



Dear colleague,

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs is a frequent venue for conferences, meetings and presidency events. Meeting arrangements require purchasing supplies and goods, which can create food waste and waste that must be sorted. The guidelines are related to catering, purchasing and meeting arrangements in general.

These principles were developed and tested during Finland's Chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2017–2019 and they proved to be easy and effective. The overall principle is as follows: buy only what you need, use recycled material when possible and consider possibilities for reuse.

As the buyer, we have the possibility and responsibility to make sustainable choices when organising meetings and purchasing supplies. Once you have digested these guidelines, you will make better choices automatically.

“Every individual can influence the state of our environment by reducing their ecological footprint and by making responsible choices. Solutions at the organisational level contribute to the bigger picture.”

WWF Finland





Catering

In the capacity of the buyer, you are in an excellent position to take environmental perspectives into account in your catering choices. When you order catering according to these principles, both the guests and the environment will thank you. Pay special attention to the first three tips.

1. **Less meat.** Discuss options to increase the use of vegetables in meat recipes and suggest offering vegetarian dishes before meat dishes in a buffet.

2. **Yes to veggies.** Consider replacing meat with vegetarian dishes. Vegan options are also delicious and easy to prepare nowadays.

3. **Keep food waste to a minimum.** Plan your menus carefully to avoid excess orders and minimise food waste. When planning coffee and snacks, ask the caterer to prepare smaller portions so guest are able to finish the whole snack and will not waste it. When planning catering, keep in mind the possibility to use the leftovers (e.g. fruits, vegetables).

4. **Consult WWF Finland's meat and fish guides and choose accordingly.** Ask your caterer to use meat and fish according to the guides when ordering catering in Finland. If you are abroad, please research what are the sustainable meat and fish choices in your area.
<https://wwf.fi/kalaopas/> and <https://wwf.fi/lihaopas/>

5. **Choose seasonal, organic and environmentally certified products.** Find out what are the seasonal produce in your area. Environmental certifications include Fair Trade, UTZ and Rainforest Alliance, and MSC and ASC for fish products.

6. **Coffee and tea.** Ask the caterer to use organic or certified coffee and tea and make sure that in addition to milk, oat milk or another plant-based drink is available.

7. **Choose local products.** Whenever you can, order ingredients that are produced locally or as close as possible.

8. **Choose jugs over bottled drinks.** Serve refreshing flavoured tap water and local juices from jugs instead of bottles. You save some money, too. If bottles are your only option, choose as big a container as possible to reduce plastic waste.

9. **Seasonal snacks.** Please remember to order seasonal berries and fruit with your coffee service. When you order fruit, remember that a whole fruit lasts longer.

10. **Special diets.** Ask the service provider make all catering lactose-free and gluten-free if possible. This ensures that catering for different diets is not necessary.

11. **Organic drinks.** A great variety of organic wines, sparkling wines and beer are now available for evening receptions and dinners.



Purchasing supplies for meetings

Meetings require a lot of purchasing of supplies and goods. When organizing Presidency events and other big meetings at the Ministry, always consider what is really necessary to acquire. Do not order simply out of habit. Nowadays you can go a long way with digital solutions.

1. **No trifles!** Certain products have traditionally been ordered in connection with presidency events, such as ties, scarves, folders, tote bags, pens and writing pads in various sizes. Consider whether all these are needed or if some could be left out.

2. **Nothing disposable.** Ask the caterer to plan the catering without disposable tableware, individually packaged items, and napkins and sticks that end up in waste bins. Always ask for catering with non-disposable tableware.

3. **Choose sustainable materials.** If possible, choose textile napkins and tablecloths. If you choose paper napkins, ask the service provider to order eco-labelled alternatives.

4. **Favour recycled materials.** Many office supplies and other products are made of recycled plastic or other recycled material. Many companies that provide business supplies have a separate catalogue of ecological products. Consider wooden pens, recycled plastic products or umbrellas made of bamboo, for instance.

5. **Choose reusable products and materials.** Consider whether a product would have a use after its original use. For example, printed textiles used as interior design elements can be re-used for a number of different purposes.

6. **Choose certified paper.** When you order paper products (such as copy paper, writing pads, notebooks), make sure that they are made of certified paper. If possible, choose paper with an FSC Recycled label.

7. **Make full use of digitalisation.** Before you order brochures or publications for distribution, consider whether the material could be sent by e-mail. You can use a QR (Quick Response) code, for example, to help guests find electronic material easily.

8. **Choose memories over material things.** Instead of a gift, offer memories of pleasant experiences or exquisite meals. If your cooperation partner wants to offer a gift to the guests, ask them also to consider a gift that is voluntary, sustainable, usable and easy to carry – so that it will not end up in a hotel waste bin.

SHARE INFORMATION ABOUT GOOD SOLUTIONS WITH OTHERS! #GREENMEETING



Meeting arrangements

In line with the Foreign Ministry's Environmental programme, take into account the ecological aspects as one of the criteria for selecting a venue for events held outside the Ministry. Ask the service provider about their eco-label certifications and environmental programmes, make sure they supply enough waste bins, use technology and choose recycled materials.

1. **Ask about environmental programs.** When selecting a service provider, discuss their ecological and sustainable measures or if they have an environment program. If you notice some shortcomings, let the venue staff know. Increasing awareness and making requests is always welcome.

2. **Ask about environmental solutions.** Ask the staff about the venue's energy consumption levels. Discuss the consumption levels of heating, cooling and lighting systems. Find out how the venue's waste management is arranged. Make sure that sorting bins are available and have clearly marked user instructions. Make sure that the service provider uses eco-friendly cleaning products and that solutions are in place for minimal water consumption.

3. **Plan commuting options.** Find out how to reach the venue by foot, by bike or by using public transport rather than using chartered vehicles.

4. **Walk when possible.** Walking is a good option from the point of view of both the environment and the guests. You can e.g. offer a guided walk to the evening reception with the help of city guides. If you need transport, select an eco-friendly means of transport if possible. In downtown Helsinki, for instance, the tram is an easy way to get around with guests. This also gives guests a chance to see the sights.

5. **Make use of video conferencing.** Always welcome requests to participate in meetings via a video link.

6. **Use electronic meeting materials.** Do not provide printed materials on the tables. Inform the guests that the materials will be distributed only electronically and ask them to bring their materials in an electronic form.

7. **Rent and recycle.** When designing a meeting venue, consider using rental and recycled products. If you buy something, consider the re-use possibilities of the materials afterwards (i.e. lifespan thinking).

8. **Visual identity electronically.** If you have a logo or image prepared specifically for the meeting, consider presenting it in an eco-friendly manner. Projecting an image on walls is the most eco-friendly way to showcase it. Rollups and traditional posters can be replaced by e.g. static re-usable posters.

9. **Decorate using natural materials.** Consider carefully whether you could use seasonal wild flowers or plants for decoration. Try birch and willow trees in spring, wild flowers and other plants in summer, rowan trees and colourful leaves and fruit in autumn, and twigs and cones in winter.

10. **Nature as a source of experience.** For evening programmes, instead of a dinner at a restaurant, you could organise an excursion outdoors or a fun sports event.