

GLOBAL
DESTINATION
SUSTAINABILITY
INDEX

2019
WHITEPAPER

Creating better places to live, meet & thrive in.

Sustainable Destination
Management Trends
Best Practices and Insights.

Featuring an analysis of the 2018 Global
Destination Sustainability Index from
the world's leading cities.

AN INDUSTRY COLLABORATION BETWEEN IMEX, ICCA, MCI AND ECM



CREDITS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

This report has been produced as a result of the generous financial support of the Thailand Exhibition and Convention Bureau.

AUTHOR

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DISCLAIMER

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the material in this document, neither the GDS-Index nor any of our partners will be liable for any loss or damages incurred through the use of the report.

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A large banner with a red and orange background and the text "WE DEMAND TO SEE CHANGE." The banner is positioned diagonally across the right side of the page. The text is in white, bold, uppercase letters. The background of the banner is divided into vertical stripes of red and orange. The banner is set against a background of a cloudy sky and a building.

Foreword

This, our third whitepaper, serves to present unique insights on the current and future trends of sustainability in 47 destinations worldwide. It explores and examines their strategies, and the tactical actions taken by big and small Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) and municipalities to become more sustainable.

It contains valuable best practices, data, and recommendations. Our aim is to inspire and empower destinations to strengthen their commitment and capacity to advance the tourism and events industry towards green growth and inclusive social development. We trust that this study will be useful not only to DMOs, but event industry stakeholders and the tourist community at large.

Participation in the GDS-index has grown 62% since 2016. At the time of printing, 58 cities were members of this global destination sustainability movement, and we aim to grow tenfold by 2023. Every one of the participating destinations is a leader in the industry, and pioneers in their willingness to benchmark, share knowledge and collaborate to make their local, and the global, destinations' community more resilient, innovative, and sustainable.

Based on groundbreaking research conducted by [Oxford Economics](#), the economic, social and environmental significance of the events industry is massive. We have the opportunity to influence safe and fair working conditions for 26 millions jobs, direct \$1.5 trillion USD towards more responsible supply chains, and inspire 1.5 billion participants to action, in creating a more sustainable and prosperous future.

The influence our industry has within the other sectors along its vast value chain further elevate the significance, and highlights the decisive role of this industry in the achievement of the 2030

Sustainable Development Agenda and its 17 SDGs.

The decisions we make now, alongside the sustainability strategies we set in motion within the next five years, will determine our future, and the futures of our children and grandchildren. A climate safe prosperous future for our wondrous world and all its inhabitants is possible, but only if we act now - and together in collaboration.



Carina Bauer
Chief Executive
Officer,
IMEX Group



Sébastien Tondeur
Chief Executive
Officer, MCI Group



Petra Stusek
President, European
Cities Marketing



Senthil Gopinath
Chief Executive
Officer, The
International
Congress and
Convention
Association (ICCA)

OUR MOTTO

**" The GDS-Index is About Progress,
Not Perfection "**

Participating Cities

“We are the leading global community of event destinations committed to sustainability & regeneration”



Contents

- 2 CREDITS AND CONTACT INFORMATION
- 3 FOREWORD
- 5 CONTENTS
- 6 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
- 12 **INSIGHTS: WHAT'S DRIVING DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DESTINATIONS?**
- 17 **BUILDING BLOCKS:** How do destinations catalyse regeneration?
- 19 **TACTICS FOR CHANGE:** How to improve performance
- 41 **APPENDIX 1:** 2018 GDS-Index Key Results
- 45 **APPENDIX 2:** About the GDS-Index and Benchmarking Methodology



Executive Summary

The Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS-Index) is a destination level programme that measures, benchmarks and improves the sustainability strategy and performance of meetings, events and business tourism destinations.

The GDS-Index is a global movement with a mission to engage, inspire and enable destinations to become more sustainable places to visit, meet and thrive in.



OUR WORLD IS TRANSFORMING

Unlike anything humanity has experienced before, the current scale, scope, and complexity of changes are shaking the foundations that society has accepted as the norm.

Five converging megaforges present destinations with both tremendous opportunities to adapt to the risks brought by: Climate Breakdown, Ecocide, Demographic Shift, Social Change and Digitalization.

The meetings and events industry supports 26 million jobs, \$1.5 trillion USD in global GDP, and reaches 1.5 billion participants in over 180 countries (Events Industry Council). The tourism industry contributes 10.2% of the world's GDP and one in 10 jobs worldwide (WTTC). If well managed, these two influential sectors can continue to generate quality jobs for resilient growth, accelerate social progress and regenerate our natural world.

However, without the appropriate policies, safeguards, and investments, the continued growth of the tourism and events industry will increase the pressure placed on ecosystems and the services they provide for both people and the planet.

PRESSURE IS RISING

Citizen awareness of sustainability has experienced a huge shift since our last report in 2018, due to the high-profile climate and anti-plastic movements catapulted the debate from the narrow -but vocal- fringes into the global mainstream. Likewise corporates are increasing their commitment and action. The transition to a low-carbon economy is underway and accelerating globally. As of May 2019, over 554 companies had committed to science-based climate action, and over 90% of the largest companies now file a sustainability report.

Executive Summary

NEW ERA OF SUSTAINABILITY

This is being driven by the requirement of 58 stock exchanges to make listed companies disclose their climate impacts. In parallel, 80% of mainstream investors now consider 'ESG' (environmental, social and governance) information when making investment decisions. That covers a staggering \$22.89 trillion USD of assets (McKinsey).

For centuries, cities have been centers of commerce, culture and innovation, and the birthplace for some of humankind's greatest ideas. Seventy percent of cities are already dealing with the effects of climate change, and nearly all are at risk. Over 90% of all urban areas are coastal, putting most cities on Earth at risk of flooding from rising sea levels and powerful storms (C40).

Unlike many nation states, cities are leading the fight against climate change. A resounding 98% of GDS-Index cities have a Greenhouse Gas emissions reduction strategy, and local governments are pioneering with climate mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Driven by concerned students, citizens, local governments and corporations a new era of sustainability is rising, and it's touching every corner of the world. Destinations face severe threat, and we believe that a better global future lies in urban innovation and collaborative action.



A NEW ERA OF
SUSTAINABILITY

DMOs AS CHANGEMAKERS

Destination Management Organisations are evolving into destination stewards and changemakers. They are progressively taking a bigger role in accelerating their city's sustainable development plan and improving their competitive position in the global market. Our research identified four core building blocks to successfully take on this role.

- 1 TAKE THE LEAD:**
Being just a promoter is not an option anymore. DMOs must evolve from a destination marketing organisation to a destination management organisation (DMOs). As destination stewards, DMOs need to take a leading position in driving sustainability across a destination by facilitating conversations, shifting culture and nurturing more authentic connections amongst their constituent communities.
- 2 DEVELOP A MASTERPLAN:**
Destinations need to have a deep understanding of the scale and impact caused by the global megaforces, and develop a long-term sustainability strategy that both aligns with the municipal vision while also leveraging the events and tourism industry to catalyse, accelerate, and support positive change.
- 3 INTEGRATE INTO CORE STRATEGY:**
Sustainability can no longer be viewed as a vehicle for promotion. It needs to be integrated as both a core pillar of the DMOs business strategy, and as a fundamental aspect of management across the organisation – from talent recruitment to development, sales to marketing, event management to finance.

- 4 BECOME A MASTER OF COLLABORATION:**
Sustainability is complex, and requires systemic change and innovation. DMOs need to become masters of collaboration as they are highly skilled at bringing their community together to rethink, reimagine and regenerate their city, and its meetings and events industry. Destinations will become even more competitive by reimagining the role of their visitors from passive tourists, or event visitors to active, temporary locals



TACTICS FOR CHANGE

From our research and work with destinations around the world, we have seen that there is no perfect sustainable destination, yet. Even the leaders of the GDS-Index don't excel in all aspects. However, by grouping the best ideas from destinations around the world, we found eight powerful best ideas. This “framework” provides a set of recommendations for any DMO or municipality, that wants to create, or improve their sustainable destination strategy.

1 INTEGRATE THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG'S):

The 17 SDGs provide a powerful framework for destinations to engage stakeholders, map current initiatives, improve strategy and report on achievements and impacts.

2 FOOTPRINT AND SET SCIENCE BASED REDUCTION TARGETS

Understanding your social, economic and environmental impacts is no longer optional. Destinations need to measure the positive and negative footprint of their events and tourism sector, and set science based targets to improve them.

3 ENGAGE STRATEGICALLY WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholder feedback and ideas need to be deeply embedded into all aspects of a destination's strategy and operations by a process of collaborative, and inclusive engagement.

4 CHAMPION CERTIFICATION

In a market where clients and consumers are looking for sustainable brands, and where everyone is proclaiming their sustainability credentials, third party certification is critical. Destinations have a key role in endorsing and promoting trusted third party eco-labels.

5 PROMOTE THE FOOD REVOLUTION

Local, organic, seasonal, plant based healthy menus are part of better food chains. DMOs can inspire a change of habits and promote their destinations as leaders in the food revolution.

6 BOOST DEMAND

Research and experience highlights that clients do not always ask for “sustainability”. Destinations need to be more proactive, bold and creative in how they approach and engage clients with their sustainability pitch.

7 BUILD AN AUTHENTIC STORY

Telling your story is a critical part of integrating sustainability into a destination brand. Pure “green” advertising campaigns do not work. Destinations need to create movements based on a new story of purpose, authentic action and data.

8 REPORT IMPACTS AND ACTIONS

Sustainability reporting by destinations is not yet mainstream. Clear reporting of social, economic and environmental impacts, strategies, and performance has the potential to better engage stakeholders, build trust and accelerate collaborative action

21% of GDS-Index destinations publicly disclosed on their sustainability efforts in either an annual report or dedicated sustainability report.

In this report we illustrate how sustainability has become a key measure of a destinations success. It drives innovation, authentic relationships, a people-centric approach to business, and makes everyone feel good. Ultimately it fosters strategies to be more competitive, collaborative and better places to live, meet and thrive in.

MEGA TRENDS



- PEOPLE PRESSURE
- CORPORATE PRESSURE
- GOVERNMENT PRESSURE

- SOCIAL CHANGE
- ECOSIDE
- CLIMATE BREAKDOWN
- DIGITIZATION
- DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFT



Executive Summary

Participation in the GDS-Index increased from 35 to 47 destinations in 2018. Convention Bureau (CVB) performance leapt 39% since 2016, which demonstrates how the GDS-Index is delivering on its purpose and helping destinations to match their initial commitments with progressive action.

68%

OF ALL GDS-INDEX DESTINATIONS HAVE A SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY A

97%

INCREASE SINCE 2016

47%

GROWTH IN DESTINATIONS WITH A SUSTAINABILITY TEAM OR COMMITTEE

32%

JUMP IN ECO-CERTIFICATION OF DESTINATIONS AND DMOS SINCE 2016

39%

IMPROVEMENT IN CVB PERFORMANCE SINCE 2016

74%

INCREASE IN DESTINATIONS INTEGRATING SUSTAINABILITY INTO CORE BUSINESS STRATEGY

ONLY

21%

OF DESTINATIONS DISCLOSE ON SUSTAINABILITY

What is a sustainable destination?

"Sustainable Destinations are places that actively account for the current and future economic, social and environmental impacts of their events and tourism industry, while engaging and listening to the needs of the host communities, the environment, visitors, and the industry.

They have collaboratively developed a long-term and regenerative vision, and take the lead as stewards and catalysts in making a better place to visit, meet, and thrive in."



Global mega-trends are transformative forces that are already, and will increasingly shape the future world and destinations, in profound ways. We propose that six of these mega-trends have significant impact on cities, and that destination management organisations must better understand and react to these forces, in their destination's development strategy.

1 CLIMATE BREAKDOWN:

Scientific predictions about the rate and effect of human impact on climate are increasing in certainty and accuracy. Scientists around the world say sharp cuts in carbon emissions are urgently needed to deliver a 50 % reduction by 2030 and avoid worse droughts, floods, extreme heatwaves and poverty for hundreds of millions of people. As climate chaos becomes more severe and frequent, threats to businesses and events (large and small) will increase. Meanwhile in the last year, we have seen that the people have had enough with government inaction.

Civil disobedience is on the rise with the surge of the Extinction Rebellion and the Fridays for Future movements demanding that governments immediately provide a safe pathway to stay below a maximum temperature rise of 1.5C. These movements will increasingly be challenging the need for people to fly so much, and promoting the new concept of "flygskam" ("flight shame" in Swedish). Consequently the tourism and events industry will be provoked to reevaluate its business model, and we will be made to feel ashamed (or embarrassed) with the amount of flying and the environmental impact caused by our industry and its professionals."



This is your wake up call...

Cities consume 75% of the world's natural resources & account for 80% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

2 ECOCIDE:

Human society is significantly threatened by the decline of natural life-support systems, with half of natural ecosystems now destroyed and a million species at risk of extinction (UN). Animal populations having fallen by an average of 60% since 1970 (WWF), and our lack of responsibility and overconsumption is proving dangerous to our planet, health, and wildlife. Over eight million metric tons of plastic are thrown into the ocean annually. By 2050 there will be more plastic by weight than fish in the sea (Ellen MacArthur).

Insights: What's driving development
of sustainable destinations?
5 MEGA TRENDS

3 DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFT:

The world population is **projected by the UN** to increase by more than one billion people within the next 15 years. By 2050 we will have 9.7 billion people on the planet, 97% of this growth will come from emerging or developing countries. Today, just over half of the global population resides in cities, but every week 1.5 million people are added to the global urban population. It is **forecasted** to grow to 69% by 2050. Most of the new growth will take place in lesser known medium-sized cities in Asia and Africa.

4 SOCIAL CHANGE: Equally significant, is that people are living longer and that the fastest growing segment of the population will be the over the age of 65. Not only will the demands of supporting an aging population require more women to join the workforce, but there is increasing recognition that a more diverse workforce is a major source of strength for a business. As power shifts from west to east, and from nations to cities, inequality is rapidly rising. The world's eight richest people now own as much wealth as the poorest half of the world's population.

5 DIGITIZATION: By 2020 there will be close to seven times the number of connected devices as people on the planet (Cisco). This proliferation of new mobile technologies, artificial intelligence, facial recognition, sensor and wearable technologies, and increased reliance on digital is transforming the events and tourism industries. Younger generations or "digital natives" born into a digital world approach technology, not simply as a tool, but as a form of "natural language." Destinations not only need to understand and benefit from the new technologies, but also how millennials organise and live their lives and their relationship with themselves, with other people and with information.

DEVELOP BETTER CITIES



Insights: What's driving development of sustainable destinations?

A NEW ERA OF REGENERATION

Consumer awareness about sustainability had a huge moment in 2018 and 2019, as widespread pressure and high-profile climate and anti-plastic campaigns moved the debate from the narrow (but vocal) fringes into the mainstream. Driven by concerned students, citizens, governments and corporations, a new era of sustainability is rising and it's touching every corner of the world.

Consumers are now actively searching for and buying into ethical and resource-efficient products and lifestyles. According to data from an August 2018 [Nielsen report](#), 81% of respondents of their massive global survey felt strongly that companies should help to improve the environment, with millennials (85%) coming out ahead as the generation demanding change.

In 2018-19, the campaign on plastic went mainstream, significantly influenced by the "[Attenborough Effect](#)". Event attendees are demanding that organisers get drastic about plastic. According to the [GlobalWebIndex study](#) of 3,833 in the UK and US, over half of consumers say they have reduced the amount of disposable plastic they are using in the last year, with 42% of consumers saying products that use sustainable materials are important when it comes to their day-to-day purchases.

With these consumers projected to be spending \$150bn on sustainable goods by 2021, brands and destinations will need to get much better at communicating their sustainability commitments and actions.

In summary, the five mega-trends of social change, digitization, climate chaos, ecocide and the demographic shifts on our wondrous planet will increasingly drive innovation, redefine relationships and transform purchasing behaviour. This will disrupt the events and tourism industry, shaping destination management and brand marketing strategies over the next 20 years.



References:

[Travel & Tourism Global Economic Impact & Issues](#)
[PWC Megatrends Report](#)
[Destinations at Risk: The Invisible Burden of Tourism](#)
[World Economic Forum Risk Analysis](#)
[Project Drawdown](#)
[WWF 2018 Living Planet Report](#)
[UN Population Projections](#)
[Ellen MacArthur Foundation](#)
[Nielsen: Sustainable shoppers buy the change they wish to see in the world](#)

4 BUILDING BLOCKS

How to catalyse regeneration?

1 TAKE THE LEAD

The question of responsibility is tricky; is it the city's environment department, the tourism authorities or the industry suppliers who are most accountable?

Everything is interconnected and being a slow adopter is not an option anymore. With the urgencies of the megatrends, all business owners and citizens within a destination can play a role to speed and scale up sustainable developments.

All major municipalities now have a sustainability strategy. The top destinations in the GDS-Index have discovered that they can play a key role in accelerating their their municipality's environmental, social and economic development strategy. This is achieved by connecting with a municipal sustainability team and with hotels, venues, agencies, NGOs and citizens with a view to inspire and enable positive action.

Copenhagen, Ljubljana, Sydney and Melbourne exemplify the increasing number of cities participating in the GDS-Index who have managed to tackle this challenge. However, one does not need to be a top performer in order to show leadership. A particular mention should be given to the incredible commitment of Goyang, (South Korea) who increased their performance by 59%, and to Dublin which saw a 41% improvement.

Identifying the right team to lead a destination's sustainability initiative is equally crucial. In 2018, 81% of destinations had an internal sustainability team versus 55% in 2016 - which is a stunning 47% growth. It can be expected that more destinations will follow the best practice of Copenhagen, Brussels, Gothenburg, Monaco and others to employ a dedicated sustainability manager.

2 INTEGRATE SUSTAINABILITY INTO CORE BUSINESS STRATEGY:

An increasing number of DMOs and CVBs are understanding the need to integrate sustainability into their DNA.

A great example of this is Gothenburg's pioneering 2020 strategy and implementation that have earned them recognition as the overall leadership winner of the GDS-Index for the last three years.

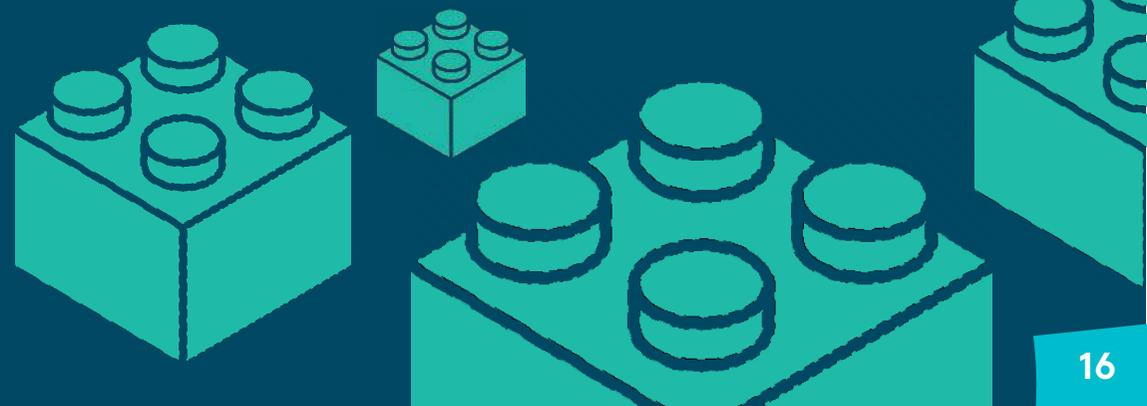
3 DEVELOP A MASTERPLAN:

DMOs urgently need to to develop a multi-year sustainability strategy, that aligns with, and supports national and local policy. Events and tourism can be used to catalyse and accelerate change. Destinations with a clear shared vision, and ability to bring together stakeholders to build on and expand initiatives, are achieving a competitive advantage.

4 COLLABORATE, EDUCATE AND CO-INNOVATE:

Solving environmental and social challenges in a city is complex and requires a combination of short term action and longer term systemic change. Understanding the ecosystem, and forging new partnerships with key industry actors along with local governmental business stakeholders in the city, creates an opportunity to create and scale up innovations and solutions for environmental and social challenges.

"Sustainability can no longer be an add on - it needs to be integrated as a core pillar of a DMOs business strategy & become a foundation for their "destination's story."



1 BUILDING BLOCKS

How to catalyse regeneration?

CASE STUDY: THAILAND

The Thailand Convention Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) has been a champion of sustainability since 2008. In 2014 after significant stakeholder consultation, TCEB launched their first sustainability Master Plan (2015-2019). This pioneering strategy included a seven pillar framework combined with a five year roadmap, detailing the steps required for Thailand to become a leading international sustainable Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Events (MICE) destination.

Since its launch, TCEB has successfully delivered on the Sustainability Master Plan's goals of stimulating collaboration, increasing the use of standards and certifications, raising awareness, and driving innovation. Sustainability is now one of the seven strategic themes of the overall TCEB MICE Master Plan. [More info.](#)

One of the strategic principles of the strategy was Leadership. Five years on, TCEB has learnt that being a leader in sustainability has not only developed the brand reputation globally, but enhanced the strategic positioning of the Events industry within the Thai Government. Most importantly, their vision to catalyse global sustainable growth has inspired action locally to develop a more efficient, responsible, and better events' industry.

As part of their strategy, TCEB have funded various global Sustainability Programmes targeted on education, engagement, and increasing certification. They generously sponsored the development of this whitepaper.



8 TACTICS FOR CHANGE

How to improve performance

From our research and work with destinations around the world, we have seen that there is no perfect sustainable destination, yet. Even the leaders of the GDS-Index don't excel in all aspects. However, by grouping the best ideas from destinations around the world, we came up with eight powerful best practices. This "framework" provides a set of strategic recommendations for any destination that wants to create, or improve a sustainable business strategy.



1 INTEGRATE THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS:

The 17 SDGs provide a powerful framework for destinations to engage stakeholders, map current initiatives, improve strategy and report on achievements and impacts.

2 FOOTPRINT AND SET SCIENCE BASED REDUCTION TARGETS

Understanding your social, economic and environmental impacts is no longer optional. Destinations need to measure the positive and negative footprint of their events and tourism sector, and set science based targets to improve them.

3 ENGAGE STRATEGICALLY WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholder feedback and ideas need to be deeply embedded into all aspects of a destination's strategy and operations by a process of collaborative, and inclusive engagement.

4 CHAMPION CERTIFICATION

In a market where clients and consumers are looking for sustainable brands and where everyone is proclaiming their sustainability credentials, third party certification is critical. Destinations have a key role in endorsing and promoting trusted third party eco-labels.

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Research and experience highlights that clients do not always ask for "sustainability". Destinations need to be more proactive, bold and creative in how they approach and engage clients with their sustainability pitch.

7 CREATE AN ENGAGING STORY

Telling your story is a critical part of integrating sustainability into a destination brand. Pure "green" advertising campaigns do not work. Destinations need to create movements based on a new story of purpose, authentic action and data.

8 REPORT IMPACTS AND ACTIONS

Sustainability reporting by destinations is not yet mainstream. Clear reporting of social, economic and environmental impacts, strategies, and performance has the potential to better engage stakeholders, build trust and accelerate collaborative action.

1 TACTICS FOR CHANGE

Incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

CASE STUDY: COPENHAGEN

The 17 SDGs provide a powerful framework for destinations to engage stakeholders, map current initiatives, define priorities, catalyse action, and report on impacts.

Since its launch in 2015, the ambitious United Nations 2030 Agenda has been picking up momentum in the Tourism and Events sector. In the last year, thousands of private and public organisations around the world have either started or increased their efforts to align their strategies to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDG sub goal 8.9 boldly states: "By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products."

The SDGs can help destinations to develop strategies with a goal of stimulating economic development, combating inequalities, promoting inclusive communities, and protecting our living planet.

Various destinations within the GDS-Index such as Lausanne, Montreux, Monaco and Malmo are using the SDGs as a powerful framework within which to engage stakeholders, map current initiatives, define priorities, catalyse action, and report on impacts.

The Copenhagen tourism and events strategy is entitled "Tourism for Good." The key concept underpinning the strategy is that tourism is not a goal in itself; rather "tourism is a means to a sustainable end". This is a reality where tourism contributes positively to society, to building better cities and destinations for locals and visitors alike. It becomes a driver of positive change."

The entire strategy is underpinned by Agenda 2030 and uses the SDGs to provide a structure and a measurement framework. The strategy is used as a starting point and an invitation - both to join them, and for others to invite them to support their efforts.

The strategy is relevant to anyone involved in the development of tourism of Greater Copenhagen. It speaks to all the area's attractions, hotels, conference organisers and venues, cruise companies, transport and tour operators, the public sector, industry organisations, NGOs, universities and anyone else with an interest in the tourism value chains.

A SUMMARY OF WONDERFUL COPENHAGEN'S STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM **TOURISM FOR GOOD** **AN INVITATION TO A JOURNEY TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM BY 2030**

«Wonderful Copenhagen's ambition for 2030 is that tourism in Greater Copenhagen positively impacts local and global sustainable development.»

WONDERFUL COPENHAGEN WILL WORK TOWARDS THE ABOVE AMBITION THROUGH 4 FOCUS AREAS

BROADENING TOURISM	TOURISM CHOICES MATTER	PARTNERSHIPS FOR GOOD	LEADING BY EXAMPLE
The goal is not fewer visitors, but that they have broader access to the destination. If the destination is developed on the spot in a broader area, travellers will get a richer experience which in turn is likely to result in higher visitor satisfaction. It will also prevent the burden of tourism pressure to be fully directed to tourism hotspots, locally and create more space for people in the city, whether locals or temporary visitors.	Like any other consumption and technical system, transportation and tourism have negative sustainability impacts. If smart, sustainable and behaviour an integral responsibility, we will know how to improve our choices, our cars and our travel, means of transport. The choices we make as we travel will be largely responsible areas. The sector's perception of the quality of the destination will improve, especially if the destination that the visitor will experience the destination to others.	Without collaboration it is impossible to know how to make the biggest sustainable impact. Without measurement it is impossible to know whether it is worth the effort. Without trying that knowledge and partnerships, we will not be able to create sustainable change. We hope that our vision, if Wonderful Copenhagen takes it forward and continues to develop, will create a sustainable partnership, and we hope it will create value in sustainable destination development.	Wonderful Copenhagen, as an organisation, can have a significant impact on the way we see and experience the city. Wonderful Copenhagen is also responsible for contributing to a socially sustainable tourism market. Thus, Wonderful Copenhagen must lead the way in creating sustainable tourism opportunities in its own operations to become a leading example.

WONDERFUL COPENHAGEN WANT TO ACHIEVE FOLLOWING TARGETS BY 2021

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued growth in tourism is supported by at least 80 percent of both visitors. Creating equal opportunities for locals to be involved in tourism development. Developing methods to measure broader tourism in terms of geographic, interest and time. <p>Supported by 8 specific actions defined in the strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 77 per cent of visitors asked to recommend the destination. 100 per cent of large conference venues and 90 per cent of large hotels have third party sustainability certification. To develop a detailed climate strategy that will reduce CO2-emissions in hotels, travel agencies, car hire, air transport, sea, bus and ferries. <p>Supported by 8 specific actions defined in the strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability must be considered a core element in all of Wonderful Copenhagen's new projects and partnerships. Copenhagen making a step towards 90 per cent of the hotels within in the Global Greenhouse Sustainability Index of the world's most sustainable hotels and conference destinations. Wonderful Copenhagen has established staff as the primary source for external knowledge on sustainable tourism and destination development. <p>Supported by 9 specific actions defined in the strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having a third party environmental certification of own operations in 2021-2023. An explicit comparison of own food and beverage procurement 30 per cent in 2020, 50 per cent in 2021, 2020 and 50 per cent in 2021. Being an organisation that consider social inclusion in its operations. <p>Supported by 8 specific actions defined in the strategy.</p>
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WITH THIS STRATEGY WE WILL CONTRIBUTE POSITIVELY TO THESE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION, 7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY, 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH, 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE, 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES, 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION, 14 LIFE BELOW WATER, 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

SDG TARGETS

44 52 53 89
8 12 13 14 15
17 17 17 17 17
12 12 12 12 12

1 TACTICS FOR CHANGE

Incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

The Sustainable Development Goals offer a common language for sustainability. They provide a powerful framework for destinations to engage stakeholders, map current initiatives, improve strategy and report on achievements and impacts.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



2 TACTICS FOR CHANGE

Footprint and set science based reduction targets:

Understanding your social, economic and environmental impacts is no longer an option. Destinations need to measure the positive and negative footprint of their events and tourism sector, and set science based targets to improve them.

Events and tourism can have a profound impact on destinations affecting the economy in terms of job creation and increased revenue from tax. It also has positive and negative impacts on the environment and local communities. However very few destinations are measuring these impacts. This is an important gap in knowledge which affects the sector's ability to protect the environment, benefit local people, and improve the customer experience.

"Investors, developers, hotel chains and tourism agencies routinely take security, political, health and safety, and other factors into account when making decisions about development. But often little, or no weight, is given to sustainability and the long-term impacts of these decisions. For example, will the local water supply meet the future needs of tourists and residents and how will increased energy demands be managed." ([Destinations at Risk: The Invisible Burden of Tourism](#))

A data driven approach to measuring impact is imperative as destinations have limited resources and therefore need to ensure that they are investing wisely and taking the most effective action towards achieving their environmental targets. Quantifying the contribution that the events and tourism sector has on a city's overall environmental footprint allows a city to see where the challenges exist, and where the greatest opportunity for improvement lies. Modelling and quantifying the impact of various policy and technical interventions in the sector then allows a city to determine which programs and advocacy positions should be

prioritised both from a local government perspective and from the key players in the sector.

CASE STUDY: SYDNEY

The municipality of Sydney developed a data driven strategy to identify the most effective way for specific sectors to reduce their environmental impacts and contribute towards the ambitious local government targets.

The accommodation and entertainment sector was selected after a thorough prioritisation process, which considered impact, opportunity, capacity, and governance. To implement this program successfully, the city created an external stakeholder Reference Group consisting of:

- Key government agencies with a specific interest in the environment and the planning of the built environment
- Organisations representing key stakeholders and special interest groups in the accommodation and entertainment sector
- Energy and water distribution networks

The role of these key technical, sector, and policy experts was to:

- Provide advice
- Build a common understanding of the issues, barriers and opportunities
- Understand stakeholder roles to foster collaboration
- Advocate for the solutions and resources required
- Support the delivery of action/s determined by the plans

2 TACTICS FOR CHANGE

Footprint and set science based reduction targets:

CASE STUDY: SYDNEY

In depth consultation was undertaken with inputs from over 139 organisations. From this feedback and with modeling from actual utility data the city was able to quantify that the accommodation and entertainment sector is currently responsible for 21% of the city's total greenhouse gas emissions, 14% of water consumption and 47% of the city's commercial waste.

As a result the city developed a five year strategy "[Making Sydney a Sustainable Destination](#)" to outline the action the sector must take in order for the destination to achieve its overall environmental targets. The flagship action from this strategy was the formation of the [Sustainable Destination Partnership](#). The partnership is a collaboration between 40 industry stakeholders that represent almost half the hotel rooms across the city, government-owned cultural institutions, international entertainment brands and key industry influencers.

The partnership has aligned with the [Sydney 2030 vision](#) and using the principle of collective impact is focused on:

- Reducing carbon, energy, water and waste
- Using and promoting environmental ratings
- Building environmental capability within the industry
- Investment in renewable energy
- Using procurement supply chains to drive action

More info: www.sustainabledestinationpartnership.com.au



SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION PARTNERSHIP



3 TACTICS FOR CHANGE

Engage strategically
with stakeholders

Stakeholder feedback and ideas need to be integrated into all aspects of a destination's strategy and operations, through more collaborative, inclusive, and strategic engagements.

Stakeholder engagement is a fundamental element of a destination's sustainability strategy. Correctly done it informs an assessment on what is important, what should be focused on and what issues should be communicated on. Without input from key stakeholder groups, any approach to systemic change will be limited by organisational self-interest and singular focus.

Many destinations conduct interviews and surveys, however few have a quality stakeholder engagement process that is transparent, inclusive and defensible, and that utilises a methodology and tools that can fully account for a shifting business environment in which social and environmental concerns are increasingly prominent.



FROM OUR EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH THE GDS-INDEX DESTINATIONS WE DEFINE BEST PRACTISE FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AS FOLLOWS:

1. DEFINE: Define the principles and purpose of the engagement exercise. Is it to review current strategies and plans, improve governance or catalyse innovation?

2. MAP: Define criteria and an approach for identifying, profiling and prioritising stakeholders.

3. PLAN: Define what engagement level and method you will use to converse with each key stakeholder group to gain qualitative and quantitative input: ie. Online surveys, 1:1 interviews, focus groups and secondary research. Create a project plan with timelines and resources

4. ENGAGE: Reach out and conduct the consultations. Ensure that you are listening to all key groups and not just your friends?

5. REVIEW: Collect and analyse data, identify key insights and use as input to improve strategy and plans.

6. PUBLISH: Document and publish key results, ensure all stakeholders who participated receive a copy.

There are many excellent frameworks for stakeholder engagement. Recommended reading:

AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard

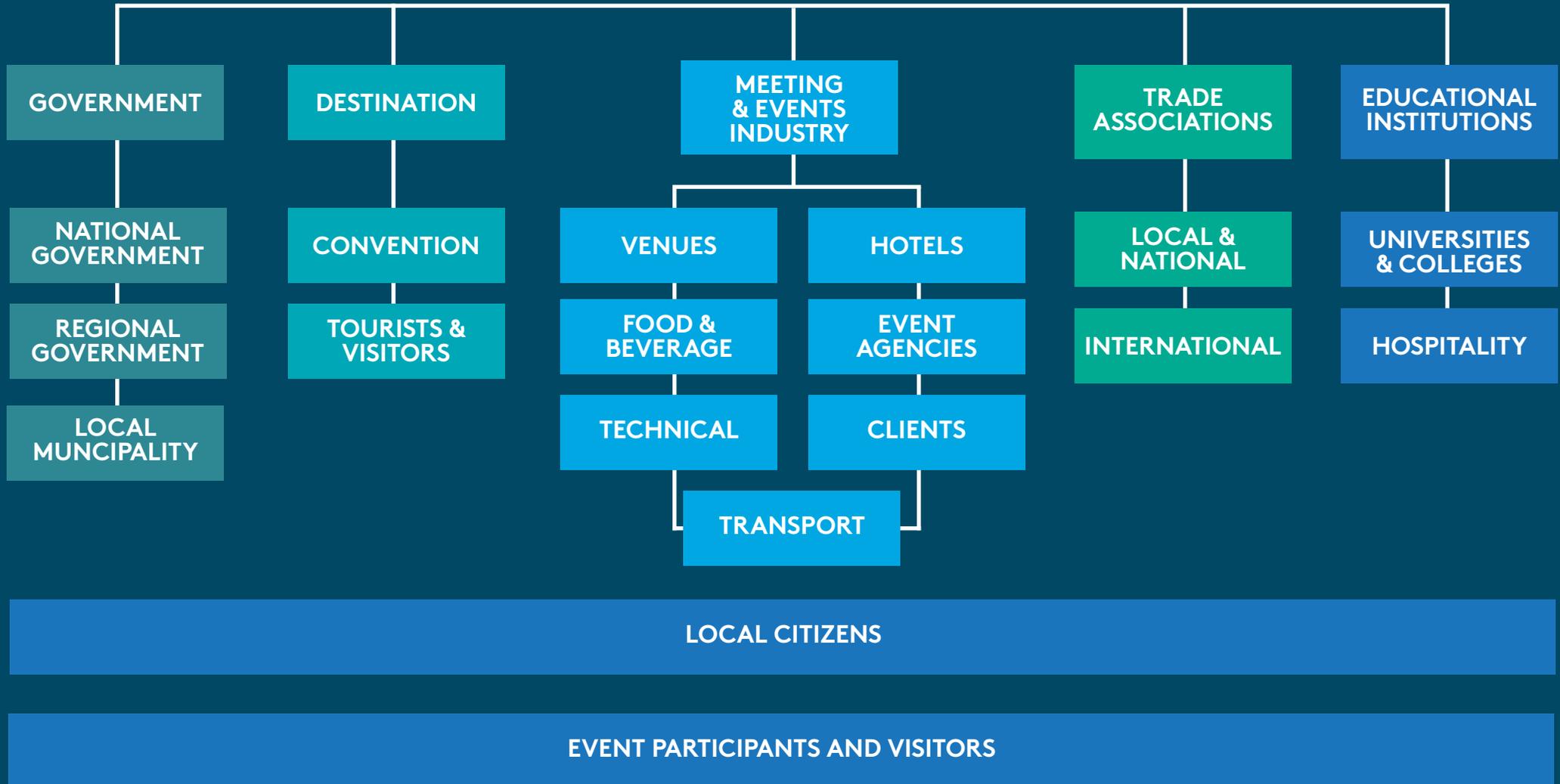
BSR Approach to Stakeholder Engagement

ISO20121 Standard for Sustainable Event Management

3 TACTICS FOR CHANGE

Engage strategically with stakeholders

MEETINGS AND EVENTS SUSTAINABILITY STAKEHOLDERS



3 TACTICS FOR CHANGE

Engage strategically with stakeholders

CASE STUDY: 10XCOPENHAGEN

10XCOPENHAGEN was initiated by Wonderful Copenhagen as a major research project in October 2017. It had the purpose of creating new insights that help to rethink tourism in Copenhagen towards 2030.

Wonderful Copenhagen decided that they needed to understand what was activating and preventing the growth of tourism and the impact it had on the city. With better stakeholder input they would then be able to foster future growth for the benefit of the city and its inhabitants.

The 10XCOPENHAGEN research includes a substantial focus on the Copenhageners' perception and experience of tourism in their daily lives, as well as research into the competitive position of Copenhagen.

The project design had a very robust, inclusive and complete stakeholder engagement strategy that involved a wide range of inputs; many of which came from stakeholders who were not historically consulted on tourism and events strategy.

The extensive research of locals, temporary locals, the tourism and events industry, innovators, urban planners, decision makers and experts used the following methods:

- Survey of more than 5,500 international visitors of which approximately 2,700 visited Copenhagen.
- 405 interviews with meetings and event visitors in Copenhagen.

- Benchmark with 10 European competitor destinations based on 4000+ interviews with visitors of benchmark cities.
- Data analysis of more than 20,000 reviews on TripAdvisor, and 720,000 pictures from Copenhagen and Stockholm on Instagram.
- One hundred and eighty three street interviews with both international visitors and locals.
- Survey of more than 2,000 local Copenhageners.
- Nine focus group interviews & workshops with local residents and businesses from different neighbourhoods, urban planners and tourism professionals.

From the results, ten reports were produced with a set of insights and recommendations, which are now being used to inform the development and improvement of the "Tourism for Good" strategy.

The methodology of the research is highly innovative and defines best practice. Not only in its approach to engaging stakeholders and reviewing social media data, but also the way Wonderful Copenhagen have developed a website that shares the data in an engaging, attractive and interesting way.

"Not only do we want this new knowledge to contribute to making Copenhagen "10x" better, but also contribute, and be part of, a global conversation on how we can rethink and improve tourism and the impact of tourism on local lives."

[More information www.10xcopenhagen.com](http://www.10xcopenhagen.com)



4 TACTICS FOR CHANGE

Champion Certification

In a market where clients are looking for sustainable providers and where sustainability credentials need to be considered, trusted certifications are fundamental. Destinations have a key role to endorse and promote trusted third party labels and increase the number of certified suppliers across their destination.

An average of 49% of all hotels in GDS-Index destination are third party certified, rising to 66% for top ten destinations. If we look at the median, we will see that half of the destinations have a hotel certification rate of 78% or higher - which is an increase of 11% in the last three years. The Nordics are the Viking warriors of certification and dominate the top ten leaderboard.

Booking.com reports, "Looking ahead, more than two-thirds (68%) of travellers intend to stay in an eco-accommodation in 2018, 32% said that lack of certification was a barrier to traveling sustainable.

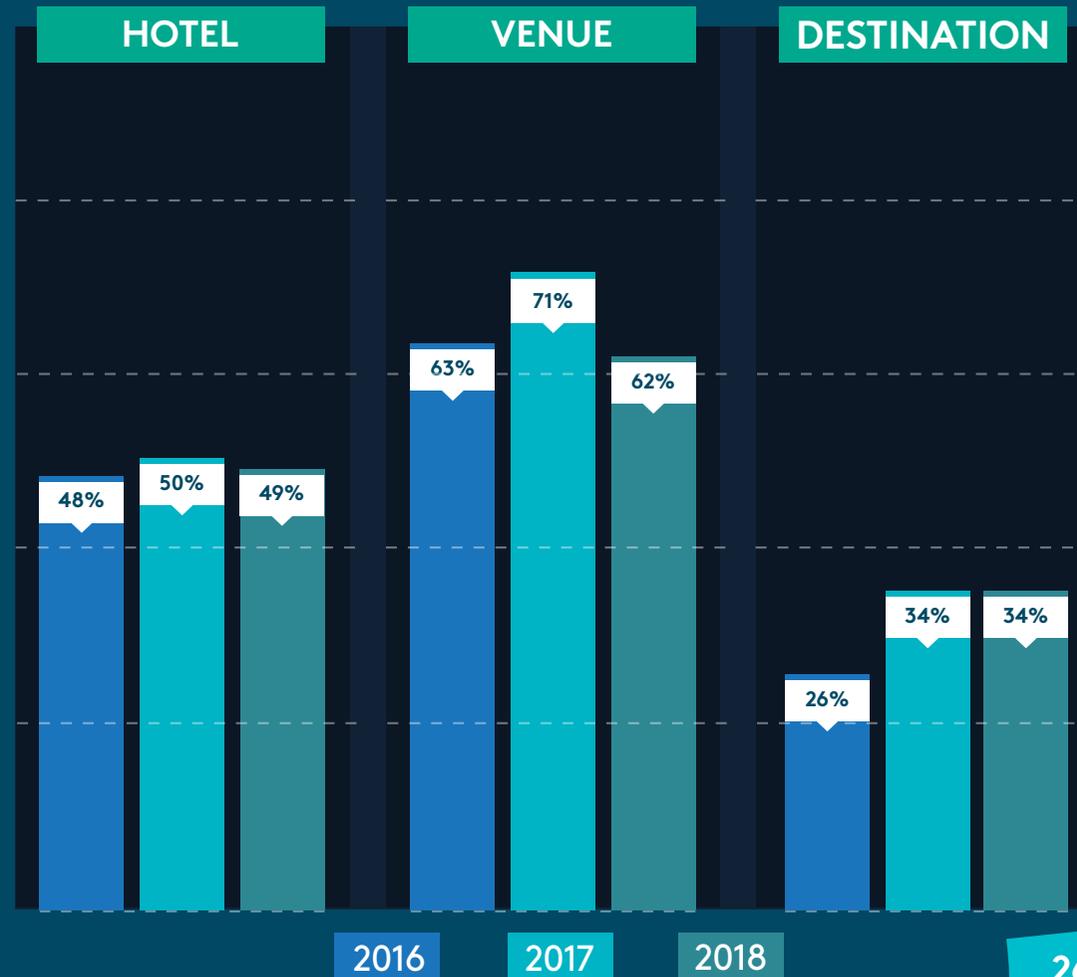
An average of 62% of all venues in GDS-index destinations are third party certified, rising to 81% in the top 10 leading destinations (up from 73% in 2016). Having the main congress and exhibition Centre(s) certified continues to influence the overall rate of certification in the destination.

At the destination level, sustainable tourism labelling and certification is still fragmented and incomplete - with none of the existing eco-labels providing a good framework for meetings and events destinations. However the eco-certification of Destinations and Destination Management Organisations increased by 32% since 2016. In 2018, 34% of GDS-Index destinations have certifications or are in the active process of obtaining one.

Analysing these trends we see that here are two clear directions being followed by DMOs:

- The certification of the sustainable management system used by the DMO for its operations and events. This is increasing covered by ISO20121, but also by local certification standards. Examples include Gothenburg, Oslo and Reykjavik. This year Green Key developed and certified Copenhagen with a new DMO standard (Green Tourism Organisation), that is being rolled out to other Danish cities in 2019.

CERTIFICATION PREGRESSION OF DESTINATIONS 2016 - 2018



4 TACTICS FOR CHANGE

Champion Certification

- The other approach is based on the GSTC Destination Standard - that is a much more involved process conducted by various organisations such as Biosphere, Green Destinations and Earthcheck. As a weakness most of these standards do not include any specific focus on the meeting and events sector

79% of the airports within the GDS-Index destinations have an eco-certification, with a growing number signing up to reduce carbon emissions and neutrality. Currently 272 airports globally representing 44% of all air traffic are measuring, reducing or offsetting their emissions: <https://airportco2.org/>.

The weak link continues to be the limited number of event agencies with a third party eco-certification. In 2018, only 49% of Destination Management Companies (DMCs) and Professional Congress Companies (PCOs) have a formal written sustainability policy

DMOs need to work with their city colleagues to champion certification across the destination. Trusted eco-labels simplify the decision making process and empower clients to choose products that are compatible with their personal and organisational sustainability objectives. The percentage of certifications by hotel, agency, venue etc provide a set of excellent key performance indicators that clearly communicate a destination's commitment to sustainability, both to clients, the supply chain and to the employees of an organisation. Certification enables organisations and their teams to improve the environmental and social impacts of their products and services authentically.

By empowering customers and service providers to make better decisions, the need for regulation is kept to a minimum. This is economically beneficial to both the city, government and industry.

THE NORDIC COUNTRIES LEAD THE GDS-INDEX IN TERMS OF NUMBER OF HOTEL ROOMS THAT ARE ECO-CERTIFIED

CITY NAME	COUNTRY	REGION	HOTELS % 3RD PARTY CERTIFIED
Karlstad	Sweden	Nordics	97%
Bergen	Norway	Nordics	97%
Västerås	Sweden	Nordics	95%
Trollhättan	Sweden	Nordics	92%
Gothenburg	Sweden	Nordics	92%
Uppsala	Sweden	Nordics	90%
Malmö	Sweden	Nordics	90%
Oslo	Norway	Nordics	88%



4 TACTICS FOR CHANGE

Champion Certification

MONACO: LEADERSHIP SPONSOR

The leading challenger to the Nordic dominance of certification comes from Monaco: This has come about as a result of the leadership of Prince Albert II who has a clear vision to make Monaco carbon neutral by 2050. The tourism sector and the hotels in particular have accelerated their sustainability efforts and are working to take actions to achieve it. At this stage 82 % of the rooms are certified and 96 have signed the National Transition Pact.

The tourism sector and the hotels in particular have accelerated their sustainability efforts and are working to take actions to achieve it. At this stage 82 % of the rooms are certified and 96 have signed the National Transition Pact.

BRUSSELS: PARTNERING TO INCREASE CERTIFICATION

With a vision to increase the number of sustainable hotels in the Brussel Capital Region, Visit.brussels joined forces with GoodPlanet, Inter-Environnement Wallonie (IEW), and the Brussels Hotel Association (BHA) to promote the Green Key Certification Label. Green Key is the largest international certification brand in the tourism sector, with 2,900 locations in 56 countries. There are now 239 Green Key locations in Belgium: 34 in Brussels which corresponds to 20% of the hotel rooms.

The private partnership is promoting Green Key certification as a sustainable and concrete framework that events and tourism organisations can use to deliver enhanced positive social, economic and environmental impacts. The project goal is also to use increasing certification levels a driver of competitive positioning for Brussels and local SMEs and the destination.

Visit.brussels also promotes the local “Ecodynamic enterprise” label. Managed by the Brussels-Capital Region, Ecodynamic encourages business to implement an environmental management system (EMS), with a view towards eventual EMAS or ISO 14001 registrations.



5 TACTICS FOR CHANGE

Promote the Food Revolution

A global food revolution is underway. Modern tourists seek local, authentic, healthy and sustainable experiences. DMOs have a key role in engaging clients and suppliers in order to inspire a change of habits and promote their destination as a sustainable food haven.

The number of people identifying as vegans has increased by 350% in the UK in the last decade, in Portugal the number had risen by 400%. In three years the US market increased 600% and the Chinese market grew by 15%. Fairr's latest report, Plant-Based Profits explain that annual global sales of plant-based meat alternatives have grown on average 8% a year since 2010. Currently, growth is about twice the rate of processed meat, with annual sales of about \$2 billion, reaching \$5.2 billion by 2020. Longer term, it could make up a third of the market by 2050.

While not everyone is becoming a full time vegan, plant-based diets aren't a trend or a fad. They are here to stay and are part of a healthy flexitarian lifestyle. In general, the events sector has been slow to react, with many attendees complaining about the lack of choice for non-meat eaters.

Leaders in the GDS-Index have identified that a local, and healthy approach to gastronomy, can be turned into a competitive advantage. It can also be a pathway to job creation increasing social inclusiveness whilst helping to reduce carbon emissions and other environmental pressures.

79%

HAD A SUSTAINABLE
FOOD PROGRAMME IN 2018

74%

FOOD WASTE PROGRAMME
IN 2018

Food Revolution

Fairr. Plan Based
Profits Briefing

PROMOTE THE FOOD REVOLUTION

SO WHAT CAN THE DMO AND ITS CITY PARTNERS DO TO CATALYSE A BETTER FOOD FUTURE?

- Research and share the risks to the industry pertaining to climate change, environmental change and societal shifts
- Engage and scale sustainable food standards and certifications
- Promote a data revolution that connects more intelligent supply and demand chains
- Inspire and promote greater collaboration between suppliers and clients
- Promote stories of best practices and local food heroes.



5 TACTICS FOR CHANGE

Promote the Food Revolution

CASE STUDY Ljubljana: Locally Grown Food Exchange

As Slovenia's capital city, Ljubljana, prepared to assume the title of European Green Capital, Ljubljana Tourism realized that to align with the sustainability ambitions of the city, the hotels and restaurants had to increase the percentage of locally sourced food. A study in the Green Supply Chains project revealed that the city's hotels and restaurants faced many obstacles when trying to source local produce. Namely higher price, transport costs and complexity.

Therefore Ljubljana Tourism started an initiative called the Locally Grown Food Exchange, where it convened meetings between suppliers (farmers, producers) and buyers (hotels, restaurants). The aim of the professionally moderated exchange was to facilitate inter-personal meetings in order to grasp the relationship between supply and demand and encourage new agreements. After the event, a joint catalogue with information about all participants, including the supplier's offer and the buyer's needs, was issued and sent via email.

The first Locally Grown Food Exchange was organised in February 2018, attracting 39 producers and nine tourism businesses. The second, in November 2018, engaged over 60 stakeholders, including 14 tourism business. They also included representatives of local schools and day-care centres as a tactic to increase the percentage of locally sourced input. Due to the very positive feedback from the participants and the professional public, Ljubljana Tourism will continue to organise the Locally Grown Food Exchange on a biannual basis.

The project won the Premik Naprej 2018 award which is given by the Faculty of Administration to the most progressive and innovative project in the public sector, and the 2019 Global Top 100 Sustainable Destination's Award.

In January 2019 a new element was launched. On a monthly basis, the Department for Environmental Protection of the City of Ljubljana identifies seasonal ingredients and the farmers that can supply them. A renowned author of cookbooks, Valentina Smej Novak, prepares typical recipes from these ingredients, and Ljubljana Tourism distribute the recipes to Ljubljana hotels and restaurants every month. The goal is to encourage them to purchase the ingredients from the list of producers and offer healthy, locally sourced, seasonal dishes to their guests.

[FAQS](#)

[European Commission Data](#)



5 TACTICS FOR CHANGE

Promote the Food Revolution

CASE STUDY Thailand: Tackling Food Waste

The United Nations estimate that a third of all food produced globally is lost or goes to waste. Around 88 million tonnes of food is wasted every year in the European Union alone, which equates to an estimated cost of 143 billion €. A recent study in the UK calculated that hotels throw away over 20% of the food they purchase. Fifty percent of this could be saved. For every £1 of food thrown in the bin, it equates to £1.5 to £2 when factoring in lost labour, lost energy, and waste collection costs.

Built on the success of its Farm-to-Function programme, the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) developed a Food Waste Prevention programme to educate and encourage the Thai business events industry to reduce food wastage. The programme is a practical answer to the largely underestimated issue of food waste and its latent impacts. In line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, it helps organisations to combat hunger, reduce waste and mitigate climate change.

The third party audited standard is articulated around nine key pillars that include:

- Policy
- Staff Awareness
- Food Waste Monitoring System Implementation
- Review of Existing SOPs and guest engagement in reducing plate waste.

The food waste monitoring methodology has been recognised as aligned with the United Nations' Draft Food Loss and Waste Standard.

As part of the programme an online tool helps MICE hotels and venues to calculate, manage and reduce the amount of waste. It also reduces the cost of catering services in conferences, seminars and exhibitions. The project has been piloted in 10 hotels, delivering over 530,000 EUR in cost savings and 383 tons carbon emissions reduction.

[WATCH A VIDEO SUMMARY ABOUT THE PROGRAMME.](#)



6 TACTICS FOR CHANGE

Boost Demand

Research and experience highlights that clients do not always ask for “sustainability”. Destinations need to be more proactive, canny, creative and imaginative in how they approach and engage clients with their sustainability pitch.

But destinations are ramping up their efforts. In 2018, 81% of DMOs included sustainability in their sales presentations, RFP responses and on their websites which is a 9% increase in three years. For the top ten leaders in the GDS-Index - the message is loud and clear with 100% of them firmly integrating sustainability into their brand development and marketing strategies. However the industry has a long way to go to speed and scale up the market for sustainable services and products.

CASE STUDY: Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau

Sustainable Events visionary, the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau decided something needed to be done to boost client demand for sustainable events. The result is a unique three point approach.

1. ASEAN as a catalyst

Thailand is this year’s Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and has set this year’s theme as “Advancing Partnership for Sustainability”. TCEB spotted the opportunity and contacted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a proposal to make this year’s events the most sustainable in the history of ASEAN. TCEB developed a sustainable event framework for ASEAN that is being implemented to improve performance at all of the 180 meetings organised in 2019. They are also using their position as

Chairs of ASEAN to raise awareness and inspire greater action among the other member countries.

2. Listed companies as a catalyst

TCEB realised that to catalyse demand from the corporate sector they needed to engage with the big listed companies. These companies have sustainability commitments and are required to report on them as part of their annual financial disclosure. However few of them have sustainable event strategies. So TCEB reached out to the Stock Exchange of Thailand, and developed a partnership to engage with its listed corporate members, advocating and educating them on the benefits of sustainable events and meetings. Additionally, TCEB provided the framework, education sessions and tools to accelerate the development of more effective, efficient and responsible events.

3. Chambers of Commerce as a catalyst

To engage with, and activate the multi-national businesses, TCEB developed a partnership with six Chambers of Commerce around Thailand. Through a series of meetings and presentations, TCEB have been raising awareness, providing education and offering tools to help the international companies in Thailand improve the footprint of their meetings.

“Our strategy has been to point out to corporates and government that business events are part of their marketing platform, and is a direct touch point between them and their clients. TCEB offer the government and corporates a Win Win Win approach.

If they can help us to boost demand for sustainability services, they align with their corporate sustainability commitments, and improve their brand image - while improving the social and environmental impacts of their events” Orachorn Wongpan-Ngam, Director of MICE Capabilities Department, TCEB.

6 TACTICS FOR CHANGE

Boost Demand

CASE STUDY: Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau

KEY LEARNINGS

Keep the guidelines simple and short.

An eight page list of recommendations will lose planners. TCEB created a one page list of 10 key actions that all events should follow.

Identify and focus on key influencers.

With the Stock Exchange members, TCEB is focusing on the Big Five - the leading five listed companies who command massive influence

Leverage the Sustainable Development Goals.

Rather than focus on all 17 goals, TCEB developed their demand boasting strategy to focus on SDG2 - Zero Hunger, SDG12 - Responsible Consumption and SDG13 Climate Change. To tackle these goals they have partnered and developed very specific services for their clients, that are focused on food waste prevention, sustainable food provision (Farm to Function), sustainable event professional certification and community engagement.



ASEAN
THAILAND 2019
ADVANCING PARTNERSHIP
FOR SUSTAINABILITY



7 TACTICS FOR CHANGE

Build an authentic Story

Telling your story is a critical part of integrating sustainability into a destination brand. Pure “green” advertising campaigns don't work. Destinations need to create movements based on a new story of purpose, authentic action and data.

81% of DMOs are communicating about their destination's sustainability programme in their sales proposals and presentations, a 9% increase since 2016. Similarly 81% are actively communicating sustainability on their website.

While some destinations are doing a great job communicating sustainability, others are seriously lagging behind in how they communicate it. They are suffering from a problem of language, storytelling and overuse of clichéd stock photos.

BETTER DESIGN FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The current visual language of sustainability relies on clichés, used by destinations regardless of their normal visual identity. It's 'Stock Sustainability', that portrays a sustainable destination as green and earthy and homespun and full of holding hands, solar-panels, water drops, clouds and windmills.

NEW VOCABULARY FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Not only do destinations need to become better visual storytellers, they also need to change the language used to communicate sustainability. The Guardian journalist George Monbiot suggests we “talk about the living world with words that engage people, reveal rather than disguise realities, and honour what we seek to protect.” This new language needs to paint the world of social progress and environmental protection as both an imminent, urgent, and also, solvable, situation.

Monbiot explains, “if we called protected areas places of “natural wonder”, we would not only speak to people's love of nature, but also establish an aspiration that conveys what they ought to be. Let's stop using the word environment, and use terms such as “living planet” and “natural world” instead, as they allow us to form a picture of what we are describing. Let's abandon the term climate change and start saying “climate breakdown or climate chaos”.

As brand agency Radley Yelder explains in their report *How to design sustainability that sells*; “Stock Sustainability isn't just off-brand for a lot of organisations, it's not engaging for most audiences. People don't want tired and clichéd – they want sexy, charming, funny, beautiful, new.”



7 TACTICS FOR CHANGE

Build an authentic Story

BETTER STORYTELLING

“Science has finally confirmed what we’ve long known to be true: we’re hardwired for stories. They lead to better understanding, trust, comprehension, receptivity, and more. We teach important ideas to our children via fables and fairy tales. We share episodes from the lives of important religious and historical figures via dialogues and stories. We connect, engage, and are moved ... to tears, to laughter, to anger, to sympathy, to action. But they must be authentic” (Sujan Patel).

Destinations need to better leverage the talented designers, copywriters and neuro-marketing experts who develop their revenue generating campaigns to tell sustainability stories that are simple, honest, relevant and inspiring. Trailblazing authentic stories that are bold in purpose, describe a desirable future vision, explain how the destination community is in action and inform using trustworthy data. Stories that fuel peer-to-peer connections, and inspire client and visitor action.

Recommended reading:
[The Gen Z Reckoning - BBMG](#)
[The Honest Product - Futerra](#)



7 TACTICS FOR CHANGE

Build an authentic Story

CASE STUDY Monaco: Green is the New Glam

Mention the word Monaco, and most people think of the playground of the rich; driving the fanciest sports car, dining at expensive restaurants and staying at the most luxurious hotels. There is a common perception that the luxury culture of Monaco is incompatible with more conscious living. However research has shown that it is quite the opposite. Sustainability is becoming part of the luxury experience, with its clientele requesting cleaner, healthier, and more responsible goods and services.

Under the surface of this champagne popping principality, Monaco, through the guidance of Prince Albert II, has set a vision to be a leader in sustainability and to be carbon neutral by 2050. A key pillar of this vision is the development of a responsible tourism and events sector, and becoming a destination that is as environmentally conscious as it is glamorous.

Since 2010 Monaco has been working on implementation of a sustainable tourism strategy. It has a dedicated sustainability manager, 82% of its hotels are eco-certified, as are its congress centre and many of its restaurants.

To better engage with their luxury target market and to powerfully accelerate and project the sustainability vision of the nation, the Monaco Government Tourist & Convention Authority created the campaign "Green is the New Glam".

GREEN IS THE NEW GLAM



7 TACTICS FOR CHANGE

Build an authentic Story

CASE STUDY Monaco: **Green is the New Glam**

The digital marketing campaign set a goal to bridge the gap between luxury and responsible tourism; to boldly claim that it's no longer possible to be "Glam" without being "Green".

The campaign has unfolded over the last two year through a series of short, inspiring and fun videos. Each [video](#) reveals a particular aspect of Monaco that makes it compelling as a sustainable destination; such as its focus on biodiversity, opportunities for eco-mobility, its local food offering or the effective recycling system. The videos have the backing of an attractive website and blog that highlights the unknown side of the principality by revealing stories, best practices and unexpected hidden gems of delight. With a strong focus on the millennial generation, the campaign is active on social media platforms.

In May 2019, the Convention Bureau launched a new campaign focused on the Events and Meetings market. Sandrine Camia, Deputy Director at Monaco Government Tourist Authority shared "we have to communicate to the events sector differently to how we talk to the leisure traveller. The "Business is Green" campaign builds on Green is the new Glam but changes messaging to better target those corporations and associations with a commitment to sustainability. We aim to inspire event organisers to choose Monaco and to organise more efficient, effective and environmentally friendly events.



#Business
is
Green
by *visit* **MONACO**

Sustainability reporting by destinations is not yet mainstream. Clear reporting of social, economic and environmental impacts, strategies, and performance has the potential to better engage stakeholders, build trust and accelerate collaborative action.

REPORTING - AN INCREASING TREND AND REQUIREMENT

While corporate reporting on sustainability efforts in the events and tourism industry is steadily increasing, destinations have been slow to keep pace. In 2018, only 21% of GDS-Index destinations publicly disclosed on their sustainability efforts in either an annual report or dedicated sustainability report. However it is important to note, that all the 47 destinations involved in the 2018 GDS-Index are measuring and disclosing on strategies and performance. Through their participation, they have all taken an important step to making their sustainability programmes data driven, comparable and transparent.

The twelfth UN Sustainable Development Goal focuses on sustainable consumption and production. Target 12.6 states an objective to “encourage companies to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle”.

Formal sustainability reporting by GDS-Index Destinations is likely to continue increasing as it becomes mandated on stock exchanges and by governments. Voluntary reporting initiatives such as Science Based Targets, the CDP Cities programme, and the SDGs, present opportunities for cities to better understand risk and opportunity, raise awareness about their sustainable activities, and accelerate real action.

IS THERE AN INVISIBLE BURDEN FROM EVENTS?

The rapid growth of tourism in the 21st century is leading to damage in destinations across the world that is largely unreported and frequently not perceived by tourists. There is an “invisible burden” of unaccounted for destination costs incurred to provide local infrastructure and the protection of eco and socio-cultural systems for visitors and local people. Correct development of the Meetings and Events industry in a destination can potentially alleviate some of the challenges presented by over-tourism. But are we measuring it correctly?

The events industry is a motor for economic growth, supporting 26 million jobs and generating \$1.5 Trillion USD in global GDP (Events Industry Council). Tourism in total generated 10.4% (\$8.2 trillion USD) in direct contribution to global GDP in 2017. (WTTC 2018). Together events and tourism attract investment in infrastructure such as airports, hotels and local transportation, income through a variety of direct taxes (ie accommodation) and indirect taxes (ie. VAT on sales), revenue to businesses, as well as paying to use local amenities and infrastructure (for example, public transport). (WTTC, 2018). But the allocation of such taxes is barely researched, and the policy implications of tourism tax allocation are vast. There is an inherent danger in under representing or not representing the costs of event and tourism growth at the destination level to ensure they correspond with revenues from tax. It is therefore vital to understand the costs and benefits per tourist and the marginal cost as visitor numbers grow (Epler Wood et al).

In their ground breaking research Cornell University and the Travel Foundation conclude - “Today’s tourism managers focus on an incomplete set of economic measures to assess the health of the tourism destination – total number of visitors, as well as direct and indirect economic impacts. Those figures provide a one-sided view of tourism’s contributions to local economies and fail to account for management costs at the local level.”

IMPACT MEASUREMENT

Today there is a serious lack of research and data to evaluate the positive societal impacts and hidden costs of events to the communities that host them. Destination management is frequently focused on promoting business and less concerned about how to manage the destination for long term societal benefit.

By measuring societal impact a DMO can better demonstrate the true value that it is delivering to the city and businesses it serves, and ultimately to society at large. Having the capacity to report on how well their mission is being delivered provides the DMO with the proof that it is doing what it's supposed to do. But when expanded into a broader process, it can be a powerful management strategy to achieve operational excellence, improve processes and delivery, and demonstrate great governance by holding itself accountable for all of the outcomes it generates beyond what is currently being reported.

In this process, measurement of societal impact by a destination converts "impact" into a powerful currency by which the DMO is able to better report on its effectiveness in carrying out its mission, in a similar way that one would report on financial results.

Recommended Reading:

- [WTTC Reports on Sustainability Reporting Trends and Best Practices](#)
- [Destinations at Risk: The Invisible Burden of Tourism - The Travel Foundation and Cornell University](#)
- [Business Reporting on the SDGs: GRI and the UN Global Compact](#)
- [#MEET4IMPACT: an impact framework that offers a comprehensive process for generating, managing and measuring the positive societal impacts of association conferences.](#)



DO
Better.

“A key challenge facing DMOs is the lack of framework to determine what should be measured, how to go about it, and how to leverage the data to better measure and communicate the impact of events on the destination”. Geneviève Leclerc, CEO #MEET4IMPACT

CASE STUDY: Gothenburg

Gothenburg has been the GDS-Index leading destination for three years in a row. Not only have they excelled in the development of an award winning strategy, but they also have been leading the way with sustainability reporting.

Göteborg & Co has been issuing a sustainability report since 2017, and it is now a core pillar of their sustainability framework. The reporting process is used to better engage and inspire key stakeholders, to share future strategy, gain new ideas and to communicate on progress.

Key to the reporting process is the materiality assessment, which has key steps:

1. Stakeholder mapping and prioritization: Who are the people that matter?
2. Stakeholder dialogue: Questioning and listening to get a deeper understanding of stakeholders, and how they see the events industry and role of the DMO.
3. Materiality assessment: What issues do stakeholders care most about, and what issues have the great impact on the destination?
4. Strategy development: Where should Göteborg and Co focus its energy to respond to stakeholder demands and make the biggest differences? What new stakeholder ideas can be incorporated?

As part of their commitment to the UN 2030 Agenda, in 2017 Göteborg & Co mapped the Sustainable Development Goals and the SDG targets to their sustainability framework. In 2019 their progress against the SDGs was disclosed in their [Annual and Sustainability Report](#).



“Reporting is about communicating the things we do, specifically in connection to the material aspects that our stakeholders are interested in. It’s about being transparent and showing our reporting process also helps us to uncover our flaws and uses our stakeholders to generate new ideas and areas for improvement.”

APPENDIX 1

2018 GDS-Index

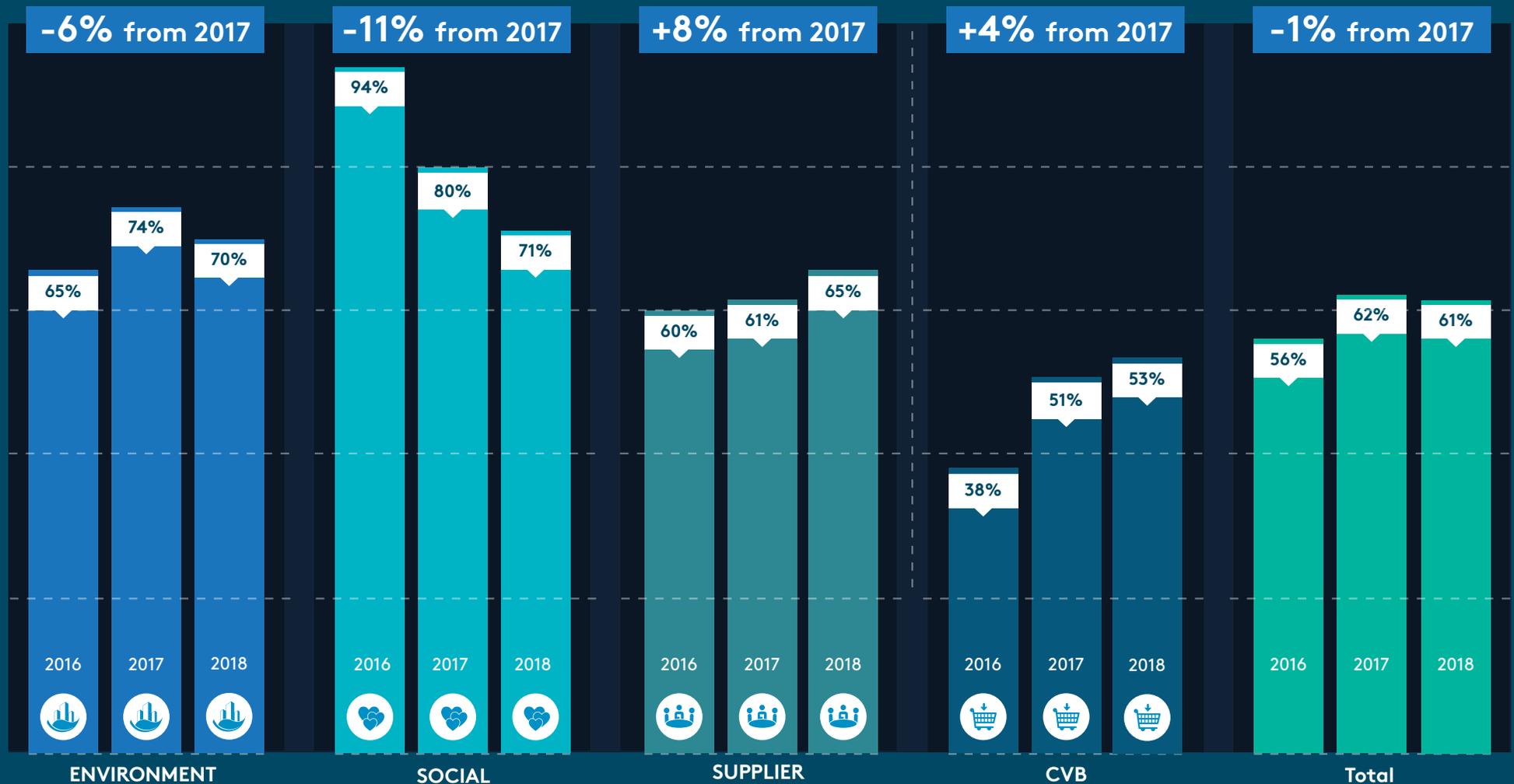
Key Results

2018 GDS-INDEX AVERAGE PERFORMANCE EVOLUTION

Performance of destinations in the GDS-Index saw an increase of 9% since the programme started in 2016.

Convention Bureau (CVB) performance leapt 39% since 2016, which demonstrates how the GDS-Index is deliver on its purpose and helping destinations to match their initial commitments with

progressive action. With increasingly robust climate and green growth strategies, the environmental performance score increased by 4% since 2016. Social performance decreased by 11% in 2018, but by 25% since 2016. This is mainly due to the change of social criteria in 2017.



APPENDIX 1

2018 GDS-Index

Key Results

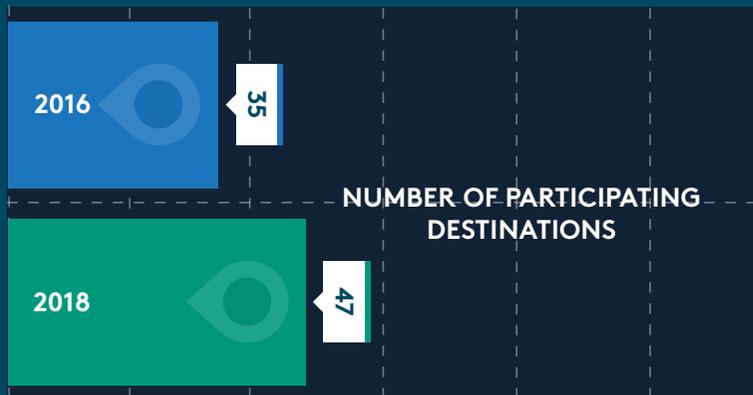
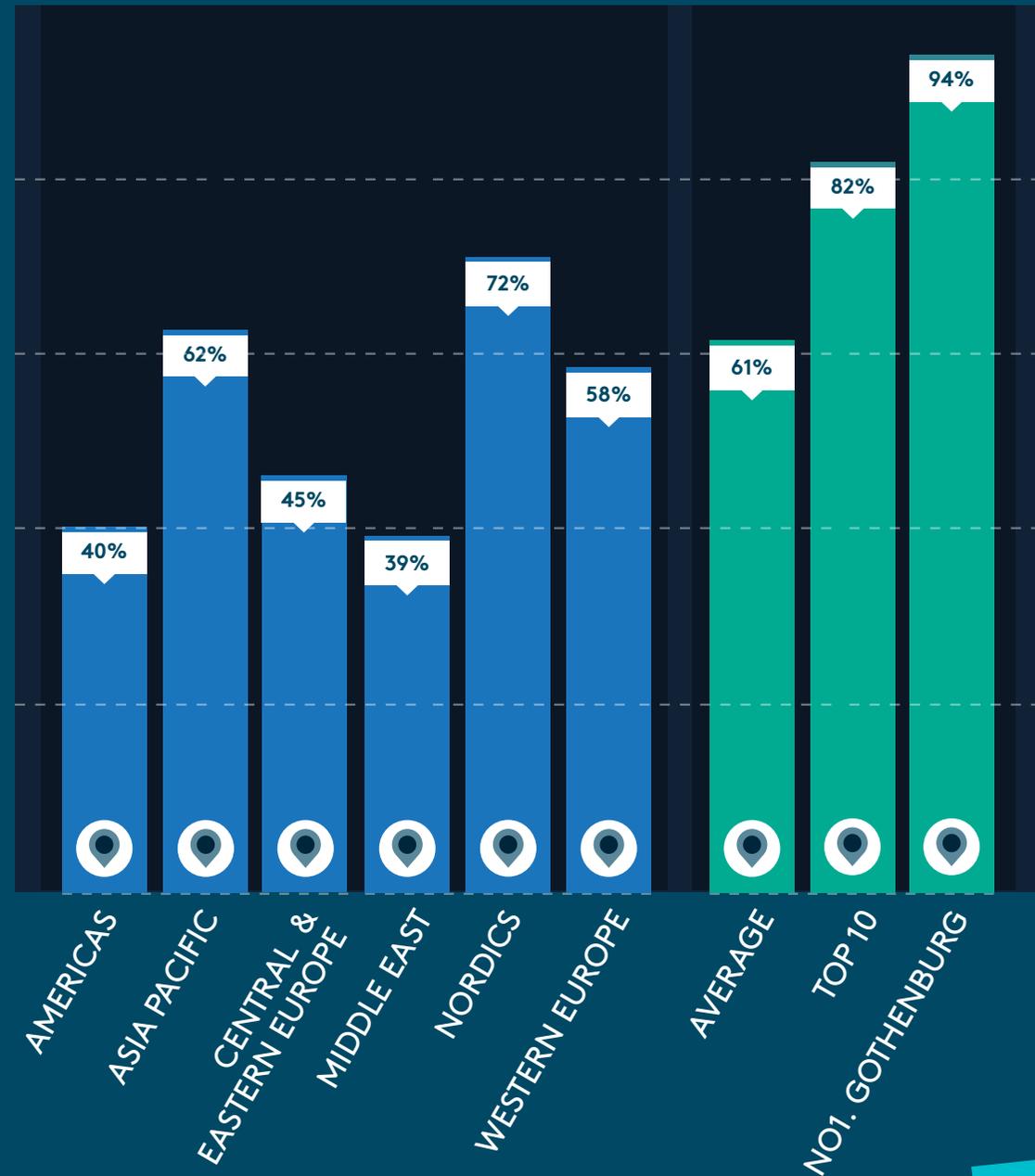
2018 GDS-INDEX AVERAGE PERFORMANCE BY REGION

With a score of 94%, Gothenburg leads as the top city in the ranking, where they also have the best CVB performance. Copenhagen takes second place, and has the best ranking for Environmental performance. With the addition of new cities and improvement of performance five non-Nordic cities now take top 10 positions: Brussels, Zurich, Glasgow, Sydney and Melbourne. Aarhus and Trollhättan perform best for Social Performance, and Malmö has a perfect 100% for the performance of its meetings and events suppliers.

REGIONAL CHALLENGERS

Regionally, the Nordics continue to outperform other regions due both to their local term commitment to city sustainability efforts but also to their pioneering focus on destination sustainability and the GDS-Index. However the Asia-Pacific region is closing the gap. This is being driven by the Top 10 performance of Sydney and Melbourne.

In three years, the GDS-Index grew has grown from 35 to 47 destinations at the end of 2018. At the time of press - over 60 destinations were participating in the 2019 GDS-Index.



APPENDIX 1

2018 GDS-Index

Key Results

2018 GDS-INDEX PERFORMANCE BY REGION & CATEGORY



ENVIRONMENT



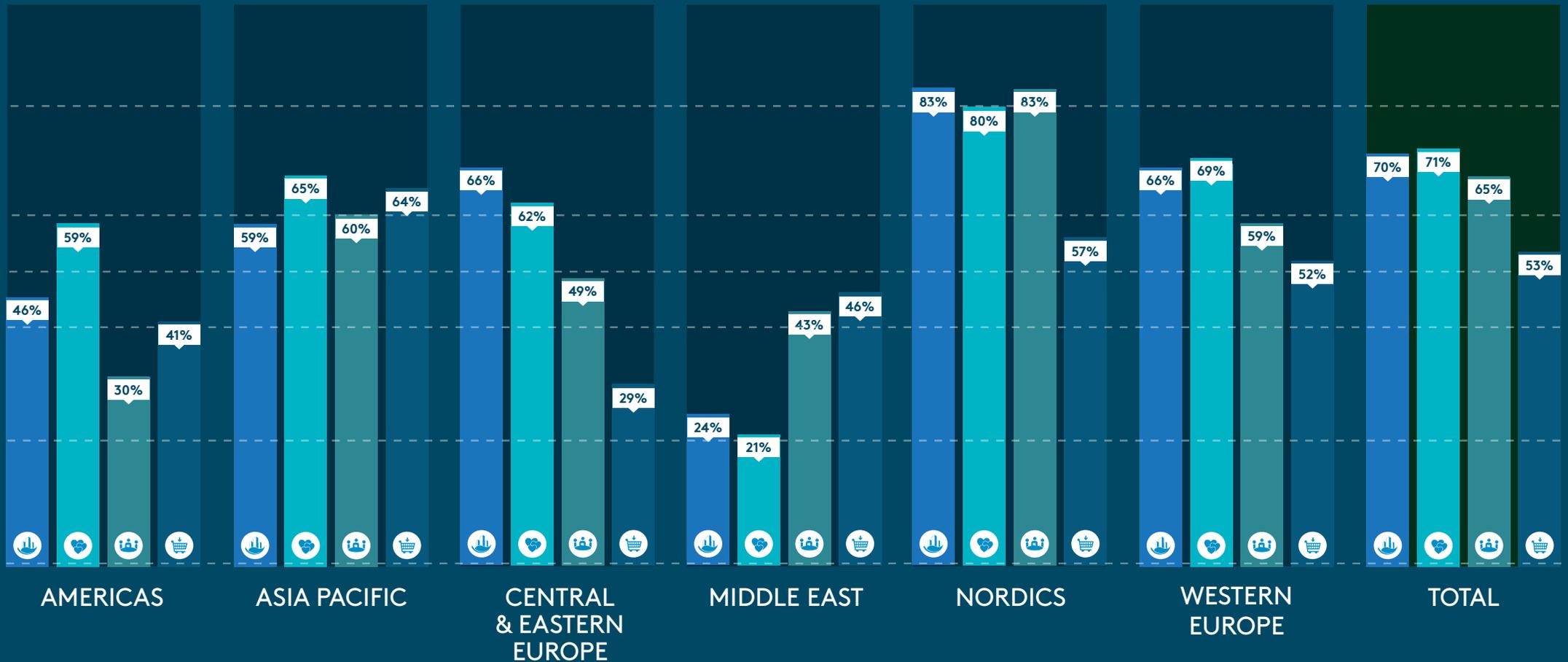
SUPPLIER



SOCIAL



CVB



APPENDIX 1

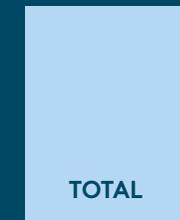
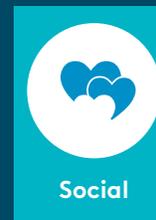
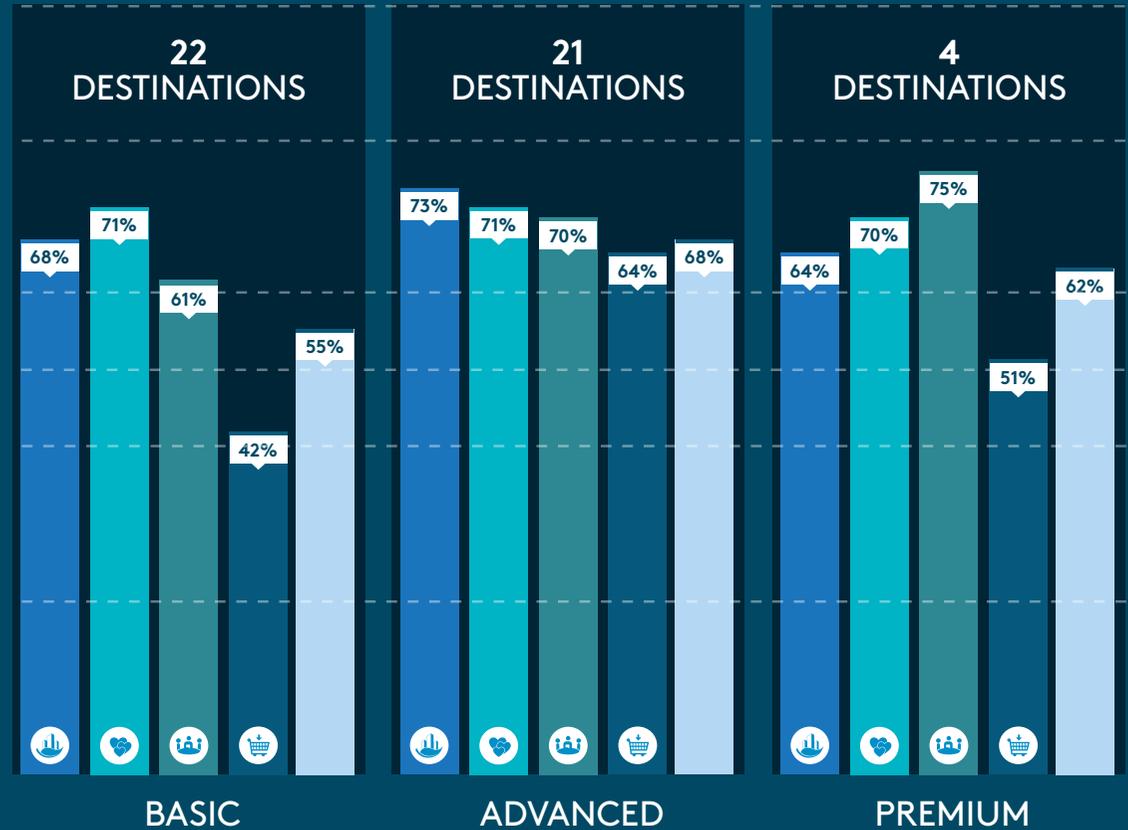
2018 GDS-Index

Key Results

2018 GDS-INDEX PERFORMANCE BY PARTICIPATION LEVEL

There are three levels for destinations to engage in the GDS-Index. 47% of the destinations participated in 2018 at a Basic level, 45% at Advanced and 8% at Premium. In terms of performance Advanced destinations out perform Basic ones by 24%, as would be expected with the increased commitment and involvement from the GDS-Index team to improve strategy. In addition, 85% of the Top-10 destinations are in the advanced category.

Premium destinations are currently under performing advanced destinations by 8%. This is due to these four cities being new to the GDS-Index. With their focus on strategy development, it is expected that their performance will increase significantly in the 2019 benchmarking.



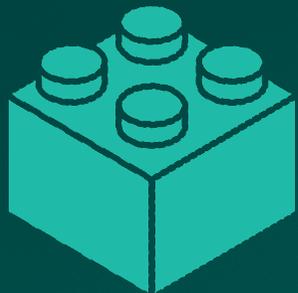
2018 GDS-INDEX RANKING



TOP
10

RANK 2018	CITY NAME	COUNTRY	REGION	ENVIRONMENTAL 2018	SOCIAL 2018	SUPPLIER 2018	CVB 2018	TOTAL	PERFORMANCE CHANGE 2017-18
1	Gothenburg	Sweden	Nordics	90	79	95	97	94	2%
2	Copenhagen	Denmark	Nordics	93	79	86	94	90	10%
3	Reykjavik	Iceland	Nordics	86	79	90	91	89	9%
4	Oslo	Norway	Nordics	83	79	90	86	86	1%
5	Uppsala	Sweden	Nordics	90	79	95	74	84	9%
5	Helsinki	Finland	Nordics	83	79	90	80	84	8%
6	Malmö	Sweden	Nordics	86	79	100	69	82	12%
7	Glasgow	Scotland	Western Europe	79	71	71	89	80	0%
7	Zurich	Switzerland	Western Europe	81	71	76	83	80	5%
8	Melbourne	Australia	Asia Pacific	55	71	81	80	75	14%
9	Sydney	Australia	Asia Pacific	71	71	62	83	73	22%
10	Brussels	Belgium	Western Europe	64	79	62	83	72	9%
10	Espoo	Finland	Nordics	86	79	90	51	72	11%
11	Tampere	Finland	Nordics	81	79	76	60	71	13%
12	Stockholm	Sweden	Nordics	86	86	90	46	70	1%
13	Monaco	Monaco	Western Europe	57	64	90	57	68	Joined in 2018
14	Barcelona	Spain	Western Europe	71	71	52	74	67	8%
15	Jönköping	Sweden	Nordics	83	79	71	51	66	-3%
15	Stuttgart	Germany	Western Europe	76	71	62	63	66	-16%
16	Lausanne-Montreux	Switzerland	Western Europe	67	71	62	66	65	Joined in 2018
16	Karlstad	Sweden	Nordics	74	79	86	43	65	7%
17	Västerås	Sweden	Nordics	88	79	81	37	64	-7%
18	Aalborg	Denmark	Nordics	76	79	71	46	62	11%
18	Bergen	Norway	Nordics	76	79	86	34	62	19%
19	Kyoto	Japan	Asia Pacific	76	64	67	46	60	2%
20	Galway	Ireland	Western Europe	57	64	52	63	59	Joined in 2018
21	Aarhus	Denmark	Nordics	79	86	71	34	58	5%
21	Bangkok	Thailand	Asia Pacific	45	50	52	69	58	Joined in 2018
22	Trollhättan	Sweden	Nordics	81	86	90	17	57	36%
23	Nantes	France	Western Europe	76	64	38	57	56	-3%
24	Dublin	Ireland	Western Europe	52	64	57	54	55	41%
25	Goyang	South Korea	Asia Pacific	43	64	67	49	54	59%
26	Geneva	Switzerland	Western Europe	67	71	62	37	53	2%
27	Monterey County	USA	Americas	45	64	48	57	52	Joined in 2018
28	Ljubljana	Slovenia	Central/Eastern Europe	69	71	43	46	51	Joined in 2018
28	Sapporo	Japan	Asia Pacific	62	71	33	54	51	-15%
29	Rotterdam	Netherlands	Western Europe	83	71	57	26	50	-6%
30	Cork	Ireland	Western Europe	57	64	57	34	48	Joined in 2018
31	Saint Petersburg	Russia	Central/Eastern Europe	71	43	62	26	47	Joined in 2018
32	The Hague	Netherlands	Western Europe	62	79	62	20	45	2%
33	Dubai	UAE	Middle East	24	21	43	46	39	Joined in 2018
34	Washington DC	USA	Americas	50	57	24	37	37	Joined in 2018
34	Turku	Finland	Nordics	81	79	33	11	37	-10%
35	Prague	Czech Republic	Central/Eastern Europe	57	71	43	14	36	80%
36	Limerick	Ireland	Western Europe	60	64	48	9	35	Joined in 2018
37	Kerry	Ireland	Western Europe	50	71	29	20	32	Joined in 2018
38	Houston	USA	Americas	43	57	19	29	30	-30%
	Top 10 Average			81	77	84	82	82	
	GDS-Index Average		Average	70	71	65	53	61	

SUCCESSFUL & REGENERATIVE DESTINATIONS ARE:



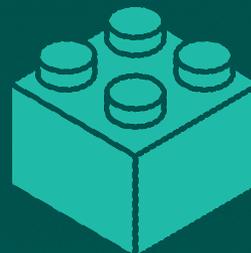
① MAPPING OUT MATERIAL RISKS



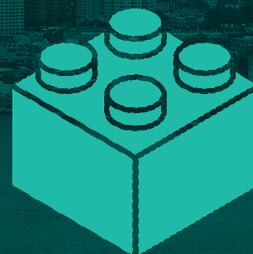
② DEVELOPING A FUTURE FITTED MASTER PLAN THAT ACTIVELY REDUCES RISKS



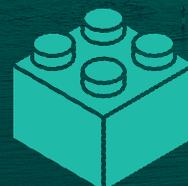
③ INJECTING SUSTAINABILITY INTO THEIR CORE BUSINESS STRATEGY



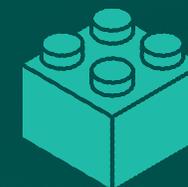
④ DELIVERING ON THEIR CITY'S DEVELOPMENT AGENDA



⑤ ATTRACTING INVESTMENT, KNOWLEDGE AND TALENT



⑦ DELIVERING A COMPETITIVE EDGE



⑥ MOBILISING EQUITABLE & FAIR VALUE CHAINS



⑧ FOSTERING COLLABORATION

APPENDIX 2

About the GDS-Index and Benchmarking Methodology

About the GDS-Index:

The Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS-Index) is a destination level programme that measures, benchmarks and improves the sustainability strategy and performance of meetings, events and business tourism destinations.

The GDS-Index is a global movement with a mission to engage, inspire and enable destinations to become more sustainable places to visit, meet and thrive in.

SDGs: Our work is aligned with the 2030 Agenda, and we are working to mainstream the integration of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals into the management of destinations globally. We are an official partner of the UN One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme, and on their working group for "Circularity in tourism".



Scope: Unlike other standards and rankings, the GDS-Index was specifically created for the events and meetings industry, and is the only programme of this type in the world.

Origins: It was created in 2015 by fifteen visionary Scandinavian Convention Bureaux, MCI and the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA).

Ownership: The GDS-Index is not owned by any one organisation. It is operated as a multi-stakeholder partnership founded and endorsed by IMEX, MCI, the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) and European Cities Marketing. Gubi Consulting and Guy Bigwood is responsible for the management of the Secretariat.

For more information on the methodology, criteria and scoring please visit www.gds-index.com/about

1	2	3	4
Benchmarking	Assessment	Consulting	Promotion
Third party evaluation of Environment, Social, Supplier and Destination Management Strategy and Performance	Specific recommendations to improve destination strategy, initiatives and performance	Strategy development, stakeholder engagement, communication campaigns, training and coaching, measurement and reporting	Communication of member best practices through media partners, social media, whitepapers and speaking engagements

METHODOLOGY

Criteria: The 2019 GDS-Index uses 71 indicators that evaluate the destinations across four key areas:

Environmental Performance: includes a city's performance pertaining to its policies and infrastructure, such as climate change commitment, recycling availability, public transport options and air pollution levels.

Social Progress Performance: indicates the performance of the city against indicators of Personal Safety, Access to Information and Communications, Health and Wellness, Inclusiveness of the Social Progress Index, and over tourism.

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About the GDS-Index and Benchmarking Methodology

Supplier Performance: addresses the sustainability commitment and performance of the local meetings' industry supply chain, including airports, events agencies, hotels, venues and restaurants.

Destination Management Performance: indicates the sustainability commitment of the convention bureau or destination management organisation, including questions pertaining to maturity of the destinations sustainability strategy, leadership, communication of sustainability initiatives to support client planners, and the rigorousness of their reporting on sustainability operations.



The Index criteria evaluates quantitative data such as recycling/landfilling rates or percentages of third-party certified hotel rooms; or are qualitative, assessing concepts such as the destination's commitment to sustainability, the existence of a destination sustainability strategy or maturity of their reporting practices.

Publicly available city level data is used whenever possible from credible sources such as the CDP, WHO or The World Bank's databank. Where there is no comparable city level data, a regional or national value is taken. As for qualitative indicators, usually it is

information collected by the Destination Management Organisation, Convention Bureau or city with the help of their partners (city departments, hotel associations etc)

Verification and Scoring:

After signing up as a member of the GDS-Index, the municipality, destination convention bureau or destination management organisation, completes an online questionnaire, gathering data from stakeholders and providing key performance indicators and supporting data.

The destinations are required to submit proof or evidence with each question, disclosing the source of their information. The quantitative data submitted by the destinations is usually from official sources, such as the city's sustainability department.

Consultants from the GDS-Index evaluate the submission, looking for inconsistencies and errors in the data. Each performance indicator is assigned a number of points and according to how well the destination fulfills each indicator, it gets some of these points, no points or all points (a full score). Indicator scores are then aggregated and weighted into an individual category score. The final destinations ranking is a sum of the four individual category scores.

Criteria Review and Revision

The GDS-Index is reviewed annually and has a major update every two years. We engage with our destinations and with the team, and get feedback on the existing criteria. We review standards from the tourism industry, and other Index and ranking systems from other industries. We then update the standard, and present to the Technical Advisory Committee - who are a team of destination sustainability experts. With their input we review the process thoroughly before presenting a final draft to our member destinations. We then incorporate any feedback and present the results to our advisory board - for their final approval. The 2019 Criteria was released on June 5th 2019.



Creating better places to live, meet & thrive in.

Join over 50 cities in the leading sustainability benchmarking & improvement programme for meetings & events destinations around the world.

The 2019 benchmarking period is open from
June 5th to September 5th.

[Click here now to join us.](#)



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INDEX