

HANDBOOK

Reuse at large-scale events



A practical guide
on how to implement
reusables with ease!

Initiated by



project
together



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1. A new standard for large-scale events: Reuse is inspiring and creates a better future



Large-scale events are more than just a place where people come together or party – they create space for change and can have an inspiring effect on society. They have the power to encourage people to change their way of thinking and to drive positive change. Here, thousands of visitors meet, chat and create shared moments that stay with them long after the event itself has ended.

At the same time, large-scale events such as concerts, festivals and trade fairs frequently leave an enormous ecological footprint: besides consuming water and power, these events also use up valuable resources through single-use items such as cups, plates, bowls and cutlery. However, switching to better solutions is not always a trivial matter. Transporting, storing and disposing of reusables, as well as returning and cleaning them, all pose logistical challenges that make it difficult to implement sustainable solutions.

But these very challenges also present a huge chance. Event organisers have the opportunity to become pioneers of sustainable action, to set new standards and show what responsible event design can look like. By opting for reusable systems and processes that conserve resources, they can not only minimise their own ecological footprint, they can also inspire visitors to make more sustainable decisions in their daily lives. Large-scale events can thus provide impetus to society as a whole.

WHY IS THAT IMPORTANT?

Picture this: thousands of visitors having the time of their life at your event, not just because they are experiencing unforgettable moments, but because of how clean everything is. No overflowing bins, no single-use forks or used paper napkins littering the ground – instead, a pleasing view of clean collection points: an atmosphere where everyone feels at home and sustainability is brought to life.

By employing reusable systems, waste has been reduced considerably; instead of cups and plates being thrown away after use, they make their way back into the system, showing how delicious shaping our responsibility can be. Other finite resources, too, are recirculated and reused instead of being consumed just once.

An event like that leaves visitors with treasured memories, at the same time breaking new ground for the environment – demonstrating measurable change with a lasting effect.

REUSE: A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION

Conserving resources

Functioning reusable models save raw materials such as water, mineral oil and energy, as containers and utensils can be reused hundreds of times. As a basic rule of thumb, reusable cups have less impact on the climate after about ten uses than their single-use counterparts.

Preventing waste

Mountains of waste are reduced drastically by not creating (or creating very little) waste in the first place.

Setting an example

Events that employ reusable systems set a strong example in terms of climate protection and the conservation of resources, plus they inspire others to adopt a more eco-friendly behaviour. Organisers thus present themselves as responsible, innovative actors and create events that leave visitors wanting more.

Increasing enjoyment

Reusable tableware is often more stable and of a higher quality than single-use alternatives, resulting in an even better experience for your guests.



“Reusable systems are an essential part of a cradle-to-cradle future, as they help keep valuable resources in the cycles. The fact that we implemented a reusable system for an audience of more than 50,000 in the Labor Tempelhof project shows that it can be done outside of large-scale events as well, and how.”

Nora Sophie Griefahn and
Tim Janssen, co-founders and
CEOs of Cradle to Cradle NGO



REUSE IS DOABLE!

At first, switching to reuse seems like a lot of work, but examples such as the one presented in this handbook show that, with the right partners and solutions that have already been put to the test, implementing reuse is easy. Our project, conducted as part of Labor Tempelhof, which translates to “Tempelhof Lab”, has shown how innovative solutions can work and wow visitors when put into practice.

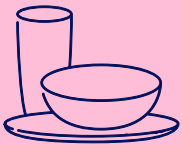
¹ Source: https://www.ifeu.de/fileadmin/uploads/Take_away_ohne_M%C3%BCII_Diskussionsbeitrag.pdf, 31.01.2025

Our key facts and data: An overview

Labor Tempelhof

A cradle-to-cradle-inspired concert series and test lab for a viable and ecologically sustainable event industry with German band Die Ärzte

- 23.-25. August at Flughafen Tempelhof airport in Berlin
- 150,000 visitors over the course of 3 days
- 29 food stands on the grounds
- 4 return stations for reusables and 23 collection points for reusables/waste (called "nutrition islands")
- 20-25 people on site every day in the name of reuse



57,393 single-use items

(plates, bowls, knives, forks) saved

A return rate of more than **90%**

88% of respondents said returning took less than 30 seconds

98% of respondents rated the implementation of reuse as excellent/good

80% of respondents felt that the return process was easy.

CO₂ emissions for transport and cleaning amounted to **1,07t**



JOIN US!

By introducing reuse at your event, you help protect the environment and at the same time contribute to setting a new standard for the industry and making it sustainable. Every event that takes this step inspires the next, until reuse is the new normal. This handbook is your tool to start your reuse journey: helping you put our experience into practice – tried and tested and with learnings gained from a real project.

Large-scale events could be the start of a huge movement. Are you ready to be a part of it?

Contact us at
kontakt@mehrweg-einfach-machen.de

2. Who are we and what do we do?

THE OBLIGATION TO OFFER REUSABLES IN THE EVENT INDUSTRY

Since 1 January 2023, catering establishments in Germany that sell ready-to-eat foods in plastic single-use containers or beverages in single-use cups are bound by law to offer reusable packaging as an alternative. Establishments with no more than 5 employees and a sales area of 80 square metres or less are exempt from this obligation.

Events are also subject to the obligation to offer reusable packaging, with the above mentioned exceptions. In general, the following applies to events: if an organiser provides catering directly, the entire event space is seen as the sales area. If this is not the case, the providers' stands are assessed individually and by their respective size: the assessment parameter is calculated by taking all of the respective provider's stands, together with the associated seating areas on the event grounds. Public seating areas provided by the organiser are not included in a stand's sales area. In a municipal context, events are subject to different regulations, depending on the municipality: Rostock, for example, only permits the use of public premises and facilities if food and drinks are served exclusively in reusable or compostable packaging. The council in Essen has also made reusables mandatory in public spaces, while Berlin has added a ban on single-use tableware and cutlery to its procurement directives.

PACKAGING WASTE IN THE EVENT INDUSTRY

Despite all efforts, packaging consumption continues to rise steadily, amounting to 237 kg per capita in Germany in 2021. The majority of all packaging is designed in a way that makes it impossible, or at least very difficult, to separate it into distinct categories and recycle it without a loss in quality. Due to the use of composite materials, dyes and softeners, single-use packaging in particular often ends up in incineration plants or, in the worst case, in nature – even when it is correctly disposed of via the recycling bin. Even single-use packaging labelled biodegradable is often not the best solution, as here, too, non-recyclable composite materials are sometimes used. In addition, biodegradable does not automatically mean that materials can be fully recycled in industrial composting or biogas plants.

In the event industry, for example, GVM, a German market research association that focuses on packaging, estimates a yearly waste of 3 billion cups, weighing a total of more than 33,000 tonnes². Here, recyclable solutions are essential to at least minimise the negative ecological impact and use resources in a manner that ensures they are not wasted but kept in the cycles. At the same time, large-scale events especially offer huge potential and can even have a positive impact going forward, for example through reusable systems and an innovative circular economy. Projects such as Labor Tempelhof show organisers how climate protection can go hand in hand with a change in how resources, entertainment and partnerships are handled.

Packaging waste in 2021 selected EU States, in kg per capita



¹ Source: Federal Statistical Office of Germany (destatis.de)

² Source: Environmental Action Germany – Event cups an environmental issue

WHAT IS LABOR TEMPELHOF?

During the Labor Tempelhof project, German bands Die Ärzte (2022 and 2024) and Die Toten Hosen (2022) gave a total of six concerts for a pilot project at Flughafen Tempelhof airport in Berlin. When putting the concerts together, the four project initiators – Cradle to Cradle NGO; KKT GmbH – Kikis KleinerTourneeservice; Loft Concerts GmbH; and Side By Side Eventsupport GmbH – aimed to make them as regenerative and climate positive as possible. The bar for the concerts was a circular economy in accordance with cradle-to-cradle criteria. In total, the team implemented around 40 corresponding measures at the concerts in 2024 – besides a comprehensive reusable system, this included recirculating the phosphor from the composting toilets and generating drinking water from the air. For more information on the solutions implemented within the Labor Tempelhof project, click [here](#).

CRADLE TO CRADLE: PRINCIPLES OF CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Cradle to cradle (C2C) is an approach to a holistic-circular economy which begins with designing recyclable products made from safe materials. This means ensuring that the resources used to make the products can circulate in their entirety in biological or technological cycles – depending on whether materials are released into the environment during the product's use or not. This also means using renewable energy in production, improving water and soil quality if possible, keeping the air clean and implementing social standards. Every resource is employed in such a way that it can be reused again and again as a raw material for something new and never becomes waste. In the context of cradle to cradle, reusable systems are a good instrument for circulating materials in technological cycles specifically, simply by reusing them.

While drinks had already been served in reusable cups at the concerts in 2022, the team took things a step further in the August of 2024: all caterers used tableware and cutlery from reusable systems.

This handbook focuses on **how to implement reuse**. **It aims to assist and motivate other organisers** to prevent waste at as many future events as possible.



WHO BROUGHT IT TO LIFE?

The "mehrweg.einfach.machen." implementation alliance, the name of which is a play on words that translates both to "just reuse" and "reuse made easy", was initiated in December 2022 by three partners: ProjectTogether; WWF Germany; and Mehrwegverband Deutschland e.V., the German Reuse Association. The alliance aims to pool forces across social groups, to develop scalable solutions along challenges, and to thus make reuse the new standard for takeaways.

For the Labor Tempelhof 2.0 project in 2024, project initiators Loft Concerts and Cradle to Cradle NGO teamed up with implementation alliance "mehrweg.ein-fach.machen.", digital platform for reusable packaging Vytal Global GmbH, event caterer GTB Gastro Team Bremen (GTB) and Kühne Logistics University (KLU) to advance the matter of reuse at large-scale events. Thanks to this unique consortium, we were able to offer over 150,000 participants sustainable, reusable catering, saving more than 57,000 single-use items in the course.

HOW SUCCESSFUL WERE WE IN IMPLEMENTING REUSE?

On-site surveys show that the switch to reuse went down exceedingly well with visitors and was viewed in a positive light with regard to convenience, quality and sustainability. Around 98% of respondents rated the implementation of reuse as excellent or good. And the return process was convincing as well: 80 % felt it was easy, and more than 90% of the reusable tableware and cutlery was returned. On the following pages, we explain how we implemented the system in detail and what we learned in the course.



“The way I experienced it here at the concert was great. You buy your food at the stand as always, then eat it in the seating area right by the return station. Just great!”

Feedback from a concertgoer



“Reuse is one of the most important levers for more circular economy and less waste. At Labor Tempelhof, the organisers and the audience both experienced the doability and benefits of reuse at large-scale events. It’s possible, it makes sense – now we just have to make sure reuse becomes the new normal.”

Caroline Kraas,
Project Lead
WWF Germany



3. How did we implement reuse and what have we learned?

At the first concerts in the summer of 2022, drinks had already been served in reusable cups with a deposit system (partner: Re-uz Germany). As we wanted to do the same again for Labor Tempelhof 2.0, that decision was made at an early stage. However, we wanted to expand the offer in 2024 and serve food on reusable tableware as well – albeit without a deposit, on the basis of trust (partner: Vytal Global). Here, the final decision was not made until later on in the planning process, which is why processes and procedures differed between the two systems.

In the following, our explanations around “reuse” therefore primarily focus on the implementation of reusable tableware for food.

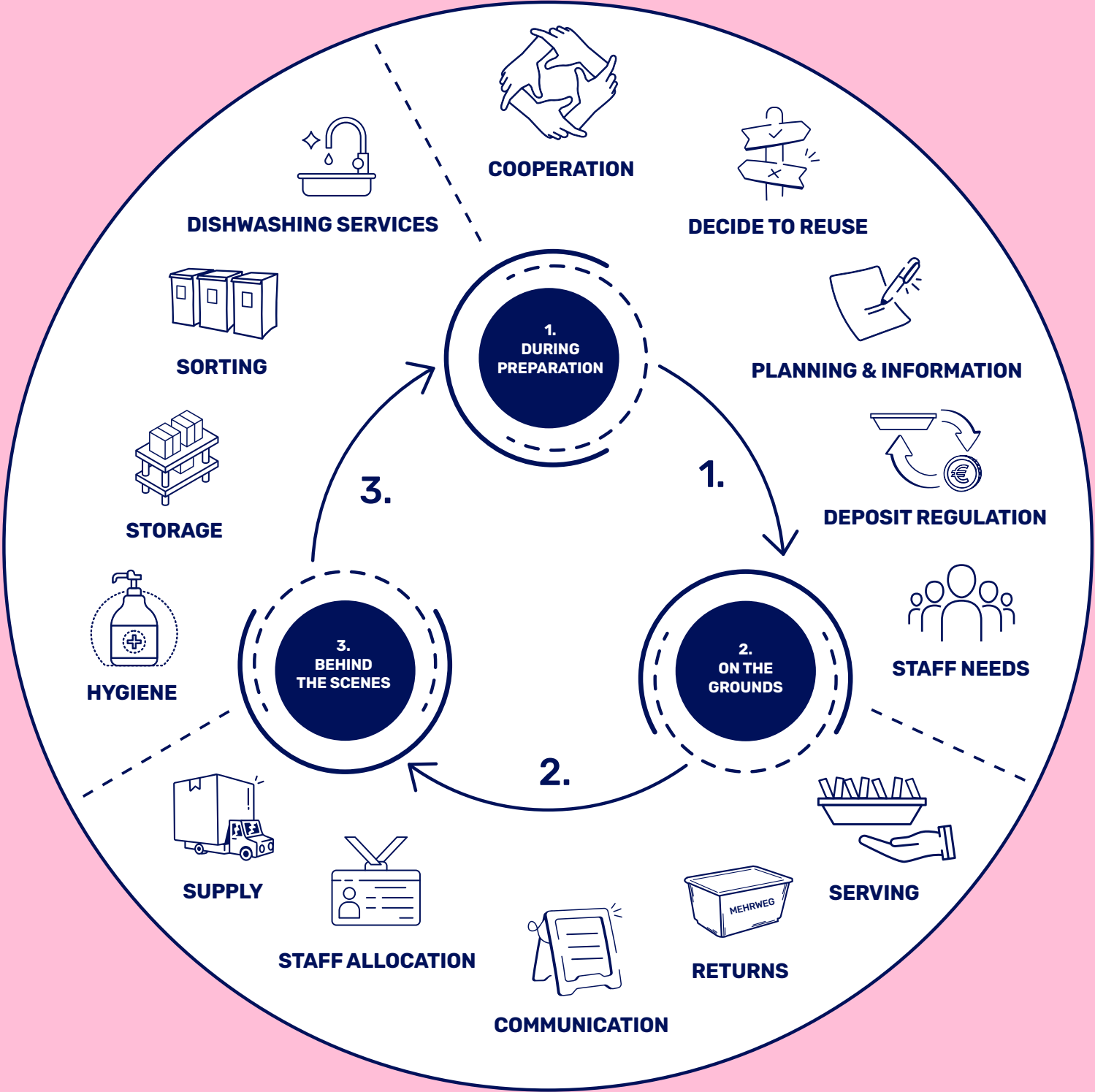
Our experience shows that it is best to use the same reusable system for food and drinks, as this makes for clearer processes and simpler communication. If it should still be necessary to use two different systems, we recommend at least employing the same procedures with regard to logistics, returns and deposits.

“Making events sustainable and inspiring others to join in.”

Amrei Karsch,
Project Lead
Loft Concerts GmbH



The reuse cycle



1. During preparation



Example: Labor Tempelhof 2024



COOPERATION

Network of actors

The following partners cooperated on the Labor Tempelhof project:

- Loft Concerts, as the organiser, with its sustainability team; Cradle to Cradle NGO (C2C) as co-initiator of the project;
- implementation alliance "mehrweg. einfach. machen." as the non-profit implementation partner;
- event caterer GTB; and
- reuse specialists Vytal Global (for food) and Re-uz Germany (for drinks).



Learning and tips



COOPERATION

Interdisciplinary cooperation

The best way to implement reuse at large-scale events is through close cooperation between the different actors. Organisers should coordinate closely with the catering and reusables logistics partners necessary for implementation.

Commitment and expertise

For a smooth and successful implementation, it is key that all parties involved commit to reuse. It makes sense to involve expertise at an early stage by drawing on the experience of other organisers as well as of caterers and reusable system providers to benefit from tried-and-tested approaches.

"Partying without waste and eating in style: food presented on high-quality reusable tableware is more appetising, while waste-free festival grounds give the atmosphere of the entire event an upgrade."

Karen Matthiesen,
Project Lead
GTB Gastro Team
Bremen GmbH



Example: Labor Tempelhof 2024



DECIDE TO REUSE

Reuse: An ambitious level

One point of discussion during preparation was defining a target for the degree of implementation of reuse. In the end, we decided on a reuse rate of 100% to set an ambitious, and above all unambiguous, target that leaves no room for discussion.

Single-use items at the event

Even though we decided on a reuse rate of 100%, there was still the occasional exception where single-use materials were employed. In some cases, this was necessary because there was no sensible reusable alternative, for example for paper for wraps. In others, single-use materials were used without prior agreement, which was addressed and stopped immediately during the event (for example grease paper, wooden picks). Ultimately, this meant that 80% of tableware and cutlery served to visitors was reusable. When calculating the total amount, we did not include the paper for wraps, as that can currently not be integrated into a reusable system, and switching would possibly make little sense from an ecological perspective.



Learning and tips



DECIDE TO REUSE

Make a clear decision on a reuse rate of 100%

Deciding on a reuse rate of 100% is a key success factor, as it creates clarity with unambiguous rules, and thus simplifies planning and acceptance. This commitment allows you to bring every process strictly in line with reuse, which in turn simplifies processes and purposefully pools resources.

An early decision

Making the decision to implement reuse at as early a stage as possible allows all partners involved to prepare for reuse and gives them enough time to make any necessary adjustments to their processes.

"A great system, especially as things are so incredibly easy without a deposit."

Feedback from a concertgoer

Replacing single-use items

As a rule, it is important that reuse always conserves resources and is an actual, more sustainable alternative. The materials used (quantity/volume, type of material) and frequency of use play a decisive role: for example, serving crêpes on an edible waffle or a paper napkin conserves more resources than serving them on a reusable plate and adding a paper napkin.

When it comes to frequency of use, the following rule of thumb applies: the more often a reusable container is used, the greater the ecological benefit. This requires planning ahead and clear communication between all parties involved to prevent as much loss as possible.

Example: Labor Tempelhof 2024



PLANNING & INFORMATION

Planning and information

Once we had decided to reuse, we immediately took it into account in each and every process, for example the placement of return stations, the delivery paths for boxes of reusables and communication towards caterers and visitors. As a result, the catering team had to make slight changes. All caterers were provided with information materials on the reuse process at the event, while visitors were informed both prior to the event by email and at the event itself that we would be using reusable tableware and cutlery.

Costing

When planning with our caterers, we discussed the size of the reusable containers and its impact on portion sizes and pricing calculations. In addition, reusables take up more space and require additional deliveries, which required efficient logistics (see Section 3.2).

Learning and tips



PLANNING & INFORMATION

Integrate reuse into every existing process

Reusable solutions need to be integrated into every aspect of planning, from logistics and production to catering to communication to visitors and crew members to ensure everyone is clear on the exact process.

Inform caterers at an early stage

Involve the catering team immediately after you have made the decision to implement reuse. This can be done either by providing information or in face-to-face conversations. Contractual adjustments may also make sense. Ensure caterers are familiar with the reuse concept and its processes.

Trial runs with caterers

Trial runs conducted prior to and at other events allow caterers to gather experience with reuse and get to know processes in practice. In the best case, they are able to test containers prior to the event and to thus estimate portion sizes. In general, a small selection of containers is enough to cover the needs of different foods and portion sizes.

Communicate with visitors at an early stage and during the event

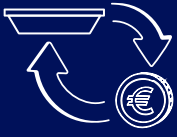
Communicating the reuse concept to visitors at an early stage (for example immediately after they have purchased a ticket) and providing accompanying communication during the event promote acceptance and help things run smoothly.

“We recommend just doing it – the benefits and impact outweigh the initial challenges.”

Jule Kauert, Project Lead
Loft Concerts GmbH



Example: Labor Tempelhof 2024



DEPOSIT REGULATION

Deposit systems

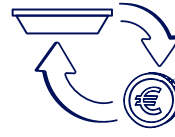
Another essential point we discussed was how to handle the reusable system for food: should we ask for a deposit or not? Should deposits be made in cash or via digital wallet?

We ruled out a digital deposit system due to the poor network coverage on the grounds. We also rejected a cash deposit system, as the organisational and financial efforts required at an event of this size would have been enormous in proportion. In addition, participating caterers were concerned that they would lose sales, as a deposit would increase the respective payable amount.

After lengthy consultation with reusable system provider Vtyal, the team opted for a pragmatic, trust-based solution of reusable tableware and cutlery without a deposit.

For drinks that had already been served in reusable cups in 2022, the decision to serve them in cups with a deposit remained unchanged in 2024.

Learning and tips



DEPOSIT REGULATION

Deposit: An individual decision

Serving food and drinks in reusable containers without a deposit on a basis of trust is efficient and makes it extremely easy to handle reusable tableware. It also facilitates accounting processes with the sales stands and does not require additional effort caused by the use of expensive cash.

A deposit-free approach works especially well at events with a controlled entrance, where reusable tableware generally does not leave the grounds. An approach with a deposit, on the other hand, boosts returns – something that is particularly relevant on open grounds where the flow of reusables is harder to influence and tracking thus becomes all the more important.

Any decision on which deposit concept is best will therefore need to be made on a case-by-case basis, taking the pros and cons regarding visitor structures, conditions on the grounds and technological options into account.

Current options for deposit regulations

With a deposit paid in cash

The high costs for providing the cash for deposits and longer handling times when serving food and drinks and at the return stations need to be considered.

With a deposit paid via an app

The obstacle here is that visitors first have to download an app, which means network coverage needs to be ensured. On the other hand, this option does away with the costs for cash and wait times while cash is given out.

With a deposit paid by RFID chip

Here, visitors first have to obtain an RFID chip (and charge it), and on the other hand, reusable tableware has to be equipped with an RFID chip. If admission wristlets/chips have already been given out (for example at festivals and multi-day events), this can be an easy and efficient alternative to a cash-free solution. When opting for this approach, please make sure wristlets are reusable and ensure they are collected and processed separately to avoid producing more waste.

Example: Labor Tempelhof 2024



STAFF NEEDS

Personnel-related implementation

One challenge when implementing reuse is how used tableware is to be returned. Due to hygiene regulations, it cannot be returned at the sales stand, which means separate return stations are necessary, which in turn require additional personnel. We planned our staff needs early on, adding to them by recruiting volunteers. Our paid personnel (5 employees via the reusable system provider) was scheduled exclusively for accepting and sorting reusables at the return stations. This was supported by volunteers who ensured waste was separated correctly at heavily frequented reusables/waste collection points (known as “nutrition islands”, see page 20); this included separating reusables into different bins. 15-20 volunteers helped out every day.



Learning and tips



STAFF NEEDS

Plan ahead

Plan how much staff you will need for the return stations in detail and due time to ensure everything runs smoothly. At some types of event, you will be able to work with volunteers; however, due to potentially higher rates of absenteeism, they should not be a supporting pillar. When scheduling volunteers, we advise planning an additional buffer. The number of employees can be reduced further if tableware is returned exclusively at return stations (and not via “nutrition islands”, see page 20), and paid personnel (as opposed to volunteers) is scheduled.

Personnel distribution

At peak times, for example at the end of the concert, having more personnel at the return stations is key. Especially at critical times, such as before the event starts and after it has ended, you will need more personnel. As it is not always guaranteed that volunteers will actually show up, we recommend scheduling enough paid employees at these times.

“Vytal is proud to have been part of the Labor Tempelhof project and to have shown that a 100% reusable system works at large-scale events, too. The cooperation was outstanding – together, we have reached a tremendous goal. We hope many events will follow this successful example and contribute to a sustainable event culture.”

Peter Maximilian Simon,
Managing Director
Vytal Global



2. On the grounds



Example: Labor Tempelhof 2024



SERVING

Food and drinks served with different reusable systems

Drinks were served in reusable cups for a deposit; visitors returned the cups directly at the drinks stands. In contrast, reusable tableware and cutlery were given out without a deposit and had to be returned at separate return stations.

Food from reusable containers more enjoyable

In interviews, visitors gave positive feedback, saying that they perceived food from reusable containers to be more enjoyable.

Single-use items on the grounds

Occasionally, caterers did not, or were not able to, serve all their food in reusables. This concerned wooden picks; grease paper; straws made of paper and bamboo; and paper napkins. Caterers had either used these items after obtaining prior approval or stopped or reduced their use after the matter was addressed.



Learning and tips



SERVING

Use the same reusable system

Using reusable cups (with a deposit) and reusable tableware and cutlery (without a deposit) in parallel can lead to misunderstandings. That's why we recommend using the same system, within which deposits, or non-deposits, and returns are handled the same way. If it is still necessary to use two different systems, for example because a system for reusable cups is already in place, we recommend at least using the same procedures for logistics, returns and deposits.

Reuse gives food an upgrade

Visitors perceive food on reusable tableware to be more enjoyable and of higher quality. This not only strengthens acceptance of reusables, it also gives the food an upgrade.

Reduce single-use materials

Reduce the last remaining single-use items as far as possible. We recommend contractually defining restrictions on single-use items prior to the event. This sometimes leads to the question of which reusables are a sensible alternative. In this context, interrogating habits is key: drinks do not necessarily need a (single-use) straw, and it is absolutely possible to eat a burger without stabilising paper from a reusable plate using reusable cutlery. When it comes to wraps, however, leaving out the paper is more difficult.

As a rule, paper napkins should only be given out upon request and not as a default.

Example: Labor Tempelhof 2024



RETURNS

Returning reusables

There were two options for returning reusable tableware and cutlery: at return stations and at collection points for reusables/waste (called “nutrition islands”).

At the four return stations, visitors took their reusable tableware and cutlery to staff, who helped them sort everything directly into the right bins.

At each of the 23 “nutrition stations”, we had provided four bins for reusables and waste, in which we collected organic waste, non-recyclable waste, reusable tableware and reusable cutlery separately. Visitors threw their reusable tableware and cutlery into the respective designated bin. We did not track whether reusable tableware and cutlery actually was returned and instead operated on a basis of trust, accompanied by communicative measures (“nudging”).

Placement of return stations

We placed the return stations so that they were near the exits, food stands and seating area with its benches and tables. The 23 “nutrition islands” were distributed across the grounds, with increased density in heavily frequented areas. Together, these offered visitors sufficient return options. During the concert, however, waste collectors struggled to empty the bins in time, which led to overfilling.

Despite the strategic placement of the return options, some visitors left their reusable containers at the food stands themselves, where they were discovered by staff by chance and had to be collected at the end of the event. The same applied to containers left on the ground.

Learning and tips



RETURNS

Integrate technological solutions

RFID-based returns management can reduce loss if the associated deposit processes are regulated digitally. In addition, this has the potential to digitalise and simplify processes that currently still rely on staff (for example reverse vending machines), thus reducing personnel needs. When using RFID, always ensure reusability.

Positioning return stations

Using the same positions next to recurring fixed points (for example water stations) helps visitors find return stations more easily. Placing them at exits or near seating/dining areas is especially helpful, as many visitors leave their tableware behind at the end of the event or immediately after eating.

Clear return processes

If reusable articles are collected in bins, the latter may be confused with waste bins. Collection bins for reusables should therefore be clearly distinguishable from waste bins.

Reusable tableware and cutlery can be collected in the same container, as the contents will need sorting later anyway. We highly recommend returning reusables exclusively through return stations, as this means they are sorted immediately upon their return.



Example: Labor Tempelhof 2024

Handling leftovers

Visitors emptied leftovers into the organic waste/non-recyclable waste bins themselves before returning their reusable tableware. When they didn't, staff was there to advise and help separate leftovers into organic and non-recyclable waste.

Confusion due to the wrong bins being used

Reusable articles occasionally got thrown into waste bins, which confused later visitors, some of whom then wanted to throw their reusables into the bin as well.

Collecting tableware and cutlery separately

Visitors and reusables staff felt it was not necessary to have separate containers for tableware and cutlery.



Learning and tips

Regulation for returning reusables and inspections

A clear regulation, communicated both before and at the event, explaining that reusable articles must be returned before leaving the grounds, can help increase the return rate. Signs placed at the exit can also advise visitors of the regulation.

Even when return stations have been put in place, we recommend inspecting the grounds at the end of the event to collect reusable tableware that has been left lying around or has accumulated at the food stands.

Flexibility and coordination

Even the best planning will not prevent unexpected situations that require on-the-spot adaptations (for example providing additional collection stations in the stage areas). It is therefore important that the entire team stays flexible and on the ball. During the event, one person should be responsible for coordinating planning.



Example: Labor Tempelhof 2024



COMMUNICATION

Communicating the reuse concept

We made visitors aware of the reuse concept across the entire grounds, for example by providing information on the screens next to the stage; we also added notices on the counters at the food stands. On two of the three days, the band Die Ärzte mentioned the reuse concept on stage, which had a tremendous effect: on both of the days when the reuse concept was addressed on stage, visitors left considerably fewer reusables behind on the grounds.

Signs on return stations

The “nutrition islands” were equipped with small banners over the bins. Organic and non-recyclable waste was collected in the usual bins at the nutrition islands, as were reusable tableware and cutlery. Even though banners showed what belonged in each bin, it was still unclear. On the one hand, the bins were regular German rubbish bins, meaning reusables were spontaneously associated with waste. On the other hand, the writing on, and colouring of, the bins was confusing (for example, reusables were collected in black bins, in Germany usually used for non-recyclable waste).



Learning and tips



COMMUNICATION

Communication before and at the event

We recommend heavily communicating reuse measures to caterers and visitors – both before and at the event. Recurring notices on stages, screens and at food stands strengthen awareness and motivate visitors to take part. Involving artists in advertising reusable measures is extremely helpful.

Visible signs at return stations

Large flags or coloured markings that can be seen from afar ensure stations are clearly recognisable.

Clear labels and noticeable designs

If it is not possible to return reusables exclusively at staffed return stations, we recommend making sure the corresponding collection containers are labelled as clearly as possible to reduce articles being thrown in the wrong bins, for example:

- different coloured containers;
- containers in shapes that do not allow associations with bins;
- photos of the corresponding reusables on the containers; and
- slots the exact size of the reusable tableware and cutlery.

Label reusable tableware

To further increase return rates, labelling reusables with the words “Take me back!” may be helpful.

“I think it’s just great that the band Die Ärzte have implemented a reusable system in the Labor Tempelhof project.”

Feedback from a concertgoer

Example: Labor Tempelhof 2024



STAFF ALLOCATION

Volunteers provide information

At the “nutrition islands” (see page 20), volunteers provided information on the reusable system. This significantly helped reduce reusable tableware and cutlery being thrown into the wrong bins and in many cases helped prevent loss.

Due to the lower availability of staff in the evening, however, there was a lack of volunteers at some “nutrition islands” at later hours. At peak times, ambassadors of Cradle to Cradle NGO and implementation alliance „mehrweg.einfach.machen.“ also provided information on reusables, the circular concept and the concert’s sustainability targets; they also helped sort waste.



Learning and tips



STAFF ALLOCATION

Providing information raises awareness and reduces loss

Having volunteers provide information is a key factor to raise awareness and create acceptance, to reduce items being thrown into the wrong bins and to prevent the loss of reusable articles.

Staff needs and equipment

We recommend scheduling staff according to peak times to ensure sufficient support. Aids such as grippers, disinfectant and gloves help correct when items have been thrown into the wrong bins and improve sorting.

“Reuse is the key to dining in style with less waste while bringing the circular economy to life. High-quality reusable tableware gives events an upgrade, keeps resources in the cycle and proves that zero-waste large-scale events are possible – as the Labor Tempelhof project has proved. Now we need to ensure reuse becomes the new normal – at festivals and in our daily lives.”

Mathias Gerspacher,
Managing Director
The German Reuse Association



3. Behind the scenes



Example: Labor Tempelhof 2024



SUPPLY

Demand planning

Individual needs were agreed with each caterer in advance, so that the reusable system provider was able to plan and supply according quantities.

Delivery prior to the event and daily supply

The reusable system provider supplied the food stands every morning by transporter. During the event, food stands with an acute lack of space were supplied by sack barrow. This meant caterers were only responsible for giving out containers, and reuse logistics did not create extra work.

Learning and tips



SUPPLY

Timely and realistic demand planning

It is important to clarify the demand for reusable containers prior to the event so that the reusable system provider can provide tableware accordingly. We recommend making sure demands are planned as realistically as possible so that sealed boxes of tableware are not opened unnecessarily, as this later leads to tableware that is actually clean still needing to be washed. (Hygiene regulations stipulate that clean tableware in opened boxes has to be washed as well.)

Daily supply

When fresh tableware is delivered on a daily basis, food stands don't need to reserve as much storage space. In addition, this removes the uncertainty around tableware quantities caterers often experience.



"More reuse please!"

Feedback from a concertgoer



Example: Labor Tempelhof 2024



HYGIENE

Hygiene

The reusable tableware and cutlery had been cleaned by a professional service and was delivered in closed and sealed boxes. Due to hygiene regulations, reusables were not returned at the food stands but at separate return stations.



STORAGE

Storage at or behind the food stands

Boxes that were delivered daily were stored safely and inaccessible to the public, either in the food truck or stand itself or immediately behind it (separated from the public area by a construction fence).

Storage area on the grounds

Besides storing reusables at the food stands, the reusable system provider had been assigned storage space on the grounds from which caterers were supplied.



Learning and tips



HYGIENE

Make caterers aware of hygiene regulations

Due to hygiene regulations, even unused reusable tableware and cutlery had to be cleaned if it was in a box that had already been opened. This can be prevented by making caterers aware of this fact so that they only open boxes as needed. This reduces the number of containers that need cleaning and improves the ecological footprint.



STORAGE

Safe storage

When storing reusables, make sure they do not take up too much space and that opened boxes are stored in the food stands to ensure hygienic conditions. Sealed boxes can also be stored behind the stands but need to be inaccessible to visitors.

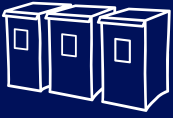
Store used tableware in the shade

If possible, store boxes with used reusable tableware away from heat and sunlight to reduce the risk of germs. It is also important to make sure boxes are not stored for too long before they make their way to the dishwashing service. At multi-day events, it may also make sense to make several trips to the dishwashing service.

Optimise routes

Depending on the size of the event grounds and the number of caterers, we recommend setting up one or two additional, decentralised storage spaces to ensure speedy deliveries even during the event itself.

Example: Labor Tempelhof 2024



SORTING

Sorting reusable tableware

There were two sorting processes, depending on how reusables were returned: at the return stations, visitors removed leftovers from their reusable tableware and returned it; staff then sorted everything into separate containers (bowls, trays, cutlery, etc.). At the "nutrition islands" (see page 20), reusable tableware and cutlery was collected in bins without prior sorting. From there, waste collectors regularly collected the bins and distributed them to the return stations, where they were emptied and sorted by staff..

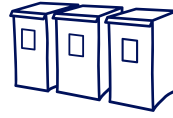
Returning boxes of reusables

The reusable system provider collected the sorted boxes of used reusable tableware from the return stations at night after the grounds had closed; they were then checked to make sure everything had been sorted correctly and stored in the central storage space.

At the end of the three-day concert series, the boxes of used and sorted tableware were all driven to the dishwashing service, which was on the way to the next event and had been selected to minimise routes.



Learning and tips



SORTING

Standardise returns and sorting

We recommend returning tableware exclusively at return stations, where containers and cutlery are immediately sorted (by visitors and/or staff), as this prevents having to sort and separate waste at a later time.

Communication on the collection of boxes

If it is not possible to return items exclusively at staffed return stations, walkie-talkies help ensure close communication between reusables staff and waste collectors (for example, which bins are full and need collecting? Where do we need more bins?)



Example: Labor Tempelhof 2024



DISHWASHING SERVICES

Washing dishes after the concert series

After the three-day event had ended, the used reusable tableware and cutlery was washed by a central service provider, on the basis of which losses were calculated.

Learning and tips



DISHWASHING SERVICES

Short transport routes to the dishwashing service

To avoid emissions, we recommend choosing a dishwashing service for reusable tableware and cutlery that is as close to the event location as possible. If this is not possible, the reusable system provider should plan their route to ensure the tableware and cutlery are taken to a dishwashing service that is on the way to the next event or near the storage facility.



4. Costs for introducing reuse at events

Introducing a reusable system has many benefits; at first, however, it means investing. As a reuse structure rarely exists, processes first need to be established and additional resources planned. This initially leads to extra costs; however, these can be reduced, or even saved, in the long term.

Cost factors that need considering are: rent; transport; the cleaning and potential loss of tableware/cutlery; the integration of a deposit system; staff; and the necessary infrastructure on site (in particular return stations), whereby staff expenses and potential losses in tableware are the biggest cost drivers. On the other hand, reuse means savings in waste collection costs and the single-use infrastructure; for the most part, however, these savings do not cover the additional costs for reuse in full. Actual costs and savings potential vary, depending on the event, and must therefore be looked at on a case-by-case basis.

To minimise, and ideally even refinance, the necessary investments, we recommend factoring the according costs into the budget from the start when planning your event. To cover the costs, you might consider one of the following: slightly increased ticket prices or food offers; a “reuse euro” (in which the ticket price expressly includes an amount of €1 for reusables); a deposit system for visitors; sponsoring; or distributing the initial costs fairly across all parties involved (organisers, caterers, visitors). Good communication with organisers, caterers and visitors creates acceptance and emphasises the benefits of reuse.

Our [cost calculator](#) can help you estimate the necessary investments for and savings potential of employing reuse.



“It’s much, much more convenient to eat from reusable tableware than from soggy cardboard/maize/whatever plates with splintery cutlery!”

Feedback from a concertgoer



5. How can you implement reuse at your event?

Concerts, festivals and other large-scale events have already shown how reuse can work at scale. Sparking tangible enthusiasm: many visitors felt they were a win – creating clean grounds and more enjoyable food and drinks. And what's even better: positive experiences like these have an effect that lasts, even after the event itself has ended. These experiences show people how easy and practical reuse can be, creating a foundation for reusables to become a given in our daily lives.

"I think it's really cool! I want it to be the default in Czechia and across the globe as well."

Feedback from a concertgoer

The following are our key points for a successful reuse implementation

- 1. Decide on a reuse rate of 100% at an early stage**
Consider reuse in every aspect of your event and integrate it into your planning processes: for example, deciding on whether to charge a deposit, placing return stations, scheduling staff and conducting test runs with caterers.
- 2. Plan costs for reusables at an early stage**
By planning ahead, you can take costs into account in future budgets from day one.
- 3. Use the same reusable system for food and drinks**
Ensure the same returns process at stations near the food stands and exits (as opposed to two providers/different deposit systems).
- 4. Information and communication are key**
Vis-à-vis caterers, on stage, at the stands and in communications before the event: more is more!
- 5. Return items via staffed return stations**
Return stations clearly separate reusables from waste and make sorting easier.
- 6. Have fun meeting visitors**
Doing a good deed feels great: returning tableware makes people happy.



6. Join the Alliance of Large-Scale Event Organisers!

We are convinced: reuse at large-scale events is more than just a measure to prevent waste! It is time to lead by example and prove that it is possible for entertainment and environmental protection to go hand in hand.

Your commitment will inspire visitors and other organisers alike to take the same step. Together, we can make reuse a given and the default, at the same time setting positive change in motion – for the industry, for the environment and for us all.

“Reusable systems are essential to reduce plastic waste and for a working circular economy. The scientific community plays a key role in promoting a circular economy and developing reusable packaging. Through innovative research and technological progress, we can create sustainable solutions that help reduce plastic waste and strengthen the circular economy.”

Sandra Transchel, Professor
Kühne Logistics University



**Implement reuse
at your event!**

Contact us at
kontakt@mehrweg-einfach-machen.de
and join the Reuse at Large-Scale
Events Alliance!

Implement reuse at your event!
#MoreReuse