



services

case study

#4 – COP21 – Paris

(ISO 20121, *Event sustainability management systems*)

ISO Strategy
for Services
Case study
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Introduction

The ISO strategy for service standardization

Trade in services is expanding at a faster rate than trade in goods. Based on this observation, ISO anticipates that market demand for service standards will steadily increase and we want to make sure that the organization and its members will have the necessary tools and knowledge to respond to this demand, and to the challenges and opportunities it brings. This is why ISO adopted, in February 2016, the *ISO strategy for service standardization*. Our mission? Raising ISO's profile as a provider of service standards while continuing to respond to market expectations and helping our members to do the same.

For those not familiar with ISO, we are a membership-based network of national standards bodies that come together to develop International Standards ensuring products, processes and services are fit for purpose. ISO standards provide practical tools for tackling many of today's global challenges, bringing tangible benefits to business, society and the environment. ISO has already published more than 700 standards related to services in various sectors, including finance, business, brand valuation, customer contact centres, outsourcing, assessment services, IT services, marketing, network billing and many more.

ISO defines a “service” as the “result of at least one activity, necessarily performed at the interface between the supplier and customer, that is generally intangible”¹⁾. However, the concepts of “services” and “service standards” are broad, and many different definitions and classifications exist. Some standards purely support the provision of a service. Others may support the infrastructure (e.g. IT or financial) necessary for the provision of a service. And then we have horizontal standards such as management system standards that can be applied to the provision of a service, but also much more broadly.

Rather than concentrate on questions of definition or classification, ISO has chosen to develop case studies to illustrate the use of these different kinds of service standards and to give real-life examples of how standards are being implemented in different industries, citing tangible results in terms of service delivery and consumer satisfaction. By looking at success stories of how standards are opening up new areas of business and improving quality and consumer trust, this case study will try to understand where standards are being implemented, how they work, and why the benefits more than outweigh the investment.

Note: This case study is part of a series, which includes ISO/TS 13131, *Telehealth services*, ISO 24510, *Activities relating to drinking water and wastewater services*, ISO 17680, *Thalassotherapy*, ISO 20121, *Event sustainability management systems*, and ISO 20022, *Universal financial industry message scheme*.

More information on ISO’s strategy for service standardization and ongoing work can be found at www.iso.org.

1) Definition from ISO/IEC Guide 76:2008, *Development of service standards – Recommendations for addressing consumer issues*.



Analysis

Presenting ISO 20121, *Event sustainability management systems*

Does the sight of empty cups and plastic bottles scattered across the lawn after a “Save the Planet” concert make you cross? This could soon be a thing of the past with ISO 20121:2012, the International Standard on event sustainability management, designed to alleviate the concerns of those who, like you, believe that climate change events need action rather than hot air and pontificating.

Developed by project committee ISO/PC 250, *Sustainability in event management*, ISO 20121 takes the management systems approach to help organizations prepare their event in compliance with the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development.

Events can be real crowd magnets, with the ability to draw thousands of people to a given site at one time, so it was only natural that the events industry should be preoccupied by its environmental impact and commit to doing its bit for the climate. Events management is a service category fraught with intricacies and complexities. First of all, it involves contact with the customer, whose satisfaction is paramount to the success of an event and the organizer’s image. Over the years, event-goers have become more environmentally conscious and, as a provider, being able to demonstrate one’s commitment to environmental protection can be the key to staying ahead of the competition. ISO 20121 is a case in

point as it fulfils several objectives at once, ensuring a high-quality event while improving the performance and efficiency of the events agency.

ISO 20121 is comprehensive in scope in that it addresses all aspects of event management, from preparation to dismantling. It starts by examining the role of leadership as a key parameter for designing a sustainability policy, looks at ways to ensure all objectives are met during the implementation stage, and includes performance monitoring and measuring guidelines to identify potential non-conformities and undertake necessary corrective actions. At the same time, the standard has an indirect effect on the supply chain as its requirements extend to raw material providers and other types of services. It thus spans the whole gamut of actors involved in meeting the conditions of ISO 20121.

Events are transient by nature and each is a unique blend of multiple elements, including duration, setting, management and people, which can never be experienced in the same way again. ISO 20121's flexible approach lends itself to all types of events, from the humble village fair to high-profile mega-concerts, and is suitable to big and small companies alike. Now, you can enjoy your favourite rock band with a clear conscience, safe in the knowledge that the environment is taken care of.

Case study:

UN Climate Change Conference COP21 – CMP11 PARIS 2015

All eyes were on Paris from 30 November to 12 December 2015 for the 21st United Nations Conference of Parties on climate change (COP21) when more than 150 world leaders embarked on crucial international climate negotiations. This “crisis summit” was billed as the last chance to secure a legally binding and universal agreement on climate change, with the aim of keeping global warming below 2°C and guiding countries’ efforts in reducing carbon emissions for the next decade and beyond.

Turning words into action, the French government made a pledge to produce a fully sustainable event. And so it was that the Paris-Le Bourget site, chosen for its hosting capacity and accessibility, was completely transformed for the two-week conference into a temporary and sustainable city.





An unprecedented event

As the largest international diplomatic conference ever organized by France, the pressure was on to create an exemplary event. The United Nations have always been attentive to the way sustainable development is taken into account in the organization of COP meetings. But with the COP21 stakes so high, the French government wanted to go further than the UN requirements for responsible organization, basing its approach on ISO 20121 for event sustainability management. The International Standard proved the right tool for the job, ensuring the high-level conference complied with the key principles of sustainable development, which led to its certification. This was the first time a state and UN conference on climate change was ISO 20121-certified.

The figures speak for themselves. With more than 10 000 government delegates from 195 parties (196 with the European Union), 30 000 members of civil society and 20 000 visitors, the conference was on a



scale with the last concert of Daft Punk. To stimulate discussions on climate solutions, the massive event also included over 200 side events focused on major conference-related issues, which ran alongside the official programme. The 180 000 m² venue housed two plenary rooms, one of which was built from scratch, 32 negotiating rooms, pavilions, press rooms as well as the “Espace Générations Climat” (Climate Generations Space), an area open to the public throughout the COP21 and home to nearly 100 civil society stands.

Budgeted at around EUR 170 million – of which 20 % was covered by philanthropy grants – the event claimed back some EUR 100 million in revenues from accommodation, catering and shopping for the sole department of Île-de-France. This brief overview gives some idea of the complexities of organizing an event of the magnitude of COP21 and the countless challenges involved in keeping it sustainable.



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Leaving a legacy

Naturally, the driving force behind this ambitious project was to maximize the chances of getting certified, but also to involve as many parties as possible in the implementation process, which was characterized by its inclusiveness. The COP21 General Secretariat in charge of organizing the Paris conference appointed a professional team of partners and service providers that were committed to finding sustainable solutions for what was to be a transient event. This, in the words of Pierre-Henri Guignard, Secretary-General of COP21, ensured that the “form [would] reflect the substance of the climate change negotiations”¹⁾.

To ensure a successful outcome, everything had to be thought through meticulously, down to the last detail, to avoid any potential mishaps or oversights that might have otherwise compromised the smooth running of the negotiations. Containing the political risks was just as important as the speeches delivered by heads of states.

The desire “to leave a strong legacy” was another important motivator. The certification obtained in Paris should set an example for all future COP summits and the events industry in general. With this in mind, the COP21 General Secretariat is currently developing a best-practice guide to ensure the methods adopted at the conference will serve as a benchmark for managing events in the future. This is a perfect example of how one player in the market can leverage the power of standards to facilitate political processes and restructure the industry on its own terms by setting new best practices.

1) “La forme devra refléter le fond de la négociation sur le climat”, official COP21 press kit: www.cop21.gouv.fr/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/DP-ecocirculaire.pdf, accessed 12 May 2016.

Defining an action plan

As regards the implementation itself, the objective was to integrate sustainable practices into all stages of preparation and throughout the supply chain, bringing together a multitude of stakeholders, namely the event organizers, service providers, partners and the participants themselves. The French government set itself the objective of ensuring optimal comfort and working conditions for participants at the conference, while being exemplary in terms of sustainability.

Four strategic goals lie at the heart of the COP21 sustainable development policy, aimed at guaranteeing the quality of reception facilities (such as transport, catering and work spaces), encouraging sustainable innovation, limiting the environmental footprint (through a no waste/no pollution circular economy) for a 100 % carbon-neutral conference, and leaving a positive legacy for parties involved in the organization of future COP21-style events.





The process began by consulting external and internal parties involved in organizing the event to identify their expectations and their vision of sustainable development and secure their involvement in the smooth running of operations. On this basis, the General Secretariat defined the objectives for its sustainability policy.

At the same time, on the upper echelons of the organization, the engagement of Laurent Fabius, French Foreign Affairs Minister and President of COP21, and Ségolène Royal, France's Minister of the Environment, was also decisive in bringing the project to a fruitful conclusion. Naturally, as the owner of the event, the United Nations Organization

played a central role in all the political and operational implications. Getting leadership on board at all levels was most definitely a key to the event's success and is a fundamental requirement of ISO 20121.

Next, an action plan was drawn up based on the management system and defined sustainability policy, which would guide the entire event from preparation to dismantling. The plan was then monitored during the two weeks of the conference to ensure COP21 was in conformity with the standard. This process allowed the organization to adapt to unforeseen challenges and make the necessary adjustments during the course of the event.

A virtuous circle

During the event, all actions had to be planned and executed in line with the concept of circular economy, an economic concept that falls within the boundaries of sustainable development and aims to produce goods and services with limited consumption and waste. To reach their goal, the organizers tailored their efforts on the “3 Rs” of COP21, namely:

- ▶ Reducing (consumption of resources)
- ▶ Reusing (products)
- ▶ Recycling (waste)

The French government was committed to ensuring a “carbon neutral” event. In order to offset CO₂ emissions that could not be eliminated during the event, France made a pledge to finance other projects compensating greenhouse gas for an equivalent amount.





Recycling of waste focused on a “zero waste, 100% recovery” objective throughout the event. To this end, a number of practical measures were put in place, starting with the total recycling of all paper used during the event, which was sourced either from already recycled paper or certified EU Ecolabel paper. On-site collection was carried out by electric vehicles in containers that were subsequently fully recycled. Recovery of bio-waste was entrusted to a private company specializing in compost and biogas. Food remains from catering were collected on site in hermetic skips and taken to a biogas plant where they were transformed into methane. In parallel, all unsold foodstuffs were donated to the local charity “Le Chaînon manquant”, devoted to collecting and distributing unconsumed food to local populations in need.

Likewise, all equipment that was not rented was given to local institutions (schools, NGOs...) after the event. For the first time ever at an event of this magnitude, an optical sorting line was installed on location to pre-sort waste before sending it to treatment centres, respecting the COP21's commitment to innovate in its waste management strategy.

Lastly, giving materials and products a new lease of life after the event was central to the sustainability efforts. To this end, 7 000 pieces of IKEA furniture found a new home with local associations. In the same spirit, COP21's largest (2000 seat) plenary room was built fully in wood from sustainably managed French forests and completely dismantled for reuse after the conference. What's more, 25 000 welcome bags were distributed to participants, woven in a small textile factory of the Lyon region using the yarn of 8 333 pullovers left in drop-off boxes all over the country.

Putting the cap on greenhouse gas

Managing the conference's energy consumption required creative thinking in terms of how to combine comfort with the conservation of limited energy resources. Heating a venue like Paris-Le Bourget involved a huge investment in equipment that would have a positive impact on the climate. The COP21 organizers opted for a new type of gas boiler that reduces CO₂ emissions by 20% and nitrous oxide (NO_x) by 75%. These were supplemented by additional boilers, selected for their state-of-the-art technology, one of which ran on vegetable oil and solar panels. As for the lighting, it was supplied by an ingenious combination of three sustainable energies: solar, wind and second-generation vegetable oil.

Transportation was also the focus of particular attention, from the back-and-forth commute to the conference centre to moving around the vast conference precinct. Some 20 000 public transport passes were issued to COP21 participants and

hybrid shuttles were organized at the exit of train and metro stations. A further 200 electric vehicles completed the transport fleet on the conference premises.

France is a land of taste and flavour, so it was important that the quality of catering services during the event lived up to this reputation. Epitomizing good partnership, all COP21 caterers signed a charter where they committed to using short supply chains with local suppliers and seasonal, organically grown produce, in line with the "3 Rs" principle. This required a comprehensive effort involving the entire supply chain and by December 2015, 53% of the supply chain had officially committed to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) principles. Thus, the benefits of implementing ISO 20121 did not just reach the conference, the effects spilled over onto the different companies in the supply chain, NGOs and other stakeholders that were indirectly involved in the project.



Conclusive evidence

Implementing ISO 20121 required comprehensive thinking across all operations to check compliance with its sustainability principles, which was only made possible by examining how each step interacted with the other. But comprehensiveness on its own is not enough and must go hand-in-hand with inclusiveness if it is to meet objectives. The COP21 General Secretariat placed great emphasis on continuous consultation, far exceeding the requirements of the ISO standard, on the premise that constant dialogue between all parties was what was needed to ensure the necessary adjustments were made during the course of the event. As a matter of fact, COP21 is a paramount example of the use of Public-Private-Partnerships (PPPs) involving private-sector companies as well as NGOs in operational activities. Such exchanges were also instrumental in fostering commitment toward a shared goal – delivering a successful event.





After two weeks of intense negotiations, COP21 was deemed a success, both of international diplomacy and event management. And with good reason – the Secretariat will be remembered for its staunch commitment to sustainability throughout the event and for setting the benchmark of sustainable excellence for the events industry. When the COP21's carbon footprint was revealed in April 2016, it seemed incredibly small for the size of the event that had just taken place – 9 600 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent, amounting to the annual emissions of just 800 French citizens – and all thanks to ISO 20121's sustainability management system.

Our sincere thanks
for her support:

- ▶ **Yasmine BEKRI**, *Chargée de mission certification ISO 20121:2012, Secrétariat général COP21 – Paris 2015*



ISO standards used everywhere





Conclusion

ISO service standards and the 2016-2020 strategy

As this case study demonstrates, service standards not only set a much needed framework for the supply of services, they also provide an opportunity to drastically improve the quality of the services offered, contributing a growing share to the added value of a product. The more diverse and competitive a market, the more guidance consumers need to be sure they are purchasing the service they want at the best price. International Standards will help to maintain a healthy competition in the marketplace by ensuring that those companies which have already invested considerable amounts of money in order to offer better quality at affordable prices are rewarded accordingly.

As mentioned in the introduction, these case studies are part of ISO's strategy on services, which was adopted in 2016 with the aim of further developing the field of service standardization. They belong to the first pillar of this strategy on "communication and outreach" that looks at ways ISO can help its members engage with their stakeholders in the services sector and in particular with small businesses. The objective is to make a clear business case for service standardization and to position it as a natural extension of product standardization.

This will help identify the market interests of the business community, which, in turn, will help determine where (in which sectors) services are being traded, and which sectors and stakeholders could benefit most from the development of International Standards. Moreover, while preparing these case studies, we were able to consult the various committees that developed the standards, to learn from their experiences with different economic actors and to get their market feedback.

Of course, the *ISO strategy for service standardization* does not stand alone and it is worth recalling the bigger picture surrounding ISO's efforts in this area. ISO recently adopted its *ISO Strategy 2016-2020*, which will guide the organization's decisions over the next five years. Among its strategic directions is a communication pillar that aims to build recognition among the public and private sector of the value and impact of International Standards. This will help us to achieve our ultimate objective of "ISO standards used everywhere". For although you may not yet see it, ISO is already working hard to make your life easier and the world a better place.





About ISO

ISO (International Organization for Standardization) is an independent, non-governmental international organization with a membership of 161* national standards bodies. Through its members, it brings together experts to share knowledge and develop voluntary, consensus-based, market-relevant International Standards that support innovation and provide solutions to global challenges.

ISO has published more than 21 000* International Standards and related documents covering almost every industry, from technology to food safety, to agriculture and healthcare.

For more information, please visit www.iso.org.

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