



# Winning Sports Events!

- Guiding Principles for Sustainable Events





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### - Guiding Principles for Sustainable Events

- » Sustainable practices are becoming a prerequisite for all activities in a modern society and we see growing demand from citizens, sponsors, sports organizations, and governments to act. If you are involved in the planning of an event this is a tool for you.
- » Sports play an important role in our journey towards a better future and as an organizer of a sports event today, you are expected to include environmental and social sustainable practices in your bid, your planning, and, of course, during the event itself.
- » These Guiding Principles for Winning Sports Events are designed to help you start to improve the sustainability credentials of your event and to contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and thereby make a real difference.
- » Whether it's a major international competition, or a smaller national tournament, there is always a need for a sustainable approach in planning and holding a sports event.

## What is a sustainable sports event?

When we act in complex systems such as the planet and society, it is vital to have a holistic approach and grasp an overall framework in order to be creative and successful.

Imagine if a team of football players does not share a common idea of how success looks in a match, or fail to agree on basic principles before play starts. If they are also unable to agree on common strategies within the rules of the game, there would hardly be anything amounting to a match – even if each individual was incredibly talented, they would be unable to co-operate, communicate or create smart solutions. Imagine if the same thing applied to the planet and society, and as a result, what would happen to our capacity for long-term survival and our chances of living here.

With common rules and a shared view of how success looks, we have an opportunity to co-operate and create effective strategies. We know that everyone on the team is needed to play their part, and when everyone is aiming for a shared goal it becomes considerably easier to win.

## A science based definition of sustainable sports events:

Sustainable sports events inspire diversity, equality, and lifelong physical activity, and are successful socially, environmentally, and financially.

They are conducted transparently and contribute to health, empowerment, learning, and a fair and meaningful life for all – locally and globally.

Sustainable sports events efficiently use renewable energy, metals and minerals widely available in nature, biodegradable chemicals and resources from well-managed land, oceans and forests. As a result, such events no longer hinder the planet's capacity to provide us with new resources and maintain life in all its forms.

The journey towards fully sustainable sports events may seem long, but it is a unique factor for the success of sports, that together we will make a reality. *Continue reading more on page 12.*

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Sports play an important role in our journey towards a better future. As an organizer of a sports event today, you are expected to include environmental and social sustainable practices in your bid, your planning, and in practice.

These Guiding Principles for winning sports events are designed to help you start to improve the sustainability credentials of your event, to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals and make a real difference.

These tips and ideas have been provided by the following associations under the auspices of the Baltic RECOord project, with support from the Swedish Institute.



## Where do I start as an event organizer?

Work starts during the bidding process of an event, continues through the preparation and implementation phases, and forms an important part of an event's legacy and its supporting "story".

Checklists on how to save the planet and society tend to become long and impractical. A more effective approach involves you and the organizing team discussing a shared vision of your event once it fulfills the definition above (page 1).

As an inspiration for topics to discuss, the "[Aspects of Sustainability at Sports Events](#)" by the Swedish Sports Confederation may be of help. Below you find these "Aspects" grouped into "Environmental", "Social" and "Organizational" areas.



### Social Sustainability

Responsible betting  
Working conditions & human rights  
Anti-doping  
Health  
Inclusion  
Equality

Accessibility  
Art & culture  
Combat matchfixing  
Pandemics  
Societal engagement  
Sex trafficking & prostitution  
Safety & security

### Environmental Sustainability

Waste management  
Bio-diversity & animal welfare  
Accommodation  
Noise & pollution  
Construction  
Energy  
Internal & external transport  
Chemicals  
Public access  
Climate

Local footprint  
Food & drink  
Material selection  
Travel to and from events  
Choice of venue  
Water  
Exploitation  
Clothes & textiles  
Don't litter  
Mood drivers

### Organizational Sustainability

Event design  
Sustainability policy  
Purchasing & suppliers  
Stakeholders dialogue  
Secretariat/office  
Communication  
Laws & permits  
Leadership & management  
Profitability  
Marketing

Monitoring & follow-up  
Sponsors & partners  
Transparency & reporting  
Training & education

[Learn more >>](#)



## The bidding process

It is crucial to start sustainability planning already in the bidding process and carefully find out what sustainability expectations there are amongst all stakeholders. This is also where you can identify and plan the unique and cutting-edge initiatives that will make your bid stand out from the competition. Identify the areas where your destination and organization are already engaged and add some new ones that will serve as “icons” for your bid.

Appoint a responsible coordinator and encourage all members of the bidding team to “own” the sustainability part of their specific area. Check out the examples from other bids you will find under Best Practices, below.

Invite potential partners and other stakeholders into dialogue about the event.

[Learn more >>](#)

## Event preparation

This is the time for making the right decisions and to select the best and most sustainable solutions for each and every detail of your event. To look at all decisions, big or small, through the sustainability lens. Like we do with all the other lenses we use almost automatically: financial, legal, quality etc.

- » Plan training for all team members (employees and volunteers)
- » Scrutinize your supply chain from a sustainability point of view (social and environmental)
- » Challenge traditional means of transportation to the event
- » Choose your focus areas guided by the aspects mentioned above
- » Involve athletes as ambassadors for sustainable practices
- » Initiate systems for measurement and follow up on your sustainability initiatives
- » Use a sustainability management system such as ISO 2021 or similar to organize and evaluate your work, learn from experience, and ensure that everyone has opportunities to become involved and strive to improve year after year (for recurring events)

## During the event

Now it’s time to deliver. Stick to your planning and remember sustainability as a factor when you make decisions on solutions to challenges that emerge during your event.

- » Keep close track of daily events; act on and address issues as they arise
- » Benefit from the fact that athletes are role models when you communicate
- » Communicate the “unexpected” cutting edge initiatives
- » Remember to document and measure
- » Listen to and learn from the feedback from participants and visitors



## Event legacy

Celebrate success and thank your partners. Communicate together with the destination the lasting improvements that are a result of the event.

- » Report results (use relevant key performance indicators) and the lasting benefits achieved
- » Publish the story (ups and downs) of your journey for others to read and learn from
- » Challenge organizers of subsequent events (if recurring) to build on your achievements
- » Be transparent and help others so they do not have to “re-invent the wheel”

## Available tools and resources

There is no lack of tools for and information on how to include sustainability in events. We have listed below some resources that will help you on your journey:

- » Swedish Sports Confederation – [Aspects of Sustainability at sports events](#)
- » Special Olympics – [Sustainability Playbook and Toolkit](#)
- » The International Olympic Committee Sustainability Strategy – [Executive Summary](#)
- » Agenda 2030 – a toolkit on mainstreaming [SDGs in sports](#)
- » IUCN – [Mitigating biodiversity impacts of sports events](#)

## Best practice

During three Insight Webinars and three Workshops, participants reviewed and discussed several sports events.

- » Baltic RECoord Insight Webinar #1 – [Sustainability The big picture](#)
- » Baltic RECoord Insight Webinar #2 – [Sustainability in practice](#)
- » Baltic RECoord Insight Webinar #3 – [Sports Events and Sustainable bids](#)
- » SCULT – [Working with volunteers](#)
- » FIS Alpine World Ski Åre 2019 – [Sustainability](#)
- » Olympic Day Klaipeda – [Overview](#)
- » European Athletics Junior Championship 2015 Eskilstuna – [Sustainability](#)
- » Biathlon World Championship Östersund 2019 – [Sustainability](#)
- » Gothia Cup – [Sweat for water](#)
- » Vasaloppet – [Sustainability](#)

## What about the scientific framework on which we base our definition?

The Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development has been designed to give guidance on how any region, organization, or project can develop a vision framed by principles for social and ecological sustainability; analyze and assess the current situation in relation to that vision and thus clarify the gap between the two; generate ideas for possible actions that could help to bridge the gap; and prioritize such actions into a step-by-step and economically attractive plan, thereby also supporting society's transition towards social and ecological sustainability.

On our journey towards sustainable sports events, we shall stop contributing to a society that generally violates the basic sustainability principles. With over thirty years of research resulting in scientifically robust and non-negotiable principles, we are entirely free to create and develop society and all its composite parts. We can do this without solving old problems with new problems, and furthermore make it easier to manage trade-offs without lapsing to reductionism.

[Learn more >>](#)



## Who is behind this document?

This document has been developed as a part of the Baltic RECoord project. It is supported by the [Swedish Institute](#) and with the participation of national sports organizations in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Sweden.

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**Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, it has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope, where once there was only despair.**

**Nelson Mandela 2000**