



# **IFES Sustainability Report 2025**

International Federation of Exhibition and Event Services

**Connecting Globally, Acting Sustainably**

## Introduction

We are pleased to present IFES's Annual Sustainability Report 2025.

In a global environment shaped by environmental, social, and economic challenges, sustainability has steadily evolved into a strategic cornerstone for organizations across our industry. It is no longer a secondary consideration, but a business imperative and a long-term responsibility. At IFES, we believe strongly that this momentum must not be lost. On the contrary, it must continue to grow in ambition, relevance, and impact.

As a global network representing the exhibition and event services industry, we recognize both the responsibility and the opportunity that come with our role. Our sector has the power to connect people, businesses, and ideas across borders, and with that comes the obligation to help shape a more sustainable future. For IFES, this means embedding the principles of sustainable development ever more firmly into our governance, our operations, and the way we engage with and support our members.

This report provides a transparent overview of the actions we have taken, the progress we have made, and the areas where further improvement is needed. We see transparency as essential to credibility and progress, and therefore view this report not only as a record of achievement, but also as an honest reflection of an ongoing journey.

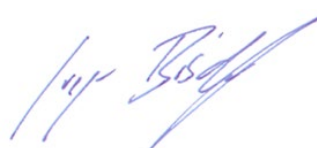
Over the past year, IFES has continued to promote responsible practices and support sustainable innovation across the industry. This has included our engagement with initiatives such as Net Zero Carbon Events 2050, ISO 20121, the Materials Library, and Better Stands. Through these efforts, we aim to position IFES, its members, and the wider industry to contribute actively to meaningful and lasting change.

Sustainability is not a fixed destination, but a continuous process of learning, improving, and acting responsibly. With this report, we reaffirm our commitment to strengthening our performance, measuring our impact, and helping to build a more sustainable and resilient future for our industry.



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Jörg Zeissig,  
President – IFES



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Gregor Bischkopf,  
Executive Director – IFES



## The Story Behind the Data

In 2025, IFES gathered its community in Guadalajara for the World Summit and stood alongside the world at EXPO Osaka—two moments that embody why live communication matters and why measuring its impact is worth doing well.

There is an important truth at the heart of what we do: bringing hundreds of people to one place is fundamentally more efficient than those same people traveling to meet each other individually. Live events consolidate connection, and that consolidation is itself a sustainability argument. Beyond the events themselves, IFES actively fosters relationships among its members so that a well-connected global network reduces the need to ship materials across borders—when a member takes a project abroad, a trusted local partner is never far away. That is "thinking globally, acting locally" in practice.

Yes, our footprint grew this year, but the story behind that number is a positive one: more members, more events, and a wider methodology that now includes venue spaces and on-site travel. The share of emissions we actively offset has grown from 6% in 2023 to 33% in 2024 and 46% in 2025—nearly half our total footprint. With 338 member companies and a per-member footprint of 0.211 tons, the trends that matter most are moving in the right direction.

So, what did 2025 actually look like, event by event? Here is the full picture!

### **BOE International 2025**

BOE International 2025 in Dortmund brought together over 350 exhibitors and approximately 9,500 trade visitors. IFES was present at a shared stand with fwd: Bundesvereinigung Veranstaltungswirtschaft eV, built using rented aluminum frames and fully recycled backdrops—demonstrating that professional presentation and responsible production are entirely compatible.

IFES contributed three panel discussions on the fwd: Stage, covering the ISO 20121 Convoy, best cases in sustainable stand production, and how younger professionals can shape the future of the industry. Together, these sessions reflected what BOE itself represents: a single gathering that replaces countless individual journeys, making the trade fair format one of the most carbon-efficient modes of professional exchange our industry offers.

### **Exhibitor Live 2025**

At Exhibitor Live 2025 in San Antonio, Texas—attended by around 3,000 professionals—IFES maintained its consistent approach to stand design: rented aluminum frames and fully recycled backdrops. As at BOE, the stand embodied a simple, replicable principle: materials should not be produced for single-use. Exhibitor Live also reinforced the broader sustainability case for exhibitions, bringing an industry together in one place rather than dispersing its conversations across dozens of separate events and flights.

### **World EXPO Osaka 2025**

From 25–29 May, 55 IFES and fwd: members joined the IFES & fwd: World Expo 2025 Study Trip in Osaka, Japan. World Expos of this global scale take place only once every five years, complemented by smaller-scale regional Expos that offer similar inspiration closer to home. Participants of the Study Trip had VIP access to 17 pavilions, exploring the EXPO's theme of "Designing Future Society for Our Lives" and witnessing cutting-edge sustainable solutions presented by nations and industries from around the world. Notably,



the Osaka EXPO was itself certified according to ISO 20121, making it a compelling reference point for large-scale, responsibly managed live experiences. A Kyoto day trip rounded out the program, deepening the cultural dimension of the learning experience. The knowledge and connections gained will continue to inform how our members approach their own work for years to come.

### **World Summit 2025—Guadalajara**

The 2025 IFES World Summit took place in Guadalajara, Mexico, from 17–20 June, under the theme "Today's Learnings, Tomorrow's Sustainability!"—marking 40 years of IFES. The venue, Expo Guadalajara, holds multiple sustainability certifications, including EarthCheck, ISO 9001:2015, and the ESR (Empresa Socialmente Responsable) designation. Its more than 1,200 m<sup>2</sup> of photovoltaic cells generate an average of 183,993 kWh annually, avoiding approximately 92 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. The venue also operates under a Voluntary Environmental Compliance Program (PCAV) with the Jalisco state government and prioritizes local suppliers throughout its value chain.

Attendees were offered carbon offset packages at registration—priced at €38 per ton, covering hotel nights, meals, and travel—supporting a gold-standard biodiverse reforestation project in Panama. The program content kept sustainability central throughout, with sessions including "From Vision to Action: Building a Sustainable Future" (Louisa Lorenz, Martijn Besaris) and "Level Up Your Sustainability Game!" (Joerg Zeissig). The Gala Dinner at the UNESCO World Heritage Site Hospicio Cabañas brought the Summit to a fitting close—honoring four decades of collaboration and looking ahead to what the next chapter demands.

### **EDPA Midwest × IFES MasterClass—Chicago 2025\*<sup>1</sup>**

On 25–26 August, IFES partnered with the Midwest Chapter of EDPA for the first-ever U.S. MasterClass, held at the Merchandise Mart in Chicago. More than 30 professionals joined two days of education covering transatlantic perspectives on event design, future trends, and persona-based sales approaches. The MasterClass model is itself a sustainability practice: by partnering with regional associations rather than building parallel structures, IFES ensures knowledge-sharing is reciprocal, travel is minimized, and impact is felt both locally and internationally.

### **IMEX Next Gen Workshop—Frankfurt 2025\***

On 19 May, IFES joined IAPCO, AMCI, and AIPC at the Joint Associations Next Gen Workshop at IMEX Frankfurt. Under the title "Mind the Gap! A Safe Space to Co-Create Future-Proof Businesses," participants tackled succession planning, the leadership career gap, and what future-proofing means for different stakeholders. By contributing to an existing flagship industry gathering, IFES again applied the principle it advocates across the industry: maximize the value of each journey, and embed education into events people are already attending.

### **Better Stands by NZCE**

Better Stands by NZCE was officially launched on 6 June 2025 during the UFI European Events Week in Thessaloniki, Greece, in front of approximately 400 industry professionals. The reaction was immediate: media coverage followed in Exhibition World, Trade Show

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<sup>1</sup>These events have not been included within the carbon emissions calculations, since IFES did not act as the hosting organization. Employee travel to these events is included within the category "Operations."



News Network, Meeting Spotlight, BR, and Business Events Africa. In June alone, more than 70 companies submitted expressions of interest, and over 60 individuals participated in structured introduction calls.

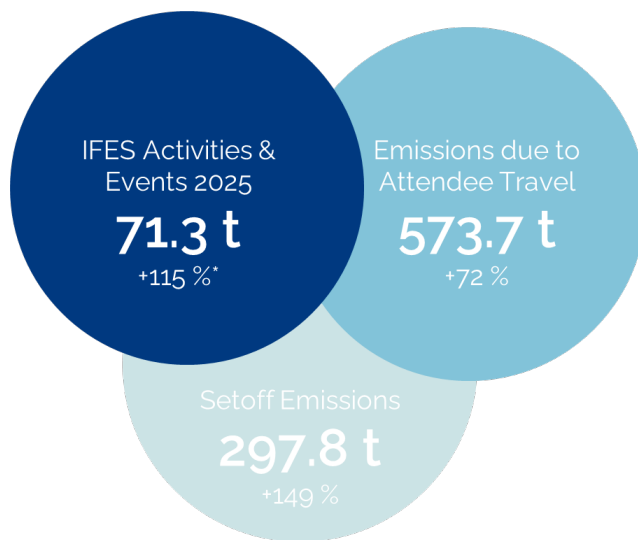
Better Stands certifies booths that reduce waste and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by using reusable materials, serving as a trusted accreditation system for sustainable service providers. Its online platform streamlines accreditation and stand assessments, replacing standalone onsite evaluations with efficient digital processes and eliminating much of the associated assessor travel. The scale of interest generated by the launch confirms that the industry is actively looking for trusted frameworks—and that Better Stands provides exactly that.

IFES, with its members at the heart of this initiative, is not only an active member but will also serve as the secretariat for the initiative as of 2026 to drive and advance the number of reusable stands at trade shows.

### **ISO 20121 Training through Collaboration**

In partnership with the German association fwd: Bundesvereinigung Veranstaltungswirtschaft e.V., IFES continued its ISO 20121 Convoy program in 2025, running a second German cohort of 11 companies that will complete their training in July 2026. Combined with the first cohort, this brings the total number of companies trained through the IFES Convoy model to 27. The program remains one of the most concrete tools IFES offers its membership: not awareness-raising alone, but a defined, achievable route to the events industry's own standard for sustainable management—and what IFES has long described as its future license to operate.

## IFES Carbon Footprint 2025



### IFES Activities & Events Footprint Put into Perspective:



**0.211 t** per member company  
+99%\*

At the end of 2025, IFES counted 338 (+25\*) members.



**0.282 t** per unique event attendee  
+186%\*

In 2025, 252 (-83\*) people attended the IFES World Summit & EXPO Osaka Tour.

### Carbon Footprint by Activity

Activity	Emissions	Set Off	vs 2024*
Office	37.40 kg	-	+/- 0%
Office Travel	35,012.95 kg	13,039.00 kg	+69 %
Board Travel	18,006.97 kg	-	+144 %
Attendee Travel	573,716.40 kg	284,774.59 kg	+71 %
Venue Space	8,599.20 kg	-	not evaluated
On-site Travel	2,087.36 kg	-	not evaluated
Meals & Catering	6,640.32 kg	-	+47 %
Material	869.70 kg	-	+53 %
Waste	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>644,970.29 kg</b>	<b>297,813.59 kg</b>	<b>+76 %</b>

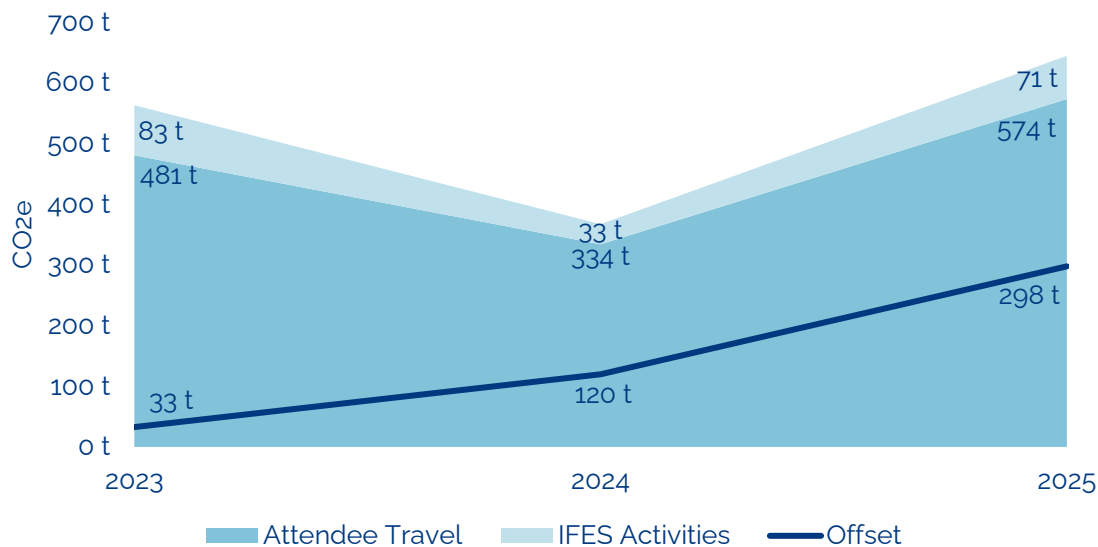
### Carbon Footprint by Event

Event / Project	Emissions	Offset
Operations	34,464.63 kg	7,500.00 kg
World Summit @ Guadalajara	470,095.53 kg	203,040.51 kg
EXPO Tour Osaka	138,012.39 kg	87,273.08 kg
BOE International 2025	239.95 kg	-
Exhibitor Live 2025	2,157.79 kg	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>635,858.74 kg</b>	<b>297,813.59 kg</b>

\*In comparison to 2024. Please note that much of the annual fluctuations, especially attendee travel, can be explained by the changing locations of our main event, the World Summit. In 2024, the World Summit took place in Malaga, Spain; in 2025, in Guadalajara, Mexico.

All values are to be understood as CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions. IFES has no Scope 1 emissions to report. Scope 2 was not assessed due to a lack of reliable data.

## Carbon Footprint over the Years



**Note:** Much of the annual fluctuations, especially attendee travel, can be explained by the changing locations of our main event, the World Summit. In 2023, the World Summit took place in Singapore; in 2024, in Malaga; and in 2025, in Guadalajara.

## Carbon Footprint Calculation - Methodology

We carefully collected and analyzed data for our carbon emissions report, covering Scopes 1–3. Our assessment confirmed that IFES produces no direct (Scope 1) emissions, as our operations do not involve company-owned facilities or vehicles.

Scope 2 emissions, which account for purchased electricity, heating, and cooling, were not included in this report due to a lack of sufficient, reliable data to calculate these accurately. Our analysis, therefore, focuses on Scope 3 emissions, which reflect the indirect impacts associated with our supply chain and business activities.

Where materials were assessed, we applied two adjustments to ensure emissions are attributed fairly and proportionally. For purchased materials, embodied carbon figures were multiplied by a factor of 0.6 to reflect an end-of-life recycling credit, acknowledging that a significant share of the material's carbon impact will be offset through recycling rather than landfill disposal. For rented materials, embodied carbon was amortized across a realistic number of usage cycles—for example, the embodied carbon of aluminum framing structures was divided by 100—reflecting the fact that reusable items serve many events over their lifetime, and it would be misleading to attribute their full production impact to a single use.

While this report does not yet provide a complete emissions profile, we believe that sustainability demands timely and transparent action. Every step toward better measurement and reduction matters. By publishing our findings now, we aim to be transparent about both the limitations and strengths of our data. We hope our openness encourages others to take the same first steps—to begin measuring, learning, and improving, no matter where they start.

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### Which CO<sub>2</sub>e data is included in our report?

- Any **travel and accommodation** of the IFES management **office**
- Applicable **travel and accommodation** of the IFES **board**
- Attendee travel and accommodation** for IFES-hosted events
- Venue spaces** used during IFES-hosted events
- On-site travel** between hotels and activity sites at IFES-hosted events
- Purchased **materials**, adjusted by a factor of 0.6 to reflect recycling where applicable
- Rented **materials**, amortized across a realistic number of usage cycles
- Food and beverages** at IFES-hosted events, using a standard emissions factor per meal

### Which emissions are not included due to a lack of reliable data?

- Waste** management
- Scope 2** emissions (electricity, water treatment, and heating)
- IT-related** emissions

### Which emission factors have been used?

The primary source for emission factors is the [UK Government Greenhouse Gas Reporting: Conversion Factors 2025](#). Embodied carbon figures for materials were sourced from the Inventory of [Carbon and Energy \(ICE\) database](#), published by Circular Ecology Ltd. Emissions from venue spaces were calculated using the [CHSB Index](#), as provided by Greenview Singapore. For individual line items where none of the above sources provided a suitable factor, other established conversion factors were applied on a case-by-case basis. Where available, direct supplier CO<sub>2</sub>e data was used in preference to any of the above.

Flight emissions were calculated on a simple distance basis—using the direct great-circle distance between departure and destination, multiplied by the applicable emissions factor. This approach does not account for layovers or actual flight routing, and may therefore slightly underestimate real-world flight emissions.