

Sustainability Guidelines 2026

Purpose and Scope

Climate change and the question of how climate neutrality can be achieved is the overarching theme. As a driver of innovation, we are able to respond quickly to these challenges and find concrete solutions.

We recognise that a healthy planet is a prerequisite for upholding our values of human rights, social balance and democracy.

These guidelines define the Institute's sustainability commitments across all levels of influence and provide a framework for internal operations as well as externally organised events.

Compliance with our sustainability guidelines is a matter of course when planning and organising our "green" events, from hybrid formats to "train first" travel guidelines including CO2 compensation for absolutely necessary air travel to climate-friendly catering.

The scope of Application:

1. *First level:* within our direct internal sphere of influence, office supplies, team travel, internal meetings, catering, hotel bookings.
2. *Second level:* Participants, partners and customers at externally organised events (e.g. encouraging sustainable travel).
3. *Third level:* Leading by example in society, communicating sustainability commitments publicly.

The guidelines serve as a basis for the development of concrete goals and a catalogue of measures for implementation.

They are developed in cooperation with the Workers Council of the Institute established under Austrian Labour Law, representing all employees of the Innovation in Politics Institute and its fully-owned subsidiaries (ECoD gemeinnützige GmbH, Hub for Innovation in Education gemeinnützige GmbH).

How this document works

This document is a policy framework. It sets out the principles, commitments and standards that apply. The operational steps are to be found in the supporting documents:

[Event Sustainability Checklist](#)

[Catering Green Standards](#)

[Travel Policy 2025](#)

Core Commitments

In order to achieve the goal of net carbon neutrality in the medium term, we will

- Make sustainability an important factor in all purchasing decisions.
- Communicate to our suppliers that we are striving for climate-friendly options.
- Avoid unnecessary travel, choose low-carbon transport where possible and offset emissions from air travel.
- Reduce energy and material consumption in our offices as much as possible and implement other environmentally friendly measures (e.g. digitalisation).
- Offer our customers climate-friendly/neutral options as standard.

Part I Internal Sustainability Guidelines

This part covers our direct sphere of influence.

Purchasing and Procurement

Responsible purchasing is one of the most direct ways to reduce the environmental footprint.

Objectives

- Prioritise environmental certified, fair trade and climate-friendly products and services.
- Reduce single use materials and packaging.
- Communicate sustainability expectations to suppliers.

Measures

- Prefer items with recognised eco-labels.
- Include a sustainability clause in contracts.
- Choose suppliers who demonstrate a commitment to environmental and social standards.
- Avoid unnecessary procurement.

Travel and Mobility

"Train First" is the Institute's binding travel principle. Rail travel is the default for all business journeys.

Objectives

- Minimise the carbon footprint of staff travel.
- Eliminate unnecessary travel through digital alternatives.
- Offset all unavoidable flight emissions.

Measures

- Train first: if the journey is under 6 hours by train, encourage train travel first.
- Video-conferencing is the default for meetings that do not require physical presence.
- CO₂ offsets must be purchased for all unavoidable flights, through a recognised offset scheme.
- Local travel (commuting, errands) should use public transport, cycling or walking; if a rental vehicle is needed, electric or hybrid is preferred.

Energy and Offices Resources

We are committed to reducing our direct energy consumption and transitioning to renewable energy sources.

Objectives

- Reduce overall energy consumption in our offices.
- Source electricity from renewable providers where contractually possible.
- Minimise paper, printing and water consumption.

Measures

- Energy contracts shall prioritise certified green/renewable electricity sources.
- Office energy use (heating, cooling, devices) shall be managed to minimise consumption.
- All devices should be switched off (not left on standby) at the end of the working day.
- Printing shall be kept to a minimum; where printing is necessary, environmentally certified recycled paper shall be used.

Digitalisation

Digital processes reduce paper consumption, travel and resource use. Digitalisation is both a sustainability measure and a reflection of our identity as an innovation-driven organisation.

Objectives

- Replace paper-based workflows with digital alternatives wherever practical.
- Reduce the environmental impact of digital tools through mindful use.

Measures

- Digital tools and workflows are the default for all internal processes, including signatures, filing and communications.
- Printed materials and physical documentation shall be avoided wherever a digital alternative exists.
- Data storage shall be kept lean and purposeful.

Catering for Internal Meetings

For specific catering requirements (ingredients, labels, supplier criteria), refer to the Catering Green Standards.

Objectives

- Reduce the carbon footprint of food served at internal meetings.
- Eliminate single-use plastics and minimise food waste.

Measures

- No single-use plastics; reusable crockery, cups and cutlery are required.
- Catering orders must be based on realistic attendance numbers.
- Surplus food shall be redistributed rather than discarded.

Part II - Guidelines for Event Organisation

The operational steps or standards for event organisation are documented in the Event Sustainability Checklist, which must be used alongside this section for all events.

Planning Principles

Sustainability must be integrated from the first planning stage. Decisions on format, venue, catering and communications made early in the process determine the majority of an event's environmental impact.

Objectives

- Integrate sustainability criteria from the outset of every event planning process.
- Explore digital and hybrid formats before committing to in-person.
- Assign clear responsibility for sustainability within each planning team.

Please visit the Event Sustainability Checklist for further details.

Mobility and Travel

The same "Train First" principle that applies to staff travel applies to all travel in connection with Institute events.

Objectives

- Minimise travel-related emissions for participants and organisers.
- Encourage public transport and low-carbon travel options for participants.
- Offset all unavoidable flight emissions.

Standards

- Wherever possible, venues with good public transport access will be selected.
- Travel guidance (public transport options, Train First policy) is included in all event communications to participants.

Venue and Accommodation

Objectives

- Choose venues with strong environmental standards.
- Select accommodation options consistent with sustainability values.

Standards

- Venues shall meet recognised environmental standards, including waste management, energy use and sustainability certification.
- Accommodation recommendations shall take proximity to the venue and sustainability credentials into account.

Catering at Events

Catering at all our events should comply with the Catering Green Standards.

Objectives

- Serve climate-friendly, healthy and inclusive food and beverages.
- Eliminate single-use packaging and minimise food waste.

Standards

- The Catering Green Standards are binding for all externally catered events.
- Catering briefs to suppliers shall explicitly reference these sustainability requirements.
- Surplus food should be redistributed where possible.

Waste Management at Events

Events must be designed to minimise waste from the outset, not managed for waste after the fact.

Objectives

- Reduce total waste generated.
- Ensure correct separation and recycling of all waste streams.
- Eliminate single-use items.

For standards please see Event Sustainability Checklist.