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# SHORT VERSION

# A ROADMAP

for Creating  
a Sustainability  
Strategy



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## FOREWORD

The Roadmap for Creating a Sustainability Strategy is the main output of the [As Sustainable As Possible \(ASAP\) project](#). It offers any sport organisation a process-based guidance and framework for the creation of a fully-fledged Sustainability Strategy. The short version of the Roadmap that you hold in your hands is a good place to start as it highlights the most important elements of the process while keeping the messages and tips concise. Please refer to the [full version of the Roadmap](#) for a more complete guidance.

## DISCLAIMER

The short version of the Roadmap for Creating a Sustainability Strategy was developed within the framework of the “As Sustainable As Possible” project co-funded by the Erasmus + Programme of the European Union. The European Commission’s support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of its contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

# 1. BEFORE YOU BEGIN

## What does sustainability mean to your organisation?

- Before you begin any activities leading towards the creation of a Sustainability Strategy, it is crucial to be clear about what sustainability is and what it means to your organisation.
- There are several definitions of sustainability or of sustainable development, which typically have three main elements in common: (1) A balancing act or harmony between nature, society, and economy/governance, (2) not compromising future generations' ability to meet their needs, and (3) continuous improvement and innovation. Consider these elements and definitions together with the mission, vision and values of your organisation and reflect on the meaning of sustainability for your particular organisational context.

## Why do you want to “go sustainable”?

- There are many reasons to “go sustainable”. Having a clear list of the “why’s” will help you not only in getting your organisation’s leadership and staff on board, but also in creating your sustainability vision and setting priorities. For inspiration, check the most commonly cited opportunities and risks outlined in the [ASAP Making the Case for Sustainability](#) document and relate them to your organisation.

## Is the leadership of your organisation on board?

- The leadership of your organisation (both the Executive Board and the management) have to, at least, support the process of embedding sustainability into your organisation, if not initiate and inspire it, if it is to succeed.

- How to get the necessary buy-in from the leadership (if they are not on board already)?
  - Find/identify “sustainability advocate(s)” among the board members and top management who will bring the agenda forward at their level. To do so, try to understand their personal interests and motivations and identify how sustainability aligns with these interests.
  - Make a strong case for sustainability: explain how it will support the core organisational purpose and strategy of your organisation, outline what benefits it may bring to your organisation, and what risks “non-action” could cause. Use language your organisation understands.
  - Facilitate an exchange between the leadership of your organisation and inspirational and influential personalities/speakers on the topic of sustainability.
- How to ensure a formal commitment to sustainability?
  - Sustainability should be understood as a topic of organisational development.
  - To safeguard a long-term commitment and to make sure that both the Strategy creation process and the implementation of the Strategy stand on strong foundations, sustainability (and possibly reference to the UN Sustainable Development Goals) needs to be enshrined in the foundational documents of your organisation such as statutes, long-term strategies, mission and vision etc.
  - Ask for explicit support for the Strategy creation process before starting it (make sure that it is on the record – e.g. announcement at Board’s level, at General Assembly etc.).

## 2. ORGANISATION OF THE INTERNAL PROCESS

### Dedicate appropriate human and financial resources to the process

- Designate a responsible person/team who will lead the Strategy creation process (hereinafter “sustainability manager”<sup>1</sup>). Make sure that this person/team is officially entrusted with this role by the top management.
- This will largely depend on the size of your organisation and the current division of roles. Often, this position would be linked to the portfolio of social development, education and values, public affairs, environmental protection or international relations.
- The tasks and working methods should be established from the outset, proposed by the top management and/or directly by the sustainability manager.
- The commitment to dedicate resources to the process will entail costs which will largely depend on the size of your organisation and size of the exercise. You should consider possible costs for meetings, external consultants, layout of documents and later for the implementation of the different sustainability measures.
- To avoid reliance on the general budget of your organisation only, it is advisable to check for funding opportunities both within the sports movement and beyond (public and private funding sources).

### Launch the process officially

- The Strategy creation process can be launched in many ways (e.g. email, town hall meeting, smaller group meetings, away day etc.), however, in each case; it should be done by the sustainability manager, ideally together with the Secretary General/CEO and/or the President.

- Make sure that the staff members learn: (1) why you are embarking on the process; (2) who the responsible person/department is; (3) how the process will be structured; (4) and that they will be fully involved and that their voices will be heard.

### Set-up a working (drafting) group

- It is highly recommended to set-up a small working group, which would be responsible for the drafting process, communication with the board and the top management, involvement of other parts of the organisation, and consultation with stakeholders and external experts. Ideally, all departments should be represented in the group.

### Organise an “Introduction to sustainability” training course/session (recommended)

- It is strongly advised that you organise introductory training on integrated sustainability. Use the [ASAP “Introduction to Sustainability”](#) model training programme as an inspiration.

### Get feedback and buy-in from staff members

- To receive feedback and important information from all staff members, it is necessary to involve them regularly in the process (physically or online).
- They should get used to discussing sustainability matters related to their own work, including how UN Sustainable Development Goals can be tied to what they do. This exercise can help with identification of risks and opportunities, materiality assessment and scope (see chapter 4).

4 <sup>1</sup>This person/team should be responsible for the creation of the Strategy, but it is not a must that he/she becomes a “permanent” sustainability strategy manager who will be in charge of the implementation.

# 3. EXTERNAL PROCESS

## Why and main principles

- A comprehensive stakeholder engagement both at the Strategy creation stage and during its implementation can help you generally improve your relationship with stakeholders, create mutual trust, increase the transparency of your decisions and activities, and open up new possible avenues of cooperation.
- When devising communications and engagement activities, take fully into account the different stakeholder categories and adjust your messages, questions and the form of engagement accordingly. Use the UN Sustainable Development Goals' language when communicating with stakeholders, in particular (potential) sponsors/ partners and public authorities.

## Who to involve

- Start by putting together a simple list of all the stakeholders of your organisation. You can use the stakeholder analysis tools included in the [ASAP Organisational Screening Tools](#).
- It is advisable to seek feedback to your emerging Strategy also from credible organisations which may be critical to your activities such as, possibly, environmental, human rights or youth NGOs. It is important to be aware of the critical points and be in active communication to minimise potential risks.

## How – methods

- The results of the stakeholder analysis will show you how you should approach the involvement of your stakeholders in terms of its intensity and proximity. Suggested methods are outlined below.

- Individual engagement - semi-structured interviews in person, one-on-one meetings etc.
- Feedback from a larger number of stakeholders - anonymous surveys, semi-structured interviews over the phone/video call, group briefings and discussions, workshops, establishing a specialist group, conferences and their follow-up etc.

## External experts/specialists

- Even though external experts (sustainability experts and consultants, experts on specific technical issues, colleagues from other sport organisations etc.) should not be considered stakeholders as such, you may find it useful and beneficial to include them in the Strategy creation process. They can bring the needed specialist expertise, objectivity and fresh eyes to the process.
- Before you engage an external expert, you should identify the precise areas where you are lacking (technical) expertise and/or where you would benefit from procedural directions.
- Keep in mind that the involvement of private external experts will often require a (financial) investment. At the same time, however, it can present an opportunity for your organisation to find partners for some of the specific sustainability-related activities and tasks.

## 4. STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS



- The Strategy creation process is the official start of your sustainability journey.
- The following ten steps should be understood as a general guidance. Their implementation will depend on the circumstances in which your organisation operates and on how it is structured.
- Some of the steps can be interchanged; however, you should always start with organisational screening to establish the baseline for your Strategy.
- Remember, that you do not have to wait until your Strategy is finalised and adopted to start changing things.



## 4.1. ORGANISATIONAL SCREENING

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### Understanding the context

- A true approach to sustainability has to be based on what your organisation actually does and how it does it in its day-to-day work, in which environment it operates, and what impact its activities have on people and the planet.
- The establishment of this “baseline scenario” is extremely important for the development of your Sustainability Strategy. It can be very beneficial for your organisation to take a moment and analyse of all its processes, developments, activities, events and projects.

### How

- Take your time to understand the screening process. Allow for at least 2 to 3 months to complete the exercise. If you decide to enlarge the screening to the assessment of the governance and management system of your organisation (recommended), it may take you even longer.
- It is recommended to use the [ASAP Organisational Screening Tools](#) that will guide you through the main elements of the process, which should be led by the sustainability manager/department.
- It is recommended that you start in a small group (working/drafting group), gathering information from selected staff members, before enlarging it to the whole organisation.
- Make sure that you get as much feedback as possible, in particular internally.



## 4.2. SETTING THE SCENE<sup>2</sup>

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- The organisational screening exercise will provide you with a large amount of information, which should form the foundation of your Sustainability Strategy. Before you dive into identifying what your sustainability priorities are and what concrete actions you should take, you will need to create a solid basis for your Strategy by describing the rationale behind “going sustainable”, and by outlining the baseline: the context, your “sustainability” starting point, and challenges and opportunities.

### Rationale

- Why a Sustainability Strategy?
  - Prepare a short statement explaining the relevance and importance of sustainability to your organisation. The notion of responsibility should be at the core of this statement.
  - Use the reasoning that you have developed when identifying the main reasons for why your organisation should embark on a sustainability journey and reference sustainability-related facts and figures.
- Main drivers
  - Reflect on the main environmental, social and economic/governance changes and challenges affecting your organisation, and on why “going sustainable” can present not only a great opportunity to address these changes and challenges, but also a way for you to remain relevant in a rapidly changing environment.

### Context

- To be able to give a concrete framework to your Strategy, and to make sure that it reflects, and builds on, the foundations of your organisation, you will need to

start with a description of where you are coming from highlighting the following points:

- Who we are (= role of your organisation)
- Our values (= main values of your organisation)
- What we do (= main tasks and activities)
- How we work (= structure, staff, funding)
- Our obligations and compliance (= legal and regulatory framework)
- Our stakeholders

## Getting started

- Our starting point in terms of sustainability
  - Moving to the core topic of your Strategy, you will need to first consider and outline what you have done so far that is relevant to sustainability and over what period. These activities and initiatives will then serve as a baseline for your action plan.
- Our challenges/risks and opportunities
  - Prepare a list of the possible challenges, areas of concern, and opportunities for your organisation.
  - Organise a working group discussion based on the draft suggestions/list and enlarge it to the rest of the organisation, as appropriate.
  - Prepare the final version with a more detailed description of what the main challenges and opportunities are for your organisation to set the stage for the next step.



## 4.3. MATERIALITY ANALYSIS

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- A materiality analysis will help you filter out the sustainable issues that are most material or pressing to your organisation and stakeholders.

### Issues identification

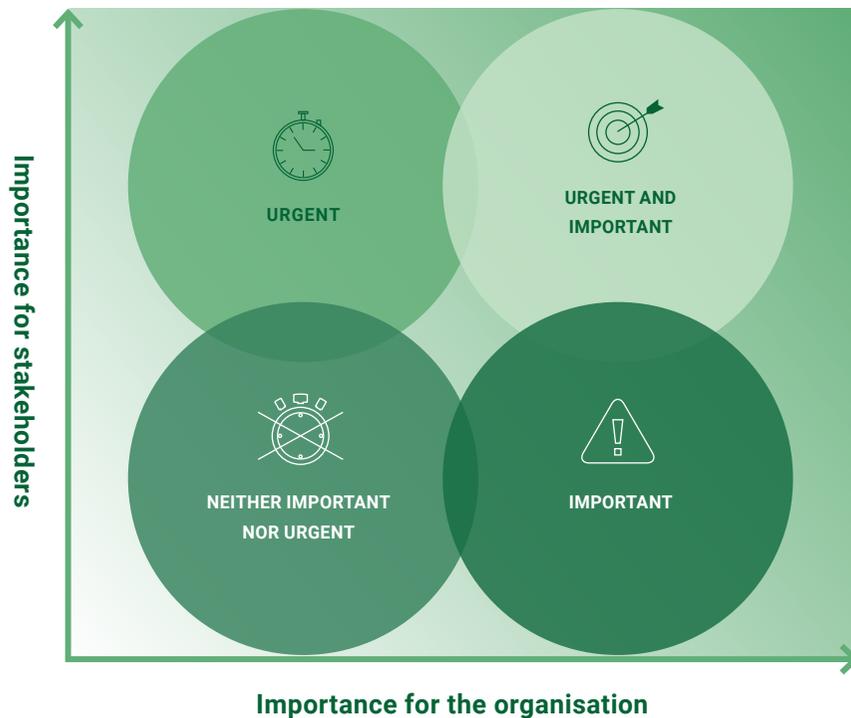
- The results of your organisational screening should help you create a list of sustainability issues that are relevant to your organisation.
- For inspiration, you can use the “Issues Identification” table in the [ASAP Materiality Assessment Tools](#).

### Issues prioritisation

- Internal process
  - When you have the long list ready, take your time to reflect on the questions included in the “Issues Identification” table.
  - Limit the list to a manageable number – e.g. 20 topics or less. Do not hesitate to cluster smaller topics into bigger “issue areas”.
  - You are invited to then choose the appropriate degree of influence/importance for each question.
  - You can conduct this exercise in the framework of a small working group or organise a workshop for a larger number of colleagues to factor in input from a wider range of internal stakeholders.
- Consultation of external stakeholders
  - Based on the results of your stakeholders analysis (Organisational screening),

choose the most important/relevant stakeholders who you will address.

- You can (1) ask them general questions on what the most sustainability-related issues are for their organisations and their stakeholders; (2) ask for their feedback to the priorities that you have identified; (3) create a short survey to combine the two above methods.
- Based on the stakeholders' feedback, you should be able to create a list of sustainability issues that are the most important to them.
- **Materiality matrix**
  - Bring the two lists together – internal and external –and create a visual matrix, which should provide you with a clear indication as to which sustainability issues are the most urgent and important for your Sustainability Strategy.
  - Check the [ASAP Materiality Assessment Tools](#) for other examples.



## Scope/areas of responsibility

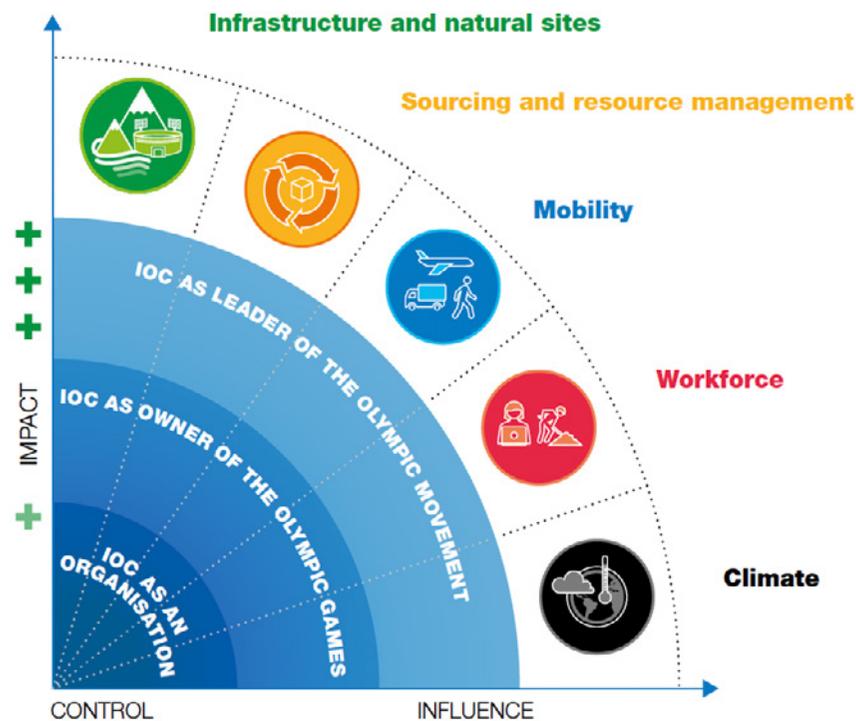
- The identified priority issues/areas will be relevant in a range of developments in, around, and outside of your organisation.
- Defining the zones of your organisation's influence and control, and examining the priority areas through the lenses of those zones, will help you clearly set out what you are going to focus on, while also enabling you to justify what you are not going to do.



Source: [World Athletics Sustainability Strategy 2020-2030](#)

## Strategic framework

- As the last step, bring the final list of priority issues/areas together with the identified zones of control/influence to create a clear structure for your Strategy.
- At this point, you should also be able to design overarching objectives for each of the priority areas/issues, which will contribute to achieving your sustainability vision/mission.
- This structure - this basic form – will then be filled with the content of concrete goals, targets and actions (=action plan).



Source: [IOC Sustainability Strategy](#)



## 4.4. SUSTAINABILITY VISION

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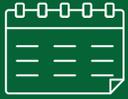


*A strong vision should certainly be challenging. It may not be obvious at first how to achieve it, but by establishing the eventual outcome you seek, you will have created a focus for developing your strategic plans.*

Source: [IOC Sustainability Essentials: Introduction](#)



- Knowing where you stand (organisational screening) and what the opportunities, challenges, and priority areas are will help your organisation look toward the future, create a long-term sustainability vision, and design possible long-term strategic goals. In other words, the vision setting is the true beginning of determining where you are going.
- It is also possible to begin the process with a vision before the wider research (steps 1-3) but you will always need this step 4 to validate the initial vision.



## 4.5. CREATING AN ACTION PLAN

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- Having defined priorities/priority areas, scope, and overarching objectives, the next step will be to establish concrete goals, targets and actions aimed at achieving these objectives.
- While your Strategy may be designed for 5-10 years, the action plan should be regularly reviewed and updated. You can choose to limit its duration to a couple of years only and then adopt a follow-up plan.
- Be realistic in terms of both the content of your goals and their targets and timeline, and count on a certain flexibility to be able to respond to future challenges.
- Work with external experts whenever necessary.

### Defining concrete goals

- To define your (quantitative or improvement-based) goals, think about:
  - What the specific risks or opportunities in each priority area/priority that you have defined are.
  - Where you want to be in e.g. 5 years' time to meet your overarching objectives.
  - What you specifically want to achieve.
- Be clear about why you are adopting a specific goal and make sure that it aligns not only with the vision and overarching objectives of your Sustainability Strategy, but also with the general objectives of your organisation.

### Defining targets and indicators for your goals

- If you are working on your first Sustainability Strategy, you will most likely start with “softer” or “relative” targets, which are based on improvements over a certain period rather than on a fixed amount or number that you would strive to achieve.
- You may also be unable to set a target due to insufficient information. It is perfectly fine to measure something (e.g. waste creation) during one year with a view to setting a target the following year. In fact, the setting-up of a target can become one of the actions in your action plan.
- Once you have identified your targets, you can start thinking about (key performance) indicators, which will help you understand whether you are achieving your goals.

### Developing an action plan

- Your action plan should include priorities/priority areas, concrete goals, activities/ actions, responsibilities and timing. Targets/indicators and budget (and possibly other elements) are optional as you may be unable to define them at the start of the implementation and can add them at a later stage.
- Start your action plan with simple changes and then work your way up to the larger projects that require more funding. In other words, look for quick wins and then work up the scale progressively – step by step.
- Types of actions/activities
  - **Data collection, analysis, setting-up targets** (e.g. an analysis of the energy consumption of your headquarters).
  - **Activities related to “how we do things”** (e.g. changes to existing organisational processes, creation of new plans, policies, processes etc.).
  - **Activities related to “what we do”** (e.g. changes to existing projects or events, or creation of new activities).



## 4.6. PREPARING FOR DELIVERY

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- A proper management system has to be put in place to bridge the gap between strategy and practice. Following the system of PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT will be a game-changer in how well you will be able to deliver on your sustainability goals.

### Implementation structure

- A clear structure defining the rights and responsibilities of the various stakeholders and the relationship between them will be crucial for the successful implementation of your Strategy.
- It is important that the structure is in line with the general management and human resources system of your organisation.
- As a basis, you can use the structure/system that you have created for establishing your Strategy (see chapter 2), which you can then further develop along three levels:
  - Decision-making and control (e.g. Executive Board, President)
  - Executive (e.g. sustainability strategy manager, Internal Sustainability Working Group)
  - Advisory (e.g. Sustainability Commission)

### Implementing procedures and processes

- Rather than “revolution”, try to adapt existing processes, formalise them, and make sure that staff are involved and feel empowered, and that stakeholders are properly informed.

- Consider creating an Implementation/Execution Plan, where you will be able to assign, and keep track of, the execution of concrete tasks, define internal and external collaborators, and set-up indicators, timelines and deadlines for each of the activities outlined in the action plan.
- You can find more guidance on establishing concrete procedures (including change management and reporting) in [IOC Sustainability Essentials – Sustainability Management in Sport](#) or in [ISO 20121 – Sustainable Events](#).

### Monitoring and evaluation

- It is important to monitor how your action plan is performing to be able to assess whether you are on the right track to meet your goals.
- Typically, the sustainability strategy manager will monitor the implementation of the action plan. However, for specific (more technical) aspects relevant to your goals and targets, you may want to work with external experts.
- Based on the data from the monitoring exercise (indicators), external feedback, and other relevant information, you will be able to evaluate the performance of your action plan and subsequently propose any changes or alterations.
- In your Strategy you should specify the type of evaluation you will conduct and how often.
  - General periodical evaluation (e.g. once a year).
  - Strategic evaluation and review (can be done after a set period – e.g. 4 years – or at the end of the implementation period of your first action plan).
  - Final evaluation (at the end your Strategy’s implementation).



## 4.7. REPORTING AND COMMUNICATIONS

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- Even though, unlike large companies, your organisation will, most likely, not be obliged to report on its “non-financials” (social and environmental performance), producing and publishing a sustainability report can help you:
  - Build a stronger relationship with your (public and private) partners.
  - Engage your stakeholders and communicate about sustainability more effectively.
  - Be ready to provide the IOC (and/or other organisations and funders) with precise and reliable information on the sustainability performance of your organisation.
- Internal and external reporting should become an integral part of your “Strategy implementation cycle,” and the actual methodology (see below) should be concisely described in your Strategy.

### Internal reporting

- You should establish a clear timeline for when you will report on the implementation of your Sustainability Strategy and its action plan to the various governance levels of your organisation.
- Typically, the sustainability strategy manager will coordinate this task.

### External reporting

- Start by including a short report about the implementation of your Strategy in your Annual Report and/or on your website (once a year). An annual sustainability conference/meeting with your stakeholders can be another way to present and discuss the outcomes of the implementation process with them.

- A formal (external) report should then be produced (at least) at the end of each implementation period (where working with shorter-term action plans) and/or at the end of the Strategy duration (final report).
- For more information, see the [IOC Sustainability Essentials – Sustainability Management in Sport](#) or, if you would like to go a step further, the [Global Reporting Initiative](#) (GRI) and ISO 20121 (mentioned in chapter 4.6).

### Communications

- All good strategies should include requirements for communications and engagement. While a number of specific communications-related activities may be included in your action plan, it is important to consider how and when your Strategy should be communicated and to whom.
- For detailed information and tips on “how to”, check the [ASAP Sustainability Communications Cheat Sheet](#).



## 4.8. REVIEW OF THE DRAFT STRATEGY

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- It is advisable to have your final draft checked and reviewed by both internal and external stakeholders (e.g. staff, Executive Board members, external experts and representatives of peer organisations, external stakeholders, and linguistic experts for proofreading).
- You can choose to consult only one or several of the suggested groups or to have only some parts of your document reviewed. What counts is that you will have received an important and valuable external input and given your stakeholders a chance to study and comment on the document before it goes for adoption.



## 4.9. GRAPHICAL DESIGN AND PRESENTATION

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- A good graphical design is essential from an aesthetic and branding point of view. However, its true strength lies in its ability to guide readers through the material, draw their attention to the most important aspects, and fully engage them with the content.
- Such design should reflect one of the most important values that underpin the Strategy creation and implementation processes: engagement (of internal and external stakeholders), cooperation and partnership.

### General tips

- Complex material can be explained in a simple way using various graphical elements such as infographics, graphs and illustrations.
- Prepare a good brief for your graphical designer. Think thoroughly which data and elements of your (written) Strategy could be visualised.
- Use the brand guidelines of your organisation to embed the Strategy into your organisation and its culture also visually.
- Remember to set aside financial resources for the design and production of your Strategy and accompanying documents.
- Produce an executive summary of your Strategy.



## 4.10. ADOPTION

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- The better you engage your organisation's decision-makers and stakeholders in the Strategy creation process; and the better your Strategy is aligned with the vision, mission and general strategy of your organisation, the higher your chances will be of having your Sustainability Strategy adopted without (substantial) obstacles.
- Once the final decision has been made and your Strategy has been adopted, do not forget to publish all the relevant documents on your organisation's website.



# ASAP TOOLBOX

NOC SUSTAINABILITY  
STRATEGY  
TEMPLATE<sup>1</sup>

MAKING THE  
CASE FOR  
SUSTAINABILITY

“INTRODUCTION TO  
SUSTAINABILITY”  
MODEL TRAINING  
PROGRAMME

ORGANISATIONAL  
SCREENING TOOLS

MATERIALITY  
ASSESSMENT  
TOOLS

SUSTAINABILITY  
COMMUNICATIONS  
CHEAT SHEET



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union