

Into the spotlight!

Sustainable sports
and cultural events

The social dimension of sustainability Interview with Wiebke Linnemann-Schweizerhof

Into the spotlight!



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In stadiums, theatres and concert halls, people come together to celebrate, dance and be entertained. They represent a cross-section of our society, with different levels of education, interests and incomes. What a great opportunity to turn the spotlight on sustainability! Sports and cultural events are an excellent arena in which to raise awareness of the much-needed transformation – and reach members of the public who have not yet engaged with this issue. These events provide a framework for a seemingly less “cerebral” approach to the topic of sustainability – one which involves celebrity role models, appeals more strongly to our emotions and senses, or challenges our perceptions. Art, for example, can show us that in our society, we often have a highly anthropocentric view of the environment: we perceive it as the world around us, separate from ourselves. Yet other cultures see the environment and humankind as a single entity; sustainability thus acquires more relevance.

But sport and culture should not merely promote sustainability; they must embrace the concept more fully themselves. I would like to see anyone who organises a sports tournament internalising the principle of competition here. They should be asking: what can I do to make this the greenest and most climate-friendly event ever? That does not mean simply offsetting emissions as cheaply as possible by purchasing certificates; it means avoiding emissions as far as possible and buying offsets at a fair and equitable price. In other words, it means living up to our climate responsibility. Major events are a particularly good opportunity to trial measures on a larger scale and achieve commercial viability for sustainable alternatives. The fact is that investing in compostable tableware, reusable cups and so on often only pays off if the target market numbers thousands, not dozens of people.

Mobility has a particularly significant impact on events’ sustainability performance. I saw this for myself when I went to a concert at the Hockenheimring. Due to the poor public transport links, there was total gridlock on all the access roads. The solution, surely, is to provide special trains, with shuttle buses to take ticket-holders from the nearest railway station and other transport hubs to the venue, with the cost of the transfer covered by the ticket price. Now that really would be something to celebrate.

Yours,
Jan Peter Schemmel

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“An event like this helps to overcome fears of engagement”



When we hear the word “event”, we tend to think of paper cups and energy-guzzling stadium lighting. But sustainable events have another – social – dimension. It looks at whether there is a discrimination-free space and whether human rights compliance has been achieved in the supply chains for sports equipment. It is this social dimension of sustainability that is in the spotlight at the Special Olympics. When the Special Olympics World Games were held in Germany for the first time in June 2023, 7,000 athletes from some 190 countries came together to compete in 26 different sports disciplines. In our interview with Wiebke Linnemann-Schweizerhof, Director of Events and Process Management, we find out more about social sustainability criteria and how an event like this can help to sensitise society.

How important were the Special Olympics World Games in Germany for your work?

So important that it is almost impossible to measure. The Games raised awareness of inclusion of people with disabilities beyond our wildest dreams. That was possible because of the event’s highly international character and the intense media interest.

How can an event like this promote inclusion?

It does so by creating awareness and confronting people with this issue in a positive way. This helps to break down barriers and overcome fears of engagement. These events show us all that people with disabilities are able to achieve far more than we might perhaps assume. In addition, sports events organisers are then inspired to create inclusive offers of their own. Another of our goals was to sensitise everyone we worked with.

How did you approach that task?

We ran sensitisation workshops at Berlin Airport and the railway stations, for example, and also provided them for hotels and security firms. We always tried to get the athletes involved. We didn’t want to be talking across them and telling people how to interact with them – we wanted to involve them in reaching out to people and building understanding that way. We raised the issue with suppliers as well: for example, when we talked to catering companies, we always asked if they had people with disabilities working for them already.

Which social sustainability criteria for events are important, in your view?

Accessibility is a key topic, of course, but it is also highly complex, which sometimes makes it difficult to put into practice. That’s because it covers aspects such as plain language, lifts and ramps, but it is also about interpreting events for people with a visual impairment. From our perspective, it is also crucial to involve people with disabilities in organising events and appoint them to decision-making bodies.

You also launched a programme for German local authorities to host delegations from all over the world. What was that experience like?

It was very positive. We had more local authorities applying to be host towns than we needed. And that also helped to advance inclusion by creating jobs,

for example. And of course, it is important for this to continue after the Special Olympics World Games, with inclusion officers working in the local authorities over the longer term.

What role did the environmental dimension of sustainability play?

Our main emphasis is on the social dimension of sustainability. For example, we look at the working conditions in partner companies and whether they are paying the minimum wage. And we do everything we can to protect the environment and the climate. And all our accredited athletes, staff and volunteers could use local public transport free of charge. We also made it a priority to use companies and products from the local area, provide guidance and manuals in digital format only and encourage waste separation.

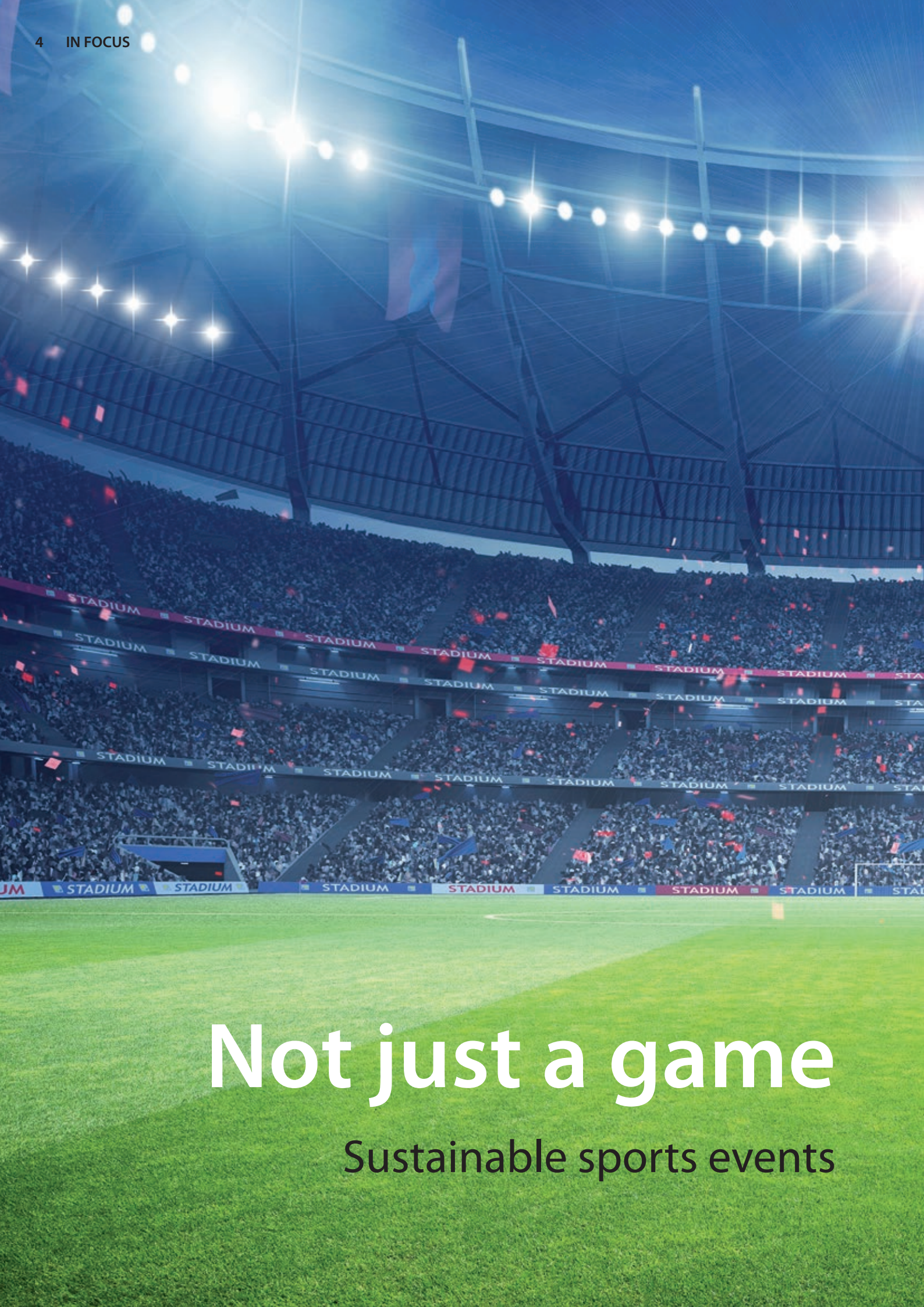
Thank you for talking to eco@work.

The interviewer was Christiane Weihe.



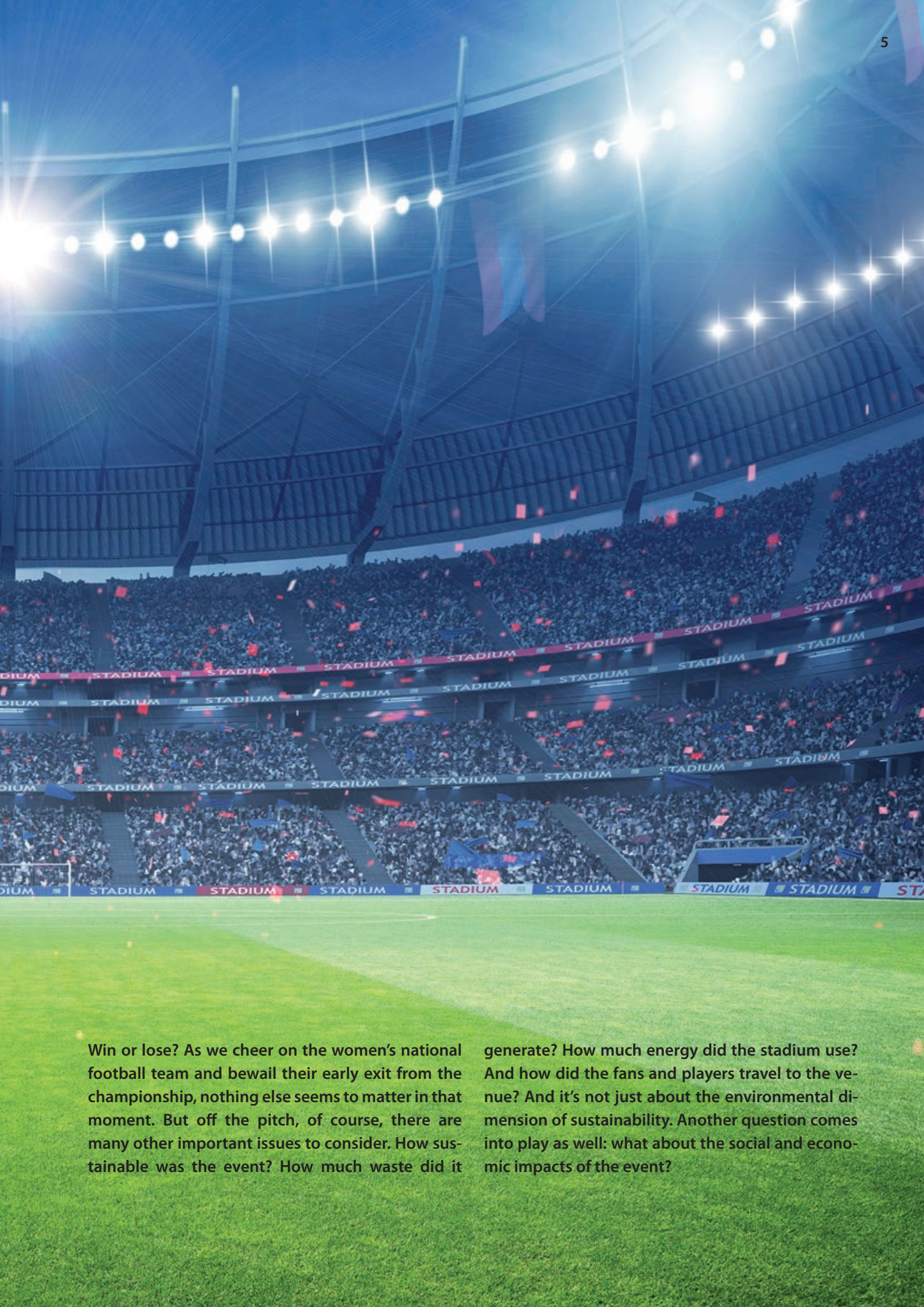
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Not just a game

Sustainable sports events



Win or lose? As we cheer on the women's national football team and bewail their early exit from the championship, nothing else seems to matter in that moment. But off the pitch, of course, there are many other important issues to consider. How sustainable was the event? How much waste did it

generate? How much energy did the stadium use? And how did the fans and players travel to the venue? And it's not just about the environmental dimension of sustainability. Another question comes into play as well: what about the social and economic impacts of the event?

Whether it's a rock concert, a handball tournament or a civic celebration – whenever large numbers of people come together to sing along, cheer on their team or take part in a celebration, sustainability should play a key role at the event. There are numerous opportunities to protect the environment and the climate here, just as there are in other areas of our lives. Reusable tableware, avoiding single-use packaging to conserve resources, effective waste separation and eco-friendly transport to the venue by bus and rail are just some of the options to consider. "Transport plays a major role in relation to the carbon footprint of public events, and this applies particularly to national and international events that involve air travel," says Dr Hartmut Stahl, a Senior Researcher in the Oeko-Institut's Resources and Transport Division. "Although admission tickets often include a free pass for local transport, it should be our ambition to ensure that free transregional rail travel to the event is included as well." However, the focus should not only be on the environmental and climate aspects of events. The social and economic dimensions of sustainability are also important. How sustainable are the supply chains for balls and equipment, for example? Are human rights principles considered here? And what about the running of the event – is it non-discriminatory with regard to background, gender, age and skills? "Event organisers who engage with these issues not only ensure more sustainability at various levels; they also have a positive impact on society and enhance their own image at the same time," says Hartmut Stahl.

Sports events in particular are often disrupted by the impacts of climate change, giving event organisers a very good reason to take action. "As we have seen on so many occasions, if there's not enough snow on the ski slopes, the races can no longer be run under natural conditions. Canoeing faces challenges if river levels are too high or too low. And track events may be affected if temperatures are simply too high to allow the athletes to compete safely."

EURO 2024

The Oeko-Institut is involved in various projects which look at how sport and sports events can become more sustainable. For example, researchers at the Institute have been advising the German Football Association (DFB) and the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB) on environmental and climate issues for many years. On behalf of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV), they have now produced a Concept and Feasibility Study for a "Climate-Neutral" Staging of the 2024 UEFA European Football Championship 2024 (UEFA EURO 2024). They began by calculating the event's ex ante carbon

footprint – projected at approximately 490,000 t CO₂ equivalents (t CO₂e) – and then looked at how to make this a climate-friendly event. "Our proposals identify practical measures to cut greenhouse gas emissions," says project leader Hartmut Stahl. "As a substantial proportion of these emissions will come from travel by fans, teams and others involved in the event, we are proposing a Combi-Ticket for local and long-distance transport so that people can choose environmentally friendly options for travel to and between venues. Other key elements include additional rail services, with special trains, and a commitment from teams to travel by rail and thus act as role models." From the project team's perspective, providing more vegetarian and vegan food in stadiums, cafeterias and hospitality areas would also increase sustainability.



In addition, the project team has drawn up a set of general recommendations that can be applied to other major sporting events, with a focus on mobility, the energy supply and catering.

But what about emissions that cannot be avoided? The experts looked at this issue as well. "Rather than relying on sometimes questionable carbon offset certificates, our suggestion is to apply the concept of climate responsibility." Here, the remaining emissions are multiplied by an applicable price based, for example, on the price of emission allowances. "The budget determined in this way will be invested in mitigation projects in sports clubs, for example, but without claiming to offset emissions or be carbon-neutral," he explains.

On behalf of the Federal Environment Ministry (BMUV), the Oeko-Institut is also focusing specifically on the circular economy. In the "Circular EURO 2024" project, the researchers identified practical measures to reduce waste. There are numerous entry points for this, including, of course, separate waste collection and recycling, but here, there is a particular emphasis on waste avoidance through the use of temporary structures (e.g. tents) and rental of furniture and technical equipment (e.g. cables). "The recommendations are targeted consistently towards multi-use systems, not just for food and beverages but also for the packaging used in the delivery of goods and materials."

MAJOR EVENTS

The value of sustainable major sporting events has now been recognised in the political arena as well: the National Strategy for Large-Scale Sports Events was published by the German Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community (BMI) and the DOSB in 2021. "One of the aims of the strategy is to utilise these events in order to initiate positive social development," says Hartmut Stahl. Against the backdrop of the strategy, a project entitled "On the Path to (Large-Scale) Sustainable Sporting Events in Germany", funded by the BMI and the

BMUV and implemented jointly by the DOSB, the German Sport University Cologne (DSHS) and the Oeko-Institut, will run until October 2024. "One objective of the project is to develop sustainability standards for small- to large-scale events because at present, there are so many different views about what qualifies as 'sustainable,'" Senior Researcher Hartmut Stahl explains. "In addition, environmental, social and economic aspects should be considered equally. And it is also about conveying the message that sustainability adds value to events and helps to create positive settings and outcomes." The researchers are drafting recommendations for event organisers and associations and offering tangible support by developing practical guidelines and a toolbox for future events.

As Hartmut Stahl emphasises, it is important to ensure that all the various strategies and mechanisms are not just applied to the individual event but continue to have an impact once fans have gone home. "Let's say event organisers want to encourage more people to cycle to the venue. In that case, this should be integrated into the training schedule as well. This may mean launching a campaign to motivate athletes to cycle to their training sessions. And this in turn requires support from the local authorities as it may be necessary to expand the network of cycle paths or install bike parking facilities."

THE OLYMPICS' CARBON FOOTPRINT

The shift towards sustainable sports is not only happening in Germany. The Olympic Committees of Europe Approaching Carbon Neutrality (OCEAN) initiative aims – with the Oeko-Institut's support – to empower Europe's National Olympic Committees (NOCs) in the field of climate action. This includes developing carbon reduction strategies, defining objectives and measures, and providing training for Climate Action Officers. The project particularly encourages National Olympic Committees to measure their carbon footprint. The

Oeko-Institut is developing a tool to aid NOCs to accomplish this task independently in future.

SPORT AND SOCIETY

Sustainability in sport is not only about making the next large-scale event as eco-friendly as possible, however. Sport also offers an opportunity to share the sustainability message with society at large. "These events have a very extensive reach and can encourage people to engage with the issue on an emotional level." So it is about inspiring local clubs and grassroots sports organisations to think about how to run their sports facilities and smaller-scale events more sustainably. One challenge identified by Hartmut Stahl is that many sports facilities are owned by the local authorities, not the clubs themselves. "Everyone needs to get round the table if the aim is genuinely to build more sustainability into sports events and beyond."

It is also important to raise spectators' awareness of the social and environmental dimensions of sustainability. So as we cheer on our teams again in 2024 – at the European men's handball and football championships or the Summer Olympics in Paris, for example – we should not only think about who scores the most goals or who runs the fastest time on the track. We should think about whether sustainability is in play as well.

Christiane Weihe



The link between sports and the environment is Dr Hartmut Stahl's research priority at the Oeko-Institut. Among other things, the Senior Researcher in the Resources and Transport Division provides consultancy services for organisers, associations and policy-makers on this topic.
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Taylor Swift takes the train?

Sustainable cultural events

Fans thrilled at the prospect of seeing Taylor Swift live on tour are probably not thinking about the carbon emissions produced by the pop icon's travel to the venue. And TV viewers engrossed in the latest Tatort are unlikely to be wondering whether the on-set catering was vegetarian. And yet cultural institutions not only have a responsibility to protect the environment and the climate. They can also help to guide our society's transition to sustainability.

Like sport, the culture sector has a great opportunity to share the sustainability message with society. It can do so by acting as a role model, powering its stage lighting with renewables and printing programmes on recycled paper. It can also address sustainability issues in exhibitions and performances. In this way, cultural institutions are able to influence the debate and promote a cultural shift. "Art and culture must engage with contemporary issues. They cannot sidestep the transition to sustainability," says Viviana López Hernández, a researcher in the Oeko-Institut's Sustainable Products and Material Flows Division. "They need to be thinking about these topics in all areas of their work, including their cultural outreach." This applies not only to museums and theatres but also to films and TV series, for example. "If an on-screen character drives an electric car and drinks from a reusable coffee cup, this helps to shape our reality."

At the same time, the culture sector itself must embrace sustainability. "This topic has gained far more relevance in recent years. Many cultural institutions are now aware that they need to take action. This includes building capacities and training staff, because there is often a lack of people with the right skills."

Many organisations are already taking action. Kunsthalle Karlsruhe has set up a Sustainability Unit, and as part of a pilot project supported by the German Federal Cultural Foundation, 19 cultural institutions, including Staatstheater Darmstadt and Münchner Lenbachhaus, have calculated their carbon footprint. "And the TV industry is engaged as well. One of the pioneers was a Tatort production in Freiburg a few years ago, where it was a priority to have an eco-friendly shoot."

SUSTAINABLE FILMS AND SERIES

The Oeko-Institut is involved in various projects which look at how to boost sustainability in the culture sector. The "100 Green Film Productions" project is an example. As part of this initiative, around 80 film and TV productions were required to comply with a set of environmental criteria. "The Oeko-Institut provided technical support for this initiative by the Green Shooting Working Group and evaluated the criteria," says Viviana López Hernández. "For example, we analysed participating productions' carbon dioxide emissions and quantified the savings achieved through compliance with the criteria." As for the formats, the researchers found that the highest carbon dioxide emissions for one minute of film time were generated in the production of mini-series (1,424 kg CO₂e), followed by feature films (686 kg CO₂e). Daily soaps and documentary series produced the lowest emissions (25 and 35 kg CO₂e, respectively). "Transport and travel produce a particularly high proportion of emissions across all formats, accounting for 40 to 80%." The study also showed that CO₂ emissions can vary considerably, even

between productions in the same format. "We assume that strategic factors, such as the choice of location or the size of team, come into play here. They determine how much travel is required, among other things," says Viviana López Hernández. "It is also important to consider the issue of sustainability from the start of planning onwards." This is particularly well-illustrated by the example of a commercial filmed in Slovenia: although much of the incoming travel was by rail, the production accounted for the highest CO₂ emissions per minute of film time by far. In total, the commercial produced 20 tonnes of CO₂e. However, through compliance with the sustainability criteria, the emissions of all the productions analysed were reduced by around 1,000 tonnes of CO₂e; this was achieved through the use of eco-friendly hotels or holiday apartments (723 tonnes), green electricity (142 tonnes) and avoidance of air travel (124 tonnes), among other things.

The researchers also looked at whether the predefined sustainability criteria, such as dispensing with air travel and avoidance of single-use plastic, are expedient and where challenges are likely to arise. "It is already working very well with mandatory criteria such as technical support from a green consultant and the submission of a final report. And overall, the optional criteria, such as avoidance of disposable batteries and the use of eco-friendly accommodation, had a positive effect as well," says Viviana López Hernández. But problems were identified in relation to green electricity for set construction and the use of low-emission trucks. "Only around a fifth of the productions were able to achieve compliance with these criteria. This may be due to the fact that there is often very limited scope to influence



how the electricity is supplied. Early planning is therefore crucial to ensure that filming can make maximum use of daylight hours.”

The project also aimed to improve the existing criteria. “With catering, for example, the focus was previously on local, organically produced food, not on providing vegetarian or vegan alternatives, where there is particularly high savings potential.” There has also been an overemphasis on increasing efficiency rather than on avoiding emissions. “Smaller teams and the choice of film location could make a difference here.”

CULTURE4CLIMATE

The Culture4Climate project, which runs until October 2024, also aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the culture sector and promote the transition to sustainability in cultural institutions. The project is led by Netzwerk Nachhaltigkeit in Kunst und Kultur (Network for Sustainability in Art and Culture) and delivered in partnership with the Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft (Cultural Policy Association). “Culture4Climate

relies on a variety of building blocks,” says Jürgen Sutter, a Senior Researcher in the Resources and Transport Division and project lead at the Oeko-Institut. “We support cultural institutions such as museums and theatres and organisations from the arts, literature and heritage sectors across a range of areas at various stages of their journey towards more sustainability.” A key component is a skills and networking website which provides up-to-date information and materials. “A climate tool should also be integrated into the website to provide information on potential savings and policy options.”

The project, which is funded by the Federal Environment Ministry (BMUV), also focuses on the provision of training for culture managers in order to build practical capacities and fosters climate partnerships between cultural institutions and sustainable businesses. Knowledge-sharing and joint implementation of mitigation measures are among the objectives here. “Funding-related coaching is another key element; this means that cultural institutions are given support with their funding applications,” says Jürgen Sutter. “There are also plans to hold a competition for the

culture sector on the global climate and sustainability goals in order to promote innovative strategies and initiatives.”

Will Taylor Swift take the train to her next concert in Germany? That seems rather unlikely. But vegetarian catering for Tatort is surely an option, and if the police chief then drinks her coffee from a reusable mug, sustainability will be advanced with every sip.

Christiane Weihe



Viviana López Hernández’s main areas of research include sustainable products and consumption, global supply chains and sustainable food systems. Jürgen Sutter is an expert in eco-audit and material flow analysis and also works on resource efficiency and renewable resources.

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