

Sustainable office



biodegradable

second-hand

refurbished

recycled

a how-to guide by

 YOUTH
EXPRESS
NETWORK



SUSTAINABLE BABES

These tips and ideas were recollected from the content of an online conference co-hosted by Youth Express Network and Sustainable Babes. This conference was held on the 16th of November 2020, in the frame of the Network Call, a series of monthly online meeting aiming at gathering the members of Youth Express Network around an informal discussion, to continue working together amidst the global Covid-19 pandemic, to share and reflect together on various topics linked to Youth work and Youth organisations.

This particular Network Call was inspired by the European Week of Waste Reduction (<https://ewwr.eu/>). It was entitled « Sustainable Office » and aimed at reflecting and sharing accessible efficient ideas to lower the environmental impact of youth organisations at the office and during events. Although this conference was addressed to youth organisations, youth workers and young volunteers, and with youth events in mind, the ideas and tips shared can be applied by any public, any office and for any event.

The Network Call « Sustainable Office » was recorded, edited and published into 6 videos that you can find on the social media pages of Youth Express Network (YouTube, Facebook and Instagram).

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Youth Express Network - *Youth Express Network is a European network of grass-root youth organisations. Its vision is to reach an inclusive society, where young people, their needs and participation are recognised, valued and appreciated.*

Website: <http://youthexpressnetwork.org>

Instagram and Facebook: @youthexpressnetwork

Sustainable Babes - *Through their initiative, the Sustainable Babes aim at raising awareness on the climate crisis and educating people on their power as consumers.*

Website: <https://sustainablebabes.com/>

Instagram and Facebook: @sustainablebabes

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INTRODUCTION

Time to save the planet! Okay sure... but where to start? Lowering one's personal impact on climate change can already be very overwhelming. So bringing your new sustainable habits to the work place... talk about a challenge?

We believe it can be done and further more, we'll try to show you that it can sometimes be even more convenient, economical and overall, not that hard to do.

Our number one tip is: don't be too hard on yourself. Sustainability comes with its fair share of eco-anxiety, no need to make it yet another stress in your life. Be gentle and go step by step. No one expects you to be perfect at it ;)

« Every little thing you'll change WILL have an impact in years, and is important. Our aim is not to convince one person to do it perfectly. We hope a thousand people will end up doing some of it, imperfectly. »

Lari Schinteie - Sustainable Babes

WHERE DO WE START?

1

MAKE IT A TEAM CHALLENGE

Open the discussion with your colleagues and the people you share your office with.

You can invite your team to join the effort for a special occasion such as a month or week-long challenge, a new year's resolution, or an international awareness campaign...

2

ASSESS THE NEEDS & SET REALISTIC OBJECTIVES

Scan your office and look for things you could improve to lower your environmental impact at work.

Take a look at the waste you and your team produce, and research the alternatives that are available depending on your local reality, infrastructures, budget...

3

EASY PEASY! GO STEP BY STEP, ONE TASK AT A TIME

Changing so many habits can be overwhelming. Our advice is to go slowly but steady. Divide your effort in different rooms/zones/category of waste.

For example, start with the waste you produce during the coffee break. And then, what about this next goodies order that's coming up on your to-do list...

4

BE KIND! DON'T FORCE IT ;)

You've been trying to convince this particular colleague to follow your effort and recycle every day, but they're not doing it.

Don't force it. We all have different rhythms. Maybe they'll come around and get inspired by your good example.

5

FIND WAYS TO MAKE IT FUN AND KEEP IT EASY

As we'll show later on this guide, making it a team building challenge or a competition rewarded by a prize can motivate your team to follow you with enthusiasm ;)

Some might even be surprised and get convinced by the end of the round!

6

LEAD BY EXAMPLE - START WITH YOU

The power of example. It's what has worked the best for us.

Witnessing your new methods and innovative accessories, noticing the concrete benefits they've brought to your life and how easy it seems... your example will be the best proof any of your colleagues will need to join in.

TRANSPORTATION



Passenger cars are a major polluter, accounting for 60,7% of total CO2 emissions from road transport in Europe.

Source: European Parliament

Alternatives:

- Public transportation
- Carpool
- Walking
- Cycling

MORE ON CARPOOL

You can discuss with your team to organise a carpool system within your organisation and pair people up according to their sector and/or time schedules. You can also check for **carpool mobile applications** to find Carpool partners in



CYCLING - Make it a team challenge!

In Strasbourg, the biggest bicycle-friendly city in France, the municipality has been promoting bike commuting for years. One of the major and most efficient local campaigns is a **big kilometric bicycle race called « To work by bike »** (Au boulot à vélo). Organised jointly by the municipality and a bike association, this challenge invites the employees of all the local enterprises and organisations to constitute a team and switch their commuting habit: together, they commit to biking to work everyday for a full month of competition! A study has shown that the 2017 edition of the challenge « converted » 500 new regular cyclists!

➔ If the infrastructures in your city allows you to cycle to work safely, don't hesitate to organise a team challenge or competition. At Youth Express Network, we take part in this challenge every year. This format makes it **easier and more fun to introduce a new eco-friendly habit at the office**. It also serves as a great Team Building activity. The team spirit motivates more people to follow and can even convince some people who would have never imagined biking to work was possible for them ;) The challenge format can be adapted to any new eco-friendly habit!

To go further: <https://auboulotavelo.eu/>

INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY

The question of eco-friendly transportation also applies to youth work and international youth mobility. When organising youth exchanges or seminars, don't hesitate to promote choosing a greener transportation and prefer Train when possible. **Green transportation will even be financially supported by Erasmus+ from 2020.**

TELEWORKING

Early estimates suggest that close to 40% of those currently working in the EU began to telework fulltime as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Source: Eurofound (2020)



Have you heard of the « **meeting that could have been an email** »? One thing the global Covid-19 pandemic made us realise is that some things can work fine with an online meeting. Another idea to lower your impact on car pollution is to drive only when necessary:

- **Promote teleworking**
- **Work from home a few days a week or when possible**
- **If you are an employer, make it easier for your employees to work from home**

WASTE AND ELECTRICITY



Each employee spends an average of 200 days per year at work, and produces between 120 and 140 kg of waste.

Source: ADEME

Alternatives:

- Implement recycling at your office, accordingly to your local regulations
- Put up updated information and rules close to the bins

VISITING THE RECYCLING CENTER

Get in contact with your local recycling center to **organise a guided visit** for your team and colleagues. This visit will have 2 impacts: informing or reminding everyone of the local rules of recycling (which material can or can't be recycled), and raising awareness on the importance of waste reduction.



With the pandemic came a new item at the office, sometimes mandatory: the **face mask**. Although the single-use mask is recommended most of the times, you can also find certified cloth mask that will prevent plastic waste.



Second-hand is key! For your **furniture or your office material**, look for second-hand items before resorting to buying new things.



You can also craft **decoration items** or up-cycle unused objects to find them new purposes.
For example, we make pennant banners out of draft paper.

ELECTRICITY

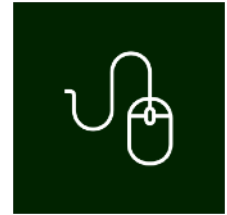
From the power plant to your bill, here are a few tricks to lower the impact of your electricity consumption:

- Lower your consumption of heating and air-conditioning
- Install movement detectors for the lights in corridors and bathrooms
- Use L.E.D light bulbs and multi socket plugs with on/off switches: turn off everything when you leave the office ;)

DIGITAL POLLUTION

The IT sector was responsible for 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions in 2019.

Source: ADEME



MATERIAL Your electronic devices impact the environment from the moment they're produced, to the moment they stop functioning. It continues even after you get rid of them. Here's how you can lower this impact:

- Buy your electronics second-hand or refurbished
- Invest in sturdy machines and brands that are openly against programmed obsolescence
- Take good care of your devices and always keep them up to date
- If something is broken, get into the habit of trying to have them repair when possible

DATA POLLUTION Data centers have a huge impact on the environment: 25% of greenhouse gas emissions generated by digital technology are due to Data Centers. Here are a few simple things you can do to help lower this impact:

- Prefer external hard drive then the cloud
- Sort out your data often and only keep crucial documents, avoid duplicates
- Clean your mail box regularly and always delete all the spam and useless emails from both your main box and the « recently deleted » folder
- Unsubscribe from newsletter you never read
- Delete your past unused mail accounts

SEARCH ENGINES

Did you know your internet researches can have a positive impact? Here are two examples of search engines that convert your researches into positive actions:



Lilo is a French search engine through which you can support solidarity projects.



Ecosia uses the profits generated by your online research to plant trees.

PAPER AND COMMUNICATION



Here are our recommendations concerning the waste of **paper and ink related with printing**:

- Print less and only if necessary - Go digital
- Always print on both sides
- Use grey ink instead of black for less official documents
- Use recycled paper
- Use thinner fonts
- Reuse paper for drafts, crafts or decoration



When we think about the paper we use in the office, we easily forget the **bathroom**. Easily fixed:

- Buy ecological or recycled toilet paper
- To dry your hands, prefer using cloth hand towels or a hand dryer



Flyers, posters, goodies, post mail... the **communication** for a structure or its events can be a huge source of waste. Here are small ideas to be more eco-friendly on this field:

- Use internet and social media to promote your events or structure
- Print stickers on paper or order a custom stamp
- This year, convert your greeting cards into a digital format : make a cool team video for example
(More ideas on the Event page)



Plastic pens and T-shirt are everyone's go to **goodies**... But no one really needs yet another one of those and they always end up polluting the ocean. Here are ideas of better and eco-friendlier goodies you can produce:

- Give less goodies
- Offer experiences instead of objects
- Offer a pack of digital goodies: PDF toolkits, QR code vouchers, access to VIP online content...
- Chose biodegradable or durable materials (paper pencils, recycled paper, glass or stainless steel)
- Chose useful items, items you can be sure people will use: water bottles, eco-cups, mugs, a thermos, tote bags, USB keys

LUNCH AND COFFEE BREAKS



Only 9 percent of all plastic waste on Earth has been recycled.

Source: National Geographic

WATER You can stay hydrated without adding on the piles of plastic produced everyday in the world. Here's how:

- Invest in a reusable water bottle. Prefer materials such as stainless steel or glass.
- If your tap water is drinkable, simply invest in a jar and glasses for the whole team
- If your tap water need filtering, invest in filtering systems such as a filtering pitcher, ceramic beads or charcoal filter
- If you cannot drink the tap water, prefer investing in big office water dispenser, rather than 1L plastic bottles

COFFEE AND TEA Coffee cups are an easy trap at the office. We suggest these alternatives:

- Have a mug at your desk: You can use it for coffee and any other beverage
- Many coffee vending machines actually include a system that will recognise your mug if you present it and serve your oder in it instead of dropping a disposable cup
- Buy tea and coffee in bulk to prevent the production of paper filters and aluminum doses
- Prefer using tea pots, reusable infusers and French coffee presses rather than machines that produce waste

CELEBRATIONS You're planning to celebrate your birthday at the office? Here are some advices to help you reduce you and your guests' waste:

- Email or ask your guests to bring their mugs and plates so you don't have to buy single-use plates and cups
- Or look up for some alternative biodegradable single-use items such as eatable plates made of wheat.

FOOD You're planning to celebrate your birthday at the office? Here are some advices to help you reduce you and your guests' waste:

- Dedicate a cupboard and invest in proper plates, cutlery and glasses for your team
- For your take away or home-made lunches, prefer eco-friendly containers ; glass or stainless steel are better for both your health and the environment (careful with metal the microwave ;)
- Ask your local restaurants or coffee shops to place your order into your own container (water bottle, food containers, thermos jug...)
- Share your zero-waste addresses with your colleague: map the restaurants that accept your containers
- Always have zero-waste material on your bag so you're able to refuse single-use items (water bottle, cutlery, straw, tote bag...)
- Put your sandwiches in a box or wrap them in beeswax wraps rather than using cellophane and aluminum

DISH WASHING Now you've eaten, here's how to wash your dishes, eco-friendly style:

- Instead of using a plastic sponge, prefer a wooden brush, vegetal sponge or eco-friendly Tawashi (crocheted Japanese sponge)
- Using a dishwashing machine statistically uses less water than doing it by hands in the sink, if the machine is full of course

You can apply everything listed before to youth events

BEFORE THE EVENT

- Ask your rental place to be sustainable: assess the things they can change easily and ask nicely if it would be possible
 - ➔ Example: if your rental places provides mugs for the breakfast but single-use cups for the coffee breaks, ask them if you can use mugs or glasses from the cafeteria
- Invest in eco-cups to re-use at every event
- In the infopack or « What to bring » list, invite your participants to bring their own zero-waste material (water bottle or mug)
- Promote your event online rather than with flyers

DURING THE EVENT

- Ask your participants to write their names on their mugs/cups with a piece of tape and marker (this way they use only one for the whole seminar)
- Rather than wasting paper with flip charts and post it, consider using a chalkboard, whiteboard or even projecting your computer and writing your notes online
- Put up information on the recycling rules you'll be applying during the event, announce where the bins are during the introduction of the seminar and how you'd like your participants to dispose of their waste