



Tips for organising sustainable and responsible events

Sustainability and responsibility guide all of our operations, including the organisation of events. When organising events, it should be kept in mind that the University of Helsinki is committed to promoting the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN. Furthermore, our goal is to be carbon neutral by 2030, and we are committed to promoting equality and diversity as well as preventing discrimination in all of our operations.

Internal and external events organised by the University of Helsinki and its faculties and units, both on University premises and outside the University, reflect the University's sustainable and responsible operations, which respect the ecological boundaries of the planet, promote equality, diversity and accessibility, as well as safeguard the continuity of our operations also for future generations.

Organise your events in accordance with the [University's values](#) and [ethical guidelines](#).

Event partners and service providers

- The [ethical principles of business collaboration at the University of Helsinki](#) serve as guidelines for all event collaboration.
- The contract suppliers providing meeting and event services to the University of Helsinki fulfil the requirements for responsibility set in the tendering procedure. A rigorous responsibility analysis has been carried out on each supplier, which includes four perspectives: environmental responsibility, financial responsibility, social responsibility and the innovative nature of procurement.

Venue and location

- Whenever possible, use the facilities of the University of Helsinki.
- If the event is organised outside University of Helsinki premises, use contract suppliers tendered by the University.
- Choose as central a location as possible for the venue. The carbon footprint of visitors' transport is reduced when the venue is easily accessible, for example, by walking, cycling or public transport.
- Instruct participants to travel to the event using low-carbon means of transport.
 - Trains: [vr.fi](#)
 - Buses: [matkahuolto.fi](#), [onnibus.fi](#)
 - Public transport in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area: [reittiopas.fi](#)



- Helsinki Region Transport (HSL) information for cyclists:
<https://www.hsl.fi/en/travelling/cycling>
- Observe the University's travel guidelines and familiarise yourself with the University's sustainable travel guidelines. (More information on Flamma intranet)

Physical and space related accessibility

- Take into consideration the accessibility of the venue. This entails the removal of all barriers, whether physical obstacles, prejudiced attitudes or hindrances to communication.
- When booking the venue, consider its accessibility, including an accessible entrance and services.
 - For more detailed instructions, you can take advantage of the [checklist for accessible events by ESKE, the accessibility centre of the Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities](#) (in Finnish only).
 - Make sure, for example, that the venue is equipped with an induction loop and that print, sign language or other necessary forms of interpreting are provided at the event.
 - Before the event, distribute information on physical accessibility to participants. In your message, describe all facilities, including accessible toilet facilities.
- [Read more about promoting accessibility at the University of Helsinki.](#)

Remote and hybrid events

- Provide the opportunity to follow the programme remotely via streaming.
- If recording the programme is possible, ensure extensive accessibility by sharing the recording online after the event.
- Consider whether the speakers' presentations can be arranged over remote connections or as pre-recorded videos, instead of requiring extensive travel from speakers.
- For more information on the digital accessibility of streamed events, see the Digital accessibility section.

Event programme

- Make sure that the event is open to all regardless of age, gender, ethnic background or religious beliefs.
- Plan the programme so that it does not exclude or offend any of the participants OR any members of the target audience (e.g., consider whether a visit to the sauna is a suitable part of the programme).
- Make sure that the presenters and speakers are chosen with diversity in mind (e.g., representing different genders). When you address the audience, consider gender diversity (e.g., address the audience by saying 'dear guests' instead of 'ladies and gentlemen').
- At the beginning of the programme, inform the participants of harassment contact persons, if any, and their role. Harassment contact persons are tasked with offering help and support in cases of potential harassment or inappropriate behaviour. If there are no



harassment contact persons at the event, share information on the [harassment contact persons of the University](#) or the [Student Union](#).

Procurement

- Consider whether procurement is necessary. Avoid gifts, props and decorations that produce unnecessary waste.
- Refrain from using material distributed to participants. Many venues have empty surfaces that can be used, for example, to display the event programme or logos.
- Check whether you can utilise equipment available for loan at your event. Read more about the materials and supplies available from the events team. (More information on Flamma intranet)
- Make the necessary procurements in accordance with the University's procurement instructions, taking into consideration the guidelines for responsible procurement. (More information on Flamma intranet)
- If you make purchases, recycle them appropriately and consider their possible further use (e.g., flowers ordered for the event can be delivered to shared facilities at a care home to cheer up the residents).

Catering

Take into consideration the [catering recommendations of the University of Helsinki](#) when planning catering.

Food

- Where possible, serve vegetarian and vegan food or sustainably caught local fish.
 - Vegetarian food denotes food that does not contain meat. Vegan food denotes food that contains nothing of animal origin, such as milk, cheese or eggs.
 - Please note that vegan food is suitable for most participants, including those with religious, ethical or cultural reasons for not eating food of animal origin. Catering suitable to as many people as possible reduces food waste and, thus, the associated carbon footprint. It is also often less expensive to serve a single dish than to provide a range of options.
 - Sustainably caught fish means that the fish and fish-based products to be procured must have MSC or ASC certification, or the species must be labelled green or yellow, which should only be used after careful consideration, in the [sustainable seafood guide of WWF Finland](#) (in Finnish only). Moreover, the aim is to prefer sustainably caught local freshwater fish as well as fish species in the Baltic Sea.
- Choose healthy and seasonal, local and organic food as well as Fairtrade products (e.g., fruit and chocolate).
- Refrain from serving products that research has shown to be considerably harmful for climate and the environment. Such products include meat, dairy and rice.
- Ask the participants to indicate their diets and take them into consideration in catering.
- Please note that the most common allergens are found in products containing nuts and gluten.



Beverages

- Refrain from serving bottled water. Thanks to its cleanliness and safety, Finnish tap water can be used in catering.
- Instruct participants to bring their own water bottles and reusable coffee cups.
- As a Fairtrade university, we are committed to promoting the use of Fairtrade-certified products, which is why we serve Fairtrade coffee and tea as well as prefer Fairtrade wine.
- Make sure that the event also includes non-alcoholic beverages. For further information, see the University's guidelines for serving alcohol responsibly. (More information on Flamma intranet)

Avoiding food waste

- Avoid food waste. To reduce food waste, require binding registration for events that include catering. If the event can be attended remotely, remember to subtract the number of online participants when ordering catering.
- Some of the registered participants may not arrive at the event. Take this into consideration when ordering catering. As a rule, 80% of registered participants can be expected to arrive, with 20% not showing up.
- In the invitation, indicate whether catering is available and what it entails.
- Remind participants to cancel their participation if they are unable to attend.
- In advance, discuss with the restaurant operator how to utilise any food waste.

Tableware

- Primarily use reusable tableware and cutlery.
- If you have to use disposable tableware, choose a biodegradable option and instruct participants to recycle the tableware as biowaste.

Waste and recycling

- Assess the amount and type of waste generated at the event.
- Plan in advance how recycling will be organised.
- Make recycling easy for event participants and instruct them to recycle.
- If you are organising an outdoor event, organise appropriate recycling at the venue.
- Read the [waste sorting instructions of the University of Helsinki](#).

Digital and social accessibility

Accessibility refers to digital accessibility, the accessibility of facilities (see physical accessibility) and the promotion of an equal and diverse operating culture. When organising events, consider physical, social, psychological and cognitive accessibility.



- The event programme and related materials and communications must be implemented so that they are as accessible as possible to all. Read the guidelines for the accessibility of the University's digital services. (More information on Flamma intranet)
- Please note that any video recordings must be captioned. Instructions for captioning video recordings. (More information on Flamma intranet)
- When organising events, the diversity of people, non-discrimination and a respectful atmosphere must also be taken into consideration from the perspective of accessibility. Read more about practical tips for organising inclusive events. LINK WILL BE ADDED LATER
- In connection with registration, ask about the need for individual arrangements and try to implement them at your event.
- Familiarise yourself with the [University's principles for a safer space](#).
- Read the [guidelines for responsible interaction in the University community](#).
- [Read more about accessibility at the University](#).

Communicating on sustainability

- Prefer the communication channels provided by the University of Helsinki, as accessibility has been taken into consideration in them.
- Communicate to event participants on the sustainable solutions of your event as well as the University of Helsinki's goal of promoting sustainability and responsibility.
- Ask people to register for the event before confirming the catering needs.
- In connection with registration, ask about individual needs (e.g., dietary restrictions and needs related to physical, social, psychological and cognitive accessibility) and try to take them into consideration whenever possible.
- Include the event's sustainable choices and tips for sustainable participation in your invitation, and communicate on them during the event.
 - Instruct participants on how to choose a low-carbon travel option.
 - Remind participants to bring their own water bottles and reusable coffee cups.
 - Communicate on the accessibility of the event as well as the services and induction loop available at the venue.
 - Communicate clearly about recycling during the event.
 - Announce that inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated at the event, which complies with the University's principles of responsible interaction.
- Make sure that all communications are accessible (e.g., registration form). Consider and instruct the speakers to consider accessibility in their presentation materials. The materials must be clear and in a sufficiently large font.
- Make sure that images used in communications reflect the diversity of people, provided that there are people in the images.
- Before and during the event, let participants know which event organisers can be asked questions.
- In the event feedback form, ask how sustainability and responsibility were realised at the event.