

Ecological Sustainability: Our Strategy for Steps 2024

Since 1988 Migros Culture Percentage dance festival Steps has been organizing the largest festival for dance in Switzerland, introducing audiences across the country to contemporary dance. For Steps 2024, nine national and international dance companies will be touring 34 Swiss theatres for nearly a month. In its capacity as tour organizer, Steps collaborates with a network of local partners.

Reducing the festival's ecological footprint has been a focal point in our strategy since 2022. We are committed to a sustainable and environment-friendly dance industry. In 2022 we tasked a team of external experts to evaluate the ecological compatibility of the festival for the first time. Working with four partner theatres – Theater Basel, Bühnen Bern, Théâtre du Jura, and Phönix Theater – we tracked the ecological footprint of a typical Steps tour. The partner theatres assessed the emissions connected to Steps performances in their respective venues, while we further analysed our direct emissions, such as the effects of our national advertisement campaign, the travel needs of the artistic directors, and everyday office activities.

The results of the full analysis are available online at steps.ch. Here we would like to mention only two: The analysis of Steps 2022 indicated greenhouse emissions of 156.7 tons in total or 10.3 kg per visitor. To put this number in perspective: a restaurant visit including a meat dish is estimated at 12.7 kg.

The analysis has provided us with a better understanding of which measures are within our control and has allowed us to refine our ecological sustainability strategy.

We will continue to provide information on how our partner theatres and invited companies can reduce their emissions. Aside from the guidelines that have been available online at steps.ch since 2022, we also recommend the website of our sustainability partner reflector, whose "[Green Guides](#)" detail measures for improving the sustainability of mobility, production, and catering.

Measures for the Reduction of CO₂

The analysis has shown that mobility accounts for 65% of the festival's emissions, thereby identifying an area in which sustainability can be effectively improved in a joint effort involving the companies and theatres participating in Steps. We have defined a strategy package for the reduction of CO₂ emissions related to mobility and touring and defined processes that allow us to track our yearly emissions. We also implement measures in other areas, however, without measuring their effect.

General

- We collectively develop our strategy as a team.
- We appoint staff responsible for the implementation of our strategy in all areas.
- We continually evaluate and refine our strategy and share learnings with our partners.

Organisation

- We avoid printing correspondence, technical riders, and contracts. We use digital signatures for contracts. Whenever printing is necessary, we print double-sided on recycled paper.

Programming

- We curate our program under consideration of its ecological sustainability and evaluate, for example, production logistics, travel distances, necessity of air travel, and the amount of people involved in a production. International productions are featured in Steps when they can be held within the context of a European tour.

Mobility

Logistics

- We use fuel-efficient and low-emission vehicles for the transportation of material (Euro 5 standard vehicles, at least three out of five stars in the VCS eco-car rating).
- Whenever possible, we use the full capacity of vehicles to minimize transportation-related emissions.
- We consider the efficiency of the vehicle type, for example, we use cars instead of vans or send material via railway whenever possible.
- Whenever possible, we use vehicles with alternative power sources, including rental cars. We also request such vehicles when working with transportation companies.

Team

- For daily tasks we travel by foot, public transport, and bicycle.
- Team members not living in Zurich can participate in meetings online.
- All meetings with our partners are held online.
- To assess potential Steps acts, the artistic directors travel by train if the journey takes less than 9 hours. Whenever possible, they attend more than one event per journey. We also collaborate with local dramaturges and festival curators in researching our program.

Artists

- We reimburse costs for travelling by train or, if public transport does not offer a viable alternative, travelling by car. We reimburse flight costs if travel by train or car is impossible or the train/car journey takes longer than 9 hours.
- Artists do not travel only for one performance. Ideally artists will further participate in other festival formats, such as workshops, talks, etc., preferably in the city in which they are already scheduled to perform.
- We rely on public transport or fuel-efficient and low-emission vehicles (Euro 5 standard vehicles, at least three out of five stars in the VCS eco-car rating) for the transportation of people as required by the festival.
- If artists attend other Steps events, we provide tickets for public transport.

Audience

- Steps organizes events across all of Switzerland, which reduces the need for audience travel.
- We ask visitors on our official channels as well as social media to use eco-friendly means of transportation to attend Steps events.

- We check which of our partner theatres offer combination tickets including public transport and communicate best-practice examples (e.g., shuttle buses) among our partners.

Accommodation

- We provide artists with accommodation within walking distance to the performance venue and reimburse travel by public transport if this is not the case.
- We use the accommodation of partner theatres whenever possible.

Communication

- Since 2022 we have increasingly been relying on digital communication channels.
- Our printing partner uses carbon-neutral printing processes, recycled paper, toxin-free colours, and implements other processes contributing to increased sustainability. No material is printed outside of Switzerland.
- In 2024 a slim program flyer will replace the extensive program from previous editions and will not be distributed through the mail.
- We distribute eco-friendly and re-usable giveaways. In 2024 companies will receive ecological t-shirts.
- Invitations for special events such as the festival opening will be distributed digitally.
- Press material will be made available digitally.

Hospitality

- Any events organized by Steps, such as the festival opening or partner meetings, feature vegan or vegetarian catering using, if possible, seasonal and biologically sourced products from the region. We do not use throw-away products, such as disposable cutlery and bottles or aluminium cans, and we work with local providers.
- Whenever possible, we prefer more climate-friendly (and more practical) gifts for performers than flowers. If flowers are gifted, then only seasonal and regional ones.

Sustainability Partners

Amstein + Walthert advises and supports organizations in becoming more sustainable. Their services include analysis, strategy development, data collection and evaluation (carbon footprint), sustainability reports, as well as the formulation of strategies and goals. Amstein + Walthert supports clients from the cultural and other sectors. amstein-walthert.ch

reflector is working with selected theatres to develop concrete action plans that enable people in the performing arts across Switzerland to design more ecologically sustainable institutions. The “Green Guides” are categorized by topic and are published on a digital platform. reflector is supported by m2act (Migros Culture Percentage) in collaboration with the Migros Pioneer Fund. reflector.eco

Tasty Future helps cultural institutions to develop more eco-friendly and plant-based gastronomical offerings to contribute to a more climate-neutral, ethical, and future-happy eating culture. From theatre bistro to staff canteen, from wardrobe snacks to opening-night buffets, we identify areas that offer most room for improvement and effective change. Tasty Future supports step-by-step institutional and culinary transformations and offers impulses for discursive and artistic projects that can further support the process. tastyfuture.ch

Vert le Futur stands for a sustainable culture and event sector. As an interdisciplinary network of event organizers, educators, artists, and sustainability experts, Vert le Futur provides a platform for sharing learnings and knowledge about ecological sustainability in the arts and culture. vertlefutur.ch