

Sustainability guidelines

for ECTMIH 2025 in Hamburg

These guidelines aim to support the ECTMIH organization to take sustainability commitments into account within all aspects of the planning, implementation and evaluation process. Sustainability is defined as meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generations. (Vos, 2007)

Our goal is to organize the scientific conference in an environmentally friendly, climate-conscious, and socially responsible manner. This guideline aims to incorporate ecological, social, and economic sustainability into the planning and execution of the event.

Below you will find action points that we will use as a guideline. This guideline will be made available to all committees and partners of the ECTMIH, with the request to adhere to it to the best of their ability. The sustainability guideline will also be published on the ECTMIH 2025 website.

We are building onto the work started by the ECTMIH team from Utrecht. This is a work in progress document, we welcome feedback, suggestions and ideas to continue to improve and learn in realizing our ambitions!

1. GENERAL APPROACHES AND PRINCIPLES

- **We make a commitment** - we advertise our event as a sustainable one. We let our participants know that we are committed to hosting an environmentally sound event, and invite everyone to think along and contribute to realizing this mission.
- **Where possible, we choose products that are recyclable or reusable.** We will be intentional about sustainability before we place supply orders. If possible, we will prioritize products that can be recycled, reused, or produced in a green way or local products. We will emphasize the importance of waste reduction and proper waste sorting.
- **We appreciate the support and contributions from our participants and contribution.** It's a team effort, and we appreciate everyone's support and engagement in our approach. We will provide positive reminders of this before, and during the conference and we welcome suggestions on how to continuously improve. Together we can be the driver of change, foster sustainable thinking and practice via the creation of spaces where we collectively put our efforts into saving the planet.

2. Venue/ Accomodation

- **Check sustainability guidelines of venue and accommodation**

Policies within accommodation and infrastructure can contribute to energy saving: Ask if the accommodation/venue has an eco-label and/or specific policies that can be implemented for climate-friendly meetings

- **Location accommodation**

Accessibility of the main venue, such as walking distance from the city centre and public transportation services can reduce impact: Prioritize venues that are easily accessible by public transport; Choose hotels in walking distance of the venue

3. TRANSPORTATION

- **Traveling to the conference (if possible) not through aviation**

Aviation alone is responsible for approximately 3.5% of anthropogenic climate change: Inform participants of the environmental footprint of various transportation forms. Encourage European participant to travel to the location by train; advertise special public transport offers on ECTMIH homepage as well as DB-Event ticket for cheaper train tickets.

- **Travel planning**

Planning ahead can lower the environmental impact and emissions of attendee travel and transportation: Choose event locations and accommodations that minimize travel of attendees; Schedule events during off-peak traffic hours like late morning or early afternoon; Provide participants with sufficient information on public transportation possibilities in the program and on your website, including clear and visible information, maps, and time estimations for their walk or use of public transport between various locations.

4. COMMUNICATION

- **Promote your event as sustainable**

Guests are more likely to adjust their behaviour if they are aware of your goals: Inform guests that they are participating in a green event on your website and newsletter; Thank guests for the considerations they have taken to make this a green event; Encourage guests to stay at sustainability-minded hotels and sustainable restaurants. Encourage participants to use climate calculator (https://co2.myclimate.org/en/calculate_emissions) to calculate their emission and suggest to compensate their CO₂ gas usage.

- **Paperless (where possible)**

Reduces demand for paper and deforestation that impacts environmental health: Send invitations, conduct event registration, and publicize updates electronically; Use web or email-based registration systems; Use projectors, whiteboards, or flat screen TV to post important information during planning sessions rather than printing meeting handouts; If printed materials are absolutely necessary, try to encourage a sustainable printing company (e.g for poster presentation). Try to send out participation certificates online.

5. FOOD AND BEVERAGE

- **Sustainable food options**

Sustainable foods have a lower environmental impact on the planet: Provide and promote the use of local, seasonal and fresh products for all meals; Plan the catering only according to the number of participants to avoid food waste; As much as possible of your meal offerings are plant-based; If serving meat options, seek humanely raised meat and sustainable seafood options; Avoid beef, lamb, and dairy products

- **Sustainable service ware**

Sustainable service ware can be reused or composted, meets Single Use Plastics Policy:

Preferably use: plated dinners on reusable dinnerware (ex: ceramic, hard plastic); If disposables are necessary, food ware products must be made from 100% fibre-based materials to be compostable and beverage containers must be glass, aluminium, or paper-based; Ask caterer to provide 100% fibre-based compostable options for plates, cups, and flatware. Avoid: Individually boxed lunches; Individually packaged condiments (use bulk dispensers instead). Don't use: Plastic food ware or cutlery, including PLA; Styrofoam

- **Serving Beverages**

Reusables and non-plastic alternatives are less wasteful than plastic disposables:

Preferably use: refillable 5-gallon water coolers instead of offering individual water bottles; Other water dispensing options: water fountain & mobile water trucks; Avoid: Straws; Single-use stir sticks for coffee and tea; Individual packaged creamer; Don't use: Plastic straws, except when addressing the needs of people with disabilities Single-use plastic beverage bottles

- **Food donations**

Donating food prevents food waste that could result in greenhouse gas emissions: Ask catering company about their leftover food policy

6. WASTE MANAGEMENT

- **Waste Infrastructure**

Having the appropriate waste bins and signs makes sorting and disposal easier: Check with venue about the possibility/accessibility to sort waste during the congress

- **Waste Reduction**

Minimizing waste is the most impactful method for waste management: Discuss the venue what possibilities exist to reduce and reuse waste; During the event planning process, identify ways to cut out unnecessary materials, even if it can be recycled or composted; Minimize waste by keeping the event simple

- **Donate and reuse material**

Lightly used material can be reused, if not by you, by someone else: if applicable make plans to donate materials and centrepieces after the event; Collect all items that can be reused later and store them for future events

7. ENERGY SAVING

- **Natural light**

Hold events during daylight hours and in locations that can be lit naturally. This includes to meet during a warmer time period to have more daylight as well as saving heating costs.

- **Lighting and Power**

Make sure all decorative lighting uses LED bulbs. Use power strips for all electronic equipment (laptops, projectors, etc.) and shut off power strips during breaks or between sessions

- **Rechargeable Batteries**

Use rechargeable batteries for electronic devices (cameras, laser pointers, etc.)

8. GIVEAWAYS

Prioritize experiences over products

Swag, merch, and freebies frequently end up in the landfill after a short time: Try giving away event tickets, food, or fun opportunities; advise sponsors to set up fun activities like photo booths to get brand marketing rather than giveaways; if products are used: Choose sustainable and useful products.