

SUSTAINABLE HOTEL INDUSTRY ECOLABELLING PROGRAM

IN ARGENTINA



Sustainable Hotel Management

Ecolabelling Regulations



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Ecolabelling Regulations

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

0	Introduction.....	4
1	Purpose.....	4
2	Applicable Jurisdiction.....	4
3	Competent Institutions and Organizations	4
3.1	Institutions and Organizations	4
3.2	Requirements and Duties.....	5
4	Preparation and Review of the Ecolabelling Program	5
4.1	Preparation of the Protocol.....	5
4.2	Review of the Program.....	5
4.2.1	Necessary Documentation	5
4.2.2	Mandatory Review	5
4.2.3	Validation of the Review.....	5
5	Link to the Ecolabelling Program.....	6
5.1	Preliminary Information about the Ecolabelling Program	6
5.2	Membership of the Ecolabelling Program.....	6
5.3	Certification of the Sustainable Management Protocol.....	6
5.3.1	Elementary Level Certification	6
5.3.2	Advanced and Excellence Levels Certification.....	6
6	Request, Award, Maintenance and Renewal of the Sustainable Management Ecolabel.....	7
6.1	Request for Membership of the Ecolabelling Program.....	7
6.2	Certification Request.....	8
6.3	Certification Process.....	8
6.3.1	Certification Dates	8
6.3.2	Certification	8
6.3.3	Certification Report	8
6.3.4	Management of Non-conformities.....	8
6.4	Ecolabel Award or Refusal.....	9
6.4.1	Ecolabel Award	9
6.4.2	Compliance with the Immediately Lower Level	9
6.4.3	Agreement between the Parties	9

- 6.4.4 Ecolabel Refusal..... 9
- 6.5 Ecolabel Maintenance.....9
 - 6.5.1 Certificate Validation..... 9
 - 6.5.2 Validation Terms..... 9
 - 6.5.3 Certificate Renewal 10
 - 6.5.4 Certificate Renewal Terms 10
 - 6.5.5 Information Update..... 11
- 6.6 Ecolabel Renewal11
- 6.7 Certificate Revocation11
- 7 Register of Certified Hotels 12
- 8 Promotion of the Ecolabelling System for Hotels 12
- 9 The Sustainable Hotel Industry Ecolabel..... 13
 - 9.1 Trademark13
 - 9.2 Vested Rights of the Distinction13
 - 9.3 Enabled Hotels13
 - 9.4 Use of the Ecolabel.....13
 - 9.5 Isologotype.....13
- 10 Confidentiality 13
- Annex I. Isologotype..... 14
- Annex II. Requirements and Duties of the Competent Institutions and Organizations under the Ecolabelling Program..... 15

0 Introduction

The Applicable Regulations of the Sustainable Hotel Management Protocol is part of the Sustainable Hotel Industry Ecolabelling Program in Argentina.

This document has been developed by the Argentine Association of Tourism Hotels (Asociación de Hoteles de Turismo de la República Argentina – AHT, as per its initials in Spanish) and validated by the Argentine Standardization and Certification Institute (Instituto Argentino de Normalización y Certificación – IRAM, as per its initials in Spanish). Both of them are the initial Certification Bodies of the Sustainable Management Ecolabelling Protocol.

The Regulations are intended to describe the process of preparation and subsequent reviews of the Sustainable Management Ecolabelling Protocol, specify the different ways a hotel may be linked to the Program, detail the steps to be followed and the different possible alternatives in the certification process and the use of the Sustainable Hotel Industry Ecolabel in a responsible manner.

1 Purpose

The purpose of these Sustainable Hotel Management Ecolabelling Regulations (hereinafter, the “Regulations”) is to establish the procedures to set up and apply the Sustainable Hotel Industry Ecolabelling Program (hereinafter, the “Program”) developed by the Argentine Association of Tourism Hotels (hereinafter, “AHT”).

These Regulations lay down the rules to request, award, maintain and renew the Sustainable Hotel Industry Ecolabel (hereinafter, the “Ecolabel”). This Ecolabel may be held by those hotel establishments that prove, through the external assessments and controls described, conformity with requirements, specifications and criteria of any of the different Sustainable Hotel Management Protocol application levels (hereinafter, the “Protocol”).

Along with the use of the Ecolabel, the hotel will be awarded a Sustainable Hotel Management Conformity Certificate (hereinafter, the “Certificate”), which clearly states the certified company’s name, the Certification Body, the scope of the certification and the Protocol application level (elementary, advanced, excellence).

2 Applicable Jurisdiction

These Regulations shall be applicable to Argentine-based hotel establishments that have implemented a sustainable management system and voluntarily wish to obtain a third-party and independent certification of their management system so that they may make use of the brand, isologotype and Ecolabel accrediting such recognition.

3 Competent Institutions and Organizations

3.1 Institutions and Organizations

The competent institutions and organizations to apply the Program will be AHT and IRAM.

The appointment of a new competent institution or organization to apply the system as new certification entities shall be approved by AHT.

AHT has a Register of Certification Bodies and the respective levels enabled to be certified.

3.2 Requirements and Duties

Competent institutions and organizations will ensure that the certification processes contemplated in the Program are performed coherently, neutrally and reliably by an independent agent from the organization assessed.

In addition, they will see to ensure and encourage the stakeholders' involvement and the transparency in applying the Program.

Annex II further describes the requirements and duties of competent institutions and organizations.

4 Preparation and Review of the Ecolabelling Program

4.1 Preparation of the Protocol

AHT developed the requirements, specifications and criteria set out in the Protocol, as well as these Regulations. To such end, it consulted other competent institutions and organizations and made them become involved.

4.2 Review of the Program

Any entity that intends to review the Program shall be authorized by AHT and deliver the documentation specified in point 4.2.1.

AHT will ensure that those in charge of reviewing the system show that they have specialized knowledge and proven experience in the sustainable tourism and hotel industry, as well as the capacity to manage the process neutrally and in conformity with these Regulations. For this purpose, it may have expert and independent technical assistance.

4.2.1 Necessary Documentation

Those in charge of reviewing the Program shall submit the following documents to AHT:

- a) A preliminary report accounting for the need for reviewing the Program.
- b) A proposal to review the Program, either in any or several parts thereof: Protocol, Regulations and/or Application Guide.
- c) A report on the expected results, applying the proposed reviews.

4.2.2 Mandatory Review

The Program as a whole shall be necessarily reviewed every six years by AHT and may remain unchanged if thus determined in its review.

Such review shall be implemented as set out in these Regulations.

4.2.3 Validation of the Review

The Program reviews shall be validated and approved by AHT.

In reviewing the Program, AHT will ensure the non-introduction of certification criteria or requirements whose application imposes disproportionate economic or administrative burdens or that cannot be borne by hotels, as system users.

5 Link to the Ecolabelling Program

5.1 Preliminary Information about the Ecolabelling Program

Through the enabled systems, AHT will provide all companies engaged in the hotel industry with preliminary information about the Program, including the necessary documentation to become a member, membership fees and annual fees for the use of the Ecolabel, as applicable, as well as any other additional information.

5.2 Membership of the Ecolabelling Program

All hotels interested in participating in the Program should become a member thereof. They may thus gain access to supplementary documentation, technical support, updates and additional information, provided by AHT or other member companies.

In no way does this link to the Program entitle the member hotel to make advertising, distinction or use of the brand.

5.3 Certification of the Sustainable Management Protocol

The Program is based on a certifiable three-level application: elementary, advanced and excellence, as defined in the Protocol. These levels establish differential sustainable management requirements, from a lesser to a higher degree of strictness and matureness in the hotel's management.

This level of link to the Program entitles the certified hotel to use and exploit the distinction achieved (see point 9.5).

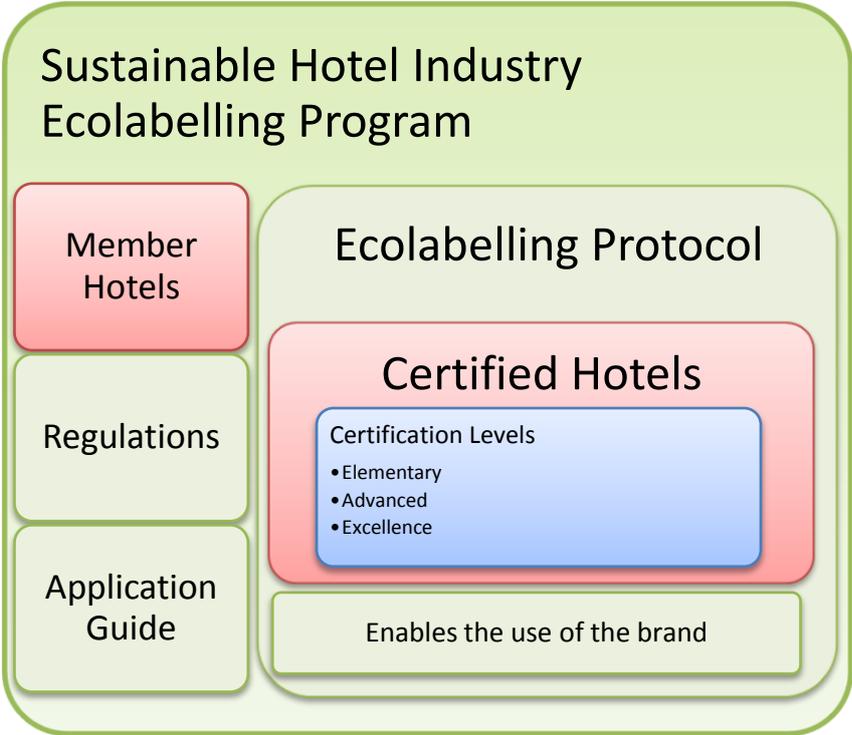
5.3.1 Elementary Level Certification

AHT shall be initially in charge of certifying the elementary level of sustainable management, after verifying compliance with the requirements established for such level through the evaluation of conformity therewith conducted by the technical team appointed for such purpose.

5.3.2 Advanced and Excellence Levels Certification

IRAM shall be initially in charge of certifying the advanced and excellence levels of sustainable management, after verifying and auditing compliance with the requirements established for each of these levels. Anyhow, this certification will have AHT's acknowledgment.

Program Participation Scheme



6 Request, Award, Maintenance and Renewal of the Sustainable Management Ecolabel

6.1 Request for Membership of the Ecolabelling Program

Any company engaged in the hotel industry that wants to become a member of the Program shall complete a membership form, pay the fees determined in each case and send it to AHT through the channels established.

After receiving such request, AHT will open a file with the related number and enable the company's web access, where it may access the online self-diagnosis tool, the Protocol, the Practical Application Guide therefor and the list of Authorized Certification Bodies.

These documents will facilitate the sustainable hotel management self-assessment and the identification of the necessary areas of improvement to comply with the Protocol, as well as an easy guide to be able to move forward in the process of implementing the sustainable management system. For this purpose, it may also request expert technical assistance from external specialists.

As from the date of becoming a member of the Program, the hotel will have a maximum one-year period to request the certification from the competent organizations. If after the expiration of this term the hotel has not submitted such request, the file will be closed.

6.2 Certification Request

Once it has become a member, the hotel that wishes to obtain the certification and use of the Ecolabel may submit, at any time, the appropriate request to AHT by completing the request printed form that specifies the organization's data, the scope of the certification, the sustainable management level for which it applies to be certified, the expected or desired dates to be subject to external certification and the Certification Body.

Once the request has been received, AHT will send it to the Certification Body to plan the certification or audit process.

AHT will not directly take part in the certification and audit process for the advanced and excellence levels of sustainable management.

6.3 Certification Process

6.3.1 Certification Dates

The process to assess conformity with the Protocol will be carried out on the agreed-upon dates among the hotel, AHT and the Certification Body, depending on the sustainable management level for which the hotel applies to be certified.

Requests with certification dates exceeding six months will not be considered.

6.3.2 Certification

The assessment of the conformity with the Protocol requirements and criteria will take place through a qualified auditor's visit to the hotel, for the length of time and under the system established by AHT's conformity assessment procedures or IRAM'S audit procedures or those of any other Authorized Certification Body. The appointed auditor will send an audit plan to the hotel.

6.3.3 Certification Report

After the performance of the certification process and within a maximum two-week term, the auditor will issue the related report to the hotel, which will reflect the conformity or non-conformity with the requirements for the sustainable management level being applied for and the deviations or non-conformities found. If there are no such deviations, the report will include the Certification Body's proposal to award the Ecolabel at the applicable level.

6.3.4 Management of Non-conformities

When the report includes non-conformities with the Protocol, the hotel shall prepare a Plan of Corrective Actions that specifies the activities or actions the hotel's Management has performed to correct the deviations detected and send it to the Certification Body. A maximum two-month term is established to send that Plan to the Certification Body, who shall review it and issue the related resolution within a one-month term as from the Plan receipt. If such resolution is favorable, the proposal to award the Ecolabel at the applicable level will be submitted.

If AHT is not the Certification Body, the latter will submit the proposal to award the Ecolabel to AHT, who may argue the award of the Ecolabel through a reasoned report within a maximum one-month term.

6.4 Ecolabel Award or Refusal

6.4.1 Ecolabel Award

In view of the results of the verification process, AHT will make the decision to award or refuse the certification and use of the Ecolabel. This decision will be communicated to the hotel and to the Certification Body.

The award of the Ecolabel will be subject to having successfully undergone the certification and audit process at a given level and may be dependent on any specific requirement to be verified in the next audit.

6.4.2 Compliance with the Immediately Lower Level

If the audit report reflects the noncompliance with the requirements for the sustainable management certification level the hotel applies for, but evidences compliance with all the requirements for a lower level (elementary or advanced), AHT and the Certification Body may award the use of the Ecolabel for such level, with the conditions set out in these Regulations.

6.4.3 Agreement between the Parties

Once the Ecolabel has been awarded, the hotel will sign an agreement with AHT and the Certification Body, which specifies the effective term of the Certificate and the conditions to use the brand.

6.4.4 Ecolabel Refusal

The Certification and use of the Ecolabel will be refused to those hotels that:

- Evidence a general noncompliance with the Protocol during the applicable level certification process.
- Have not filed the Plan of Corrective Actions or this is not approved by the competent organization.

6.5 Ecolabel Maintenance

6.5.1 Certificate Validation

The Ecolabel maintenance during the effective period of the Certificate will require the hotel to be subject to two validations thereof in the terms determined by the certified level and by the Certification Body that has awarded it, after which the related report will be issued to the hotel with the procedure described above for the original certification.

These validation processes will be shorter in length than the original certification process and will be performed according to the procedures established to such end by the Certification Body.

The performance of validations will not exempt the hotel from the inspection or verification processes that AHT may establish with respect to the proper use of the Ecolabel.

6.5.2 Validation Terms

6.5.2.1 Elementary Level Validation

The term established for the elementary level validations is two years.

6.5.2.2 Advanced and Excellence Levels Validations

The term established for the advanced and excellence levels validations is one year.

6.5.3 Certificate Renewal

The effective period of the certification and use of the Ecolabel by a hotel is established depending on the certified level, provided that the organization evidences that the original conditions in which the certification was awarded remain the same through the validations made by the competent organizations.

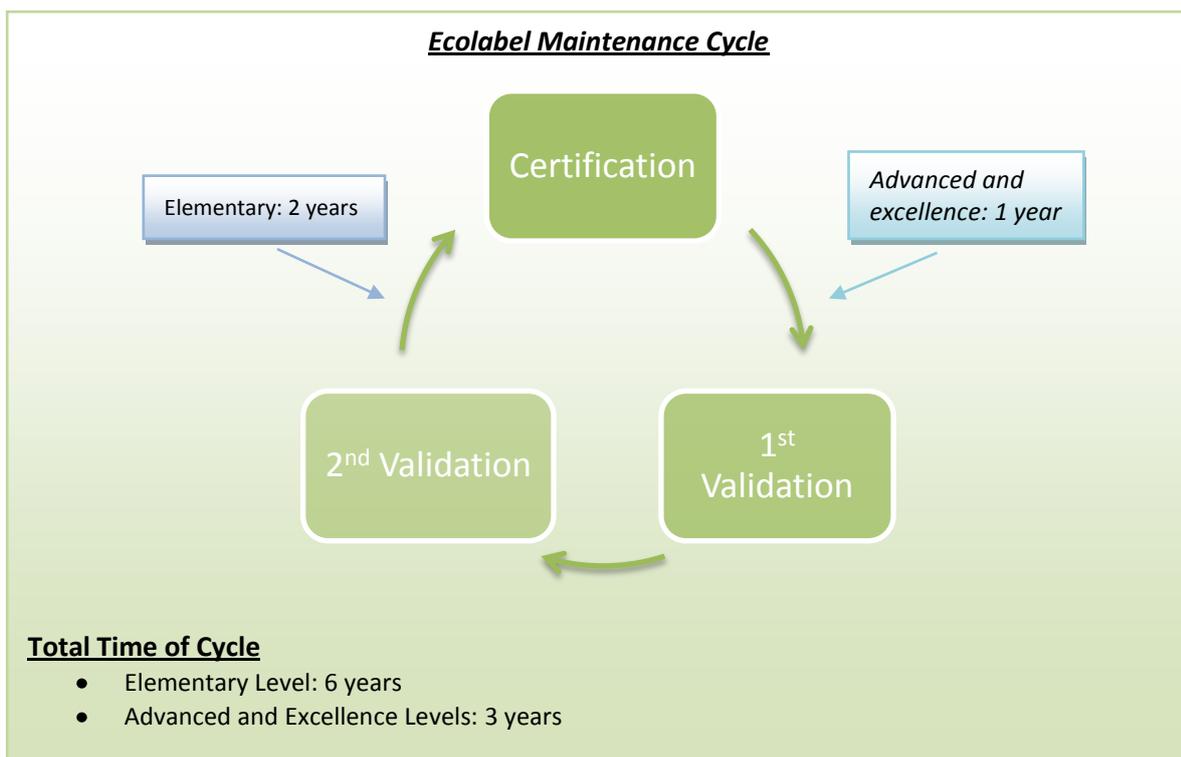
6.5.4 Certificate Renewal Terms

6.5.4.1 Renewal of the Elementary Level Certificate

The term established for the renewal of the elementary level certificate is six years.

6.5.4.2 Renewal of the Advanced and Excellence Levels Certificate

The term established for the renewal of the advanced and excellence levels certificate is three years.



6.5.5 Training

To renew the Ecolabel, hotels will be required to provide evidence of the performance of a training cycle for their employees of at least three annual training actions on sustainable tourism and hotel management.

- a) For the elementary level, an annual six-hour training per employee.
- b) For the advanced level, an annual twelve-hour training per employee.
- c) For the excellence level, an annual fifteen-hour training per employee.

The subjects of the training actions carried out by hotels shall be validated by AHT.

6.5.6 Information Update

During the effective period of the Certificate, the hotel will formally commit to:

- Complying with the sustainable management level requirements and specifications it has been certified.
- Allowing the competent institutions and organizations' access to its premises, its people and the necessary documentation to assess conformity with the Ecolabelling Protocol.
- Communicating in writing any substantial change in the original conditions in which the Certificate was awarded (changes in premises, new services, category changes, legal changes, among others) to the assessing competent institution or organization.
- Paying charges, license fees or rates, as determined in each case.

6.6 Ecolabel Renewal

The ecolabel will be renewed prior to the end of the effective period of the Certificate through the performance of an assessment and audit process by the same competent organization as the one described for the original certification.

Upon the renewal, the hotel may apply for a higher sustainable management level certification, as set out in the Protocol, for which purpose it shall communicate so to AHT.

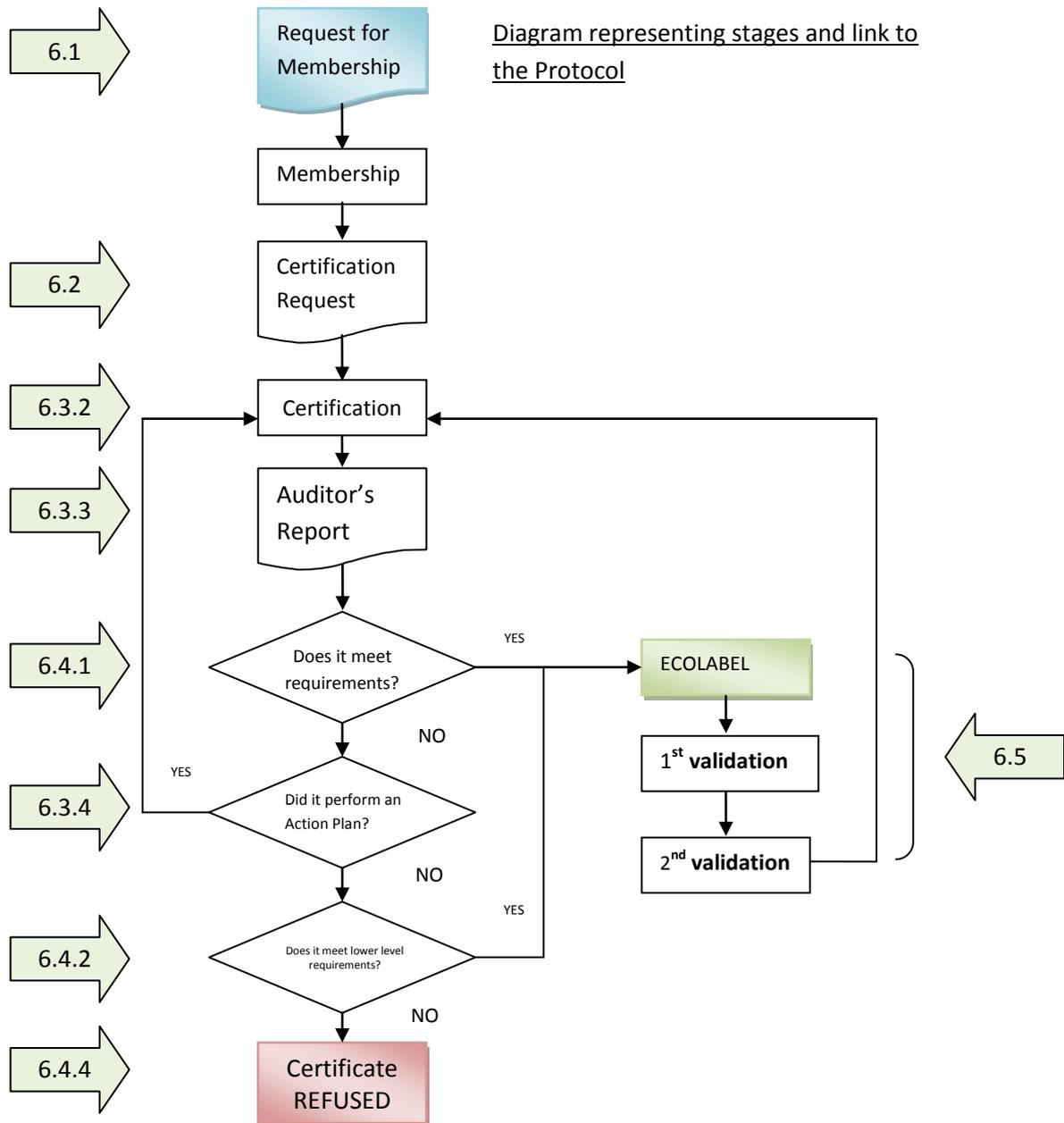
6.7 Certificate Revocation

AHT may agree to nullify the Certificate and revoke the rights to use the Ecolabel in any of the following assumptions.

- When the hotel has been penalized for a serious noncompliance with effective laws.
- When a fraudulent or misleading use of the Ecolabel is verified.
- When the conditions under which the Certificate was awarded are no longer in place.
- When the hotel's Management expressly waives the Certificate in writing.

If there are claims from a hotel by customers or other stakeholders of AHT, the latter reserves the right to inspect the hotel and agree to propose the temporary suspension or withdrawal of the Ecolabel, in the light of the results of such inspection.

7 Register of Certified Hotels



AHT will keep an updated register of hotels to which the Ecolabel has been awarded, the purpose of which is to make the award, the effective term of the certification and the level reached known to the public and stakeholders. The register will be made publicly available.

8 Promotion of the Ecolabelling System for Hotels

AHT will develop a specific action plan to promote the application of the Ecolabelling system among Argentine hotels, in cooperation with other institutions and organizations engaged in the tourism and hotel industry.

This action plan will include campaigns of information, awareness and training aimed at the tourism and hotel industry that foster the system adoption, as well as campaigns of promotion and advertising among consumers, customers, tourists and the public in general.

The Ecolabelling system will be preferably promoted through the system web site, furnishing basic information and promotional material.

AHT commits to disseminating information about the Ecolabelling system and advertising it on national and international tourism markets, encouraging its recognition by operators and other tourism organizations and institutions. To such end, it will foster the cooperation with other institutions and organizations engaged in the tourism and hotel industry and will have IRAM's assistance.

9 The Sustainable Hotel Industry Ecolabel

9.1 Trademark

The sustainable hotel management Ecolabel is a trademark managed by AHT. This trademark is subject to legal registration in Argentina and in other countries to ensure protection of its rights of use.

9.2 Vested Rights of the Distinction

A hotel's full compliance with the requirements set out will entitle it to public recognition and the use of the brand, isologotype or Ecolabel related to each sustainable management level, according to the conditions set out in these Regulations.

9.3 Enabled Hotels

Only certified hotels and those included in AHT's register may make use of the Ecolabel. Its use is mandatory for the hotels to which the right of use has been awarded.

9.4 Use of the Ecolabel

The Ecolabel should always be associated with the certified company's trade name and in no case will it be misleadingly used for the customer of the tourism service.

9.5 Isologotype

The isologotype of the Ecolabel is reproduced in Annex I and its conditions of use, utilization and application are described in the Visual Identity Manual of the Ecolabelling Program.

10 Confidentiality

AHT and the competent organizations will consider as confidential all the hotel's information, data or documents they may access during the Ecolabel request, certification, award, maintenance or renewal processes, making exclusive use of such information for the purposes contemplated in these Regulations.

Annex I. Isologotype

The sustainable management Ecolabel will have the following isologotypes for each of the three application levels of the system.

ELEMENTARY LEVEL:



Pantone 428 C
C:0 / M:0 / Y:0 / K:23
R:186 / G:186 / B:185

ADVANCED LEVEL:



Pantone 374 C
C:23 / M:0 / Y:60 / K:0
R:184 / G:219 / B:124

EXCELLENCE LEVEL:



Tipografía: Arial
1234567890
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNÑOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnñopqrstuvwxyz

Tipografía: Arial Black
1234567890
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNÑOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnñopqrstuvwxyz

The Ecolabel will be printed in four colors (CMYK color model: Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Key (black)) or in black and white (monochromatic version) on white background, as set out in the Visual Identity Manual of the Program.

The isologotype shall include the Program registration number.

Annex II. Requirements and Duties of the Competent Institutions and Organizations under the Ecolabelling Program

Requirements:

A.II.1. AHT and the competent organizations shall ensure at any time that their institutional activities and those of their management bodies or branches do not affect the confidentiality, objectivity and impartiality of the Ecolabelling system conformity assessment activities.

A.II.2. AHT and the competent organizations shall ensure independence of criterion and the absence of conflicts of interest with the Ecolabelling Program member organizations.

A.II.3. AHT and the competent organizations will carry out the conformity assessment and certification activities with the utmost strictness and professionalism, ensuring that their staff has the technical skills required therefor through proven training and is free from any pressure or incentive that may influence on the results of the certification.

A.II.4. AHT and the competent organizations shall ensure that they will be able to perform the conformity assessment and certification tasks assigned thereto in these Regulations, both if they are carried out by own staff of both institutions and if they are carried out by third parties on their behalf and under their charge.

A.II.5. AHT and the competent organizations should have:

- a) Enough staff with adequate technical knowledge, training and experience to perform the Ecolabelling system certification tasks at the appropriate application levels.
- b) Procedures that describe the Ecolabelling system conformity assessment and certification tasks and processes at the system member hotels. These procedures shall take into account the size and scope of the organizations assessed to allocate the length of time such processes will take.
- c) Adequate structure to fulfill technical and administrative tasks related to the conformity certification and certification activities.

Duties:

A.II.6. *Of AHT*

- a) Prepare and review the requirements, specifications and criteria set out in the Ecolabelling System Protocol.
- b) Prepare and review these Applicable Regulations.
- c) Prepare and validate the Practical Application Guide for the Ecolabelling System Protocol.
- d) Prepare and validate the isologotype of the sustainable management brand or Ecolabel and the related conditions of use.
- e) Establish processes to inspect and verify compliance with the system requirements at the hotels to which the Ecolabel has been awarded.
- f) Establish, as applicable, the charges, rates or license fees for the use of the Ecolabel.
- g) Have the information, models and forms to request the possibility for the hotels to become members of the Program.

- h) Provide member hotels with the necessary documentation to begin the certification and implementation process.
- i) File the proceedings for certification requests.
- j) Establish the Ecolabelling Protocol conformity assessment and certification processes at the elementary level initially.
- k) Establish, as appropriate, the charges applicable to such certification processes.
- l) Validate the Ecolabelling Protocol conformity assessment and certification processes at the advanced and excellence Levels.
- m) Decide on or refuse the Ecolabel award.
- n) Keep an updated register of the system member hotels and of the certified hotels at each Protocol application level.
- o) Keep an updated register of the Authorized Certification Bodies, specifying the level.
- p) Establish the procedures that will govern the revocation or nullification of the Certificate, as the case may be.
- q) Establish and lead the appropriate action plans to promote the Ecolabelling system.
- r) Ensure overall compliance with the system and the principles set out in these Regulations.

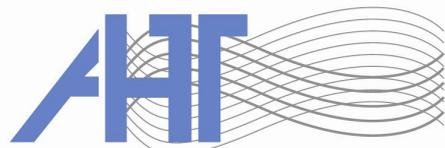
A.II.7. Of IRAM

- a) Validate the requirements, specifications and criteria set out in the Ecolabelling System Protocol.
- b) Validate these Applicable Regulations.
- c) Validate the Practical Application Guide for the Ecolabelling System Protocol.
- d) Establish the Ecolabelling Protocol conformity assessment and certification processes at the advanced and excellence Levels.
- e) Establish, as appropriate, the charges applicable to such certification processes.
- f) Propose the award or refusal to use the Ecolabel to the audited hotels at the advanced and excellence levels to AHT.
- g) Report to AHT any incident that may be an objective cause for revocation or nullification of the Certificate.
- h) Assist AHT in promoting the Ecolabelling system.
- i) Ensure overall compliance with the system and the principles set out in these Regulations.



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