



## QUICK TIPS

# GREENING PROJECT AND OFFICE MANAGEMENT

The EU is promoting climate neutrality and environmental sustainability in its external action, in line with the Green Deal ambition, through policy dialogue, programmes, projects and investments. The EU is also committed to lead by example.

Nothing is more convincing when promoting transformational change than practising what we preach. Day-to-day operations, both in EU offices and in EU-funded projects, offer ample opportunities to minimise our environmental footprint.

Engaging and sensitising colleagues and implementing partners in green practices can have a multiplier effect, as these practices are incorporated into personal habits. Remember that small acts can have a big impact!

These Quick Tips focus on measures to green the operations of entities, management units, public services, and private operators implementing EU cooperation programmes and projects.



### Assessing and measuring

- ▶ An assessment of the environmental and climate footprint of our operations is an essential starting point: to identify the elements with the greatest negative impacts and to target our efforts. This can be done through an external or internal audit.
- ▶ Involving staff in participatory assessments, particularly in the choice and prioritisation of measures and planning, is a key condition to secure everyone's participation in the greening effort.
- ▶ It is also important to integrate greening measures in work plans and measure the impact of our efforts.



### Greening project operations

The tips below cover the whole project cycle and can be implemented at any stage.

#### Buying green

- ▶ Define environmental sustainability and circularity criteria for procurement, in order to reduce negative impacts, by promoting circular economy principles, forest product certification, organic products as well as efforts to use low carbon/energy efficiency and design out waste and pollution management. This will keep products and materials in use and support regenerating natural systems. For example:
  - Make sure you clearly communicate to the contractors/implementing partners the intention to apply the circular economy principles - emphasising environmental sustainability and low carbon/climate friendly approaches - and encourage them to include in their offer/proposals options which facilitate waste minimisation, a longer product use and cost-effective material recovery (e.g. 'product as a service' models - leasing instead of buying -, sharing schemes).

- Prioritise products from a circular economy and with low ecological footprints (e.g. recycled paper, FSC-certified paper and wood, led lighting, second-hand goods). Ecological labels (international or national) can be used as references.
- Prepare an end-of-cycle plan for purchased equipment. Check how you can ensure that it will be reused (e.g. by partners or social institutions) or, if it reaches its end-of-life during project duration, how it will be recycled or disposed of.
- Purchase only what is necessary and avoid single-use products; take stock of what is already available in-house or from existing and previous contractors/implementing partners/projects, and that can be reused.
- Consider options to repair or upgrade equipment instead of replacing it with new ones.
- Prioritise resource-efficient equipment (e.g. for energy and water efficiency).

### Greening calls for proposals and tenders

- ▶ Clearly communicate to the applicants the importance of environmental sustainability objectives in the Call for Proposals (CfP) and Call for Tenders (CfT), including with references to the EU Green Deal, the Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement, and the EU's ambition to lead a just transition to a circular economy globally.
- ▶ Clearly indicate in the guidelines of the call and during presentations what actions/products or expenditures will be ineligible (e.g. Styrofoam, single-use plastics, pesticides, hazardous chemicals) and add it as an Article 7 in the grant contract or as an annex, to be checked by an auditor (legal condition).
- ▶ Ensure that tenders for goods, services or works specify the obligation to use sustainable materials. For example, works on buildings and construction (including project offices) need to adhere to the use of renewable energy and resources (e.g. in compliance with relevant efficiency codes), rainwater harvesting, designing out air conditioning, etc. This can also provide an incentive to local service providers and suppliers to go green. *Further suggestions can be found below in the section on greening office management.*
- ▶ When preparing the calls for proposals or calls for tender as well as evaluation criteria and assessment grids, include environmental sustainability, notably low carbon performance, and circularity criteria in the call as part of the “added value” or “cross-cutting issue” criteria. For example: give higher scores to applicants that show a commitment to environmental performance as an added value aspect and/or in their project management approach, including action to contribute to climate change objectives and the circular economy transition (e.g. energy efficiency plans, use of renewable energy).

### Greening events and meetings

- ▶ Meetings and events, when they entail lots of travel, need to be carefully considered. Organise meetings/events in **online formats** if possible; minimise the use of video (the bandwidth for video is 5-10x that consumed by audio) and send material using shared platforms instead of attachments.
- ▶ Carefully assess the need for long-distance **travel**; when needed, carefully plan to maximise the benefit. Prioritise travel by train, direct flights and in economy class. Promote the payment of carbon offsets for air transport; make sure **carbon offsets** can be claimed as reimbursable expenses.
- ▶ Select **venue locations** where travel by rail and public transport can be prioritised (e.g. considering ease, cost and quality of public transport).
- ▶ **Avoid the use of single-use plastics** (such as water bottles and tableware) in events and minimise the use of **other single-use products** (e.g. gifts, name tags).
- ▶ Promote **paperless events** and avoid **promotional material**; select necessary hand-out material based on environmental sustainability criteria (e.g. avoid plastic pens). Plan ahead, and identify the options for recycling and adequate disposal of waste and ensure (require) the appropriate waste collection and management.
- ▶ In **catering**, limit meat and meat products as they are the main food contributors to climate change and environmental degradation. Instead, promote plant-based food with a good nutritional quality, organic and locally-produced seasonal products. Determine beforehand what will happen to leftover food; agreements with social institutions are a good option, but make sure the venue providing the food has no restrictions on that.

### Reports and deliverables

- ▶ Reports and deliverables should be in digital versions (preferably compressed), unless there are specific needs for printed versions.
- ▶ Request hard copies of reports only when necessary, and only the minimum number of copies necessary using double-sided printing on recycled or FSC-certified paper.
- ▶ When sending bulky reports, have the contractors use links to shared platforms.



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## Greening office management

In line with the tips on greening project operations, this section offers tips for implementing partners, contractors and EU delegation staff.

### Greening office management

- ▶ Promote **sustainable mobility**. Carefully assess the need for long distance travel and plan **missions** to maximise benefit and encourage sustainable mobility options. See recommendations on travel above; options offered by the travel agency can be accompanied by information to staff on their greenhouse gas emissions.
- ▶ Establish **waste** segregation shared stations in the office. If the municipality doesn't have segregated waste collection, seek ways to channel waste to recycling points. For example, agreements may be established with paper and glass manufacturers to collect waste.
- ▶ **Aim for paperless**. Discourage printing and set printers to double-sided black & white printing as default. Encourage signing of documents electronically (paperless processes).
- ▶ Be aware of the cumulative environmental footprint of electronic communications. Reduce excessive use of **emails** and don't send unnecessary attachments; clean your mailbox regularly.
- ▶ **Promote energy efficiency**. Install led lighting and promote energy efficiency measures. Set thermostatically-controlled temperature ranges when using air conditioning and heating (e.g. 19°C when heating and 24°C when cooling), and make sure thermostats only operate during working hours. Adapt dress code to the location's climate.
- ▶ Promote **water use efficiency**. Use flow regulators in water taps, dual-flush toilets, water-efficient watering of gardens (equipment, watering in the evenings), keep gardens with indigenous species and adopt water conservation gardening practices such as mulching.
- ▶ **Water and food**. Install water fountains/filters when tap water is not safe for consumption. See guidance above on food and catering.
- ▶ Use **sustainable items** such as non-disposable tableware for service lunches, cocktail parties and use by staff; eco-certified cleaning products, when available; refillable pens and toners, etc.
- ▶ For tips related to the organisation of events and meetings, see above; many of these can also be relevant to catering contractors.

### Personal commitment

Promote sustainable consumption among workers/staff, for example by:

- ▶ Bringing reusable containers (to collect take-away food) and personal tableware (if not available for common use).
- ▶ Choosing the places you eat/drink together based on social and environmental considerations.
- ▶ Using non-plastic refillable water bottles, cups and mugs, and use of water fountains.
- ▶ Facilitating car-pooling whenever possible, e.g. coordinating arrival/departure schedules.
- ▶ Opting for sustainable modes of transport (public transport, cycling or walking) in daily commutes.
- ▶ Allowing flexibility in arrival/exit schedules to avoid rush hours, leading to fuel savings.
- ▶ Teleworking when appropriate.
- ▶ Promoting the use of stairs instead of the lift (also as part of a healthy lifestyle).
- ▶ Organising environment quizzes or competitions, with sustainable prizes.



## Environmental Management Systems

If your office/service wants to take a more formal and structured commitment to environmental sustainability, an Environmental Management System (EMS) may be an option, e.g. through EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme) or the ISO 14001:2015 standard. Such systems are certifiable, but they can also be implemented partly in an EU delegation and managed by the environmental focal point with the assistance of other committed staff. Note that your local coordinator and [EMAS in DG HR](#) can be consulted on these aspects and can help you set up such systems and improvements.

### Raise awareness and encourage further action

- ▶ Organise actions at your office or in your region, e.g. cycling days, cleaning operations, having your own local herb patio or vegetable plot, that staff can co-create, maintain and utilise for their own consumption. Team up with local initiatives.
- ▶ Advertise and promote green actions on your local Intranet or through a Newsletter, presenting inspiring initiatives. Include 'green tips' (on energy, digital use, paper and water use, food, etc.).
- ▶ Encourage partners to be part of such actions, by highlighting their benefits (environmental, socio-economic, health-related, ethical, etc.) and by giving them incentives (e.g. advertising their participation in local media or in EU communication channels).

### Further information and support:



- ▶ [EMAS – Eco-Management and Audit Scheme](#).
- ▶ [European Commission DG Environment. Buying green! A handbook on green public procurement, 3rd edition](#).
- ▶ [European Commission DG Environment. Public Procurement for a Circular Economy. Good practice and guidance](#).
- ▶ [Sustainable@Work Guidelines on organising sustainable meetings and events at the Commission](#).
- ▶ [UK Department of Energy & Climate Change - SME Guide to Energy Efficiency](#).

Contact the EU Greening Facility:

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