

RESPONSIBLE KONTIOLAHTI KONTIOLAHTI, FIN



What was the goal?

Raised customer awareness and public opinion of pressing societal and environmental issues demand that Kontiolahti organises its events and operations in a sustainable manner.

Kontiolahti established its Responsibility programme in 2018 to achieve several sustainability-related goals:

- ▶ to address environmental issues with sustainable solutions;
- ▶ to make operations accessible for all individuals;
- ▶ to create an atmosphere where tolerance grows, and everyone is respected as themselves; and
- ▶ to emphasise safety in all its actions and especially in its events.

How was the goal achieved?

The wheels that set the Responsible Kontiolahti programme in motion were a strong commitment from both the local authority and the OC management, as well as the addition to the team of an expert coordinator.

Responsible Kontiolahti consists of three elements:

- ▶ Environmental Sustainability;
- ▶ Inclusion and Accessibility; and
- ▶ Safety.

The first steps included recognition of issues that impact the size of the event's carbon footprint (and later the whole site operation), development of ideas to improve those issues and exploring ways in which necessary measures could be implemented. The outcome of this was an environmental programme that received an audited EcoCompass certificate in 2020 evidencing OC Kontiolahti's commitment.

In 2019, Kontiolahti expanded the scope of the Responsible programme, with efforts focused on improving accessibility and inclusion. This came about through a mixture of permit requirements relating to the provision of accessible spaces

for physically impaired people as well as the desire to attract new, and unintentionally excluded, audiences to the event. It now offers specific services for physically disabled people, free entrance for all children under 12 years of age, and provides free tickets for low-income families in cooperation with local associations.

Kontiolahti is committed to developing all three pillars in cooperation with its local, regional, national, and transnational partners.

Which IBU sustainability issues does it address?

- ▶ Emissions from travel & transport

Based on visitor survey data in 2018, over 50% of local spectators used public transport to attend the event, which diminishes its transport emissions. There is also a plan to transport more spectators to and from the stadium by train in future events. Kontiolahti also uses renewable fuel in its grooming machines.

- ▶ Emissions from energy use for heating, cooling, and power

All grid electricity comes from renewable sources (mainly from windmills).

- ▶ Inadequate sustainability awareness among biathlon stakeholders

Volunteers are educated on environmental guidelines, including lighting and heating instructions as well as helping spectators with waste separation, via in-person training sessions and as part of the volunteer guideline package. Sustainability related information is also conveyed within other training sessions for volunteers that interact with spectators, e.g. for security and stadium information volunteers (approx. 30 people).

▶ Inactive lifestyle

The development of the Kontiolahti Biathlon Stadium to attract World Cup events makes it possible for local people to ski six months annually in good conditions. This has become an attractive exercise solution for local school children.

▶ Unavailability of education & training

Kontiolahti is committed to fostering biathletes' dual careers. It cooperates on a regional level with the Joensuu Sports Academy to organise training sessions for biathletes in the Kontiolahti Stadium three times a week. The Joensuu Sports Academy makes it possible for talented athletes to combine target-oriented training with studying in secondary and higher education.

▶ Lack of inclusion

Kontiolahti invites all children under 12 years of age to participate in its events for free. It hands out free tickets to low-income families in cooperation with its partner associations. It organises accessible events for people with physical disabilities.

▶ Waste production

Kontiolahti achieved its goal to reduce the amount of municipal waste by improving its own purchasing policy and adding waste sorting stations at all events, though this came about largely due to the pandemic.

▶ Unsustainable sourcing practices

The pandemic has also forced Kontiolahti to use more disposable materials than planned, albeit that it has a policy in place to use non-plastic disposables wherever possible. Options to re-use materials are sought, and there is a policy to recycle materials wherever possible. As an example, large guidance signs with a changeable date option were recently purchased so that they can be re-used for several events.

What were the challenges faced?

- ▶ The biggest challenge OC Kontiolahti faces as part of its environmental programme is in getting people to follow waste separation guidelines. It was realised that all recycling areas need to be staffed to ensure that visitors sort their waste correctly.
- ▶ Another big challenge is transportation and finding a suitable way to compensate emissions from such areas as team flights.
- ▶ Another challenge is staffing. Ideally, Kontiolahti would have a full-time responsibility coordinator planning and coordinating all activities in this field.

What are the next steps?

The next steps for OC Kontiolahti's responsibility programme include:

- ▶ Increasing data collection to be able to create more indicators and track progress.
- ▶ Updating its heaters to be able to use renewable energy sources to heat temporary infrastructure.
- ▶ Conducting more social inclusion projects, such as engaging with Ukrainian refugees living in Kontiolahti.

