

## A quick guide to organizing a Zero Waste event



### Importance of Zero Waste practices

Organizing events in line with Zero Waste principles is key to reducing our environmental impact and promoting sustainability. By reducing the amount of waste, conserving resources and encouraging conscientious consumption, we can create positive change and set an example for future events. Zero waste events not only reduce the amount of trash sent to landfills, but also educate participants about the importance of environmental conservation and sustainable resource management. It is important that when organizing events, whenever possible, Zero Waste principles are followed.



## A step-by-step guide to organizing a Zero Waste event

### **Step 1: Choosing a location**

Choose a location that supports and enables the organization of events with less waste. You can look for places that provide recycling and composting options. Ideally will be that the venue has experience hosting sustainable events and/or is willing to collaborate to reduce waste. It is crucial to establish clear communication and explain to the staff in the facility how we want them to manage waste. Discuss whether reusable items will be used, whether single-use items will be allowed, and who will be responsible for cleaning up after the event. In accordance with the separate collection of waste at the event, it would be desirable to take the separated waste to the recycling yard after the event, and distribute the leftover food to the guests or donate it to those in need (e.g. Soup kitchen, dog shelter, etc.).

### **Step 2: Informing the participants**

Communicate with participants that the event will be organized in accordance with ZW practices. Use digital methods of promotion to convey this message. Emphasize the importance of their role in the success of the event and provide guidance on what they can do to contribute, such as bringing reusable items (e.g. reusable bottles).

### **Step 3: Creating clear labels and guidelines**

In order for event participants to properly dispose of waste, it is important to place clear signs in the event area with information about composting and recycling. Use visual guidelines for waste disposal and provide detailed instructions on the proper disposal of different types of waste. Clearly mark the collection points for plastic, glass and organic waste. Clear messages ensure that separate waste collection practices are easily understood and followed by participants.

### **Step 4: Food waste management**

Food waste can be a significant challenge, so plan carefully to minimize the amount of leftover food after the event. Make sure that the amount of food is in accordance with the number of participants. Communicate your zero waste goals with suppliers, ask them to use reusable cutlery and crockery. Donate any leftover food to those in need or allow participants to take leftover food. Consider using a caterer that offers finger-food or smaller portions that do not require cutlery, and choose dishes that can be served on larger plates. Beware of buffet style serving as it can lead to more food waste.

### **Step 5: Providing a place to fill the water**

Make sure there is a place to refill water bottles at the event. Inform participants to bring their own reusable water bottles, or provide them with bottles or reusable cups if possible. Also,

consider reusable cutlery and crockery options, and avoid using styrofoam and plastic. This step helps significantly in reducing single-use plastic waste.

<b><u>Items to avoid</u></b>	<b><u>Acceptable substitutions</u></b>
<b>Disposable plastic plates</b>	<b>Reusable plates (glass, metal, etc.)</b>
<b>Disposable plastic bowls</b>	<b>Reusable bowls (glass, clay...)</b>
<b>Disposable plastic cutlery</b>	<b>Reusable accessories</b>
<b>Disposable plastic food boxes</b>	<b>Reusable boxes</b>
<b>Plastic water bottles</b>	<b>Reusable water bottles, glass bottles, containers with taps</b>
<b>Disposable cups/mugs, plastic cups/mugs</b>	<b>Reusable cups/mugs</b>
<b>Plastic straws</b>	<b>Metal straws, paper straws (no straws if not necessary)</b>
<b>Aluminum foil or plastic foil</b>	<b>Beeswax foil, silicone covers</b>
<b>Plastic bags</b>	<b>Bags, paper bags</b>
<b>Styrofoam bowls</b>	<b>Reusable bowls</b>
<b>Disposable cups for coffee and juice</b>	<b>Reusable cups (paper coffee cups are the least recommended option as they are not recyclable due to the thin layer of plastic inside as a liquid barrier)</b>
<b>Plastic coffee/tea stirrers</b>	<b>Wooden chopsticks, metal spoons</b>
<b>Individual portions in disposable packaging (oil, vinegar, honey, chocolate cream, butter, cereal, yogurt, candy, snacks, etc.)</b>	<b>Bulk dispensers (larger containers)</b>
<b>Disposable gloves for cleaning actions</b>	<b>Reusable, washable gloves</b>

\*\*\* Disposable paper products (cups, plates, coffee cups, cutlery) should be avoided because they cannot be recycled due to the thin layer of plastic inside that acts as a liquid barrier.

\*\*\* Biodegradable, compostable and/or bio-based plastic options are not the most reliable as they require special conditions for composting within an organic waste management system that still does not exist in the Western Balkans



<u>Food</u>	<u>Advice</u>
Fruit	Buy fruit at the market or supermarket using a bag or crate to avoid using plastic bags. Apples, bananas, tangerines, peaches, pears, grapes... whatever is available and can be eaten out of hand and/or dried fruit
	Don't forget to wash the fruit, especially if you don't have access to water on your location
	Be sure to serve food in reusable containers or bags, without plastic packaging. You can also serve fruit in a wooden crate or a regular paper bag
Pastries and/or sandwiches	Order bagels/sandwiches from a local bakery, give them a larger container to wrap them in - stress that you don't want a plastic wrap

<u>Beverage</u>	<u>Advice</u>
Fruit syrup	Glass bottles
Water	Water bottle/container (with tap) of water from a drinking fountain, from which volunteers or participants can refill their reusable water bottles or glasses *Especially important if your location does not have access to drinking water
All drinks with packaging return system	Any beverage with a take-back system (beverages in glass bottles that are returned to the manufacturer and reused)... *Make sure empty packaging is returned after the event
Juices without packaging return system	Reusable containers (with a tap) that you fill with juice before the event so that the



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	participants can pour their own drinks into the reusable glasses
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By integrating these substitutions, you can further reduce waste and promote a sustainable approach at your event. **Let's be the change we want to see!**

**\*\*\* Before organizing the event, you can instruct the organizer/staff of the facility to get more detailed information with the help of the [Zero Waste HORECA guide for Montenegro](#)**