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Guidelines towards Environmental Sustainability for projects supported by the European Youth Foundation

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document contains important recommendations for combating the negative environmental side-effects caused by meetings and activities organised or supported by the European Youth Foundation (EYF).

Initially developed by a working group that was set up by the Programming Committee on Youth, the guidelines are designed to support the development of environmentally friendly and sustainable practices for activities and events supported by the EYF.

Sustainability needs to be on the agenda for all of us. As youth and people working with youth, it is crucial that we are at the forefront of this change in practice as it is the young people of today and tomorrow who will face the detrimental consequences of current, unsustainable lifestyles. As such, we have tried to go further than just well-known practices such as recycling. The guidelines include bold, ambitious recommendations in order to minimise the environmental impact of EYF-supported activities. Furthermore, the guidelines intend to raise environmental awareness and to create a mutual understanding regarding environmental sustainability in youth activities.

The EYF prides itself on being recognised as an innovative, youth-friendly funder and we believe these guidelines will further this reputation. This document aims to inspire positive

change within youth organisations and the broader youth sector. It targets first and foremost the youth NGOs receiving an EYF grant to organise a youth project.

The Programming Committee on Youth would like to acknowledge and thank International Young Nature Friends and Youth and Environment Europe for their contribution to the drafting of this document.

2. TRAVELLING

NGOs implementing EYF-supported activities should consider the following recommendations concerning travel:

- The use of eco-friendly/ecological transport modes by participants in EYF-supported activities should be maximised.
- Train, boat or coach line transport are preferred as the most ecological/eco-friendly means of transport. Therefore, participants are/should be encouraged to make use of public transport, in particular buses, trains and ferries instead of planes and private cars.

TRAINS & BUSES & TRAMS

- Travelling in 2nd class should be given preference over travelling in 1st class
- Travel tickets should be booked well in advance and discounts (such as rail cards and student discounts) should be used/taken advantage of.

PRIVATE CAR

Private cars should be used for valid reasons only, such as:

- a car-sharing scheme is in place;
- necessity to transport many materials;
- the destination cannot be reached by public transport;
- a disability prevents one from using public transportation and/or public transport is not equipped for special needs/disabled persons.

PLANE

Plane travel is the form of transport that produces the highest amount of greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, it is recommended that plane travel should only be used if travel time would otherwise exceed 8 hours, or due to extraordinary circumstances. Travel should be reimbursed based on the same criteria as train travel (2nd class, advance ticket purchases, etc).

TAXI

Travel by taxi should be used in particular situations only. Taxi costs can only be reimbursed if:

- participants would have to use local public transport between 23:00 and 06:00 hours;
- no other public transport possibilities are available.

Participants who arrive by taxi or car pick-up service should preferably be grouped and arrive together with the aim of minimising the amount of travel/gas emissions.

AVOID UNNECESSARY TRAVEL: USE OF VIRTUAL MEETINGS

- It is strongly advised to consider the possibility of using online services/free online tools for virtual meetings instead of face-to-face meetings, particularly those lasting one day or less, as well as those requiring participants to travel long distances, especially by air.
- Webinar technology should especially be considered in the case of speakers or experts delivering a short session (one day or less) and who would have to travel long distances to come to the meeting.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planes, cars, taxis ... think first!• Choose GREEN: trains, ferries, buses and trams!• Virtual is good! |
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3. FOOD/NUTRITION

NGOs implementing EYF supported activities should consider the following recommendations concerning food:

- Local products which benefit the local economy and local producers as well as reducing the “carbon footprint” of each meal, should be used wherever possible in preference to sourcing food from companies known for their poor environmental record, questionable labour practices, questionable marketing strategies, engagement in monopolistic business practices and possible bad health effects.
- Providing healthy and nutritious food options for environmentally-conscious participants, vegans, vegetarians and people suffering from food allergies (gluten and others) should be an aim for all youth NGOs implementing activities.
- Organic, fair-trade and GMO-free food, snacks and beverages should be provided wherever possible and affordable during all the duration of the activity.

- Efforts should be made to reduce the carbon footprint and other environmental impacts of activities. One of the means to achieving this is by minimising meat consumption. For example:
 - (a) offering vegetarian food as default option;
 - (b) organising 'meatless days' / 'Veggies rule!! day';
 - (c) serving meat only once a day;
 - (d) reducing the portion size of meat.
- Ordering bottled water by session organisers should be discouraged. Organisers are encouraged to opt for tap water instead of bottled water where the quality of drinking water is ensured.
- Buffet/self-service facilities are preferred/advised to avoid and/or minimise food waste.
- 'Take-away' food – such as packed lunches – should not be packed in plastic. The use of more environmentally-friendly packaging, such as cardboard or compostable materials, should be promoted instead.
- The use of single-serving items (ie: individual packets of sauces, individual jam or butter) should be discouraged. Organisers are encouraged to buy normal/bigger size containers for daily products (for butter, jam, sauces etc.) as they are more eco-friendly than single-serving items.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BUY local products! • BUY organic, fair-trade, GMO-free food, snacks and beverages! • LESS meat is GOOD! • OPEN tap and not bottle (when possible)! • Portion control with buffet! • Eco-friendly food packaging! |
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4. MATERIALS, EQUIPMENT, PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

NGOs implementing EYF supported activities should consider the following recommendations concerning materials, equipment and services:

- When buying any product, the following aspects should be taken into account:
 - the quantity and quality needed;
 - the duration needed;
 - the supplier's environmental and social policy;
 - transportation distances.

Other examples of sustainable practices:

- buying products that are not disposable and can be stored and re-used;

- using certified eco-products (BIO food and cosmetics, eco-friendly products, FSC wood and recycled paper, Fairtrade etc.) and suppliers wherever possible and affordable;
- preferring sustainable products, materials and supplies wherever possible, e.g. renewable, natural, biodegradable;
- using local products and suppliers;
- avoiding the use of packaging as much as possible;
- the use of toxic products should be avoided;
- the use of materials and goods produced in sweatshops shall be avoided;
- eco-stationery (such as vegetable ink, degradable and refillable markers) should be provided during the activities;
- only recycled paper, with high level of post-consumer content should be used during activities;
- electronic means of communication and data transfer should be used whenever possible. Disposable, one-use CDs and DVDs as means of data transfer should be avoided. Instead, online cloud services and USB sticks should be used;
- formats that avoid wasting paper should be used when possible;
- printing should be kept to a minimum and be double-sided;
- flipchart paper should be used carefully, double-sided and recycled.

When ordering products, gadgets and preparing info packs and conference packs, the following recommendations should be considered:

- digital info materials and conference pack materials should be used whenever possible and the printing of materials should be avoided;
- if ordering products, organisations should ensure as far as possible that the items are not produced in sweatshops and should strive to create sustainable, lasting products.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce quantity! • Go for BIO! & look for the green LOGOs! • Look out for waste! • 3Rs: REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE! |
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5. VENUE CHOICE

When choosing a venue/location, NGOs implementing EYF-supported activities should give preference to venues:

- using sustainable and environmentally-friendly practices :
 - energy and water saving, collecting rainwater
 - sourcing energy from renewable resources where available,
 - separation of/recycling waste, composting
 - preferring bio and local produce
- which are social enterprises, the profits of which are used to support non-governmental organisations and charities;

- supporting local communities, by sourcing and purchasing locally, providing employment, especially to disadvantaged community members (people with disabilities and special needs);
- which are accessible via public transport;
- which are accessible for participants with disabilities;
- offering respectful food choices.

a. Waste Management

Taking into account the fact that waste management is one of easiest ways to reduce one's environmental impact, the following waste management recommendations should be considered:

- The possibility of sorting waste should be taken into account during the planning process of an activity or event. For example, plastic, paper, glass and aluminium – depending on local recycling facilities.
- The recycling system should be explained to participants and they should be informed about the importance of segregating waste.
- Food waste should be avoided wherever possible, and should either be composted on-site or collected by the municipality whenever such an option is available.

b. Hygiene and Cleaning

NGOs implementing EYF-supported activities should consider the following recommendations concerning hygiene and cleaning:

- Ecological/eco-friendly cleaning supplies that do not cause lasting damage to the environment should be used wherever possible. For washing-up (dishes etc.), the use of natural cleaning products, such as baking soda, vinegar, citric acid, should be encouraged whenever possible.
- Similarly, bio and ecological soaps and shampoos should be provided wherever possible.
- Only recycled toilet paper should be used during activities.

c. Energy Resources and Heating

NGOs implementing EYF supported activities should consider the following recommendations concerning energy resources and heating:

Wherever possible, venues hosting activities or meetings should:

- use renewable energy;
- be well insulated in order to save heat;
- ventilate quickly and efficiently;
- switch off lights, computers and other equipment while not in use;

- use energy saving lighting ;
- recuperate energy wherever possible (for example, with heat-to-power recovery generators);
- avoid overheating buildings in cold months, by using thermostats and keeping the temperature between 18-19 degrees during the day.

6. INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

Participants of EYF-supported activities should be informed why steps are being taken to improve the sustainability of youth activities and encouraged to learn and co-operate together to decrease the ecological and social footprint of the activities they take part in.

In addition, all participants should be encouraged to dedicate some time to carrying out community-oriented activities, thereby partially covering the negative footprint caused by the meetings/events they take part in.