

Complex Networks 2024

Sustainability report

Complex Networks 2024, the 13th International Conference on Complex Networks & Their Applications, was successfully held in Istanbul, Turkey, from December 10th to 12th, 2024. This edition continued the commitment to sustainability by implementing several eco-friendly initiatives.

The implementation of sustainability commitments has been held conjointly by the Sustainability Chair, the Local Sustainability Co-Chair and the Local General Co-Chair.

Venue

Yıldız Technical University (YTU)

The conference was hosted at YTU, strategically located in the heart of Istanbul. YTU has been a pioneer in sustainability efforts, making it an ideal partner for this event. The university provided a functional and pleasant environment, featuring a spacious plenary hall, two smaller rooms equipped with advanced technical and IT facilities, as well as a large hall suitable for networking, research poster displays and relaxation. Additionally, the on-campus cafeteria facilitated communal dining in a convivial setting.

Sustainability Initiatives at YTU

YTU has implemented ambitious goals to reduce consumption of plastic, paper, food, water and waste. The university actively promotes responsible consumption and carbon emission awareness, encourages recycling and engages in various environmental initiatives:

- **Recycling Programs:** Creation of bowls from recycled plastic bottles to feed stray animals on campus.
- **Biodiversity Enhancement:** Tree planting to enrich local biodiversity and mapping of plant species on campus.
- **Alternative Beverages:** Harvesting linden flowers to prepare infusions as alternatives to traditional tea.
- **Community Consumption:** Picking fruits such as strawberries, peaches, quinces, pears, cherries and persimmons for communal consumption.
- **Urban Agriculture:** Establishment of community gardens for staff, promoting urban agriculture.
- **Water Management:** Measures to reduce surface water flow to protect soil and land.
- **Energy Management:** Use of solar panels.

YTU is proudly the first state university campus in Istanbul to achieve "Zero Waste" certification, reflecting its effective waste management model focused on recycling and waste reduction.

Sustainable Practices

Accommodation

- **Hotel Selection:** Hotels with sustainable certifications were prioritized, offering comfortable accommodation while minimizing their environmental impact.
- **Transportation Considerations:** Proximity to the conference venue and accessibility via public transportation were key factors, with an average commute of thirty minutes by public transit.

Catering

Menus for lunches and the welcome reception were carefully crafted, emphasizing balanced meals with local and seasonal ingredients to reduce the carbon footprint. Vegan and vegetarian options were available, and portion sizes were adjusted to minimize food waste.

- **Catering:** 100% of the utensils used during coffee breaks and lunches were recyclable or reusable. Service dishes were made of stainless steel or glass. Some participants brought their own utensils and cups, a practice that could be further encouraged.
- **Menu Options:** Vegetarian dishes were served, and balanced, low-carbon menus were offered, with reduced portions of beef and limited to one serving.
- **Dietary Considerations:** 18% of participants had specific dietary requirements, which were accommodated in menu planning.
- **Food Waste:** No food waste was reported; some participants even refilled their plates, indicating ecological awareness.

Digital Information and Communication

- **Digital Information:** Website pages provided access to essential information for planning trips and stay in Istanbul, including conference schedules, poster presentations, meal participation, etc. A dedicated sustainability page on the conference website provided participants with essential information, promoting a paperless approach.
- **Digital Communication:** Emails were sent before and at the beginning of the conference to provide important details such as schedules, session locations and themes, supplemented by QR codes displayed at registration desks and various points in the YTU hall to provide easy access to this information.

Travel

- **Travel:** Participants were encouraged to choose sustainable transportation options and offered the possibility to offset carbon emissions related to travel.
- **Public transportation:** Attendees were encouraged to utilize public transportation to reach the venue, as well as shared taxis.

Water Management

Complex Networks once again provided participants with reusable glass water bottles. Istanbul faces a unique challenge when it comes to water, as tap water is not drinkable, leading to the widespread

use of plastic bottles. To face this, reusable glass bottles offer a sustainable alternative to limit plastic waste. Water fountains were placed around the venue to facilitate easy refills.

Waste Management

While the catering team and university staff managed waste professionally, obtaining quantitative data on waste was challenging. Though precise measurements were not available, we could observe an effort to minimize waste.

Sustainable Goodies

The organic cotton tote bags, produced by local companies, align with the same eco-friendly goal, providing a sustainable alternative to plastic bags while supporting local businesses.

Inclusivity and Diversity

Complex Networks 2024 emphasized inclusivity by offering differentiated pricing, enabling students from economically disadvantaged countries to attend. The conference also ensured significant female representation across all committees and among participants, surpassing the average in this type of event.

In summary

Complex Networks 2024 in Istanbul successfully integrated sustainability into its organization, setting a benchmark for future conferences in the field. By integrating these strategies, the conference aimed to promote sustainability and reduce its environmental impact.