

SUSTAINABILITY AS AWARENESS AND SUCCESS

ÖSTERSUND, SWE



What was the goal?

The OC has noted that the mean temperature in Östersund is approximately 1.5°C warmer than it was 50 years ago. Staff members have witnessed winters becoming wetter and shorter which will likely pose a problem for future events. They also became aware that they were contributing to the problem themselves, as an international event requiring significant travel; snowmaking; textile, food, and beverage procurement; waste production; and so on.

The Östersund OC therefore set the vision of a “fossil fuel free” championships in 2019 and has, since then, continued work to reduce all greenhouse gas emissions at every Biathlon World Cup in Östersund with the ambition to eventually run the event without any reliance upon fossil fuels.

How was the goal achieved?

Aligned with the goal of the regional government to become fossil fuel free by 2030, OC Östersund worked in close co-operation with the local municipality and the OC for the Alpine Skiing World Championship 2019 in Åre, using the ISO 20121 sustainability event management system, to define sustainability strategies for the two events - both of which were third-party certified.

They took stock of all emission sources in the event, from procurement for the whole event to energy usage at the sponsor village, and from spectator transport to technical power for broadcasting. Based on this, a strategy was devised to reduce emissions arising from some of the most impactful, and manageable, activities.

The implementation process had to be affordable, relatively easy, and incremental - with initiatives put in place over time. It was felt that, through communicating simple environmental information, creative and impactful solutions could be achieved without too much investment or the necessity for rules and regulations. In implementing its strategy, OC Östersund is transparent with its emissions figures and openly communicates its reduction efforts.

In the latest WC, held during November and December 2021, the carbon footprint for the event was calculated by the IBU's Carbon Footprint Tool at 858 Tonnes of CO₂ equivalent. “Travel to host country” contributed to one-third of this amount, and nearly 15% came from Accommodation, though the OC felt the figure estimated was too high given the fact that the hotels are heated with renewable energy.

Which IBU sustainability issues does it address?

► Emissions from travel & transport

The largest contributor to Östersund's carbon footprint is due to international travel by athletes, teams, and the IBU. In the first phase, in 2017, OC Östersund focused on addressing local and regional transport emissions. It replaced petrol and diesel with the renewable diesel HVO100 (Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil) in the transport fleet and snow groomers. Sponsor BMW cooperated by running the official shuttle fleet with this new fuel, initially with a special permission. Today HVO is officially compliant with BMW diesel engines. Recently, electrical cars have started to replace the combustion engines at events.

► Emissions from energy use for heating, cooling, and power

All non-renewable energy sources are banned from the Östersund arena, which is owned by the local authority. That means that all heating, even for temporary tents, is derived from biomass. The electric power is supplied from renewable energy, and the diesel generators for technical power are replaced by doubled electrical power lines (Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS)) to ensure redundancy.

► Inadequate sustainability communication

Staff at OC Östersund are informed of the sustainability strategy and follow the new guidance in their day-to-day decision-making. All OC Östersund's volunteers are educated in basic sustainability by the "Sustainability Inspirer" - a team member that is dedicated to driving sustainability within the OC. The event's 600-800 volunteers are given a presentation as well as being provided with a handbook to explain expectations regarding and justification for sustainable actions.

► Use of water and energy for snowmaking / snow-farming

There is a direct pipe from Sweden's fifth largest lake, Lake Storsjön, to the venue, which is also not used for the tap water system.

► Waste production

The axiom used by OC Östersund is that "We don't talk about waste, we talk about products to be reused or recycled." In the restaurants for volunteers and athletes, the OC has banned all forms of disposable plastic. The plates are composted, the cups are recycled, and the wooden cutlery is burned for local district heating. All the food waste is collected and used for compost or biogas production. Another initiative sees athletes assigned with their own clothes bag at the arena, for use during the entire event; single-use plastic sacks are banned.

What were the challenges faced?

- OC Östersund's main challenge is one faced by all international sport events, namely handling the international transport of athletes, teams, and IBU officials and administrators. One piece of good news here is that Östersund's airport now makes it possible for biofuel to be used in some aircrafts. The OC is following these discussions closely.
- It also finds its main obstacle as part of the waste management programme is correct separation - or any separation at all - in the team areas.

What are the next steps?

The next step for OC Östersund includes installing waste separation racks for different types of waste in the team areas, with easily understandable signs in various languages and an explanation of the concept in a handbook. OC Östersund is also discussing a partnership to install charging stations to make an electric shuttle fleet a reality.

