

Draft Proposal

The European Green Deal – What does it mean for events?

The European Green Deal is Europe’s strategy to become carbon neutral by 2050, to tackle climate change and to protect the environment. However, simultaneously, it is also a new growth strategy that aims to ‘transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with a modern resource-efficient and competitive economy’ without leaving anybody behind, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic; as well as a strategy to implement the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030.

The event industry can use the European Green Deal, hereinafter referred to as EUGD, as an opportunity to formulate a strong sustainability strategy for the future that puts people and the planet first, while contributing to the EU’s ultimate goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2050. This document briefly highlights the main and most relevant elements of the EUGD, stipulates what the Green Deal could mean for events, and how a sustainable event industry could contribute to a green (and prosperous) future.

The main elements of the European Green Deal

In order to deliver the EUGD, policies for clean energy supply across the economy, industry, production and consumption, large-scale infrastructure, transport, food and agriculture, construction, taxation and social benefits need to be re-thought. In addition, ‘it is essential to increase the value given to protecting and restoring natural ecosystems, to the sustainable use of resources and to improving human health’. These lines of thought have culminated in the main elements of the EUGD, which will help to transform the EU’s economy for a sustainable future, are summarized in Figure 1 below.

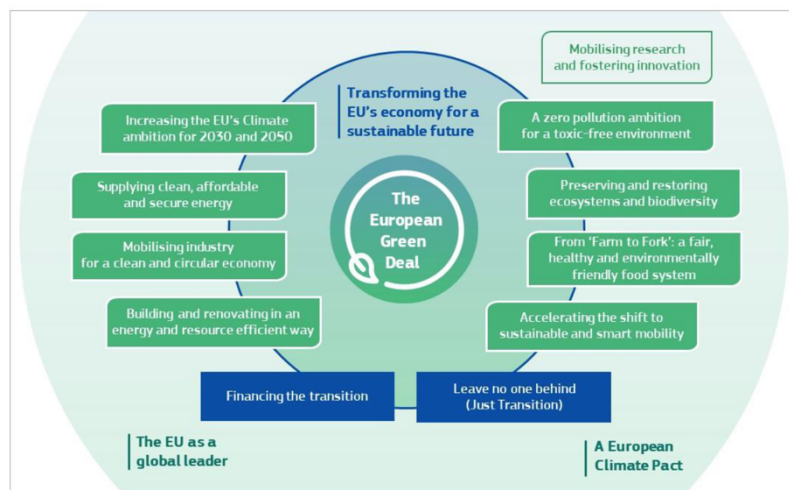


Figure 1: ‘The European Green Deal’ (European Commission, 2019b)

1. **Increasing the EU’s Climate ambition for 2030 and 2050**
 - a. The EU is climate neutral by 2050, with no net carbon emissions. The European Climate Law sets out the legal basis for this trajectory.
 - b. By 2030, the EU’s greenhouse gas emissions have reduced by at least 50% and towards 55% compared with 1990 levels
 - c. Carbon taxing

- d. A carbon border adjustment mechanism ensures that there is no carbon leakage (if production of goods is transferred from the EU to countries with lower emission reduction ambitions or are imported by carbon-intensive imports, global carbon emissions will not decrease, just shift to other countries)
- 2. **Supplying clean, affordable and secure energy**
 - a. The decarbonization of the energy system is critical to reach 2030 and 2050 climate objectives; renewable energies play an important role.
 - b. 'The transition to climate neutrality also requires smart infrastructure'
- 3. **Mobilizing industry for a clean and circular economy**
 - a. 'Achieving a climate neutral and circular economy requires the full mobilization of industry', the transition is an opportunity to expand sustainable and job-economic activity.
 - b. The Circular Economy Action Plan will include a 'sustainable products' policy to support the circular design of products, promote reducing and reusing of materials before recycling them. Action will focus in particular on resource-intensive sectors such as textiles, construction, electronics and plastics.
 - c. Promoting new forms of collaboration with industry is essential
 - d. Digital technologies are a critical enabler for attaining the sustainability goals of the Green deal in many different sectors.
- 4. **Building and renovating in an energy and resource efficient way**
 - a. Using energy efficient buildings
 - b. Renovating rather than building new buildings, as building new consumes many resources
- 5. **Accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility**
 - a. Transport accounts for a quarter of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions, hence sustainable and smart mobility is important
 - b. Increasing capacity of railways
 - c. The price of transport must reflect the impact it has on the environment and on human health
 - d. Promoting the production and deployment of sustainable transport fuels and charging stations for electric and hybrid vehicles
 - e. Transport should become drastically less polluting, especially in cities
- 6. **A zero-pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment**
 - a. Ensure a toxic-free environment, especially concerning chemicals in the environment
- 7. **Preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity**
 - a. Upholding vital ecosystem functions (food, fresh water, clean air)
 - b. Ensure EU plays key role in upholding responsibility to play key role in meeting objectives of The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (Kunming)
 - c. Take pressure off of forest ecosystems
 - d. A sustainable 'blue economy'
- 8. **From 'Farm to Fork': a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system**
 - a. The Farm to Fork strategy lays out objectives for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system.
 - b. Stimulate sustainable food consumption and promote affordable healthy food for all.
 - c. Recognize impact of food production, transport and packaging on the environment
 - d. Reduce risk of pesticides, fertilizers, antibiotics
 - e. Farm to fork helps to achieve a circular economy

Additional objectives:

- **Promoting and investing in the digital transition**
 - o 'The EU should [also] promote and invest in the necessary digital transformation and tools as these are essential enablers of the changes.'
- **Mobilizing research and fostering innovation**
 - o New technologies, sustainable solutions and disruptive innovation are critical to achieve the objectives of the European Green Deal.
- **Leave no one behind (ensuring a Just Transition)**
 - o The transition can only succeed if it is conducted in a fair and inclusive way. The most vulnerable are the most exposed to the harmful effects of climate change and environmental degradation.

Key elements that are relevant for the events industry, and how the industry can act on them

Increasing the EU's Climate ambition for 2030 and 2050

The events sector can contribute to carbon neutrality by formally adopting the EU's goal to become carbon neutral by 2050 (or earlier) and can play a vital role in promoting the SDGs and the EUGD; sharing the values of environmental protection in light of climate change; speeding up the digital transition by hosting online events and ensuring a just transition by training the workforce of the future in sustainability skills. The environmental footprint and carbon emissions of resources used at events will also be an important factor in transitioning to a sustainable event industry.

The various points outlined below can help to achieve carbon-neutrality and protect the environment.

Supplying clean, affordable and secure energy

Events are powered by 100% renewable energies.

Mobilizing industry for a clean and circular economy

Put principles from the Circular Economy Action Plan into practice as to reduce the amount of resources and raw materials consumed, by re-using, reducing and recycling where possible. Mapping the diverse resource flows of specific types of events (eg. conferences; music festivals) can help to identify starting points.

Building and renovating in an energy and resource efficient way

Choosing venues that are energy efficient/ have a good energy performance and were built in a resource efficient way.

A zero-pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment

The events industry can commit to a 'zero pollution events' future by

- Using exclusively eco-friendly cleaning products at (outdoor) venues
- Banning single-use event (promotion) materials such as glow sticks
- Banning single-use plastic bottles and plastic packaging

Preserving and restoring ecosystems and biodiversity

- Ensuring that event materials are environmentally certified, eg. FSC certified paper and checking the origins of wood (deforestation-free)
- Ensuring that event venues do not harm ecosystems or threaten biodiversity
- Selecting environmental NGO's as charitable causes for events

From ‘Farm to Fork’: a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system

Catering for a green events industry should consider the environmental cost of food production and serve food that comes from- and supports sustainable food systems and integrates objectives of the Farm to Fork Strategy (eg. no harmful pesticides in food production). Ideally, food served at green event has a neutral or positive environmental impact and is also healthy. It is:

- Locally grown/ sourced
- Seasonal
- (Mainly) meat-free
- Lastly, food loss and waste should be prevented by arranging for leftover food to be donated or sold for lower prices (too good to go, soup kitchen donations etc.)

Accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility

When events are held offline, both professionals and attendees are encouraged to use sustainable and smart mobility and walking and biking where possible. This minimizes the use of transport where possible. Where there are no alternatives to using planes, trains and cars, the transport emissions are offset through certified projects such as the projects listed on the [UN Carbon offset platform](#) that can help to fulfil various SDGs.

Additional objectives:

- **Promote and invest in the digital transition**
 - The events industry can actively partake in the digital transformation by providing an increased percentage of online events that are inclusive, participatory and accessible to a wide audience.
- **Mobilizing research and fostering innovation**
 - Events can be used to trial circular economy solutions, sustainable living innovations and promote the SDGs and the EUGD.
- **Leave no one behind (just transition)**
 - Attendees: Online events can have a wider audience reach as they remove cost barriers for travel, accommodation, subsistence (internet connection and devices are, however, required).
 - Event professionals:
 - the industry can ensure a fair and prosperous society through transparent pricing and the payment for the delivery of services according to time and expertise rather than commissions.
 - Equality and inclusion can be promoted by having a diverse body of staff.
 - In terms of training the workforce of the future, event professionals can be trained in calculating carbon footprints and understanding best practice for carbon management to deliver emission reduction. This training will enable event professionals to decide on event related decision based on carbon impact.
 - To foster a new path of sustainable and inclusive growth, people who currently work in the event industry can be upskilled and re-deployed to deliver a ‘new’ service of enabling connection, collaboration and participatory and inclusive decision making
 - Events professionals that have lost their jobs as a result of the coronavirus crisis could receive re-training in sustainability professions that are on the rise, such as solar panel installer.

Launching sustainable events reporting and measuring system

The implementation and monitoring of progress will be vital both to the success of the Green Deal and the sustainability transformation of the events sector. A sound reporting system will thus be an important tool.

References

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