

Press release

SETAC offered an exemplary carbon-smart conference

When the topic of a conference is the environment, factors related to responsibility need extra-special attention. The 29th European annual meeting of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC) involved scrupulous planning to ensure an eco-friendly event.

As with so many other conferences held at Messukeskus Helsinki, the SETAC conference was perfectly organised. The organisers of the conference can be especially proud of how well environmental considerations were taken into account. This was reflected in every aspect of the conference arrangements, making the event a model for all other events dealing with environmental concerns.

The Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC) held its annual European conference in Helsinki from 26 to 30 May 2019. The event was organised by SETAC and hosted by the Finnish Environment Institute. This year's conference drew a record 2,162 participants, from 64 countries. The conference in Helsinki was the northernmost location for the society's annual conferences, and received excellent feedback both for the overall organisation and for its environmental friendliness.

Responsibly? Of course!

Messukeskus was a natural choice of venue for the SETAC conference, as the centre places a strong emphasis on environmental issues. Messukeskus was the first Finnish exhibition and conference centre to receive the ISO 14001 environmental management certification in 2009.

Messukeskus recovers and reuses 99 per cent of the waste generated in its operations, and makes extensive use of the latest innovations in building technology, such as geothermal energy, district cooling, heat recovery and LED technology. In the last few years, Messukeskus has also reduced the use of disposable products, increased its usage of electric vehicles and reduced its water consumption by half. At the time as the SETAC conference was taking place in Messukeskus, a solar power plant was being installed on the roof of the venue.

Recycling and reuse of materials

Given its impressive eco-friendly credentials, Messukeskus helped the organisers get off to a strong start in planning an environmentally friendly conference. Additional ideas and wishes that SETAC expressed during the planning phases were fully taken into account without any difficulty.

The conference organisers provided all the materials related to the event in digital format, and encouraged the participants to avoid printing material. Messukeskus also takes an ultra-modern approach to helping visitors find their way, as all the halls, lobbies and conference rooms are equipped with large and easily programmable digital displays. Use of conference-themed floor materials is kept to a minimum, and even this small amount is reused. Messukeskus has a well-established tradition of having these materials recycled to make bags and accessories.

Public transport

The City of Helsinki City supported the SETAC conference by providing participants with free public transport. Messukeskus is just five minutes from the city centre by train, and trains run every few minutes. SETAC conference participants gave highly positive feedback on the fast, eco-friendly and congestion-free public transport connections between Messukeskus and central Helsinki.

Locally sourced food and the world's cleanest water

Catering for the conference was provided by Messukeskus' service partner Fazer Food Services, using locally sourced produce and seasonal vegetables. One of the meeting days was entirely devoted to vegetarian food. Food waste was kept to a minimum throughout the event. The conference guests had plenty of praise not only for the tastiness of the food, but also the environmentally conscious food services as a whole.

The quality of drinking water in Finland has been proven to be the best in the world; the guests could conveniently refill their own water bottles in the conference facilities. Participants could enjoy responsibly produced coffee in the Messukeskus restaurants during breaks in the conference proceedings. The coffee beans were roasted using energy from renewable sources, with no environmentally burdensome waste being produced.

The eco-friendly SETAC conference in numbers

- Messukeskus holds the ISO 14001 environmental management certification
- 99% of waste is recycled
- 85% of food locally produced
- Vegetarian Wednesday – 369,300 kg less CO₂ emissions
- No conference-themed floor materials – 1,020 kg less waste (418 kg CO₂)
- Free public transport for conference guests – 30,300 kg less CO₂ emissions

Thank you for the feedback, SETAC!

“Excellent preparation, which led to a perfect meeting! We have never felt more welcome than at Messukeskus. Everyone involved—catering, AV, logistics, the project manager—worked together as one big team. Extremely helpful and friendly staff!”

“We had the same person coordinating everything from the start of the preparations until the last day of the event. That was extremely helpful”.

“The friendliness, the motivation and the professionalism of the persons involved in the preparation of our event gave us a very comfortable feeling. We were fully confident that the event was going to be a success”.

“There is not one single thing that we could think of that Messukeskus could have done better. The cooperation was excellent”.