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MI AMI BEATs

Executive summary

The MI AMI BEATs project, developed within the Alta Scuola Politecnica program and in collaboration with MI AMI Festival organizers in Milan, addresses the challenge of designing a transparent, accessible, and data-driven sustainability evaluation framework for music festivals. It aims to bridge the gap between rising environmental expectations and the lack of standardized tools for sustainability assessment in the music industry.

Better Days s.r.l., organizer of MI AMI, played a central role in defining goals: the objective was to create a framework of indicators usable by organizers to monitor, score, and communicate sustainability performance. The project followed a mixed-methods approach including literature review, benchmarking of protocols, field data collection at MI AMI Festival 2024, and structured engagement with experts and festival actors.

The challenge is relevant as many organizers lack resources to adopt certifications and rely on non-standardized practices. Audiences and institutions increasingly demand proof of responsibility, yet no unified model exists to measure or compare performance credibly. To address this, the project analyzed stakeholder needs, including organizers, staff, artists, and attendees, through meetings with Better Days, academic consultations, and extensive fieldwork at MI AMI 2024. Interviews with 30 stakeholders and a survey of 700 participants provided data, perspectives, and practical suggestions.

A review of the sustainable event industry highlighted the gap between formal protocols and real practices. Comparing four leading frameworks with ten European festivals showed progress in waste, energy, and mobility, but shortcomings in long-term planning, inclusivity, transparency, and impact reporting. From this analysis, a sustainability matrix was developed, structured around the six dimensions of the European Green Festival Roadmap 2030: Energy, Materials & Waste, Food & Beverage, Travel & Transport, Water, and Community & Biodiversity. These criteria guided the definition of measurable indicators, refined with insights from field research.

The final framework includes thirteen indicators in seven categories: Emissions monitoring & Communication, Energy, Materials & Waste, Food & Beverage, Travel & Transport, Water, and Community & Biodiversity. Each indicator has its own formula, value function, and scoring system. Scores are aggregated through a Weighted Linear Sum, assigning festivals a sustainability tier. To improve usability, an Excel-based tool was created with drop-down menus, data entry fields, and automated scoring, making the framework accessible without technical expertise.

In conclusion, MI AMI BEATs provides a concrete, scalable, and freely accessible solution, combining academic rigor with field validation. It offers festivals a systematic method to track and communicate sustainability, supporting cultural events in aligning with environmental and social responsibility in a transparent way.

Key Words

Sustainability in festivals, Data-driven framework, Multi-criteria indicators, Transparency and accessibility



MI AMI BEATs Logotype.



Figure 1 - MI AMI BEATs visual identity graphic.

**Project description
written by the
Principal Academic
Tutor**

Music festivals are powerful cultural and social experiences, but they also generate significant environmental impacts, from energy use and merchandise production to waste generation and transport-related emissions. The MI AMI BEATs project addresses this challenge by developing a voluntary sustainability protocol specifically tailored to music events, combining environmental, social, and economic perspectives. By embedding sustainability into the lifecycle of cultural events, MI AMI BEATs aims to inspire a new standard for environmentally and socially responsible festivals in Italy and beyond.

The protocol was tested at the MI AMI festival in Milan, a long-standing event attracting 23,000 attendees and 200 staff. The 2024 edition served as a baseline: (i) to set monitoring indicators covering multiple aspects (waste, water, energy, biodiversity, transport, materials, etc.), and (ii) to assess the festival's footprint through a site-specific survey administered to participants during the event. The results informed the development of sustainability targets, which were then implemented and monitored during the 2025 edition.

The project followed a structured methodology: (1) workshops with the organizers of MI AMI event to identify objectives, critical issues, and best practices; (2) definition of a site-specific survey to support a detailed footprint analysis of MI AMI 2024; (3) identification of targets and mitigation strategies; (4) definition of the MI AMI BEATs protocol; (5) application of the protocol across both editions of MI AMI (2024 and 2025); and (6) monitoring and dissemination, including engagements with other festival organizers to ensure replicability.

Stakeholders included Better Days SRL (festival organizer), academic partners from Politecnico di Milano and Politecnico di Torino, and local communities who benefited from reduced ecological impacts and enhanced cultural responsibility. Disciplines such as sociology, design, urban planning, acoustics, energy, and waste management were integrated to guarantee a holistic approach.

**Team description by
skill**

The MI AMI_BEATs project team (Figure 2) is characterized by its multidisciplinary nature and complementary skill sets, which enable it to address the sustainability challenges of music festivals through an integrated and systemic approach.

Agnese Baldoni, a Master's student in Systemic Design at Politecnico di Torino, and Laura Calisi, a Master's student in Interior Design at Politecnico di Milano, contributed as designers, focusing on graphics, presentations, visual identity, and communication. Their work ensured that the project's content was clear, accessible, and coherent, facilitating the understanding of collected data and developed strategies, while also providing the project with a recognizable and engaging visual identity.

Francesca Falconi, Giacomo Seratoni, and Matteo Napodano, Master's students in Management Engineering at Politecnico di Milano, brought in analytical and managerial expertise essential for conducting footprint analyses, identifying sustainability goals, and translating theoretical objectives into concrete and measurable operational strategies. Their ability to organize complex data and integrate logistics, human resources, and financial evaluations ensured that the project remained both feasible and realistic.

Salvatore De Pascalis, a Master's student in Environmental and Land Engineering with a focus on Remediation Technologies at Politecnico di Milano, contributed with specialized technical expertise in environmental management, risk mitigation, and ecological impact reduction, ensuring that the proposed strategies are both effective and sustainable in the long term.

The collaboration between designers, management engineers, and environmental specialists enabled the team to develop an innovative, multidimensional, and replicable protocol capable of integrating mitigation, monitoring, and awareness-raising, while actively involving organizers, participants, and local communities.

Goal

The main objective of the project is to develop a sustainability assessment framework for music festivals that is clear, accessible, and data-driven, capable of transforming sustainability from an abstract concept into a practical operational tool. The intention is to enable informed decisions and targeted actions across all stages of a festival, from waste management to energy use, from transportation to catering services, and from community engagement to biodiversity promotion, making sustainability measurable, comparable, and communicable.

To achieve this goal, the project defined thirteen specific indicators organized into seven categories, each with dedicated formulas, thresholds, and scoring systems. These indicators make it possible to calculate an overall score and classify events according to different levels of sustainability performance. The multi-criteria approach allows for the simultaneous consideration of multiple, and often conflicting, dimensions, ensuring a comprehensive, balanced, and reliable evaluation.

Another key objective is to make the framework practical and user-friendly through an intuitive Excel-based tool that guides organizers in calculating scores and interpreting results, even without advanced technical expertise. In this way, the project delivers not only a methodologically rigorous instrument but also fosters cultural change by promoting responsible and conscious behaviors. The result is a replicable model capable of supporting any festival or cultural event that seeks to integrate sustainability into its practices, while communicating its social and environmental impact in a clear and transparent way.

Understanding the problem

Despite growing attention to sustainability in music festivals, many organizers struggle to manage large-scale events without clear and standardized tools to measure, evaluate, and communicate environmental, social, and economic performance. Current practices are often fragmented, inconsistent, and difficult to compare across events, while the financial resources and technical expertise required to adopt certifications or proprietary assessment tools are frequently limited. At the same time, audiences, institutions, and stakeholders increasingly expect festivals to demonstrate responsibility, transparency, and a tangible commitment to sustainability.

Data collected from the MI AMI Festival in 2024 and 2025, through interviews with stakeholders including staff (Figure 3), artists, and participants, as well as a structured survey completed by more than 1,000 respondents, revealed that information related to sustainability is often partial, poorly coordinated, and not fully integrated into operational decision-making. This lack of systematic assessment complicates the planning and implementation of targeted interventions in critical areas such as energy use, transportation, waste management, food and beverage provision, water consumption, community engagement, and biodiversity protection.

A comparative analysis of sustainability protocols and practices from ten other European festivals highlighted progress in areas such as waste reduction, adoption of renewable energy, and sustainable mobility. However, significant gaps remain in long-term strategic planning, social inclusion, transparency, and impact reporting. Without a unified and replicable framework, organizers lack a comprehensive understanding of the sustainability of their events, limiting their capacity to improve performance and communicate results credibly. This underscores the need for a structured, evidence-based tool grounded in measurable indicators, capable of guiding informed decision-making and embedding sustainability into all stages of festival management, transforming it into a concrete and shared value for all stakeholders involved.



Figure 2 – MI AMI BEATs Team.



Figure 3 - MI AMI Interview, dialogue with a festival operator during data collection.

Exploring the opportunities

The analysis of opportunities in music festivals demonstrates how sustainability can serve as a strategic tool to enhance the environmental, social, and cultural performance of events. Insights gathered from the MI AMI Festival in 2024 and 2025, combined with comparisons to other European festivals, highlighted concrete opportunities such as the adoption of renewable energy, waste reduction and recycling, sustainable mobility, and the use of low-impact local suppliers.

From a social perspective, sustainability provides opportunities to actively engage the community, raise participant awareness, and create a more inclusive and participatory festival experience. The use of clear and measurable indicators makes it possible to translate these opportunities into concrete, replicable, and easily monitorable actions, equipping organizers with reliable tools to make informed decisions and communicate results transparently.

Moreover, embedding sustainability into the identity of the festival strengthens the event's reputation, transforming sustainability from a mere constraint into a defining feature and added value of the project.

Generating a solution

The MI AMI_BEATs project has developed a concrete response to the challenge of sustainability in music festivals through the creation of an operational protocol, structured as a comprehensive and interactive Excel-based tool. This tool enables organizers to evaluate, monitor, and communicate the environmental and social performance of their events in a clear and systematic way.

The protocol is built around thirteen indicators, organized into seven key categories: Emissions Monitoring and Communication, Energy, Materials and Waste, Food and Beverages, Travel and Transport, Water, and Community & Biodiversity. These indicators translate industry best practices into concrete and measurable criteria. For each indicator, reference values, thresholds, scoring functions, and calculation formulas are defined, allowing the determination of an overall sustainability score through a multi-criteria approach based on Multi-Attribute Value Theory and the weighted sum of individual indicators.

This tool supports organizers in making strategic decisions aimed at reducing environmental impact and improving overall performance. Beyond providing an objective assessment, the protocol encourages the adoption of innovative and responsible practices, raises awareness among organizers, artists, staff, and participants, and contributes to a positive impact on the environment, the local community, and the overall festival experience. In doing so, it fosters a strong culture of sustainability that is fully integrated into event management.

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