

ZERO WASTE EUROPE PRESENTS

MY ZERO WASTE EVENT

12 ACTIONS TO START A ZERO WASTE
PROCESS





THE EVENTS SECTOR AND WASTE PRODUCTION

An event is where people, materials and energy come together in one space for a limited period of time.

Large-scale events involve a group of organisers, volunteers, materials such as decorations and sound equipment, transport, accommodation, participants, services providers and suppliers.

Creating an event means having a positive impact – meeting people, sharing a moment, communicating a message – but the impact can also be negative, particularly on the environment.

WHAT IS A **ZERO WASTE** EVENT

A zero-waste event is designed to reduce or even eliminate the production of waste and limit the use of raw materials, through different areas of action:

Reducing waste at source (because the best waste is still one that isn't there!), reuse, recovery, recycling and composting.





12 SUGGESTIONS TO REDUCE WASTE AT AN EVENT



ACTION 1: | **OFFER TAP** **WATER**

Tap water is 100 to 200 times cheaper than bottled water, transporting it produces fewer greenhouse gas emissions and using it significantly reduces the production of waste related to disposable plastic bottles. Tap water is strictly regulated, safe for human health and can be offered at any type of event.

You can connect directly to the mains water supply, or hire a water tanker truck. Some local councils offer this service in partnership with suppliers. Depending on the type of event, water can be served at special 'water bars' with open access water fountains, or served to participants by waiters, or provided in jugs.



ACTION 2: I GO SUSTAINABLE FOR MEALS

To avoid buying disposable items (even recyclable or compostable ones) you can offer a reusable equivalent: replace paper plates or plastic knives and forks with crockery and cutlery, paper tablecloths and serviettes with their fabric equivalent.

You could rent the material you need (table linen, crockery) or use a borrowing scheme (for reusable cups, for example). Looking for suppliers can be one way of creating links with other organisations and potential partners, to purchase or rent material together. At large-scale events, a deposit and return system for certain objects will encourage participants to return items at the end of the event. Washing catering supplies can be outsourced to a supplier such as Ecocup for larger events, or it can be a good opportunity for the team to bond over a physical task while reflecting on the day's events!



ACTION 3: I TRY TO LIMIT FOOD WASTE

To minimise food waste, the best solution is to plan ahead. The last resort is to plan what to do with leftovers (such as donating them or organising a solidarity meal, for example).

So as to keep the number of meals in line with the real numbers of guests, it's handy to keep a close eye on how many have registered and ask them specific questions about their meal, possibly asking for payment in advance.

Remember to maintain the cold chain, as once a fresh product (one containing meat, fish, cream or eggs) is removed from the cold chain it must be consumed, or be thrown away as a health hazard. You can also offer different portion sizes to adapt to each guest's appetite, limit the number of choices, bring dishes out one at a time to respond to demand, or offer doggy bags. You could use organic fruits and vegetables that don't need to be peeled or offer dishes that use the whole vegetable (such as radish top soup, vegetable peel crisps).

ACTION 4: I KEEP ORGANIC WASTE OUT OF LANDFILL

If no plan is put in place, organic waste is mixed in with general waste and ends up in an incinerator or a landfill. However, getting organic waste back into the ground is a logical and ecological process. The idea is to have a waste stream specifically for recovering organic waste.

If your local council offers separate collection of organic waste, you will just need to add a separate bin at every waste collection point at your event. For smaller events, you can use a wormery. For larger events, a service provider or charity can collect organic waste on site to compost or transform into methane.



ACTION 5: I REDUCE THE CONSUMPTION OF PACKAGING

The fashion for individual packaging is now rampant, and at coffee breaks at events you are often faced with an array of individually packaged portions: coffee, sugar, even individually packaged cakes. Less wasteful solutions do exist, though! For coffee, sugar, salt, tea, condiments and sauces, choose bulk dispensers or larger packs. Drinks can be served from fountains or taps!


Perhaps your usual suppliers offer the products you need in larger packs, with the option of returning packaging. If you choose to buy from a specialised bulk produce shop, don't forget to bring your reusable containers. Lastly, don't forget to borrow or rent the equipment you need to serve the products (sugar shaker, tongs etc).



ACTION 6: | FIND ALTERNATIVES TO NEW DECORATION

Events often use site-specific set-up and decoration, where much is bought new and discarded at the end of the event (carpeting, table decorations etc). It is possible to maintain the unique aspect of an event while avoiding this approach. Material, decorations and other necessary elements can be rented, borrowed, shared or bought second hand.

Online rental companies like uk.zilok.com can rent you all the equipment you need to set up an event, from marquees to tablecloths to a candy floss machine! Other providers can rent out plants, including delivery, set up and pick up. For your second hand purchases, think about visiting a reuse centre. Alternatively, pick up free equipment on trashnothing.com, recupe.net or similar platforms.



ACTION 7: I NEGOTIATE WITH SUPPLIERS

When you place an order, you think about the product you want, but it's difficult to know what kind of packaging it will come in. This is why it's important to talk to your suppliers, find an alternative product if necessary and discuss the option of returning the transport packaging to the suppliers.

You can inform your suppliers about your approach from the outset, through a user agreement, making it clear that you do not require individual packaging. You can ask for larger packages and find out about the option of returning packaging containers: bottles and their crates, or barrels in particular, are often returnable with a deposit system.

ACTION 8: I COLLECT REUSABLE OBJECTS

This action is particularly relevant to regular events (board meetings, trade fairs etc) and non-personalised objects. A transparent badge received at the entrance, a pen and a notebook, a USB key containing information or a map (on request) are often reusable. The principle is simple: collect what participants won't use again at the end of the event, to be used again at a future event.

Don't automatically distribute items, instead make them available to participants. Place containers at the exit to recover materials. You may want to provide participants with an incentive to return the object, such as a deposit (for cups, for example) or another encouragement such as a free drink or a raffle for badges returned. Collection bins can also represent projects, with participants voting for their favourite project by placing their badge or another object in the relevant bin.



The background of the entire page is a photograph of recycling bins. On the left, a blue bin is partially visible with a white recycling symbol and the word "Glass" in white. In the center, a white bin is visible. On the right, another blue bin is partially visible with a white recycling symbol and the letters "Pa" in white. A large, semi-transparent blue rectangle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the title text.

ACTION 9: | RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT RECYCLING

In order to get the largest possible proportion of materials properly sorted, it's important to have visible recycling points, to make sure that people sort waste correctly and that the area around the bins are kept clean, so that participants continue to respect the site.

Recycling points should be placed at strategic spots (close to the buffet, for example), instructions for proper sorting of waste should be clear (colour coding, for example). For larger-scale events, it may be necessary to have a recycling team to provide information to attendees and assist them in correctly sorting waste. These awareness-raising activities and the subsequent waste management can be fun and dealt with by a specialised team such as Connexions, who manage events waste. You then need to make sure that each waste stream is properly handled by the stakeholder best placed to make the best use of it.

ACTION 10: I INSTALL DRY TOILETS

For some events at which portable toilets are needed, choose dry toilets! They use no water, instead using a woody material that creates compost. If there are no businesses providing this services in your region, try to use grey water for flushing instead.

The easiest way to put this into practice is to call on a specialised service provider that can look after the set up, maintenance and pack up of the toilets and the recovery of the compost.

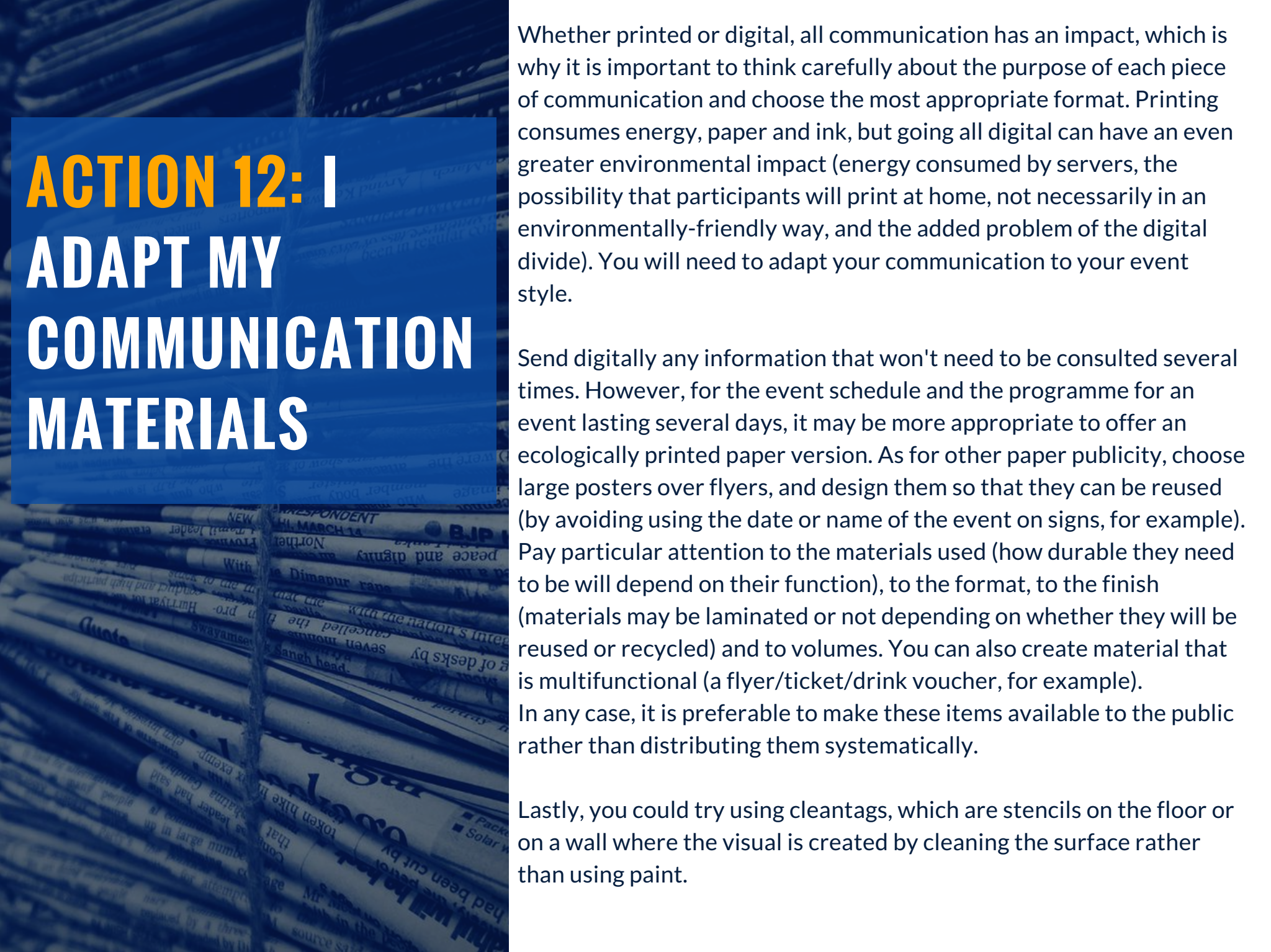


ACTION 11: I KEEP GIFTS AND FREEBIES TO A MINIMUM

At sponsored company or trade events, partners let visitors know who they are by giving away small gifts (pens, notebooks, other freebies) that are often surplus to requirements. Even if a notebook and a pen can be useful in theory, having a pile of them at home is not necessary and is a source of waste. The aim is to better define what purpose the gift serves in order to find the best alternative.

If your partners need visibility they could, for example, sponsor the buffet lunch, personalise fruits or other food with their logos stamped in edible ink, set up a relaxation area, offer a fun service (juice bar, massage, mobile phone charger station...). If the aim is to leave guests with a memory, a gadget could be replaced by a photo booth. A virtual gift bag is another great way to communicate with and to give content to attendees.





ACTION 12: I ADAPT MY COMMUNICATION MATERIALS

Whether printed or digital, all communication has an impact, which is why it is important to think carefully about the purpose of each piece of communication and choose the most appropriate format. Printing consumes energy, paper and ink, but going all digital can have an even greater environmental impact (energy consumed by servers, the possibility that participants will print at home, not necessarily in an environmentally-friendly way, and the added problem of the digital divide). You will need to adapt your communication to your event style.

Send digitally any information that won't need to be consulted several times. However, for the event schedule and the programme for an event lasting several days, it may be more appropriate to offer an ecologically printed paper version. As for other paper publicity, choose large posters over flyers, and design them so that they can be reused (by avoiding using the date or name of the event on signs, for example). Pay particular attention to the materials used (how durable they need to be will depend on their function), to the format, to the finish (materials may be laminated or not depending on whether they will be reused or recycled) and to volumes. You can also create material that is multifunctional (a flyer/ticket/drink voucher, for example). In any case, it is preferable to make these items available to the public rather than distributing them systematically.

Lastly, you could try using cleantags, which are stencils on the floor or on a wall where the visual is created by cleaning the surface rather than using paint.



TAKING IT FURTHER

This guide is not exhaustive when it comes to explaining all the actions that you could take to produce a Zero Waste event.

According to your constraints and opportunities, you can choose to take it a step further. Here are some more ideas.

EVEN LESS WASTE

#01

Raise awareness about the disposal of cigarette butts – put ashtrays by bins, or if that is not possible, provide pocket ashtrays.

#02

If your event is the kind to which guests usually bring gifts (birthday, wedding), let them know about your approach and suggest alternative, dematerialised gifts (concert tickets, donation to charity, dance classes etc).

#03

Suggest to guests that they bring food containers so that they can take home the leftovers of a meal or buffet.

#04

For activities at the event, think of things that won't produce waste, such as massages or sports games. Alternatively, create activities based on the reuse of materials, such as creative upcycling workshops.

WHO ARE WE?

Zero Waste Europe is an umbrella organisation empowering communities to rethink their relationship with resources.

Beyond recycling, the Zero Waste network aims at reducing waste generation, closing the material loop whilst increasing employment and designing waste out of the system.

ZEROWASTE EUROPE
.EU



This booklet was conceived and realised by the association Zero Waste France and Donatienne Lavoillotte, Specialist in eco-responsible events (lesensdelevenement.com).

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