

How to make EHPS conferences more climate-friendly

First ideas for the 2022 meeting of the European Health Psychology Society

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After two years of EHPS conferences held online, EHPS 2022 is going “hybrid” for the first time.

Although this new format brings some challenges, it offers opportunities for urgently needed climate actions we can take as a community. According to the latest

Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change report, the world's CO₂ emissions need to be reduced to zero by 2050 to avoid a tipping point ([IPCC, 2022](#)). Even though political and transformative decisions are necessary to reach this goal, everyday consumer decisions have an important impact. Here we reflect on some of the opportunities the hybrid conference offers, share first ideas on how to make future EHPS conferences “greener”, and ask for [feedback and ideas](#) for future steps we as individuals and a community can take.

1. Preparation

1.1 Online or in-person attendance

In-person conferences are important activities that enable sharing of the latest research and supporting good quality networking. Many EHPS members have forged friendships and collaborations lasting entire personal and professional lives. Nevertheless, the impact of an in-person conference on the environment is significant. Attending an in-person event produces approximately 840 kg of CO₂ equivalent per person (Tao et al., 2021), which equals to charging a Smartphone an impressive 102,180 times ([EPA, 2021](#)), or a 5,100 km drive by a compact car (using E85 fuel; [Myclimate](#)). While transport is the most important source of greenhouse gas emission associated with in-person conferences (Bossdorf et al., 2010; Tao et al., 2021; van Ewijk & Hoekman, 2021), accommodation and food should not be neglected, as they represent around 13% to 18% of conference emissions (Bossdorf et al., 2010). Switching from in-person to virtual conferences can potentially reduce their carbon footprint by an impressive 94% (Tao et al., 2021). Besides being more climate-friendly, online conferences can be more inclusive as it may be easier for participants with lower financial resources or from farther away to attend, as shown by increased attendance rates and similar satisfaction rates compared to in-person events (Yates et al., 2022).

travel options with the least emissions (e.g. using trains for distances under 700 km, or cycling).

1.3 Booking accommodation in Bratislava

The conference will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, which is located in the heart of the city centre. All venues should be within walking distance, with the farthest one being the University auditorium at 1000 meters from Crowne Plaza. Booking accommodation close to the city centre reduces commuting. More eco-friendly accommodation can be found using common search tools with eco-filters ("Travel Sustainable properties" within booking.com or "Green" within TripAdvisor). Some of the results are, however, large hotel chains that buy eco-certificates and should not be preferred over smaller hotels, especially hostels or apartments shared with colleagues (Google finds several apartments that at least label themselves "eco"). An accommodation's policies and practices on their use of renewable energies (as well as recycling, food waste, single-use hygiene articles, water-saving, re-use of towels, etc.) may guide our choices. Even if the accommodation is further away, it is easy to get around in Bratislava either by cycling (e.g. bike rentals: VisitBratislava Bikesharing, Rekola, ANTI) or by using a tram.

2. During the conference

Together with Easy Conferences (the organising company), this year's local organising team has already done a lot to make the in-person conference more climate-friendly. The conference venues are easy to walk to and within walkable distance from points of interest. There will be no single-use conference bags, and the conference program and abstract books will be published

online only. Once the conference is over, delegates will be asked to leave their conference name badges at the site to be re-used by Easy Conferences.

All catering services are advised to avoid single-use plastics and must source their ingredients as locally as possible. Lunch will be served as a buffet at the hotel cafeteria to reduce waste and packaging, and to enable delegates to avoid sandwiches with food they may not eat, (plastic) bottled water, or crisps in plastic bags (sometimes the defaults at previous conferences). Lunches for delegates attending meetings during lunchtime will be packed as eco-friendly as possible. The tap water in Bratislava is of good quality, and there are contactless drinking fountains available around the city. Bringing a refillable bottle will help translate "green intentions" into action.

As climate-friendly food options can be chosen by the majority of the delegates and have a considerable impact on the total conference carbon footprint (EAT-Lancet Commission by Willett et al., 2019; Neugebauer et al., 2020; van Ewijk & Hoekman, 2021), the organising team is keen to reduce meat and dairy products and make vegetarian and vegan food options available and attractive.

Tell us what you think about introducing vegetarian/vegan lunches or vegetarian/vegan days at in-person EHPS conferences, possibly starting in Bratislava, with four optional and very quick questions [here](#) (takes 2 minutes).

3. After the conference: Assessment of EHPS conference on climate

The conference organizing team will send a survey to the EHPS community after the conference. This will help them evaluate the conference experience, and ask a few questions about how delegates travelled to Bratislava and

Dubrovnik (for comparison). We will analyse this data anonymously and estimate the overall climate impact of the in-person conference in 2019 to the hybrid format in 2022.

4. Further ideas and inspirations are highly appreciated

If you have any further ideas on how to reduce the carbon footprint during the conference, or good tips for other delegates on how to travel more sustainably (e.g. planning on coming by bike, or taking the train despite a long distance), tag us on Twitter to share them!

[#sustainableEHPS](https://twitter.com/sustainableEHPS) & [@SpecialInterestGroupEhps4G](https://twitter.com/SpecialInterestGroupEhps4G).

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