on interests and topics, engagement can have a very positive side effect as employees, suppliers, customers, etc. feel that they are involved and taken seriously. This can strengthen the partnership, cooperation and collaboration in the long term.

> Recommendation: The table "A.1 - List of interested parties" in the of interested parties in the ISO 20121 may provide an idea about your stakeholders. Begin with an open-mind and a 360° view, then narrow down your field to the most important in a second analysis. Take your time and do not rush this step.

Results from the dialogue with the stakeholders are analysed in a team meeting. In addition, the company's ability to influence environmental, economic and social factors and the likely scale of any impacts is determined by analysis. The greater the influence, and the greater the impacts arising, the greater the potential and scope for action. It does not make sense to prioritise tackling issues where the company's influence is small, or where any resultant impacts will be negligible. At the end of this meeting and analysis, everyone has an overview of the relevant topics and a clear understanding of priorities where potential to influence and results of that influence are high. In order to assist the analysis, we recommend categorising the significance of positive and negative impacts, distinguishing between scale (the magnitude or intensity of the impact) and scope (range or how many stakeholders are affected), severity, and likelihood of an actual or potential impact.

There is a growing interest from investors to assess the sustainability performance of organisations, and there is an increasing body of evidence of investors discriminating in favour of positive performance against relevant criteria. Their key focus centres on the impact of environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues on the performance of the company. The European Financial Reporting Advisory Group (EFRAG, 2021) therefore promotes the concept of 'double materiality', considering both 'financial materiality' (the impact on the organisation) and the 'impact materiality' (the impact of the organisation).

PDCA-Cycle:
P1 (4.2), P6 (6)

4.3 Defining Material Issues

Having developed an understanding of issues, on the basis of ability to influence and the results of exercising that influence, through the preceding phase prioritisation can now be formalised with the introduction of a further dimension. Relevance matrices can be used to graphically illustrate the relevance and the significance of the issues as topics are comparatively evaluated. Chapter C.2 in the ISO Standard 20121 provides guidance in this respect. This process helps in the decision-making process because it makes visible the most relevant issues, the Material Issues (see top right of the example relevance matrix included below). Subsequently, these are presented to the management, so that agreement as to which issues are essential and will be addressed can be formally confirmed. Various factors play a decisive role here, such as financial and also human resources. "Less is more" should be is the motto here. It makes sense to focus on the core issues, while at

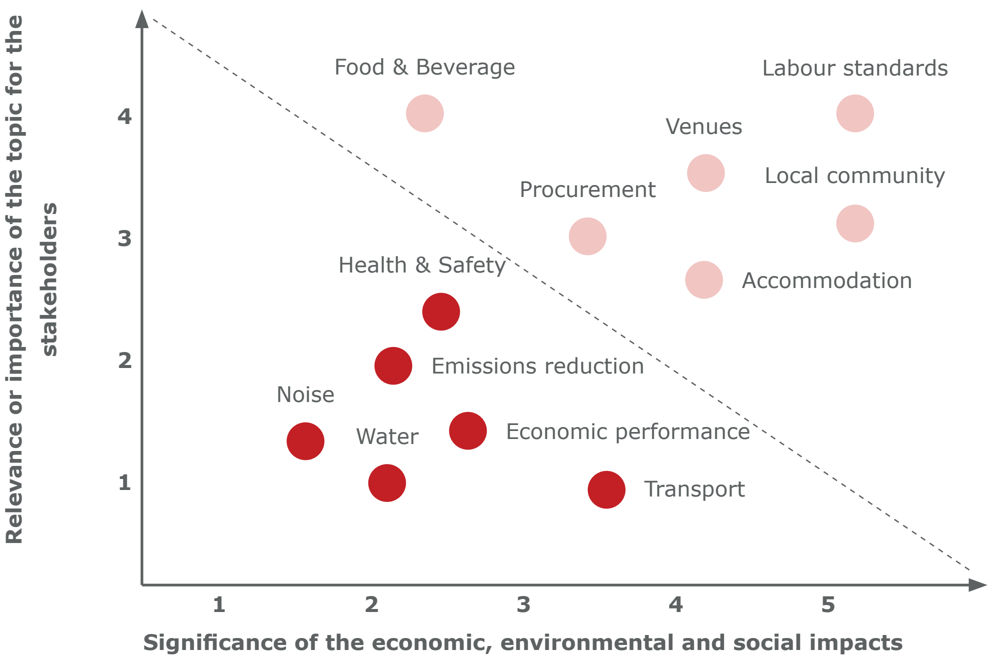

Figure 1: Example of a relevance matrix to define the Material Issues

the same time understanding the value of 'quick wins' to demonstrate progress and build confidence.

PDCA-Cycle:
P2 (4.3), P6 (6)

The international sustainability reporting regulations build on the concept of materiality. On one side, the focus is on the impacts of the company on the economy, the environment and on people including human rights (impact materiality); on the other side, companies need to consider the financial implications of sustainability-related issues on the company (financial materiality). The combination of both perspectives will lead to a concept of "double materiality".

> We recommend not choosing too many topics as Material Issues and focus on them. For a smaller organization, or a business unit of a larger group, 6-8 Material Issues are reasonable, for larger organizations 8-12 topics are manageable.

4.4 Develop a Sustainability Strategy

Equipped with the information and commitments established by the previous work, the team can now turn itself to the development of the organisation's sustainability strategy. This strategy should take as its starting point the vision, mission and values of the company, going on to describe the material issues, the associated medium and long-term goals, and the management approaches that will be used to address these issues. An example of the structure and content of a sustainability strategy can be seen in Annex A4 Structure of Sustainability Strategy. The strategy should also describe the relevant governance including regimes for ongoing 'monitoring' and more formal periodic reviews, with the first review occurring after say a three-year period.

One of the principal challenges when formulating the strategy will be to keep in balance bold ambition and realism when setting goals for all areas, to be achieved in the medium or long term. The strategy should not be primarily oriented towards competitors or certain customer expectations, which would perhaps be the easier way. The strategic goals should be based on the company's own convictions and should be formulated ambitiously, even if the path to achieving the goals is not yet clear. The strategy can certainly be seen as a dynamic management tool, which can also be adjusted during implementation, if priorities shift or goals are set too low or become unattainable.

We again underline that these efforts towards sustainability should not be treated as a detached, standalone project. Real success can only be achieved when sustainability is adopted as a working principle, integrated with, and embedded in all levels and recognised the strategic choice for the future direction of the organisation. A disconnected or top-down imposed exercise will hardly work on the long run and may even become counterproductive.

For this reason, it is important that the strategy and the goals are worked out together in the company. They must be well thought through and considered meaningful and worthwhile by all involved. The goals should be reachable by your own means and decisions and not depend on factors or support outside your control. This process takes time and can be exhausting, but it is the basic prerequisite for success. The initiative must above all be seen as an opportunity to improve efficiency, attract new clients; and last but not least prepare the organisation for the future.

Evidently, the goals need to fit the size and maturity level of the organisation. Examples of possible strategic goals to underpin the vision could include:

- Achieving a better energy efficiency at our premisses, e.g., use roofs to produce solar energy, provide natural cooling, change heating systems using new climate solutions, etc.;
- Reducing consumption of fossil energy with the objective to emit no greenhouse gases or other harmful substances within 5 years, e.g., by using electrical company cars, using mobility programs, Hydrogen powered trucks, etc.;
- Sourcing all products and parts thereof as well as miscellaneous materials in ways that have no negative environmental or social impacts and applying ethical supply chain policies;
- Taking care of inclusion and adjusting our employment policies, such as by creating a barrier-free working environments for all employees at all workplaces;
- Improving the existing skills management programme to attract new workforce, empower young talents and offer suitable job opportunities for senior staff over 55 years of age.

PDCA-Cycle: P3 (4.5), P4 (5.2), P5 (5.3), P6 (6)

4.5 Elaborate the Action Plan

This step marks the transition to the implementation phase for the action plan translates the strategy into a series of operationalised steps for achieving the goals set out in the vision. The action plan clearly regulates the implementation: Who is responsible for what and over what time frame? In practice, it has proved useful to draw up the action plan as a table. This can help to maintain a good overview.

However, before developing any action plan, it may be useful to develop detailed concepts of the approaches to the material issues from the strategy. This intermediate step will enable a more in-depth examination of the material issues and potential solutions for implementation. This can help to reinforce understandings of the relevance of the issues for the company, the goals that are being pursued and means to be employed to achieve those goals. The goals are best accompanied by measurable indicators. Attention should be given to identifying indicators of progress towards long term goals and not simply of the outcomes once completed. In this way, the progress and any deviations from the goal can be made timely and visible.

The action plan should also describe plans and regimes for monitoring and communication. The monitoring program regulates how the monitoring process is carried out, who is responsible for it, and how it is reported. Monitoring is important in that the progress can be observed, and intervention can be taken in the event of a negative trend (deviation from the goal). In this regard, and particularly in the case of longer-term goals, we repeat the importance of identifying indicators which will allow progress towards those goals to be tracked.

> We recommend to build up datasets for common rental products and components, and define the key criteria to measure and monitor impacts, i.e. allocate % of key material by mass in product e.g. glazed units for tents, say 15% aluminium and 85% glass, determine how many times, on average, each component is used before replacement, assign carbon conversion factors using https://circularecology.com/embodied-carbon-footprint-database.html, etc.

> Furthermore, we recommend to fully embrace the principles of circular economy and develop plans to reduce impacts (eg. reduce water or fuel consumption, replace plastic with biodegradable material, or eliminate unnecessary packaging, just to mention some examples).

PDCA-Cycle:
P5 (5.3), P6 (6), D1 (7.1-7.3), D2 (7.4), D3 (7.5), D4 (8)

The communication plan clarifies how communication will take place, focusing on the internal communication first. Communication is important because it has a primary influence on whether the implementation of the project will succeed or fail. All employees, shareholders or partners need to be informed on rationale, the essential steps, and objectives. In particular, the parties directly affected by changes need to be taken on board, if not already involved in the process. Which methods are suitable for which stakeholders and when? For this purpose, a list of different communication methods can be found in the Annex A5 Communication channels.

4.6 Incorporate into the Management System

With the elaboration of the action plan and its approval by the Board, implementation can commence. This begins with the launch of the activities, supported by monitoring and reporting to the responsible management bodies. Existing business processes may have to be reorganised, or agenda items for meetings adjusted so that the development is also discussed. Again, this is best not as a separate, bolted-on agenda item, but rather it should be embedded as part and parcel of the discussions of the business of the day.

It must be expected that errors or inefficiencies will be discovered during implementation. These must be identified and corrected promptly, and those responsible must think carefully about what needs to be changed. If, for example, data collection does not work well because the person responsible is too comfortable or overloaded, or because the right data is not being collected, the goal should not be questioned, but the way to achieve it should be adjusted or adapted as necessary.

This also applies to the monitoring system defined in the action plan. Controls are necessary because they are part of the management principles and serve for quality assurance, as for everything that a company produces. In order for the monitoring system to be seen as a useful instrument, it should not be self-serving, but should be geared and demonstrably working towards achieving objectives.

It is important that development and progress is well and efficiently documented, not only with a view to possible certification. Documentation should be purposeful, as limited as possible, but as extensive as necessary, so that progress as well as traceability can be documented in a transparent and verifiable way. These days we would expect that the documentation, including reports, will be available in digital form for all parties involved.

PDCA-Cycle:
C1 (9.1), C2 (9.2), A1 (10.1)

We recommend that the implemented strategy be subjected to an internal audit about 6 months after its introduction. This on-site analysis should be carried out by an external expert in the presence of the project participants. It serves as a starting point for any adjustments and the definition of the next steps.

5. Reporting and Communication

Once an organisation has implemented its sustainability strategy ….and is acting accordingly, it makes sense to report and communicate this to the world at large. Earlier communication to internal stakeholders is one thing and an important part to play, but communication externally, ahead of any demonstrable results is likely to be regarded as hyperbole and is unlikely to serve a company well. Do good first, and then talk about it should very much be the mantra. Companies that do generate a good sustainability performance should consider how they will report and communicate this performance to key stakeholders. There are different options to document the efforts made and to report on the sustainability performance.

5.1 Certification and Labelling

Some companies may opt for a certification which will be provided by national or international certification standards for events, such as the ISO 20121 or other relevant standards.

Process and types of certifications with ISO 20121

The international ISO Standard 20121 is about the management system of those companies that organise events or are part of the event value chain, such as suppliers. The widespread, international recognition of this standard by governmental bodies, national standardisation agencies, building authorities and event organisers, confers considerable benefits of ISO certification. The certification is a proof point that the company is following good sustainable practice, something

ISO 20121 sets out three different routes to claiming compliance:

- First party certification (self-audit and self-declaration). In the case of first party certification, the company itself, which has implemented and checked the management system, simply self certifies its compliance with the standard.

- Second-party certification is undertaken by an external organisation that has an existing relationship with the company being audited. The second party conducts an audit and certifies that the standard is implemented correctly by establishing a statement of conformity to the company.

- Independent third-party certification. This involves a qualified, independent certification entity, which will conduct an audit to assess that the management system meets the requirements of the standard. Only accredited certification bodies and specially trained auditors are allowed to carry out a third-party certification. ISO certifications are generally awarded in this way which, as might be expected, represents the highest grade of certification.

In reality, 1st and 2nd party certification have limited value, as they lack independence. Their function can just as easily be achieved through an effective internal audit. Therefore, for any company intending to promote its sustainability achievements, it is recommended to go down the third-party certification route.

The certification process starts with selecting the route and then appointing an auditor who will ultimately perform the (external) audit. The audit is carried out on site, usually at the company's headquarters. The audit checks whether the documented management system is implemented in practice. Possible deviations are noted and discussed with the responsible persons and documented. Any corrective measures can be submitted up to three years at the latest before re-certification. The audit results are summarised in an audit report. If all requirements for a certificate are met, the certification document will be issued to the company.

Remark: If the ISO Standard is translated into a National Standard in your country (see Annex C2 ISO 20121 Standard at national level) you may find also that national standards agency provides listings on its web page of entities specifically approved to undertake certifications of this specific ISO Standard, or alternatively generally experienced certifying bodies. In this case, the reputation and experience in the event sector is an important consideration in the choice of the auditor for a third-party certification.

Labels for the event industry

Alternatively, the company may opt for a specific label dedicated to the event sector in its home country. Sometimes these sustainable event labels offer a more streamlined process to recognising implementations of the principles of sustainability. Such labels may include event organisers, or locations, catering (e.g., regional and ecological food labels), products and procurement, or industry-sector-specific labels for cultural events like festivals as well as sport events.
Sometime, events and/or event organisers can be labelled directly as well as indirectly. They can claim certification or sustainable event labels for their own organisation and request their suppliers to be labelled respectively. Sustainable product procurement is particularly important for any sustainable event (with aspirations for an own label or certification) and is thus recommended to include e.g., acquiring labels like the international "Green Globe" for events, "Green Sign" for accommodation or the "European Ecolabel" for products used on events can show stakeholders that the supplier takes account on its sustainability impact. A non-exhaustive list of applicable national and international certificate providers is found in Annex C2 ISO 20121 Standard at national level.

Benefits of certification

As discussed previously, achieving a higher sustainability level, confers many benefits. To the extent that this relies on acceptance by stakeholders, whether internal or external, the corroboration provided by certification – whether in accordance with ISO 20121 or with other labelling frameworks – can only add value to the realisation of these benefits, such as:

- Resources can be used efficiently, in a targeted manner and thus costs can be reduced.
- The credibility of a company is improved and acknowledged by employees, clients and the community. Also, loyalty and attraction for new employees and volunteers are increased.
- Further development and optimisation in the management of the companies is promoted.
- Systematic communication structures with employees, customers and partners can be established.

- The sustainability strategy combined with the certification will form a competitive advantage for the company and an opportunity to demonstrate leadership in sustainability.
- Access to new markets and customers that require the adherence with sustainability standards.
- Improved risk management and decreased likelihood of fines and prosecutions because of non-compliance with socio-economic or environmental regulations.

5.2 SDG reporting

The UN Sustainable Development Goals have become the common internationally acknowledged language for talking about sustainable development (see chapter 3.1 Situation assessment). Similarly, using the SDG vocabulary, goals and targets, has also become a way of talking about companies' sustainability performance. Many companies now link their business activities concerning sustainability issues by reference to the UN SDGs. Almost three out of four world largest companies (G250) have aligned their business strategy with the SDGs (KPMG 2020, p.44). Many sports federations and event organizers too have followed this trend. The IOC has taken a significant effort to outline the key SDGs to which the IOC aims to contribute (IOC Sustainability Strategy, October 2017).

Caution is needed here however, for linking a company's activities with too many random SDG goals, for example in a sustainability report or in external sustainability communication, will soon seem unreliable and may be downgraded as 'SDG-washing'. For a purposeful, clear communication of an organisation's contribution and impact on the SDG goals, the UN Global Compact has published a comprehensive guideline for SDG reporting. Furthermore, the SDGs can be directly linked with the GRI Standards in a sustainability Report.

The following steps suggest how to best proceed in order to embed the SDG framework into the management system and eventually to publish an report.

SDG mapping: find key SDGs

Getting focused is the key to success. This is also true about implementing the SDGs into the organisation. It is not advised to involve all 17 SDGs at the same time, but to focus on the key SDGs with the help of an SDG mapping: This helps to identify the SDGs on which the value chain of the company has a positive impact (i.e., is part of the solution) and on which SDGs the company has a rather negative impact (i.e., is part of the problem).

Define priority SDG targets

After singling out the key SDGs, it is recommended to define respective targets for these goals. The SDGs consist of altogether 169 specific targets with various timelines to consider.

Find indicators, measure and analyse

Once the priority targets are defined, indicators to measure performance need to be selected. The UN working group on SDGs have defined a set of indicators, but as these are highly aggregated, they're rather useful for countries than for companies. UNCTAD is offering a customized set of indicators that can be applied by companies. Alternatively, the company can try to align the UN targets with disclosures from the GRI Standards. The website www.sdgcompass.org can help to identify the best indicators by SDG Goals and target.

Report and implement targets into the management

To implement the UN SDGs into the organisational culture, the company can set individual performance targets with respect to its contribution to the key SDGs. The Practical Guide published by GRI and UN Global Compact assists with effectively integrating these SDGs into the company's reporting, e.g., in a sustainability report.

- Example: http://extrassets.olympic.org/sustainability-strategy/_content/download.pdf
- GRI/UN Global Compact: Integrating the SDGs into Corporate Reporting. A Practical Guide, August 2018.

5.3 Sustainability Report with reference to or in accordance with GRI

Sustainability reporting is gaining increasing importance from the local to global scale and is expected increasingly to be demanded by investors, other stakeholders or governmental institutions.

In the future, reports on sustainability will soon be part of financial reporting, at least for larger companies. Smaller business units too, when part of holding companies, will have to deliver their data on sustainability performance for consolidation in the report of the holding company.

Smaller organisations may decide to publish their own sustainability report (or a thematic section of it). Here, reporting standards as GRI provide useful guidelines (see chapter 3.4 Paving the way), yet they don't have to be applied for an adequate report. GRI is the most commonly used reporting standard. According to the survey of KPMG (KPMG 2020) 73% of the world largest 250 companies (G250) apply the GRI Standards for their sustainability reporting. https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/xx/pdf/2020/11/the-time-has-come.pdf

The new GRI Standards 2021 offer two options for sustainability reporting. Larger and more advanced businesses, already experienced in sustainability reporting, are likely to use the option to report "in Accordance with the GRI Standards 2021" is a good way. Alternatively, smaller business with less experience in these practices can use the Standards of GRI as a reference and publish a report "with Reference to the GRI Standards 2021".

At the date of publication of this Guideline, GRI has not specified the GRI Event Organisers Sector Disclosures (EOSD) as a priority for updating. However, the new GRI Standards 2021 offer a flexible approach to work with external topics. Therefore, the event-sector specified topics from the EOSD can successfully be used in combination with the updated new Standards. To report on progress, many organisations tried to link the SDGs with the Standards of GRI; to support their efforts, GRI has produced a document, assisting organisations to identify relevant disclosures (GRI, March 2020).

Linking the SDGs and the GRI Standards: https://www.globalreporting.org/media/lbvnxb15/mapping-sdgs-gri-update-march.pdf

5.4 Communication

A convincing sustainability programme with appropriate reporting tools is a good basis for communication. But communications of any initiatives without a clear concept are very likely to miss the mark, scoring neither with clients, nor with the media, or other stakeholders also, inadvertently, creating the reputational risk of being accused of Green Washing.

How to communicate?

Before communicating, the first question is who the target audience is. Not all target groups respond to the same communication so it's important to clarify in advance who you want to reach. It is also helpful to know what the target groups want and what their interests and needs are.

When it comes to the how, there is a simple answer: to be *clear, honest and transparent* – no matter which target groups are being addressed. If the content is too complex and not presented in the right context, it may be understood only by a few. Consistency will be essential too, especially if multiple communications are issued to different target groups, and contradiction must be avoided. By honest we mean that the content should be balanced and should contain the positive as well as the negative impact of the organisation's activities. One-sided reporting looks untrustworthy. Furthermore, it should be transparent. For instance, instead of writing that the organization always strives to keep waste to a minimum, it is better to report on concrete deeds and measures.

Communicate what?

Depending on the method of communication, the content may vary. A *sustainability report* mainly focusses on documenting and presenting the sustainability performance of an organisation. A *sustainability concept or charter* shows the vision and mission of an organisation. A press release, on the other hand, reports facts and figures. On the whole, the organisation should show what it can do and prove what it claims – and do so in an appropriate relation. Paradoxically, it is advisable to use the word "sustainability" as little as possible because the term has become too abstract for many and has been used too often in the media.

Communicate by which means?

The means of communication should be adapted to the target group. Younger generations, for example, are oriented more digitally, newspapers are interested in headlines, and clients are better reached with a printed report. The presentation also should be published in the right place at the right time, so that the message can attract the attention of its recipients. If focusing only on environmental impacts, there should be no more printed reports. However, this is not necessarily the way to reach all target groups or stakeholders. Therefore, it is necessary to find a compromise between being environmentally friendly and being sustainable in terms of impact. (See the different communication methods in Annex A5 Communication channels.)

6. Key Messages

This guide is intended as a starting point, and we recognise that the needs of individual companies will vary considerably. The topic is also almost inexhaustibly broad, with a lot of well-intentioned guidance already published, and leaves a lot of room for interpretation.

Nevertheless, we believe that we have drawn out the most important elements, statements and instruments in this guide. Readers can get a good overall understanding about how to move forward to develop a suitable sustainability programme.

Here are some high-level messages to summarise the process of implementing sustainability into the company's strategy:

- Commitment: it all starts with a commitment from ownership and top management. Without the commitment at these levels, all efforts to improve and to demonstrate sustainability are unlikely to succeed.

- Impacts count: considering sustainability in the planning and implementation process means to consider the impact that the decisions and actions will have on the economy, the environment, and people including human rights.

- Stakeholder dialogue is fundamental: it is important to identify the key stakeholders and include them in the process to better understand, assess and prioritise the impacts.

- Focus on what matters: there will be a long list of Issues that could be looked at and managed. Suppliers should focus the scope of their responses on the areas relevant to their products and services, where there actions can make a difference, and they can claim to manage in compliance with ISO 20121.

- Embrace the commitment: integrate and embed all efforts to improve sustainability within the company's day to day activities. Do not treat sustainability separately, as a 'bolt on'.

- Managing means measuring: to monitor impacts we need SMART objectives and Key Performance Indicators to measure progress.

- Walk the talk: remember that doing good and communicating effectively, monitoring and reporting on sustainability performance, all helps to underline the commitment to sustainability and increases loyalty of employees, customers, and other partners.

- Stay focused: we recommend organisations in the event industry to develop a simple but robust sustainability strategy that addresses material issues in their own context.

- Rome wasn't built in a day: recognise that sustainability entails commitment to a continuous effort which requires the proper allocation of resources. The process of establishment takes time, and the commitment is for the long-term.

Annexes

Annex A – Check-lists and templates

This Annex A contains a few selected check-lists and templates to support the user going through the process from preparation and kick-off through to the implementation of the action plan.

A1 Assessment of status

The checklist below helps the company to assess the current works status by asking questions, such as:

Step	Tasks / Questions	Done	In progress	To do
Preparation and kick-off (1)	Has a management team for the certification process been nominated?			
	Is there a clear commitment to sustainability from the management team			
	Has an internal Sustainability Manager been nominated?			
	Where the management team, the employees and the main stakeholders informed about the plan?			
	Has the scope of works been properly defined?			
	Is there a list with relevant topics and corresponding examples?			
	Does the nominated management team need an external coach/mentor?			
	Is there an agreed timeline and budget until certification?			
Stakeholder Engagement and Impact Analysis (2)	The tree important steps with the stakeholder: Identify, prioritise, consult?			
	Have the most relevant internal and external stakeholders with respect to sustainability been identified?			
	Have suitable dialog methods been chosen?			
	Have the results and feedbacks from the stakeholder interviews been evaluated and documented?			
	Have all relevant topics been identified?			
	Were all relevant topics (influence on environmental, economic, social issues) assessed in the impact analysis?			
	Has this assessment been done by a representative number of persons?			
	Can the company influence directly or indirectly the topics?			

Identification of Material Issues (3)	Has the relevance matrix been done and checked?			
	Were the identified relevant themes validated by the management team?			
	Were the core themes (topics) defined?			
	Are the defined core themes well balanced? (Environmental, economic, social)			
	Do we have a track record or existing data on the core themes?			
Developing a Sustainability Strategy (4)	Has a sustainability strategy been developed?			
	Is the sustainability strategy compatible to the corporate strategy?			
	Does the strategy contain guidelines to the sustainable development as well as value for the company?			
	Does it address the identified core themes?			
	Are the objectives suitable and doable (following the SMART criteria)?			
	Are the measures indicated to reach the objectives?			
	Have we decided about the reporting system, i.e. a certification or any other reporting tool?			
	Has the internal and external communication been organized and implemented?			
Elaboration of the Action Plan (5)	Have the concepts (individual or joined concepts) been developed?			
	Theme 1:			
	Theme 2:			
	Theme 3:			
	Theme 4:			
	Theme 5:			
	Theme 6:			
	Have the objectives been set in accordance to SMART criteria?			
	Are the indicators clearly defined?			
	Are the actions or measures adequate and targeted?			
	Are the actions, responsibilities and the time line clearly set?			
	Have the necessary resources or means been organized?			
	Do we have a monitoring program to assess the data and information?			
	Do we have a communication plan?			

Step	Tasks / Questions	Done	In pro-gress	To do
Embedding in Management Plan (6)	Is this step organized as an ongoing procedure?			
	Are the start/roll-out and the objectives communicated to all parties?			
	Do the parties involved have adequate templates to report?			
	Is there a suitable and transparent filing system in place?			
	How shall the performance be checked (periodical checks, internal audits?			
	How will recorded deviations lead to an improved result in the future?			

A2 Methods for the dialog with stakeholders

Method	Pros and Cons
Interview by phone of video calls	• Builds a personal connection, increases likelihood of feedback • Minor costs may be incurred • May be time consuming waiting for answers • The interview must be well structured (with an interview guide) and the results must be well processed afterwards • Clarifications can be given instantly
Emails	• Only suitable to establish a first contact
Meeting	• A good way to build trust and convey credibility. • You get a sense of how stakeholders feel about the company/organisation • High probability of getting good quality answers • Costs may be incurred • If desired, a third impartial party can also chair the meeting • Ensure that all stakeholders can benefit from the meeting. • Organising can be time-consuming, e.g. finding a suitable time and place for everyone.
Survey	• The survey must be user-friendly with simple and understandable questions • It must be short so that it is fully completed and returned within time • Relatively easy method to get feedback • Responses can be easily tracked • The processing of responses is easy, as most providers have integrated analysis tools.
Letter	• Intended more for information than for dialogue • Difficult to find out whether the addressee has been reached (enquiry necessary) • Outdated communication channel, no longer up to date

A3 List of Issues

The following table lists the issues suggested by ISO 20121 in alphabetical order. It is not exhaustive and can be supplemented individually as required to consider in fulfilling issue identification and evaluation.

The table also refers to the relevant Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) and Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) standards, which can be helpful when choosing measures and indicators.

As described in step 3, it is important that the user identifies the Material Issues (may also be named Material Topics), i.e. the most relevant issues that have the greatest significance for the company on the economic, environmental and social aspects.

Issues listed in ISO 20121	**Description and comments**	**Connected**	
		to SDG	**to GRI**
Accessibility	Accessibility issues associated in the context of location, facilities, services provided including marketing and communications, etc. This does also include wheelchair-accessible buildings, or audio commentaries for people with impaired vision, etc.	SDG 9	
Accommodation	Location and credentials of accommodation, such as barrier-free locations, certified sustainable hotels, etc.		
Animal welfare	Activities at significant risk of impacting on animals/wildlife, such as sufficient run for animals in competition, or stairs and accesses that can also be used by pets, etc.	SDG 15	GRI FP10
Anti-competitive behaviour	Activities at significant risk of anti-competitive behaviour, anti-trust and monopoly practices. Are employees instructed accordingly, i.e. are such guidelines and policies in place?	SDG 16	GRI 206 (2016)
Biodiversity and natural preservation	Valuing and protecting the variety of life in all its forms, protecting and restoring ecosystem services and using land and natural resources sustainability in connection with venue location, catering (e.g., endangered species), and use of materials, e.g., making electrical installations bird-proof, etc.	SDG 13, 15	GRI 304 (2016) GRI 308 (2016)
Bribery and corruption	Anti-corruption, gifts and gratuities policies. Are employees trained for fair business practice and policies about gifts and gratuities introduced? Does that form part of employment contracts?	SDG 16	GRI 205 (2016)
Communication	Activities at significant risk of not providing factual and unbiased information and fair contractual practices, e.g., publication of a sustainability report in accordance with international standards	SDG 9	GRI 204 (2016)
Conditions of work and social protection	Activities at significant risk of breaching terms and conditions in International Labour Law, of not providing equal opportunity for a diverse workforce (i.e., gender, age, ethnicity, disability and other indicators of diversity), of not respecting rights to exercise freedom of association and collective bargaining and of the use of abusive labour practices such as forced, compulsory or child labour concerning contracted labour, volunteers and the supply chain.	SDG 8	GRI 402 (2016) GRI408 (2016) GRI409 (2016)

Consumer practices	Activities at significant risk of not fulfilling needs of consumers/ attendants regarding safety, information, freedom of choice, accessibility and usability (universal design concept), unfair terms and conditions, availability of effective consumer redress and education on impacts of consumer choice. This could also include considering health and safety risks of minors including protection from exposure to alcohol and other drugs.	SDG 12	GRI 410 (2016) GRI416 (2016) GRI G4-PR2
Discrimination and vulnerable groups	Activities at significant risk of discriminating, or breaching the rights of, vulnerable groups (e.g., children and youth at risk, the elderly, persons with disabilities, on grounds of sexual orientation, the internally displaced, refugees or returning refugees, and women) and indigenous people. Equal opportunities in employment.	SDG5	GRI 406 (2016)
Economic performance	Direct economic value generated and distributed, including revenues, operating costs, donations and other community investments, e.g., disclosure of contract sums to local companies	SDG 8	GRI 201 (2016)
Emissions reduction	Emissions relating to greenhouse gases, ozone-depleting substances, toxics (e.g., NO, SO, and particulates), water discharges and spillages, e.g., usage of appropriate filters on heating devices or engines.	SDG 13	GRI 303 (2016) GRI308 (2016)
Energy	Consideration for energy efficiency and sustainable energy supply will reduce the use of fossil fuels and their impacts. Usage of renewable energy sources.	SDG 7	GRI 302 (2016)
Food and beverage	Catering services are accessible and offer choice and balance and are safe and hygienic. Options for vegetarian or vegan food available.	SDG 2, 3, 12	GRI G4 EOSG EO8
Health and safety at work	Activities at significant risk of impacting the health and safety for contracted labour, volunteers and the supply chain. Training and toolbox-talk for workers. Protective measures such as wearing helmets, safety equipment, sufficient illumination, safety inspections, etc.	SDG 3	GRI 403 (2018)
Human development and training in the workplace	Workforce by employment type, contract and region and programmes for skills management and support continued employability of workforce and supply chain, e.g., integration of LGBTIQ+ community, women in leading positions, support for re-entry after pregnancy, etc.		
Illegal drugs and anti-doping	Activities at significant risk of involving the use of illegal drugs and doping, e.g., information campaigns on drugs, zero-tolerance policy	SDG 3	GRI 403 (2016)
Indirect economic impacts	Indirect economic impacts including the development of any infrastructure, employment opportunities, services provided to the public and fair profit sharing, e.g., installation of additional plugs, handover of material for local reuse after the event, education or training of local people, etc.	SDG 8, 9	GRI 203 (2016)
Labour standards	Processes for interested parties to communicate complaints and grievances to be documented and responded to, e.g., instructions on how to deal with bullying, or harassment at work. Whistle-blowing, etc.	SDG 8	GRI 103 (2016)
Local community	Impacts of activities on communities, including entering, operating and exiting, e.g., increased added value for local restaurants or suppliers		GRI 415 (2016)

Market presence	Practices in relation to spending on locally-based suppliers and local hiring. Using local or regional suppliers and resources, building long-term partnerships, sales representatives, offering attractive leasing terms, etc.	SDG 12	GRI 202 (2016)
Materials choice	Efficient use of all materials in buying and use, considering the full life cycle. Develop principles of circular economy. Replacing plastic or PVC by other materials. Methods to extend life cycle of material. Usage of natural products (wooden structures). Usage of lighter or stackable material, etc.		GRI 301 (2016)
Noise	Unacceptable sound levels in the surrounding community. Avoid working at night, use temporary noise protection in sensitive areas, availability of earplugs, use equipment and engines with filters, etc.	SDG 3	GRI 413 (2016)
Prevention of use of banned chemicals	Preventing the use of banned chemicals and, where possible, chemicals identified by scientific bodies or any other interested parties as being of concern, e.g., cleaning agents that are hazardous to health	SDG 13	
Resource utilization	Activities at risk of not using resources, including energy, water and materials, in a responsible and efficient way, by combining or replacing non-renewable resources with sustainable, renewable resources, e.g., by using innovative technologies. Consider also resource conservation. Using mobile trees to provide shade, use material from natural raw material, etc.	SDG 12, 13	GRI 301 (2016)
Security practices	Security policies and procedures (including observance of the special needs of people with disabilities when designing emergency and evacuation systems) and human rights. Cooperation with local authorities. Manuals for safe usage of equipment and materials, Anti-panic devices, cybersecurity, etc.	SDG 3, 10	GRI 410 (2016)
Sourcing and procurement of products and services	Sustainability criteria in accordance with this list for sourcing and procurement activities. Proper scanning of offering. Develop and adopt responsible sourcing policy. Inquire and review of the sustainability criteria of suppliers and subcontractors, (e.g., human rights, safety at work, etc.)	SDG 12	GRI 204 (2016)
Transport and logistics	Impacts of transporting good and people (access to transport for people with disabilities). Using eco-friendly transport means, or offer such alternatives to organizers, proper logistic planning to minimize transports, usage of adequate dispensers, stacks. Organize work on site to reduce transports.	SDG 9, 11	GRI G4: EN30 GRI EOSD: EO2
Venues	Location and credentials of venues (e.g., Brownfield, Greenfield, Existing Venue). Accessibility by public transports, usage of existing infrastructure, building temporary infrastructure as needed, build new infrastructure only with sound legacy plan	SDG 15	
Waste	Prevention, reduction, diversion and management of waste. Organize waste management for whole period (from first installation until restitution), Segregate waste where useful. Reduce packaging material. Reusable cups, reduce print material, etc.	SDG 12	GRI 306 (2020)
Water and sanitation	Water of good quality and readily accessible or impacted by regional constraints (e.g., water scarcity). Sustainable sanitation solutions. Water-saving installations, use of grey water for irrigation of green spaces, etc.	SDG 6	GRI 306 (2016)

A4 Structure of Sustainability Strategy

Preamble

1. Introduction
1.1 Basic Information on company
1.2 Definition of Sustainability
1.3 What does sustainability mean for our company
1.4. Why do we need a sustainability strategy/concept

2. Strategic objectives
2.1 Our vision
2.2 Mission Statement/Policies

3. Stakeholders
3.1 Identification of stakeholders
3.2 The key stakeholder for our company
3.3 How to involve the key stakeholders

4. The Material Issues
4.1 Define importance and influence for our company
4.2 How to identify the Material Issues

5. The Priority Themes
5.1 Environmental issues
5.1.1 Theme 1: Current status, objectives, indicators, existing and new measures and actions
5.1.2 Theme 2: Current status, objectives, indicators, existing and new measures and actions
5.2 Economical issues
5.2.1 Theme 3: Current status, objectives, indicators, existing and new measures and actions
5.2.2 Theme 4: Current status, objectives, indicators, existing and new measures and actions
5.3 Social issues
5.3.1 Theme 5: Current status, objectives, indicators, existing and new measures and actions
5.3.2 Theme 6: Current status, objectives, indicators, existing and new measures and actions

Note: This does not have to be six themes and they can be split out in different ways than in the classic scheme shown above. They could also be framed around Environment, Social and Governance themes.

6. Monitoring
6.1. Tasks, Responsibilities and Competences
6.2. Contacts
6.3. Schedule

7. Communication and Reporting

A5 Communication channels

Channels, Means	Pros	Cons	Stakeholder type
Meetings	• interactive exchange • direct dialogue • content can be adapted	• time consuming • availability • not applicable to all	Internal and external
Newsletter	• cheaper than a printed report • addressees can be selected specifically	• one way communication • may be neglected of misunderstood	Internal and external
Presentations, fairs	• helps to differentiate the organisation from others and can attract new sponsors or clients • direct dialogue • content can be tailored to the audience	• cost for preparation and material costs	external
Press release	• easy to make • high reachability	• a good reason for publication is necessary • no feedback	external
Sustainability concept	• shows commitment • comprehensive and transparent	• time and effort	internal and external
Sustainability reports	• shows commitment and professionalism • comprehensive and transparent	• time and effort • printing cost and possibly PR support	internal and external
Web page	• visible for all parties • no printing cost • can be updated anytime	• passive or reactive communication	primarily external
Social Media	• high reachability • direct communication • fast and modern	• may not reach senior staff • no control on dynamics	external

If the following points are taken into account, the probability is increased that the message will reach the recipient:

- Choose simple spelling or language.
- Use pictures and graphics.
- Include a good structure.
- Mention positive and negative points.
- The less unnecessary flowery phrases, the better.

Annex B – Normative documents on sustainability

This Annex B provides an overview with a brief explanation about the relevant normative documents such as goals, reports, standards and guidelines which regulate or guides sustainability in general and in particular for the events industry.

B1 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The SDGs are key components of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and are based on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They were unanimously adopted by the United Nations in September 2015 and officially entered into force on 1 January 2016. All countries equally are called upon to eradicate all forms of poverty and inequality by 2030, and to counteract climate change. Most countries have undertaken to implement the SDGs at their national level.

The SDGs consist of 17 goals and 169 sub-goals or targets at the state level. They provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. The SDGs are an urgent call for action by all countries – developed and developing – in a global partnership. The 17 goals are:

SDG	Objective	Description
1	No poverty	End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2	Zero hunger	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
3	Good health and well-being	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
4	Quality education	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5	Gender equality	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
6	Clean water and sanitation	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
7	Affordable and clean energy	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
8	Decent work and economic growth	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
9	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
10	Reduce inequalities	Reduce inequality within and among countries
11	Sustainable cities and communities	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
12	Responsible consumption and production	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
13	Climate action	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
14	Life below water	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

15	Life on land	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
16	Peace, justice and strong institutions	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
17	Partnerships for the goals	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Obviously, some SDGs are more relevant than others and organisations can frame their strategies to contribute to one or more specific SDGs relevant to their work. Various guidelines are being developed to show how organisations and companies can make their contribution to achieving the goals.

The reader will find more information about the targets, events, publications and actions for each goal using this link on the web page of the United Nations.

https://sdgs.un.org/

B2 UN Global Compact

The UN Global Compact is considered the world's largest and most important initiative for responsible Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). It was launched on 31 January 1999 by the then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan becoming effective on 26 June 2000. The UN Global Compact Network supports companies and organisations to develop their strategies and measures for a sustainable and socially responsible global economy. Worldwide, almost 10,000 companies from 161 countries have joined this pact on a voluntary basis. The pact contains 10 universal principles in the areas of human rights, labour standards, the environment and the prevention of corruption. It offers a good framework for considering one's priority issues.

https://www.unglobalcompact.org/

https://unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/mission/principles

B3 International Standardization Organisation (ISO)

Founded 1947, the ISO began its activities at its headquarters in Geneva. ISO elaborates international standards in all fields (with the exception of electrics, electronics and telecommunications). 165 countries are now represented. In general, the ISO has local representation through the various national standards associations across its membership. For the events industry the following standards are important:

ISO 20121: Event sustainability management systems – Requirements with guidance for use

The specific standard for sustainable event management is the ISO standard 20121 which was first published in 2012. The ISO standard 20121 is an international standard that is based on the British Standard BS 8901, Sustainable Events Management System, published in 2009 to provide a set of guidelines to help with the planning and management of sustainable events. It was triggered by the 2012 Olympic Games in London which were the first Olympic Games with a standardised sustainability system.

Several other ISO standards are relevant for a sustainable event industry too, including:

ISO 14000 family: Environmental management

The several standards of the ISO 14000 family serve as practical tools for companies of any sector to improve their ecological performance. These ISO 14001 standards include guidelines and criteria for multiple aspects of environmental management, such as water use and energy use. Stronger Focus of the standards set is laid on environmental management systems, environmental protection and performance, life cycle assessment, labelling, communication with stakeholders and measuring impacts.

First launched in 1996 and last revised in 2015, there are over 300’000 certifications in 171 countries to the widespread ISO 14001 standards by now. Benefits of the standards include e.g., an organized way to meet legal requirements, measures to fulfil expectations of stakeholders and shareholders, tools for self-improvement and thus form a competitive advantage.

Organizations that are familiar with ISO 14001 cover already a broad range of ecological topics which are one out of the three pillars of a sustainable management system for event suppliers.

https://www.iso.org/iso-14001-environmental-management.html

The following two ISO standards are also important, but are for guidance only, i.e. not intended for certification:

ISO 26000: Social Responsibility

The ISO 26000 standard is aimed at all types of organisations, including those in the event industry, committed to acting in a socially responsible way. It rather provides guidance than requirements, so unlike some other ISO standards, companies cannot get certified to this standard. Instead, it explains what social responsibility means and assists companies to translate principles into actions. The standard was developed by means of a multiple stakeholder process from across the world, thus it achieved to represent an international consensus. The ISO website offers linking documents for linking the ISO 26000 standard with the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the UN SDGs.

Event suppliers can get useful guidance on several key sustainability issues such as human rights, labour practices, the environment, fair operating practices, consumer issues and community involvement and development.

https://www.iso.org/iso-26000-social-responsibility.html

ISO 20400: Sustainable Procurement

The ISO 20400 standard for sustainable procurement is a sector-specific application of ISO 26000, Guidance on social responsibility, which it complements by focusing specifically on procurement and purchasing processes. Of particular use and relevance to the events sector, ISO 20400 offers guidance for companies to integrate sustainability into their procurement system. The standard integrates key principles of sustainable procurement, such as accountability, transparency, ethical behaviour and respect for human rights, and focuses on risk management and priority setting to manage the sustainability impacts of purchasing decisions. For global event suppliers the issue of sustainable procurement is material. It is also included as one part of the event-specific standards ISO 20121 as "Supply chain management".

https://www.iso.org/files/live/sites/isoorg/files/store/en/ISO%2020400_Sustainable_procur.pdf

B4 Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)

The GRI is the largest and most widely used framework for sustainability reporting worldwide. GRI was founded in 1997 as a non-profit making organisation with the aim of standardising reporting and making it comparable for organisations of all kinds. In 2016, GRI published the first international standards on sustainability reporting (last update in October 2021). The GRI Standards consist of three universal and 31 thematic standards. The latest surveys show that 73% of the world's 250 largest use this framework for sustainability reporting (KPMG, 2020). In parallel with ISO 20121 Standard, GRI has developed specific guidelines for event organisers. Various stakeholders have been consulted and an Event Organizers Sector Supplement Working Group established. In these guidelines event-specific topics such as sourcing, mobility, inclusivity, legacies, food and beverages are regulated. The sector-specific guidelines are now gradually harmonised and updated with the newest version of the GRI Standards of 2021.

https://globalreporting.org/

B5 Guidelines in the event industry

Parallel to the development of institutional standards and guidelines on sustainability, a variety of governing bodies, federations, organisers, sponsors and other representatives of the event industry have issued their own guidelines on this topic. This has led to a range of different frameworks, guides and tools to assess and support multiple aspects of sustainability of events, related industries or parts of their supply chain, which can be applied while organising an event.

Governing bodies, Federations and Brand owners

Large, international organisations such as the IOC have developed their own strategies and adopted a variety of guidelines and documents on sustainability, or issued a climate strategy such as FIFA. The strategies differ, with FIFA placing more emphasis on compliance and legal issues, while the IOC also emphasises environmental concerns and social issues. The IOC guidelines are primarily aimed at International Federations, the National Olympic Committees and some are specific to Olympic Organising Committees hosting Olympic Games in their country. Worth mentioning are the numerous documents and guidelines of the IOC, which are also directly addressed to service providers.

Olympic Sustainability – The IOC Sustainability Strategy
https://olympics.com/ioc/sustainability

Sustainability | Inside UEFA | UEFA.com
https://www.uefa.com/insideuefa/sustainability/

FIFA's Social Impact
https://www.fifa.com/social-impact

Producers and event organisers

10 years ago, only a few major event organisers had formulated their stance on sustainability. These days, more and more producers and organisers of festivals, sporting and other annually recurring events have developed comprehensive programmes and established their own guidelines to make their events more sustainable. These organisations have integrated sustainability into their management systems. In parallel a number of individual events or organisers have been certified according to ISO 20121.

The guidelines define the expectations or requirements for their suppliers, generally obligating them to document their sustainability and to contribute with sustainable products and services. Many event organisers now focus on these issues when selecting their service providers, not only for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games or the Commonwealth Games 2022 in Birmingham, but also for recurring events where organisers have committed themselves to sustainability, see for example:

Leading by example: our responsibility > Sustainability | World Economic Forum
https://www.weforum.org/sustainability-world-economic-forum

Introducing Sustainability | Roskilde Festival (roskilde-festival.dk)
https://www.roskilde-festival.dk/en/sustainability/introduction/

The events industry has also created a number of forums specialising in sustainability, which provide interesting information. Noteworthy examples of these include e.g., the "Sustainable Event Alliance". This internationally active association provides a membership charter, several guides, trainings for sustainable event management as well as an open database for sustainable suppliers or specialists in the field. Similarly, the knowledge platform "Green Events" connects event organisers in joint projects and provides specific guides.

B6 Outlook on future regulations

In recent years, we witness an increasing demand on governmental regulation of sustainability reporting. In November 2021, the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) has announced the foundation of an International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB). By the time of this publication, the ISSB has already published two prototype disclosures.

The EU has empowered the European Financial Reporting Advisory Group (EFRAG) to develop mandatory sustainability reporting standards under the EU's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD). Exposure drafts on different issues are in consultation and should be finalized by the end of 2022. Event suppliers are advised to observe the international and regional sustainability regulation initiatives carefully as it will drastically increase the demand for sustainability related data.

Annex C – ISO Standard 20121

ISO 20121 is a management system for sustainable event management processes and deliberately does not define any targets that have to be met. It merely defines the requirements for a sustainable event management system in order to improve the sustainability of events and provides guidance on how to achieve these requirements. The standard can be applied to all types and sizes of organisations or companies involved in the design, planning and implementation of sustainable events.

The special feature of the ISO standard is that it is designed in such a way that the sustainability can be constantly improved during the management cycle of an event. Since its successful introduction in 2012 a large number of companies and organisers have improved sustainability with the help of this management system. It was potentially due for review in 2017 but it was agreed to continue unchanged and reassess in 2022. That process is underway led by AFNOR, with expectation an updated version will be released in 2024 – i.e. ISO 20121:2024. Nowadays, this ISO standard is acknowledged by all governmental bodies in the event industry.

It is important to note that ISO Standard 20121 is a sustainability management system, unlike its cousin ISO Standard 14001 which focusses on environmental management.

C1 How to use ISO 20121

A universal model for improving processes in the management cycle is the renown PDCA cycle which comprises the four phases Plan, Do, Check and Act, each with different sub-steps. This cycle is used by ISO 20121 to provide guidance on how to use. This Guide takes this same cycle to illustrate the individual steps specifically for the event supplier's industry. Also, the following explanations refer to and complement the Annex A Guidance on planning and implementing this International Standard.

For a better overview, a separate numbering has been created for this guide. The reader will find the chapter number of the ISO standard in brackets so that the passages can be found easily.

Plan	Do	Check	Act
P1: Identify and include stakeholders (4.2) P2: Determine scope of management system (4.3) P3: Define development principles (4.5) P4: Establish development policy (5.2) P5: Assign responsibility and authority (5.3) P6: a) Determine and address risks and opportunities b) Set objectives and define how to achieve them (6)	D1: Provide resources, determine competence and ensure awareness (7.1-7.3) D2: Implement internal and external communication (7.4) D3: Create and update documentation, incl. supply chain (7.5) D4: Implement and control processes and manage the supply chain (8)	C1: Evaluation of performance against governing principles (9.1-9.2) C2: Audits and reviews by management (9.3-9.4)	A1: Identify nonconformity and take corrective actions (10)

Stage "Plan"

P1: Identify and include stakeholders (4.2)
Stakeholders are persons or organisations that are affected by an event and/or have an influence on it. They play an important role in a sustainable event management system because the exchange with affected stakeholders enables the identification of risks and opportunities and possibly may lead to form new partnerships. In order to identify those stakeholders, it is important to analyse which individuals or groups are affected by or involved in the event-related activities. It is obviously not possible to contact and involve all stakeholders, as resources are limited. Therefore, only the most important stakeholder groups (key stakeholders) are selected and contacted such as participants, suppliers, regulators and the community.

Does this stakeholder has a large influence on you:				**Is this stakeholder strongly influenced by you:**			**Influence in the future**	**TOTAL**
Stake-holder	Economi-cal perfor-mance	Ecological perfor-mance	Social per-formance	Economi-cal perfor-mances	Ecological perfor-mance	Social performance		
Employees	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	14
Share-holders/ Investors	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	9
Suppliers	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	11

Example of a Matrix to define the most important stakeholders

Once the most important stakeholders have been identified, the next step is the stakeholder dialogue. One of the aims of the dialogue is to gain an insight which issues are important to the stakeholders and which must be considered. Another goal is to use the dialogue to find out how further cooperation can be shaped in order to achieve the sustainability goals.

P2: Determine scope of management system (4.3)

The previous step was to involve the most important stakeholders. The aim of the involvement interests and goals they represent and which issues are important to them. The scope is defined on the basis of the interests of the stakeholders. An event in itself cannot claim compliance with the standard. Only the management system in which this event has been planned and implemented can claim conformity with the standard for itself.

The event management system must determine the possible uses of its sustainable event management system so that it can define its scope. In determining the scope, the following must be considered:

- The external and internal issues and objectives in the context of the company and internal issues and objectives (refer to chapter 4.1. Understanding of the organization and its context in the ISO Standard).

- The requirements from external and internal stakeholders as listed in P1

The scope must be available as documented information.

The scope may differ depending on the services and business models of each service provider. They may determine individually which parts of their products and services in the management system are relevant for the sustainability of events. Event organisers, for example, who organise many different events, can decide to introduce this management system for an event or series of events, or to use it for all the events they organise. On the other hand, a company with many different business units may use the event management system for their event related business unit only. Furthermore, the event supplier may wish to apply the event management system for its rental business only, leaving the sales activities apart.

P3: Define development principles (4.5)
The guiding principles should be recorded in the form of a declaration and form the basis for the company's sustainable development activities.

Specifically, it is required that:

- the guiding principles for sustainable development are established and documented,
- the main purpose in relation to client groups be stated
- and the company's values in relation to sustainable development and its work within the within the events industry.

Note on principles: How a company evolves and whether it succeeds, depends largely on its mission, vision and values. The vision is forward-looking: Where does the company want to go, what does it want to achieve? What is the overarching goal?

The mission relates to the present: What can the company do, what is it there for? Corporate values form an important part of the corporate culture. They are the cornerstones of a culture and show the employees the necessary guidelines in their everyday working life. As described in detail in the table A.3 Example of maturity matrix, the principles on inclusion, integrity, responsible behaviour and transparency are important aspects of sustainable development.

Principle	A few possible questions
Inclusion	• How are the rights and interests of stakeholders taken into account? • How is it ensured that no groups or individuals are disadvantaged or not informed? • Are there interests beyond the stakeholders that should be taken into account?
Integrity	• How, in accordance with all other guiding principles, is accountability for (an) action(s) demonstrated? • How is it demonstrated that decisions and actions are impartial and that they comply with relevant laws, legal requirements and regulations?
Stewardship	• Will decisions and activities relate to the event result in decisive environmental or social changes or losses? If so: Have alternatives been assessed? • How are skills regarding sustainable development management developed, shared, applied and recognised? • Is the use of resources and the resulting impact considered and monitored in any activity?
Transparency	• How is it ensured that relevant and reliable information is available in an unhindered, economical and comparable manner?

The four most important principles in accordance to ISO 20121

P4: Establish development policy (5.2)
The further course of action should be structured. Therefore, it is important that policies are introduced and documented. The policy for sustainable development includes:

- a commitment to the leadership role within sustainable event management,

- a statement of purpose and values
- and a commitment to follow the policy, i.e. the guiding principles.

The policy must be documented and communicated internally and be available to interested external stakeholders as appropriate.

It is the basis for all activities, products and services related to the event. They shall be helpful in identifying potential requirements such as products, facilities, suppliers, bid specifications and contractual terms and conditions. They should therefore apply to the entire management cycle – from design, procurement to implementation. In addition, the needs and interests of stakeholders and users of the delivered commodities must be taken into account. The guidelines apply to the whole value chain, i.e. include the suppliers or outsourced services.

P5: Assign responsibility and authority (5.3)
Assigning and publicising roles and responsibilities ensures that the sustainable event management system meets the requirements of the ISO 20121 standard. It also serves to report to the governing body on the performance of the sustainable event management system.

P6a: Determine and address risks and opportunities (6)
In which topics do you want to improve? What would you like to achieve? For this, goals must be set. However, these goals can only be achieved if they are approached strategically. For this reason, measures must be planned that lead step by step to the goal. When choosing topics, all three dimensions of sustainability should be taken into account:

- Ecology: use of resources, choice of materials, conservation of resources, reduction of emissions, nature conservation and biodiversity, emissions and pollutants in soil, water and air.
- Social: labour standards, health and safety civil rights, social justice, local community, indigenous rights, cultural issues, accessibility, equality, traditions and religious sensitivities.
- Economy: return on investment, local economy, market capacity, business values, innovation, direct and indirect economic influence, market influence, market presence, economic performance, risk, fair trade and profit sharing.

It should be noted that many topics may overlap such as transports, accessibility, etc. All the issues that need to be considered can be found in chapter 6: Planning.

P6b: Set objectives and define how to achieve them (6)
The sustainability goals to be achieved can be set best according to the following SMART principle:

- Specific: Choose the goals so that they are concrete, precise and unambiguous. They must also take into account applicable requirements and be consistent with the Guidelines for Sustainable development guidelines.
- Measurable: The goals are measurable and their degree of achievement verifiable.

- Attractive: The goals are positive, action-oriented and communicated to all stakeholders.

- Realistic: The goals must remain achievable. They can be adjusted and updated.

- Timed: The goals and their achievement have a fixed end date.

The goal-setting process should also consider how the sustainability goals are to be achieved in concrete terms. The following questions can help:

- What needs to be done concretely?
- What resources are needed?
- Who is responsible?
- When must implementation be completed?
- How will the results be evaluated afterwards?

In order for goals to be achieved, they should be as concrete as possible and have an end point (see SMART criteria). What is the objective? Is it measurable/observable? By when should the goal be achieved? Is it doable? What reference value is taken for comparison? Here is an example: By 2025 CO2 emissions of our transport fleet shall be reduced by 25% compared to 2021. Targets represent the minimum level of performance and quantified by so-called key performance indicators (KPIs).

Stage "Do"

D1: Provide resources, determine competence and ensure awareness (7.1-7.3)

Now it's a matter of turning words into deeds. To ensure the successful implementation of a sustainable event management system, you need resources. The requirements as well as the provision of necessary resources must always be documented. Resources include, but are not limited to, staffing, expertise, training, infrastructure, technological processes and finances:

People whose work has an impact on the performance of sustainability of events must have the necessary skills and accordingly empowered to act. People working for the company must be aware of the company's sustainable development guidelines.

- Infrastructure and technology: The requirements for equipment, materials, products and services must be assessed. This involves calculating how much resources should be invested in infrastructures and technologies.

- Finance: The provision of needs-based resources will have an impact on the budget. The financial consequences from the provision of the required resources must be assessed.

D2: Implement internal and external communication (7.4)

When you do good, you should also communicate it. Communication is crucial for the successful implementation of the sustainable event management system. This applies to both internal as well as external communication.

Successful communication requires that the following questions are clarified:

- What is to be communicated (content)?
- When is it to be communicated (timing)?
- Who is being communicated with (target group/s)?
- How is it communicated (type, medium)?

It is important that the following topics are communicated:

- Policy, i.e. Guiding principles of the company for sustainable development
- Sustainability management system for Events
- Themes, objectives and targets
- Procedure for achieving objectives and targets
- Importance and/or benefits for stakeholders
- Progress against performance
- Feedback from stakeholders

D3: Create and update documentation, incl. supply chain (7.5)

The event management system and issues during its implementation must always be documented in order to maintain transparency and to enable third party verification. The areas that should always be documented are:

- Stakeholder identification and inclusion (P1),
- Scope of the event management system (P2),
- Principles, guidelines and themes (P3, P4, P6a, P6b),
- Allocation of functions and responsibilities (P5)
- and difficulties or issues encountered.

D4: Implement and control processes and manage the supply chain (8)

For operational planning it is important that

- the functions and responsibilities have been allocated (P5),
- the participants have been trained to carry out their tasks (D1),
- the right mechanisms are in place to achieve the specific objectives (P6b),
- the channels of communication with stakeholders are open (P1)
- and finally, the necessary documentation is available (D3).

Subsequently, it is ensured that the operational processes that are related to the sustainable event management system, are carried out according to plan. This concerns both internal as well as externally contracted or outsourced operations. It is therefore crucial that the importance of each objective, stage goal and concept to service providers can be justified.

Stage "Check"

C1: Evaluation of performance against governing principles (9.1-9.2)

The monitoring and measurement are not only an important to check how the system is working but also a precondition to achieve improvements in the future.

Incorrectly set measurement criteria, forgotten controls or deviations from targets can happen, this is not a big deal. However, it is important that the right lessons are learned and corrective measures are implemented.

Particular attention should be put on:

- Setup a reasonable warning system
- Check baseline measurement for the KPI's
- Implement lessons learned at once

The evaluation of the performance may also include product manufacturer and/or subcontractors as outlined in Annex B "Supply chain management" of ISO 20121. It is key to discuss and agree with them on measurement methods and the data you expect them to deliver. It may be advisable to include such deliverables in their scope of services.

C2: Audits and reviews by management (9.3-9.4)

Internal audits are carried out to determine whether the sustainable event management system meets international standards and whether it is successful in achieving the sustainability goals. For a successful audit, one needs to:

- determine what will be monitored and measured in the audits,
- determine when the measurement will be carried out and the subsequent analysis of the results take place,
- select the auditors and conduct audits,
- ensure objectivity and impartiality of the audit process,
- ensure that the relevant management levels are informed of the audit results, and
- and retain documentation of the audit as evidence.

The reviews by the management levels shall be in writing and include suggestions for improvement for the management system.

Stage "Act"

A1: Identify nonconformity and take corrective actions (10)
Non-conformities occur in the form of non-compliance with requirements and can cause serious problems in achieving objectives. It is therefore crucial that:

- the non-conformity is recognised,
- it is responded to,
- the need for action is assessed and necessary measures are taken,
- the effectiveness of the corrective action taken is reviewed, and
- changes are made to the sustainable event management system; and if necessary, preventive measures are taken.

The corrective actions should be proportionate and solve the problems in the long term so that non-conformities do not recur.

C2 ISO 20121 Standard at national level

Here below is a non-exhaustive list of countries which have translated ISO 20121 into a national standard

Region	National Provider	Official name of the norm	Languages
International	International Organization for Standardization (ISO)	ISO 20121:2012	English, French
Australia	Standards Australia	AS ISO 20121:2013	English
Belgium	Belgian Standards	NBN ISO 20121: 2014	
Brazil	Brazilian Standards	NBR ISO 20121: 2012	
Canada	CSA America, Inc. [CSA]	CSA 20121-13 (R2018)	English
Denmark	Danish Standards [DS]	DS/ISO 20121:2012	
France	Association Francaise de Normalisation	NF ISO 20121: 2012	
Germany	Deutsches Institut für Normung [DIN]	DIN ISO 20121:2013	German, English
Italy	Ente Nazionale Italiano di Unificazione (UNI)	UNI ISO 10121: 2013	Italian
Norway	Norges Standardiseringsforbund	NS ISO 20121:2012	
Russian Federation	Interstandard	GOST R ISO 20121:2014	Russian

Spain	Asociacion Espanola de Normalizacion	UNE-ISO 20121:2013	Spanish
Sweden	Swedish Standards Institute [SIS]	SS-ISO 20121:2012	
United Kingdom	British Standards Institution [BSI]	BS ISO 20121:2012	English

Glossary

Glossary

The terms are listed in alphabetical order. The descriptions of the terms were made by the authors and apply for this Guide only. They are to be considered as a supplement to the terms and definitions described in the ISO 2021 standard.

Term	Description
Audit	Systematic and independent process documented to determine, by means of an objective evaluation, the extent to which the specified criteria are met, usually distinguished between internal and external audit
Area of application (Scope)	Area in which the standard is applied depending on the set (system) limit and implementation possibility; also scope.
Conformity or non-conformity	Conformity or non-conformity with a defined attitude or behaviour. Fulfilment or non-fulfilment of a requirement.
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility is typically a strategy implemented by large corporations to address stakeholder issues through programs such as charity, philanthropy, and/or volunteer efforts. As important as CSR is for the community, it is equally valuable for a company.
Documented information	Information that must be controlled and made available, including the carrier medium. Documented information can be in any format, on any medium and from any source.
Event cycle	Phases and activities of an event (including the products and services involved), starting from research, conception and planning to implementation, review and follow-up activities.
ESG	ESG stands for Environmental Social and Governance, and refers to the three key factors when measuring the sustainability and ethical impact of an investment in a business or company. It is a generic term mainly used in capital markets and commonly used by organisations to evaluate the behaviour of companies.
Inclusion	Practice of fair dealing and meaningful stakeholder involvement. Inclusiveness refers to all persons regardless of race, age, gender, colour, religion, sexual orientation, culture, nationality, income, disability (mental, spiritual, sensory or physical) or any other form of discrimination.
Integrity	Compliance with ethical principles
Key Performance Indicators (KPI)	Indicators that can be used to measure the performance of activities in a company. They are used to determine progress towards important objectives.
Key Stakeholders	The most important stakeholders. They have the greatest influence or authority and can make a project a success or a failure. Their needs must be met.
Management team (Governing body)	Person or group of persons who controls and directs an organisation/company at the highest level.
Management system	Set of interrelated or mutually influencing elements of a company/organisation to define guidelines, objectives and processes to achieve these objectives. It can encompass one or more areas.
Material Issues (Topics)	Issues that reflect the significant economic, environmental and social impacts of a company/organisation or that have a material impact on stakeholder assessments and decisions; also core issues (GRI). The term "Issues" may also be replaced by "Topics".
PDCA Cycle	The PDCA cycle is a universal model for improving processes in the management cycle which comprises the four phases Plan, Do, Check and Act, each with different sub-steps.
Relevant topics (Themes)	Topics that can reasonably be expected to be relevant to a presentation of the economic, environmental and social impacts of a company/organisation or to influence stakeholder decisions (GRI).

Responsible management	Accountability with regard to sustainable development, shared by all whose actions affect environmental performance, economic activities and social progress, and reflected both as a value and in the actions of individuals, organisations, communities and relevant authorities.
Sustainable development	Development that meets the needs of the present without risking future generations being unable to meet their own needs.
Transparency	Openness about decisions and activities that affect society, the economy and the environment, combined with a willingness to communicate them clearly, concisely, timely, honestly and fully.
Value chain	Sequence of activities or actors through which products or services are made available.

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