

A sustainable event in Leuven? Tick these boxes!

You recycle your waste paper, you turn off the light when you leave a room, you place your food scraps in a compost bin, and you bring your lunch to work in a reusable container. Maybe you even offset your carbon footprint when you fly. Good for you!

But have you thought about making your event more sustainable? Don't worry. At Leuven Convention Bureau we will guide you through the key areas you need to consider. You'll find simple, practical advice on this webpage, for every type of event, from conferences with a large international audience to simple office meetings. Green events are destined to become the standard in Leuven. Just **by choosing Leuven**, you tick an important box.

Let's not forget, a sustainable event is simply good business practice too. Your audience cares about sustainability. Your efforts will be noticed; enhancing your brand, building your reputation, and proving that social and ecological responsibility is something you take seriously.

And while it's easy to make small sustainable changes in your personal lives; planning an eco-friendly conference or event means looking at the bigger picture. We will assist you in caring about air quality, waste management, water conservation and energy efficiency. Making your event sustainable? Choose for Leuven, tick the following boxes and you will reach your sustainability goals in no-time!

First things first

Think about sustainability early on, even in the early stages of your planning process.

Some of the first planning decisions you make, like the city and the venue, can make the biggest impact on your event sustainability.

Analyse good practices, cooperate with partners and set your ambitions. Involve your staff and stakeholders. Implement sustainability in every way; before, during and after the conference or event. Report and evaluate your efforts, share your insights. Discuss your plans with our team at Leuven Convention Bureau, it is our second nature to incorporate sustainability in every event. From start to finish.

Choose wisely

Travel and transport

The single most impactful choice you can make for a greener event is where you host it. Travel to and from your event is the single biggest contributor to your event's carbon footprint. Air traffic in general generates an enormous ecological footprint.

Develop a **sustainable travel policy**, take a look at [KU Leuven](#)

You can minimize your event's footprint by encouraging delegates to offset their carbon footprint. There are plenty of initiatives that will, for a small fee, plant trees, invest in renewables or other low carbon initiatives. [Get inspired and take a look at the sustainable travel policy of the university KU Leuven.](#) To offset the CO₂ emissions of all work-related air travel by staff, KU Leuven funds an internal climate fund with 40 EUR per tonne of CO₂. On top of that 33,4% of KU Leuven employees walk or cycle to the office, 26,9% use public transport.



Choose a green city with a focus on sustainability

Knowing that your sustainability goals will be incorporated in and enhanced by the running initiatives of the city of your choice, makes a big difference.

The city of Leuven is running an initiative that strives for a **climate-neutral future for Leuven: [Leuven 2030](#)**. As a city, Leuven is fully aware of the need to reduce carbon emissions in a result driven manner. Citizens, companies, knowledge institutions, they all work together to build a sustainable future. Take a look at their impressive [road map!](#)

Choose a venue easily reachable by foot, bike or public transport

How far from the airport is the city and the conference venue of your choice? Is public transport available to bridge the distance? You're on the right track if there is a rail station with convenient links to the airport or with good links across the area. How far apart are the conference venue and your recommended hotels? The closer together, the lower the carbon footprint. Finally, consider the walkability of the city. How many hotel rooms are located within walking distance? What about restaurants? The more accessible the main venue is to attendees on foot, the lower the environmental impacts.

In Leuven you do not need to worry, it is a safe small-sized city. Conveniently located at a 15 minutes train ride from Brussels international airport, **all of its locations are within walking distance**. Leuven boasts several traffic-free zones, an outstanding cycling infrastructure and an extensive bus network.

Conference venue and hotel

The venue you choose shouldn't only be in the right place. It should have **the right eco-friendly credentials**, too. Look for venues and hotels that have a clearly-stated sustainability policy and/or Green Key certificate and that will work with you to minimise your impact.

Good food, less waste

The right supplier

Choose a **sustainable and local catering specialist** with a clear focus on local and seasonal food, and a strategy to reduce food waste. It can be helpful to opt for 1/3 vegetarian, 1/3 meat and 1/3 vegan food. Food suppliers should be as local as possible. That way you're minimising time on the road for high-energy refrigerated transports.

Over-ordering is a common problem, minimise excess with careful planning. Donate leftovers from the event to charity organisations like [Poverello in Leuven](#) and initiatives that promote circular economy such as [Maakbar](#). The right supplier will also help minimise food-related waste, like disposable flatware and cutlery. Make sure they can offer you reusable items.

Ethical coffee breaks

Make your coffee break stand out! That means no straws, no plastic spoons, no unnecessary single use plastic. Fairly-traded tea and coffee comes from sustainable sources. Request that condiments are to be served in bulk. Going disposable-cup-free as an event makes a bold statement. Offer a reusable eco cup made from a sustainable material, either as part of your goodie bag or available for sale. Reusable water bottles are a must, in Belgium we drink water from the tap.

Conference material

Make it easy for your attendees to go **paperless**. Send invitations via email or set up digital ticketing. Invest in a conference app instead of producing booklets or tons of print material. Are you working with an abstract book, set it up in pdf on your conference website. Put your agenda online or in the app. Your conference app can have extra interesting measurable features, it is a plus. Still, when you do need to print material, use recycled paper, vegetable-based inks and dyes, and a local supplier to keep delivery emissions low.

Search for reusable solutions in terms of signage. Instead of foamex or vinyls, print your signage on recycled paper, place them into a reusable frame or board. Make the content and message **generic**, and these items can be reused for multiple events.

This also applies to lanyards and plastic cases for name badges. These could be returned at the end of the event and **reused** with a little careful direction.

Social program

Focus on **experiences**, not on gadgets. Plan a social program within the host city, do not book busses to transport your attendees to crowded touristic highlights. Instead, allow your participants to enjoy the city they are in. Give them some free time to explore the surroundings, to wander around and discover the local bars, restaurant, shops and businesses.

Parting gift

Connections and future collaborations are the best parting gift of a conference or event. Still, if you do include a parting gift at your event, make sure your gift bag or goodie bag is sustainable. A tote bag of sustainable cotton with circular made local goodies can be a worthy farewell gift at a sustainable conference.

Now that you have ticked all these boxes, your eco-friendly venture is about to begin!