

**International Conference “Organic Waste in Urban Environments – New European Challenges” Brussels, 20 – 21 November 2008**

**CO<sub>2</sub> Impact of the conference**

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This conference tried hard to be a model in terms of CO<sub>2</sub> impact and therefore focused on preventing and limiting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

**FIRST THINGS FIRST**

In order to achieve this, we first needed to know how important our CO<sub>2</sub> impact was. Therefore we made an inventory of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions caused by the conference, using a standardized, widely accepted method.

The following emission sources were considered:

- energy in house (energy linked to burning of fossil fuel)
- non-energy in house (cooling & refrigerating gas)
- freight
- supplies
- transport of persons
- direct waste
- fixed assets (buildings, IT hardware,...)

This inventory — called ‘Carbon Balance’ — helped us to define what the important emissions of the conference were, and helped us “choose our battles”.

This allowed us to be transparent and keep track on the conference emissions in time. For the first time, we were able to compare the impact of the conference emissions with the overall yearly emissions of each participant of the conference (average values).

**WHOLE SYSTEM DESIGN**

In order to reduce and limit the CO<sub>2</sub> impact of this conference in an effective, practical and profitable way, we needed to focus on ‘negawatts’, or energy efficiency first, and thereby respect the following order of priorities:

- First, **reduce** the need for transport, energy,... (example : we located the conference in the centre of the city near public transport facilities)
- Then, **change, substitute or innovate** existing technologies or behaviours (example : we published the presentations digitally instead of on paper; we distributed a notepad to all participants with on the verso an abstract of the presentations)
- Finally **offset** remaining emissions (example: we decided to carbon offset for flights)

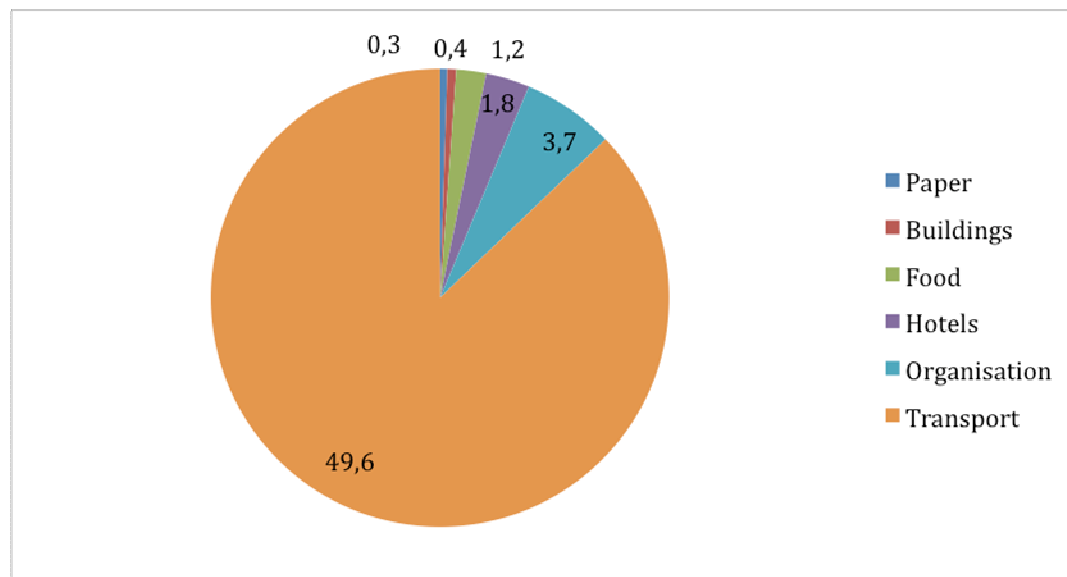
It is far more profitable, both financially and ecologically, for instance, to first reduce the need for energy or transport than immediately offset the emissions the conference is causing.

In that respect, the conference organizers are happy to present the results of the carbon footprint because increasing (y)our awareness can contribute significantly towards a sustainable and low carbon conference.

### CO<sub>2</sub> impact of the conference

Based on our calculations<sup>1</sup>, we can estimate that the total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions caused by the conference were 56,9 T CO<sub>2</sub>, divided into the following significant sources of emissions:

CO <sub>2</sub> source	Ton CO <sub>2</sub>	% of total
Paper	0,3	0,5%
Buildings	0,4	0,6%
Food	1,2	2,1%
Hotels	1,8	3,1%
Organisation	3,7	6,5%
Transport	49,6	87,1%
<b>Total emissions</b>	<b>CO<sub>2</sub> 56,9</b>	



46,1 Ton CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were caused by flights.

For 114 participants, the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions/participant was 0,5 Ton CO<sub>2</sub>. The EU average of total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per person per year amounts to 10,5 Ton CO<sub>2</sub>. Each participant joining this conference increased his yearly CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by approx. 5% in two days time.

Based on this experience, we can learn how to do even better in future occasions by focusing more on preventing and limiting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. However, this experience shows that – for such an international conference with high attendance of people coming from all over Europe – it will be difficult to limit the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions caused by transport of persons. But the emissions caused by the organization, hotels and food supplies still offer room for improvement.

<sup>1</sup> For more details on our assumptions, please contact the authors.