

A vertical white line with small circles at the top and bottom, and three small horizontal bars in the middle.

Environmental Sustainability Plan 2024

A guide by Open Cultural Center

The background is a solid green color. It features a faint, light green map of the world centered on the Atlantic Ocean. Overlaid on the map are several large, concentric, light green circles that create a ripple effect.

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About this guide

This guide has been developed under the framework of the European project 'Training Without Borders' (TWB), developed between Open Cultural Center Spain and Open Cultural Center Greece.

Implemented between December 2021 and November 2023, TWB is dedicated to improving cooperation between the two teams while learning from each other.

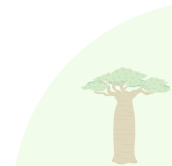
This Environmental Sustainability Plan was developed under the framework of the project Training Without Borders 2021-1-ES02-KA153-YOU-000011906. This project has been co-funded by the European Union.



About the author organisation

Open Cultural Center (OCC) is a registered non-profit organisation active in both Spain and Greece, working towards the inclusion of migrant and refugee people through educational and cultural activities. It works mainly with volunteers to offer language classes, technical workshops, sports activities, cultural events, and women and children's support to the wide variety of communities it works with.

At the same time, we work on an international level to create awareness about the situation of refugees while working with many European partners to increase our social impact.



Introduction

In an era marked by climate change and natural catastrophes, the intersection of environmental sustainability and migration has become an increasingly urgent and complex challenge. During the last 10 years, weather-related disasters have forced an average of 21.6 million people being displaced per year (IOM, 2022). In 2022 alone, the number of internally displaced people caused by weather-related disasters increased by 45% compared to that of 2021 (IDMC, 2023). Projections suggest that this number will continue to rise, with environmental factors such as sea-level rise, droughts, and extreme weather events becoming increasingly significant drivers of displacement. As an NGO dedicated to addressing the different dimensions of migration, we recognize that the well-being of displaced communities is inherently linked to the health of our planet.



Our Environmental Sustainability Plan (ESP) embodies our dedication to addressing these issues by also aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and advancing our aim to protect the planet while safeguarding the rights and well-being of those displaced by environmental factors. More concretely, while all of the SDGs can be related to climate migration there are a few that directly align with our Environmental Sustainability Plan:



Quality Education through training, educational activities, and workshops on environmental awareness.



Affordable and Clean Energy by reducing energy consumption and promoting energy-saving behaviors among staff and volunteers.



We work towards inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban environments to provide refuge and support for displaced individuals.



Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns through waste reduction and recycling initiatives.



We are committed to mitigating climate change and its impacts on vulnerable populations.



Protect life on land through responsible recycling and reducing electronic waste.



Environmental Impact Assessment

With the available resources at our disposal, we have started working towards becoming a more environmentally friendly organization through the following.

Our current sustainability initiatives

- **Recycling Bins:** we have implemented plastic, paper, organic, and glass recycling bins in our Barcelona office, our volunteers' flat, and the Moianès housing project. There is a leaflet with all the necessary information next to the bins to ensure that waste is placed in the correct one. These bins help us divert waste from landfills and promote responsible waste disposal practices.
- **Water Cooler:** Sustainable water coolers help reduce single-use plastic waste by using reusable containers and bottles, minimizing the need for disposable plastic bottles. These coolers are also designed to be durable, prolonging their lifetime and reducing the consumption of resources and materials.
- **Reusable Cutlery and Dishes:** in our day-to-day, we use reusable cutlery and dishes, minimizing single-use plastic waste and paper towel usage, which aligns with our commitment to reducing environmental impact.
- **Second-Hand Technological Devices and Furniture:** we prioritize the use of second-hand laptops, electronic materials, and furniture in our offices. This not only reduces electronic waste but also supports the circular economy and reduces our carbon footprint. We encourage laptop, electronics, and furniture donations from our partners at technological companies.
- **Bike Project in Greece:** our bicycle project, which allows us to lend bicycles to the people living in Nea Kavala Camp in Greece, encourages sustainable transportation options, reduces emissions, and promotes a healthier lifestyle among our local community members. Most of our bikes are second-hand.
- **Bicing for Volunteers:** to further encourage eco-friendly transportation, we provide Bicing options (public bike system in Barcelona) for our volunteers in Barcelona, promoting biking as an environmentally friendly way to commute. Moreover, 40% of the staff in Barcelona walk to the office and the remaining 60% take public transportation.
- **Cloud Computing:** embracing cloud computing services allows us to minimize the environmental impact associated with on-premises servers and data centers, reducing energy consumption and carbon emissions.

- **Vegetable Baskets and Farmers' Markets:** in Spain, we provide local vegetable baskets for our volunteers. In Greece, we support local farmers' markets, promoting sustainable and local agriculture. In both cases, these are seasonal vegetables, contributing to sustainable and community-driven food practices.
- **Shared Office Spaces and Apartments:** we use shared office spaces and volunteers' apartments to maximize resource efficiency and reduce our overall environmental footprint. Additionally, we make use of our partners' offices on the weekends, effectively using their resources that would otherwise be wasted, as these buildings are always open.
- **Limited Paper Usage:** we prioritize digital communication and documentation to minimize paper consumption, saving trees and reducing our carbon footprint.

Areas for improvement

- **European Travels:** we acknowledge that travel-related emissions are an area that requires attention. We aim to find ways to reduce our carbon footprint when it comes to European travels, including exploring remote meeting options if possible and green traveling.
- **Recycling Education:** we recognize the importance of educating our team and community members on effective recycling practices. We will implement awareness campaigns and training to ensure everyone knows how to recycle properly.
- **Paper and Cartridge Recycling:** we aim to enhance our paper and cartridge recycling efforts to further reduce waste and promote responsible disposal.

By continually assessing and improving our sustainability practices, we remain committed to reducing our environmental impact and contributing to a more sustainable future.

Action Plan

After assessing our environmental impact and identifying our current sustainable initiatives and the areas of improvement, we have developed an action plan with specific measures to improve our environmental impact.



Energy Efficiency Measures

- Conduct regular workshops to educate staff about energy-saving behaviors and techniques.
- Ensure that the temperature controls in the office always adhere to the minimum and maximum temperatures allowed by the municipality.
- Emphasize the importance of reducing energy consumption in daily activities.
- Ensure minimal energy use during non-working hours.
- Encourage staff to unplug or turn off electrical devices when not in use, including computers, monitors, and office equipment (e.g., printer located in the Bike Space in Greece).
- Research and assess the environmental sustainability practices of our electricity provider.



Carbon Footprint Reduction Strategies

- Push for and opt for greener modes of transportation when traveling is strictly necessary.
- If budget allows, purchase carbon credits when flying is necessary.
- Create a Notion page with resources for green travel to frequent destinations.
- Evaluate the necessity of travel for EU projects and explore alternatives like virtual meetings to minimize carbon emissions associated with travel.
- Encourage using energy-efficient servers, promoting digital file-sharing instead of printing, and encouraging the use of eco-friendly devices.





Waste Reduction and Recycling Initiatives

- Provide comprehensive training to staff and volunteers on the city's recycling system, including the proper sorting and disposal of recyclables.
- Expand and reinforce recycling initiatives in Moianès project.
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- Expand and reinforce recycling initiatives in Moianès project.
- Ensure clear signs and designated bins for different types of recyclables.
- Search for an external entity to take care of waste management in Greece.

- Use recycled paper in all our offices.
- Establish a central collection point for recyclables that have to be disposed of in a 'Green Point', in a prominent location accessible to all staff members.
- Promote the use of this central collection point for the responsible disposal of hard-to-recycle items.
- Research and collaborate with local e-waste recycling programs or organizations to responsibly recycle electronic waste.
- Raise awareness about food waste.

Education and Awareness Campaigns

- Implement training programs for staff and volunteers on environmental practices, emphasizing their role as ambassadors for sustainability. This includes incorporating recycling and energy-saving workshops into new staff and volunteer induction processes.
- Ensure that a yearly refresher on environmentally friendly practices at the office is carried out to maintain our commitment to sustainability.
- Organize and promote educational activities, and workshops, for our community on environmental topics, fostering a sense of environmental responsibility and engagement.
- In Greece, incorporate recycling-related activities into the adult language classes and organize activities focused on recycling and the use of recycled materials for the children's classes.
- In Moianès, include environmentally friendly practices in the personal development curriculum.
- Create a form where anyone can add suggestions for improvement as well as new sustainable initiatives
- Create a communication campaign around climate migration for World Environment Day (5th of June).
- Create informative and engaging communication materials highlighting the intersections between climate change and migration, making these materials accessible to a wide audience.
- Collaborate with partner organizations to develop and submit EU project proposals for environmental sustainability and migration.
- Identify organizations and opportunities locally to get involved in environmentally friendly activities and awareness-raising efforts.



Monitoring and Reporting

To understand OCC's progress in improving and enhancing environmental sustainability it is important to monitor a number of key performance indicators (KPIs) that align with the desired goals and objectives of this ESP. These KPIs are set to be achieved in a year, by the end of 2024. We will monitor the progress of these measures by registering the number of trainings we do, participation rates, and feedback forms, among others.



Goal 1: Raise Awareness on the Climate-Migration Nexus

KPI	Current Conditions	Desired Trend or Target
1.1 Conduct an awareness campaign 1.1.1 Reach achieved through media coverage (e.g., social media impressions, website views)	0/year - 550reach	1/year - 750reach
1.3 Develop and submit a EU project proposal	0/year	1/year
1.4 Include climate migration as a recurrent topic in our awareness raising strategy	Tracking to start in 2024	

Goal 2: Capacity Building for Staff and Volunteers

KPI	Current Conditions	Desired Trend or Target
2.1 Number of recycling and energy-saving trainings	1/year	3/year
2.2 Percentage of staff and volunteers who participate in recycling and energy-saving training	75%	100%
2.3 Percentage increase in staff and volunteer adoption of recycling and energy-saving practices post-training	60%	100%
2.4 Increase in recycling rates within the offices	80%	100%



Goal 3: Implement Environmental Activities with Supported Communities		
KPI	Current Conditions	Desired Trend or Target
3.1 Number of environmental activities conducted within supported communities	0/year	5/year
3.2 Participation levels of community members in these activities	Tracking to begin in 2024	80%

The Sustainability Working Group

This ESP is intended to be a living document that will be reviewed once a month and if necessary, strategies and actions will be added, modified or removed. A key initial step in its implementation is the creation of a staff working group that will provide ongoing guidance and coordination for the implementation of the ESP. Yet, this should not overshadow the importance of community cooperation and partnerships for implementing a successful environmental sustainability program. We will need ongoing involvement, action, and input from all our staff and community to ensure that plan implementation is effective. To make sure this involvement is accessible to all, we will create a form where anyone can add suggestions for improvement as well as new sustainable initiatives. The answers to this form will be checked and discussed at the end of every trimester by the sustainability working group.

Goal 4: Greening Our Workspaces		
KPI	Current Conditions	Desired Trend or Target
4.1 Conduct regular assessments of office sustainability practices	2/year	1/month
4.2 Monthly energy consumption compared to municipality's temperature guidelines	Tracking to start in 2024	
4.3 Reduction in energy usage during non-working hours	Tracking to start in 2024	50%
4.4 Establishment and accessibility of the 'green point'	0	1
4.5 Identification and collaboration with local e-waste recycling programs	0	2 collaborations
4.6 Volume of e-waste responsibly recycled	50%	100%
4.7 Percentage of staff opting for greener transportation methods in work trips	0%	50%
4.8 Notion page with resources for green travels to frequent destinations	0	1
4.9 Measure and track reductions in waste generation within the office	Tracking to start in 2024	25%



Conclusions

This sustainability plan marks a key step towards our commitment to environmental stewardship and social responsibility. It is important to remember that even with seemingly small actions, we have the power to bring about substantial change. Our dedication to sustainability extends beyond the present, as we will review and evolve this plan by the end of 2024, ensuring that our efforts remain adaptable and effective as we progress into 2025. With collective determination and a shared vision, we can foster a brighter, more sustainable future for all.



We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all those who have taken the time to read our Environmental Sustainability Plan. We hope that it has provided valuable insights and practical recommendations to protect the planet while safeguarding the rights and well-being of those displaced by environmental factors.

We believe in the power of collective learning and improvement, which is why we welcome any feedback or suggestions. Furthermore, if you are curious to see how we are implementing the strategies and approaches outlined in this guide, we invite you to follow us on our social media accounts.



References

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- International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2022). Knowledge Platform on People on the Move in a Changing Climate. Environmental Migration Portal. <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/>



