EmpCo Directive: New Rules for Sustainability Communication

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As of 27 September 2026, new European Union regulations protecting consumers from misleading environmental claims have come into force. The EmpCo Directive is designed to combat greenwashing and improve the transparency of information regarding the environmental impact of products and services. The new rules are also relevant to the promotion of sustainable solutions in tourism, hospitality, and the meetings industry.

What is the EmpCo Directive?

EmpCo (Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition) is the commonly used name for Directive (EU) 2024/825 of the European Parliament and of the Council, adopted on 28 February 2024. Its objective is to empower consumers in the green transition by strengthening protection against unfair commercial practices and providing more reliable information.

The Directive entered into force on 26 March 2024, while the new rules have applied since 27 September 2026.

EmpCo amends existing legislation on unfair commercial practices and consumer rights. One of its key objectives is to combat greenwashing, meaning the practice of presenting products, services, or activities as more environmentally friendly than can be substantiated by available evidence.

The most significant change concerns the credibility of environmental claims. Communications should be specific, accurate, and verifiable. Simply using environmental slogans, symbols, or imagery can no longer substitute for genuine action or evidence supporting the claimed environmental benefits.

What changes does EmpCo introduce?

1. Greater precision in environmental claims

The Directive limits the use of generic environmental claims such as “eco-friendly,” “green,” or “environmentally friendly” unless the business can support them with reliable and widely recognised evidence demonstrating real environmental benefits.

This does not mean that all sustainability-related terminology is prohibited. The key question is whether the claim reflects reality and can be substantiated.

For event organisers, instead of stating:

“Our events are environmentally friendly,”

it is preferable to say:

“At our events, we implement measures to reduce the use of single-use materials and provide

participants with access to public transport.”

2. No attributing sustainability characteristics to an entire organisation based on a single initiative

Implementing one environmental measure does not automatically justify describing an entire company, product, or operation as sustainable.

For example, reducing paper consumption in an office is not sufficient grounds to claim that the entire organisation is “fully sustainable.”

Communications should clearly distinguish between specific environmental initiatives and an overall assessment of environmental impact.

The same principle applies to destination marketing. The presence of certified hotels or a well-developed public transport network can be important strengths, but they do not automatically make an entire city a sustainable destination.

3. Greater transparency for labels and certifications

EmpCo restricts the use of sustainability labels that are not based on recognised certification schemes or established by public authorities.

Businesses should therefore pay close attention to:

- Who issues the certification
- What criteria must be met to obtain it
- Whether a verification and auditing system exists
- Which aspects of the business or product the certification covers
- Creating a proprietary “green” logo or using a leaf symbol alone does not constitute proof of environmental performance.

4. Restrictions on climate-neutrality claims

The Directive prohibits claims that a product, service, or event is “climate neutral,” “climate positive,” or has a reduced climate impact if those claims rely solely on greenhouse gas offsetting conducted outside the company’s value chain.

In practice, simply financing offset projects, such as tree planting initiatives, is not sufficient justification for claiming climate neutrality.

For events, organisations should precisely explain the methodology used, the emission-reduction measures implemented, and any offset projects involved, without attributing environmental characteristics that cannot be substantiated.

5. Credible targets and future commitments

Many organisations communicate plans to achieve climate neutrality, reduce emissions, or decrease waste generation. Under EmpCo, such statements require stronger supporting evidence.

Claims about future environmental performance may be considered misleading if they are not supported by:

- Clear commitments
- Measurable targets
- A publicly available and verifiable implementation plan
- Adequate resources
- Regular independent monitoring and disclosure of progress

Instead of stating:

- “By 2030, we will become a green destination,”

it is preferable to say:

- “By 2030, we aim to reduce the amount of waste generated at events within our programme. Progress will be measured against a defined baseline year and reported through regular public updates.”

What does EmpCo mean for the MICE industry?

The meetings and events industry increasingly uses sustainability as a key element of the value proposition offered by cities, hotels, conference venues, and event organisers. EmpCo provides an opportunity to refine this communication and place greater emphasis on tangible actions and measurable results.

Particular attention should be paid to terms such as:

- “Sustainable event”
- “Green meetings”
- “Responsible destination”
- “Climate-friendly venue”

These expressions are not automatically prohibited, but their use must correspond to actual practices and be supported by appropriate evidence.

How should organisations prepare their communications?

A good starting point is to review:

- Marketing materials
- Websites
- Presentations
- Brochures

- Social media content

Particular attention should be given to:

- General environmental claims
- Climate-neutrality statements
- Labels or symbols suggesting certification

EmpCo does not prohibit organisations from communicating environmental initiatives or promoting sustainable practices. Its purpose is to reduce misleading claims and improve consumers’ access to reliable information.

For the tourism and MICE sectors, this means placing even greater emphasis on the precision of communications, the credibility of supporting data, and ensuring that all claims accurately reflect real actions and achievements.

Sustainability should be communicated through concrete solutions, documented results, and transparent goals.