



Nordic Council of Ministers
Office in Lithuania

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PLAN 2024-2026



1. Table of Contents

2. Introduction.....	3
3. Baseline Assessment.....	5
4. Action Areas & Initiatives.....	9
5. Climate contributions towards carbon neutrality	15
6. Future Commitments & Conclusion.....	16
Appendix 1: Overview of the activities included in current the climate accounts	17
Appendix 2: Summary of actions taken	19

2. Introduction

Welcome to our Climate and Environmental Action Plan

As a proactive participant in the global sustainability movement, the Nordic Council of Ministers office in Lithuania is committed to making a significant and positive environmental impact. This Climate and Environmental Action Plan 2024 -2026 serves as a blueprint, guiding us towards the achievement of our ambitious sustainability goals.

Mission statement

This commitment to climate and environment is deeply intricately linked with the ambitious Nordic Council of Ministers Vision for 2030. By 2030, the vision aims to establish the most sustainable and socially inclusive region in the world. Specifically, we aim to achieve the following:

1. **A Green Nordic Region:** leading a green transition to achieve carbon neutrality, embracing a sustainable, circular, and bio-based economy.
2. **A Competitive Nordic Region:** fostering green growth through innovation, knowledge, and digital integration, positioning ourselves at the forefront of sustainable practices.
3. **A Socially Sustainable Nordic Region:** promoting inclusivity, equality, and interconnectedness, underpinned by shared values, cultural exchange, and enhanced welfare.

The objectives outlined in Vision 2030 are not just aspirational goals but form the cornerstone of this action plan. Each initiative, target, and strategy outlined in this document is crafted to align directly with our vision, ensuring that every step we take is a stride towards a greener, more competitive, and socially sustainable Nordic Region. This plan serves as a tangible representation of our commitment to these ideals, aligning our external efforts with actionable internal measures that will guide our progress

Background

Our sustainability journey began in 2010 with the inception of the first green action plan. Our current Climate and Environmental Action Plan is not only a continuation of that journey but also a strategic alignment with the efforts of the Nordic Council of Ministers. We draw inspiration from the ["Climate and Environmental Action Plan for Nordens hus 2022–2024"](#) aiming to mirror the commitment and initiatives in our operations in Lithuania.

This document is dynamic, designed to evolve as we progress in our sustainability journey. It reflects our current strategies and will be updated regularly to integrate new technologies, insights, and best practices.

Stakeholder Engagement

We understand that sustainability can never be achieved in isolation. Alongside our regular work, we aim to encourage others to become more environmentally friendly. In particular:

- **Staff engagement:** our environmental action starts with our staff and colleagues. All staff take part in a review of yearly emissions presentations where they get a chance to learn about our impact and explore potential actions. Staff engage in relevant environmental activities, e.g., visiting wetlands, we have supported and directly see the impact we have. Colleagues also organize regular relevant volunteering opportunities for staff (Intern's social action).
- **Inclusive project approach:** in all projects done in collaboration with us, we ensure a holistic approach and that environmental considerations are integrated alongside other critical aspects such as gender equality and youth involvement. Each project description includes specific questions addressing these areas.
- **Local partnerships and expert collaboration:** by working with local partners, we both contribute to the community and gain insights. Collaborating with specialists like Planet Positive, we aim for accurate sustainability reporting and improved practices. Our work with organizations in peatland restoration and reforestation, such as the Foundation for Peatland Restoration and Hold.Earth amplifies our climate impact.

We are committed to working collaboratively with various stakeholders, leveraging their expertise and perspectives to enhance sustainability initiatives and create a more inclusive and environmentally responsible community.

Overview of document structure

This action plan is organized to provide clarity and direction in our sustainability efforts. Following this introduction, the document is structured as follows:

- **Baseline assessment:** an analysis of our current environmental impact, including carbon footprint and resource consumption.
- **Action areas and initiatives:** detailed actions for key areas like transport, energy efficiency, waste management, and green procurement.
- **Climate contributions.** information about wetland and forest restoration activities.
- **Future commitments and conclusion:** our ongoing commitment to sustainability and the future steps we plan to take.

This structure ensures that each aspect of our environmental strategy is systematically addressed, offering a clear roadmap for implementation and improvement.

3. Baseline Assessment

In this chapter, we establish a detailed understanding of our environmental impact, laying the foundation for our future sustainability initiatives. While we highlight that environmental impact is not limited to climate change, the decision to focus on carbon footprint assessment has been made after observing our current impact and noticing that climate is the most significant area we negatively contribute to.

Methodology

With the help of Planet Positive, a sustainability consultancy, we have used the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol to develop the methodology and draw corresponding conclusions. This ensures that our reporting is both rigorous and aligned with international standards.

To maintain consistency in our calculations, in this report we have decided to exclude emissions from projects funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers office in Lithuania and focus only on emissions from direct activities and operations.

Notably, we are introducing project specific GHG calculations for select projects and events, such as the Nordic-Baltic Youth Summit. This way we explore possibilities to expand the calculations methodology, introduce new measures to reduce emissions and, when relevant, create positive climate contributions. These projects have dedicated human resources and budget to reduce their impact on the environment.

Yearly GHG emissions trends

We began tracking GHG emissions in 2021, taking 2019 as our base year. The ensuing graph illustrates our progress and challenges in reducing our carbon footprint over the past five years.

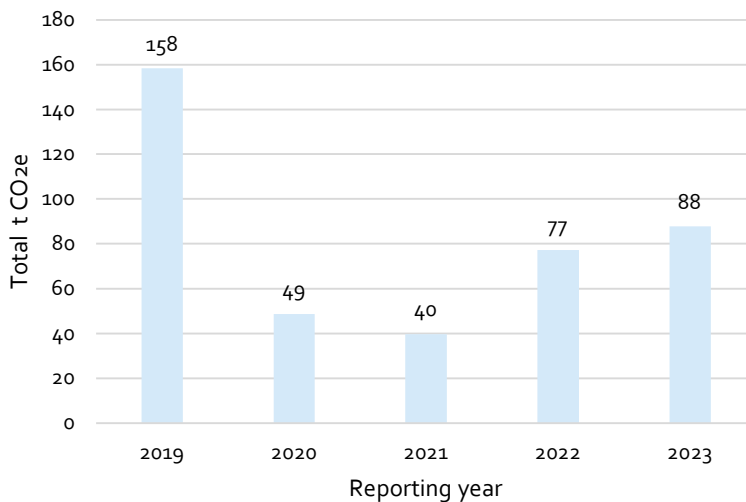


Figure 1. GHG emissions trends in 2019 - 2023

Our emissions have fluctuated from a peak of 158 t CO₂e in 2019 to a low of 40 t CO₂e in 2021, reflecting changes due to pandemic impacts and operational adjustments. As business activities normalized, emissions increased, highlighting the need for intensified efforts to reduce our carbon footprint as we move forward.

Emissions by scopes

Throughout the process of calculating emissions, we ensured that our emissions data is comprehensive, encompassing all three scopes as defined by the GHG Protocol. A detailed breakdown is included in Annex 1.

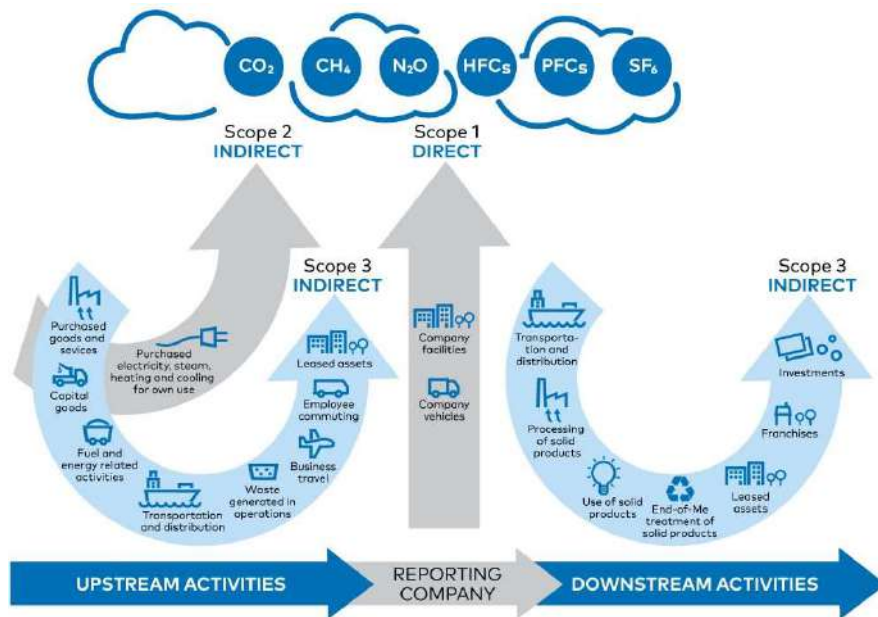


Figure 2. GHG emissions divided into 'scope 1', 'scope 2' and 'scope 3'

(Figure based on the GHG Protocol. Source: Nordic Council of Ministers, 2022).

In 2023, most of our emissions were Scope 3, pointing to areas where our sustainability efforts can have the most impact.

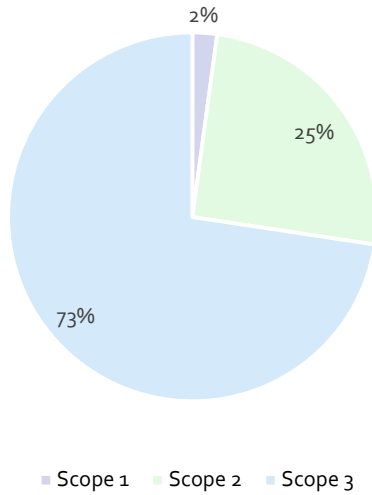


Figure 3. Breakdown of emissions from 'scope 1', 'scope 2' and 'scope 3' in 2023.

Overview of emissions by category

In this graph, we delineate our carbon footprint across various operational categories, providing a quantifiable baseline for targeted action.

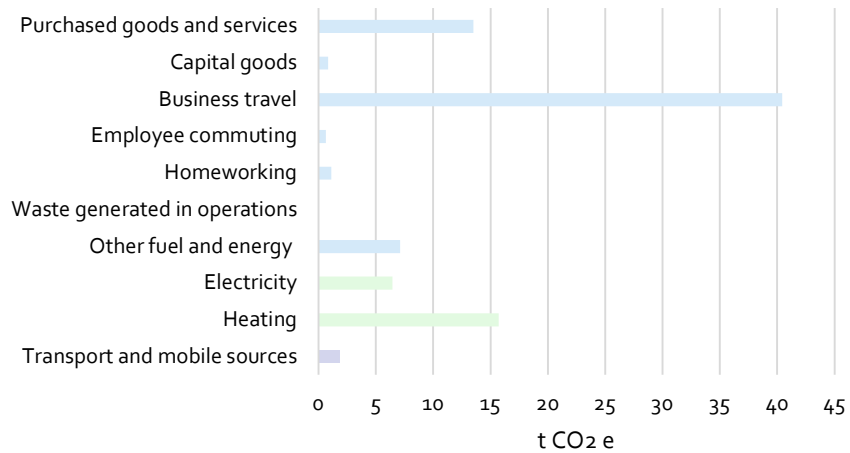


Figure 4. Emissions from 'scope 1', 'scope 2' and 'scope 3' by operational category in 2023

In the graph:

- Scope 1: "Transport and mobile sources" show our direct emissions, which represent the office hybrid car and are small, indicating progress in our sustainable transportation initiatives.

- Scope 2: "Heating" and "Electricity" depict our indirect emissions from purchased energy, identifying areas for improving energy efficiency and exploring renewable energy options.
- Scope 3: All other indirect emissions that occur in our value chain, including categories like "Business travel" and "Purchased goods and services", form a substantial part of our footprint.

By thoroughly evaluating our carbon footprint, we set the stage for effective sustainability initiatives, ensuring our efforts are both meaningful and directionally sound as we progress toward a more sustainable future.

Information on how we will approach reductions in these areas is presented in Chapter 5, where our action plans for travel, energy, waste management, and more are laid out.

4. Action Areas & Initiatives

This chapter looks into the specific strategies we have implemented to address our emissions. We will provide a detailed analysis of our emissions in key areas, along with goals and the initiatives set to achieve them.

Given that transport and commuting constitute approximately 53% of our emissions, and office operations and utilities account for 45%, with homeworking around 1%, we structure our analysis into two main sections: Travel Activity and Operations and Office utilities.

4.1. Travel Activity

Travel, particularly air travel, is the largest contributor to our overall carbon footprint. A detailed analysis of our travel-related emissions shows that air travel accounts for the majority, followed by car, train, and hotel accommodations. While we cannot currently eliminate these emissions due to the nature of our work, we aim to reduce these emissions via sustainable travel initiatives. In 2023, our total travel emissions were 46.4 t CO₂ e.

Travel emissions in 2023:

- Air travel 41.3 t CO₂ e
- Office car 2.4 t CO₂ e
- Commuting 0.8 t CO₂ e
- Other modes of travel and hotels (e.g., ferries, trains) 1.9 t CO₂ e

It is important to note that here we include travel for both office staff and guests directly purchased by the office (not including projects travel emissions).

Initiatives:

- **Sustainable mobility:** embrace the use of a hybrid office car, blending efficiency with environmental responsibility.
- **Car sharing:** actively promote carpooling and the use of public transportation among our team members for attending events, exemplifying our commitment to reducing carbon emissions.
- **Optimized visitor travel:** strategically plan visits to encompass multiple meetings, thereby minimizing travel-related carbon footprint.
- **Close proximity to venues:** select venues for events and accommodations that are easily accessible on foot, aligning our event logistics with sustainability principles. If accommodation for foreign speakers is involved, make sure the event venue is within walking distance. Additional information on future commitments.
- **Regional travel policy:** for travel within the Baltic countries or journeys under 300 km, prioritize the use of buses and trains, favoring more environmentally friendly transport options.
- **Eco-certified accommodations:** whenever feasible, choose hotels with eco-labels like Green Key or Swan, demonstrating a preference for establishments that share our commitment to the environment.

- **Remote work flexibility:** by allowing employees to work from home on certain days, we aim to decrease the necessity of daily commuting, thus cutting down on our overall carbon footprint.

Celebrating green commuters

Our journey to work is less about the distance and more about the difference. An impressive 80% of our staff has turned their daily commute into an eco-friendly expedition. Our staff proudly opts for sustainable transportation options to work, including 42% utilizing public transit, 26% enjoying walks, and 12% cycling their way to the office.

4.2. Operations and office utilities

Operations and office utilities emissions encompass the emissions through daily operations and activities, including energy consumption for heating, electricity, and water use, waste disposal services, and the acquisition of capital goods. In this section we also include emissions related to food, which are generated during events. In total, this adds up to 39.8 t CO₂e.

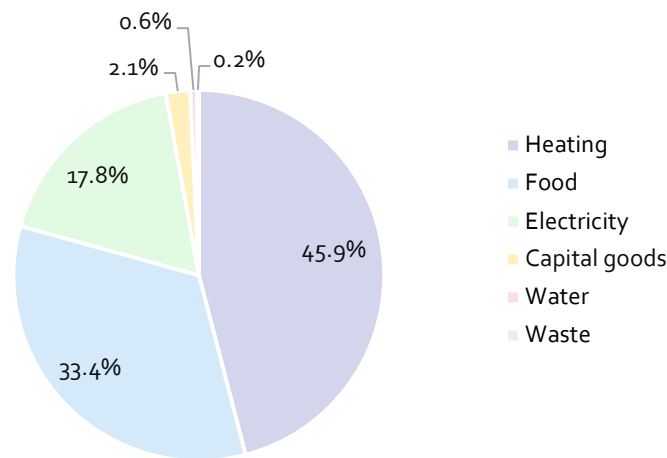


Figure 5. An overview of operations and office emissions divided by source in 2023.

4.2.1. Heating and electricity

A significant portion of our carbon footprint is effectively managed through conscientious energy usage in lighting, appliances, and office practices. Due to office rental constraints, transitioning to renewable energy sources or reducing heating emissions is not feasible at this stage. Additionally, we have limited data regarding heating and the staff initiative in emission reduction. In 2023 taken together, heating and electricity contributed 64% of office emissions, with heating accounting for 18.3 t CO₂e and electricity 7.1 t CO₂e.

Initiatives:

- **Lower heating:** enforce office-wide practices to minimize heating usage, especially when the office is unoccupied.
- **Optimized lighting:** maintain 100% LED lighting in the office in 2021 and in some shared areas are utilizing motion sensor lights.
- **Appliance management:** when upgrading appliances and office equipment select energy-efficient models of office appliances, enhancing our energy conservation efforts

- **Standby power strategy:** advocate for minimizing standby power consumption by turning off non-essential equipment, while maintaining essential systems.

Enlightened efficiency

Since February 2021, our embrace of LED lighting paired with motion-sensor technology has not just brightened our spaces—it has smartly dimmed our energy bills, cutting electricity costs by over 20%.

4.2.2. Food

The food category, accounting for the second largest share of office operations emissions (13.3 t CO₂e), encompasses all food-related activities such as catering during events and dinners.

Initiatives:

- **Sustainable food choices:** incorporate sustainable food options at events, providing only vegan choices at office organized events since 2020.
- **Responsible food waste:** implement efficient food waste management strategies in office and during events. When waste is unavoidable, use office food waste bins to manage organic waste.

Plant-powered

Our leap to 100% vegan catering is not just about embracing our inner herbivores. Plant-based diets are proven to generate fewer emissions, use less water, and require less land compared to traditional meat-heavy diets. Swapping steak for seitan and dairy for almond milk is a strategic move to significantly reduce our climate impact and to show change can be tasty too.

4.2.3. Sustainable procurement and capital goods

We are committed to using the Nordic Swan label or an equivalent standard as a benchmark for our procurement. While we do not have emissions data on emissions from some external procurements (e.g., cleaning supplies), goods purchased by the office add up to 0.84 t CO₂e.

Initiatives:

- **Environmental standards:** standardize the use of environmentally friendly labels like Nordic Swan for all procurement activities. This includes office supplies, cleaning products, gifts and other office requirements.

- **Conscious choices:** environmentally friendly solutions are considered while choosing suppliers and contractors.

Certified right choices

Using the Nordic Swan Ecolabel is not just for show — it is like having the environmental equivalent of a black belt. Since the 90s, we are one of the forerunners of promoting the Nordic Swan Ecolabel locally, prioritizing certified products in our office procurement and communicating about the benefits.

4.2.4. Water

Water usage in the office mainly revolves around kitchen and restroom facilities. Our current water usage converts to 0.23 t CO₂e in 2023.

Initiatives:

- Promote the use of tap water over bottled water in office and during events.
- Office dishwashing machine to be put on when full as much as possible.

Glass half full

Sure, opting for tap water might not sound like headline news. However, it embodies our approach to our approach to sustainability — both resourceful and inherently positive. It's the kind of choice that whispers rather than shouts, hinting and reminding about greener lifestyle.

4.2.5. Waste

Due to its small size, our office generates a limited amount of waste, primarily from paper and plastics. In 2023, waste emissions totaled to 0.07 t CO₂e.

Initiatives:

- **Recycling bins:** continue using clearly marked waste bins to facilitate effective segregation for recycling.
- **Paperless office:** strive towards creating a paperless office culture and refine printing practices for minimal waste.
- **E-waste recycling:** ensure responsible recycling of electronic waste.
- **Limiting single-use:** eliminate the use of single-use items in office events and meetings.
- **Equipment renting:** since 2019 opt for renting equipment, like coffee machines, to reduce waste from obsolescence.

- **Responsible food waste:** implement efficient food waste management strategies in office and during events. When waste is unavoidable, use office food waste bins to manage organic waste.
- **Individual action:** remove individual waste bins from workspaces to encourage thoughtful waste disposal and recycling.

Waste less, play more

Our annual emissions tipping the scales at a mere 70 kg could be visualized as 700 rubber ducks. Through mindful choices, we have ensured our waste footprint is so modest, it wouldn't even fill a kiddie pool in the vast ocean of global emissions.

5. Climate contributions towards carbon neutrality

While we strive to minimize our environmental impact, we recognize that some emissions are presently unavoidable. This understanding underpins our commitment to climate contributions—an effort to not just compensate or offset our emissions but to drive meaningful environmental restoration and support broader sustainability goals.

Embracing climate contributions

Moving beyond traditional offsetting, our climate contributions aim for a holistic impact. This approach is aligned with our strategic vision for sustainability, seeking to benefit the planet, and supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Climate contributions are a tool to expedite progress towards staying below the 1.5°C global warming threshold, yet they are not substitutes for direct efforts to reduce emissions.

Strategic partnerships for peatland and forest restoration

Aligned with our commitment to immediate, impactful climate action, we actively engage in environmental restoration projects. We cooperate with the Wetland Restoration and Protection Fund and Hold.Earth. Together we will avoid emitting 790 t CO₂e. This is double of our emissions in the period of 2019 – 2024. The activities also contribute to the improvement of biodiversity and the restoration of ecosystems.

- **Tartokas Peatland Initiative:** collaborating with local stakeholders and Nemunas Delta Regional Park, we have revitalized 3.8 hectares of the peatland, preserving its hydrology and habitats. This is projected to prevent 383.2 t CO₂e by 2050.
- **Šilėnai Peatland Restoration:** this 'Orchid Haven' is a biodiversity hotspot with seven rare plant species. Our work has secured an additional hectare of the peatland, aiming to prevent 129 t CO₂e emissions by 2050.
- In mid-20th century large-scale drainage and peat extraction were carried out in the **Paąžuolinės peatland**, which caused the loss of natural values in this area. We contribute to the restoration of the peatland, avoiding the emission of additional 87 t CO₂e.
- We also plan to plant trees in autumn 2024, avoiding additional 87 t of CO₂ emissions and creating a new forest area.

During the organization of one of our events, the Nordic-Baltic Youth Summit, we also collaborated with Hold.Earth by planting 1000 trees together, thus reducing the negative impact of this event on the environment.

6. Future Commitments & Conclusion

As we look to the future, our commitment to environmental sustainability remains steadfast and evolving. Building on the foundations laid in this action plan, we will continue to develop and implement initiatives that align with our long-term vision for a sustainable future.

Key future directions:

- **Annual emissions calculation:** each year's end brings a chance for reflection and evaluation. We will calculate our emissions and, if relevant, adapt our approach and initiatives.
- **Broadening our understanding:** recognizing the importance of all aspects of our environmental impact, we plan to deepen our insight into our emissions. Gathering more data will help us develop broader, more effective strategies in the future.
- **Sustainable events:** our goal is to set a benchmark for green events, focusing on every detail, from sustainable food options to the environmental themes of discussions.

While this action plan covers the period up to 2026, our objectives extend beyond that. We recognize that sustainability is a long-term commitment that requires continuous development and adaptation.

In conclusion, our office is committed to upholding the principles of environmental responsibility while also striving to innovate and adapt in our pursuit of sustainability. This action plan is not just a roadmap for the present but a living document that will evolve as we strive to make a lasting, positive impact on our region.

Appendix 1: Overview of the activities included in current the climate accounts

Scope	GHG-Protocol description of scope categories	Relevant activity
Scope 1 Direct impact	Activities related to the organization's vehicles and facilities	Company vehicles
Scope 2 Indirect impact	Procured electricity, steam, heating and cooling for own use	Electricity District heating Water
Scope 3 Indirect impact	Upstream activities:	
	Purchased goods and services	Printer paper IT equipment Furniture
	Capital goods	Not applicable
	Fuel- and energy related activities (not included in scope 1 or scope 2)	Other fuel and /or energy
	Upstream transportation and distribution	Not applicable
	Waste generated in operations	Waste at office
	Business travel	Business travel via plane, car, taxi, metro, ferry, train. Hotel stays
	Employee commuting	Transport of employees to and from work
	Upstream leased assets	Not applicable
	Downstream activities:	
	Downstream transportation and distribution	Not applicable (no manufacturing activities)
	Processing of sold goods	Not applicable (no manufacturing activities)
	Use of sold goods	Not applicable (no manufacturing activities)
	End-of-life treatment of sold goods	Not applicable (no manufacturing activities)
	Downstream leased assets	Not applicable (no lease activities)
	Franchises	Not applicable (no franchise activities)

Investments

Not applicable (no investments)

Appendix 2: Summary of actions taken

Action Area	Initiatives and Actions
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilized hybrid office car. Encouraged carpooling and public transit. Optimized visitor travel for multiple meetings. Chose walkable event locations. Preferred buses/trains for short distance travel. Selected eco-labelled hotels. Supported daily eco-friendly commuting. Shared office bike available. Implemented remote work days.
Heating and electricity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transitioned to LED lighting. Installed energy-efficient appliances. Reduced heating during off-hours. Minimized standby power usage. Promoted virtual meetings.
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vegan food in all events
Green procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoiding food waste, when unavoidable responsibly discarding Committed to the Nordic Swan ecolabel. Selected sustainable office, cleaning, and event supplies. Chose environmentally friendly suppliers and contractors.
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted tap water usage. Ensured full loads for dishwashing.
Waste reduction & recycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established recycling stations. Moved towards a paperless office. Recycled electronic waste responsibly. Eliminated single-use items. Implemented efficient food waste management. Preferred renting over buying equipment. Introduced separate food waste recycling bins. Removed personal waste bins.
Awareness and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hosted volunteering opportunities. Engaged staff in annual emissions review. Organized educational wetlands visits.
Limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rental agreements limit energy and water conservation measures. Air travel is essential for operations.