



International  
Olympic  
Committee

# SUSTAINABLE SOURCING GUIDELINES FOR BRANDING AND SIGNAGE MATERIALS

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THE  
OCEAN  
RACE





These guidelines are a joint publication by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) and The Ocean Race.

They are intended to be used by professionals in charge of designing and procuring branding and signage materials for events. The content can be used, for example, to brief suppliers or to define sustainability requirements in calls for tenders or in contractual agreements.

The guidelines have been developed using the detailed information contained in the [“Environmental impact evaluation of branding and signage materials for events”](#) IOC-UEFA report, and in consultation with a group of event organisers and signage specialists coordinated by [The Ocean Race](#). References to the IOC-UEFA report are included in the last column of the table below, to allow users to access more detailed information on specific types of materials or sustainability topics.

The focus is on the environmental impact of materials. The social impact of sourcing is important too. However, this can be managed through more generic supplier requirements and is thus not covered by this document.

# PART 1 – DESIGN AND SELECTION GUIDELINES



| Ref                     | Guidelines   | Why this is important   | Additional comments  | Most relevant to...               | Avoid   | Good  | Better   | Best   | Link to <u>IOC-UEFA</u> report  |
|-------------------------|--|---|--|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|--|---|
| <b>GENERIC GUIDANCE</b> |  |   |  |                                   |   |   |  |  |   |
| 1.                      | <b>Avoid single-use</b> products, components or materials if alternatives exist.                   | Encourages reuse and avoids waste, which can be hard to recover and recycle.  | Applies to signage substrates and fixings.   | All signage and branding products | Single-use plastic products.  | Single-use non-plastic components minimised.  | Components that can be dismantled for recycling.   | Modular components that can be reused.                       | P.16 & P.18<br>Waste hierarchy  |
| 2.                      | Products and materials must be <b>easy to reuse or recycle</b> ; reuse being the preferred option. | The use of virgin materials, especially from non-renewable sources, can have significant carbon and other impacts. Recycling enables these impacts to be reduced. | <p>Products should be easy to disassemble and separate into components, for reuse or recycling.</p> <p>Suppliers should provide details on how products and materials can be recycled if they can't be reused.</p> <p>If wood is used, ensure that it can be transformed into wood chips or biofuel.</p> | All signage and branding products | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paint, aluminium film or laminated finish coating on wood, steel, etc.</li> <li>Laminated finishes on paper or signage.</li> <li>Self-adhesive vinyl graphics.</li> <li>Synthetic carpets or vinyl floor coverings.</li> <li>Foam-based hardboards.</li> <li>PVC.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use recyclable cardboard, wood or eco plywood (formaldehyde-free).</li> <li>Mechanical fastenings rather than adhesives.</li> <li>If plastics are used, prioritise, in order: PE, PP PET, PS.</li> <li>Use non-PVC self-adhesives from renewable sources and with recyclable materials.</li> </ul> | If items are not easily reusable or recyclable, the supplier must offer an alternative solution (e.g. taking back items or implementing a tailor-made solution for reuse/recycling). | Products designed to be reused or repurposed for other uses. | <p>P.19-20<br/>Understanding recyclability</p> <p>P.40-42<br/>Signage and overlay materials &amp; recyclability</p> |



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| <b>GENERIC GUIDANCE</b> |   |   |  |                                   |  |   |  |   |   |
| 3.                      | It is preferable to use materials or components with <b>reused or recycled content</b> .  | The use of virgin materials, especially from non-renewable sources, can have significant carbon and other impacts. Use of recycled materials reduces these impacts. | Sources must at least contain a certain percentage of post-consumer content. Ideally, they should be independently verified by a suitably qualified third party or through a recognised scheme.<br><br>E.g. <u>Der Blaue Engel label RAL-UZ 30a: Products made from Recycled Plastics</u> ; <u>SCS Recycled Content</u> .  | All signage and branding products | Heavy, non-recyclable materials from non-renewable sources.                            | Materials contain some recycled content.                      | Materials contain >50% recycled content.   | Materials contain >75% recycled or reused content.  | P.47<br>Material & weight / using circularity to reduce footprint |
| 4.                      | It is preferable to use <b>bio-based products or components/ materials with a lower environmental impact</b> , especially where they have been independently certified and do not compromise other reuse and recycling streams. | Fossil fuel-based materials generally have a higher overall environmental impact than bio-based materials.  | Production of “vegetal plastic”/starch fibre/hemp must meet high environmental standards, i.e. using agricultural residues, following organic agriculture or sustainable agriculture methods, using non-genetically modified crops. If supplier offers bio-based products, they should provide environmental impact information including land use and/or biodiversity impact. | Plastics, board and textiles      | Fossil-fuel based products where comparable bio-based materials are readily available. | <u>Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials</u> (RSB) Certified | Full Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) on material showing lower environmental impact than conventional materials. | Full LCA on material showing lower environmental impact than conventional materials and material can be reused or recycled. | P.49<br>Bio-based materials                                       |



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| <b>GENERIC GUIDANCE</b> |   |   |  |                                   |  |   |  |   |   |
| 5.                      | It is preferable to use <b>eco-designed</b> products. | Eco designed products take account of the impact over the whole lifecycle.                      | An ecolabel provided by a third party is the preferred option.   | All signage and branding products | Products that claim eco-design with no evidence provided.  | Products that have evidence of an eco-design method.  | Products with a relevant ecolabel from a recognised certification body.<br><br>E.g. <u>Cradle to Cradle label</u> , <u>Der Blaue Engel</u> , <u>Nordic ecolabel</u> , <u>EU ecolabel</u> . | Products that take a lifecycle approach to eco-design, including how the product is going to be used, | P.22<br>Certification & labels  |
| 6.                      | <b>Limit the use of hazardous substances.</b>         | To ensure that people and the environment are not unnecessarily exposed to hazardous chemicals. | Suppliers must describe the measures taken to limit the presence of hazardous substances in supplied materials.<br><br>The EU REACH Regulation on the restriction of hazardous chemicals is the strictest of its kind in the world, and hence used as a reference.<br><br>Restricted substances are listed in <u>Annex XVII to the REACH Regulation</u> (e.g. bisphenol-A (BPA), some phthalates, some heavy metals). In addition, as much as possible products should not contain substances on the <u>REACH Candidate List of Substances of Very High Concern (SVHC)</u> . | All signage and branding products | Products containing restricted or banned hazardous substances.<br><br>PVC products with no or limited supply chain information, and incinerated at end of life.<br><br>Coatings with heavy metals. | Products specified as not containing <u>REACH restricted</u> substances or classified as <u>SVHC</u> above a defined threshold. | Products with a guarantee from an independent authority as not containing any <u>REACH restricted</u> substances or classified as <u>SVHC</u> .  | Products also guaranteed to exclude substances restricted or classified as SVHCs in any jurisdiction. | P.23<br>Key procurement questions (raw materials sourcing; production)<br><br>P.25<br>Flame retardants<br><br>P.26<br>Impacts of PVC<br><br>P.48<br>PVC vs non-PVC alternatives |



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| <b>GENERIC GUIDANCE</b> |   |   |   |                                   |  |   |   |  |   |
| 7.                      | It is preferable to use factories that have a <b>sustainability-related policy and/or management systems</b> in place.  | Provides assurance that sustainability is important to the manufacturer and is being managed.                         | Evidence or certification should be provided by the supplier. | All signage and branding products | Products with poor or no supply chain information.   | Supplier can identify upstream suppliers and provide details such as factory locations.   | Manufacturer has a recognised sustainability certification.<br><br>E.g. ISO 14001, EMAS, ISO 45000, ISO 26000, SA 8000, B Corp. | Upstream suppliers are independently certified and have sustainability targets (e.g. zero waste to landfill, CO <sub>2</sub> reduction). | P.21<br>Supplier credentials & sourcing |
| 8.                      | Consider the following measures to limit the environmental impact of <b>printing</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use waterless printing methods</li> <li>• Save printing materials as much as possible, e.g. by choosing formats that limit the production of scrap printing materials</li> <li>• Save ink as much as possible, e.g. by limiting printed surface areas, choosing fonts that minimise ink consumption, selecting white or light backgrounds.</li> </ul> | Ensures that potentially harmful substances are avoided, and that the recyclability of printed items is not affected. |   | Printed materials                 | Solvents with a high content of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs).<br><br>Fluorescent or metallic ink colours (which often contain toxic substances).<br><br>Laminates and ultraviolet varnish and waxed finishes. | Eco-solvent or UV-cured inks.<br><br>Material is REACH-compliant (i.e. no SVHC above 0.1%) [see also Guideline 6].<br><br>Confirmation from recycler that printing type is compatible with the recycling process.<br><br>Printer has an environmental certification (e.g. ISO 14001). | Inks with minimal environmental impact, such as water-based or vegetable oil-based inks.  | Water-based and natural dyes/inks.   | P.25<br>Printing                        |



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|------------------------------------|--|--|---|--|------------------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| <b>SPECIFIC MATERIALS GUIDANCE</b> |  |  |   |  |                                    |  |   |  |  |
| 9.                                 | <b>Wood</b> should be Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified wood or equivalent.   | FSC certification ensures that the wood has been sourced from sustainably managed forests.                     | An FSC certificate should be provided by the supplier.        | Wood products                              | Non-FSC wood                       | FSC-certified  | FSC-certified                                     | FSC certified<br><br>Or<br>Wood products (e.g. fibreboard) derived from certified waste sources. | P.48<br>Timber<br><br>P.56-58<br>Wood & Fibre boards |
| 10.                                | <b>Paper-based</b> materials (incl. cardboard): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must be produced without bleaching or using non-chlorine bleaching methods.</li> <li>Must contain at least 75% recovered paper fibres, with a minimum of 80% post-consumer recycled fibres; or must be produced from legal and certified sources from sustainably managed forests.</li> </ul> | Stated requirements ensure paper or board is sustainably sourced and production processes have a lower impact. | Evidence or certification should be provided by the supplier. | Paper-based materials, including cardboard | Uncertified paper-based materials. | Other labelling schemes such as Type 1 Ecolabels (e.g. Blue Angel or Nordic Swan) or PEFC-certified. | Paper certified according to FSC 100% or FSC Mix. | FSC recycled paper with full chain of custody to final manufacturer or supplier.                 | P.60-62<br>Wood & fibre boards                       |



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|------------------------------------|--|--|---|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| <b>SPECIFIC MATERIALS GUIDANCE</b> |  |  |   |  |   |  |  |  |  |
| 11.                                | <b>Plastic materials</b> should contain as much recycled content as possible, be designed for long life or re-use, and be suitable for recycling at end of life. | This will ensure that the environmental impact of plastics used is minimised.  | Items made from multi-layer laminates are difficult or impossible to recycle. | Plastic-based materials                                | Single-use plastic items.<br><br>Multi-material plastics unless alternatives are not available. | Some recycled content.<br><br>Material recycling (not incineration) secured for end of life (e.g. supplier has closed-loop takeback scheme).   | >50 % recycled content.<br><br>Material can be reused or repurposed at end of life.  | >75 % recycled content.<br><br>Plastic items with long-term use case/ can be repurposed at end of life.<br><br>Third-party certified ecolabel (e.g. <a href="#">SCS Recycled Content</a> ).  | P.47<br>Managing plastics<br><br>See also Guideline 4 above on bio-based materials |
| 12.                                | Materials containing <b>PVC</b> should be avoided.   | PVC is a versatile material used widely in overlay, but there are concerns over its environmental and human health impacts across its lifecycle. | Non-PVC alternatives should be used wherever possible.                        | Foamboards, banners, self-adhesives, vinyls and decals | PVC products with no or limited supply chain information.<br><br>Incineration at end of life.   | Avoid PVC if possible.<br><br>If PVC is required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Material is REACH-compliant (i.e. no SVHC above 0.1%) [see also Guideline 6].</li> <li>Confirmation that supply chain uses mercury-free processes.</li> </ul> | Avoid PVC if alternatives exist<br><br>If PVC is required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Material is REACH-compliant.</li> <li>Confirmation that supply chain uses mercury-free processes.</li> </ul> | Avoid PVC if alternatives exist<br><br>If PVC is required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certified from <a href="#">Vinyl Plus manufacturer</a></li> <li>Material is REACH-compliant.</li> <li>Re-use or repurposing options are identified for end of life.</li> </ul> | P.26<br>Impacts of PVC<br><br>P.48<br>PVC vs non-PVC alternatives                  |





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|------------------------------------|--|---|--|---------------------|---|---|--|--|---|
| <b>SPECIFIC MATERIALS GUIDANCE</b> |  |   |  |                     |   |   |  |  |   |
| 13.                                | <b>Metal-based</b> materials should be lightweight and designed for recycling.   | Metals have a very high environmental impact. While metals have become popular alternatives to plastics due to their high recyclability, metal-based products should not be employed on a single-use basis. | Most steel and aluminium will contain recycled content, but this is rarely declared by manufacturers as it is historic practice and supply can vary. Instead, using suppliers that can provide certified Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) data (e.g. through Environmental Product Declaration (EPD) or an eco-label) is recommended. | Metal products      | Single-use metal products.  | Lightweight design.<br><br>Modular components.                                      | Products procured for long-term use and reuse, or on a rental basis.   | Responsible sourcing certification for mined material, e.g. IRMA ( <a href="#">Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance</a> ).<br><br>Products procured for long-term use and reuse, or on a rental basis.  | P.48<br>Metals  |
| 14.                                | <b>Textile</b> materials should contain as much recycled content as possible, be designed for long life or re-use, and be suitable for recycling at end of life. | Textiles are an important and widely used aspect of overlay. However, textiles can be difficult to manage at end of life due to very limited global recycling capacity.                                     | Many of the guidelines on plastics also apply to textiles.   | Flexible graphics   | Single-use textile items.<br><br>Multi-material fabrics (especially block-out fabrics, which often include a PVC layer), unless alternatives are not available. | >25% recycled content.<br><br>REACH-compliant dyes and inks [see also Guideline 6]. | >50% recycled content.<br><br>REACH-compliant dyes and inks.<br><br>Material can be reused or repurposed at end of life.<br><br>Third-party environmental data supplied. | >75% recycled content.<br><br>Single material textiles only.<br><br>REACH-compliant dyes and inks.<br><br>Textile item has long-term use case/can be repurposed at end-of life.<br><br>Third-party certified ecolabel such as <a href="#">EU Ecolabel</a> , <a href="#">Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS)</a> , <a href="#">OEKOTEX</a> . | P.71<br>Flexible graphics<br><br>See also Guideline 4. above on bio-based materials |

# PART 2 – EXAMPLE OF INFORMATION REQUESTS TO BE INCLUDED IN PURCHASING SPECIFICATIONS



| ITEM                                     | WHY THIS IS NEEDED  | INFORMATION REQUEST DETAILS  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Materials sourcing and production</b> | To provide assurance and transparency on the materials and how they are manufactured. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The different components of each type of branding/signage materials.</li> <li>• The country of origin of each main material type.</li> <li>• The country of assembly of the finished products.</li> <li>• The percentage of recycled material and the country where the material was recycled.</li> <li>• The percentage of certified material.</li> <li>• Relevant product ecolabels and supplier certifications (see <a href="https://www.sustainabilitymap.org/standards">https://www.sustainabilitymap.org/standards</a>).</li> </ul> |
| <b>Second life or recycling</b>          | To provide assurance on the method and feasibility of re-use and recycling.           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-use method proposed for each reusable material type (e.g. merchandising, roofing, waterproofing, silage, geotextile, earthworks).</li> <li>• Recycling method proposed for each recyclable material type (e.g. destination, % of material that can be recycled, certifications).</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Ethical sourcing</b>                  | To provide assurance that the supplier meets ethical, social and labour standards.    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide suppliers with a Supplier Code of Conduct and request confirmation that they comply with the requirements of the code.</li> <li>• The Supplier Code of Conduct should include requirements on no forced or child labour, fair working practices, fair wages, no discrimination, rights to collective bargaining, etc.</li> </ul>  |