

Sustainability
Certification
Program



Hoteles
más Verdes

Application
Regulations



Does not indicate GSTC accreditation



Hoteles
más Verdes

**Sustainability
Certification Program
Application Regulations**

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“Hoteles más Verdes” Sustainability Certification Program

Introduction

These “Hoteles más Verdes” Sustainability Certification Program **Application Regulations** have been prepared by Instituto Tecnológico Hotelero (hereinafter, ITH) of **Asociación de Hoteles de Turismo de la República Argentina (hereinafter, AHT)**, as agreed and validated by Instituto Argentino de Normalización y Certificación (hereinafter, IRAM) and with the involvement of other public and private institutions in developing and applying this sustainable tourism certification program for tourist accommodations in Argentina.

This document has been drafted to clearly describe the preparation process and the subsequent revisions of “Hoteles más Verdes” Sustainability Certification Program, to detail the different ways used by tourism companies to join the program, to specify the different steps to be followed to apply for the program and the alternatives that may arise in the certification process, as well as to regulate the use of the different versions of “Hoteles más Verdes” **Ecolabel**, according to the different application levels of the certification standard.

Since 2013, the “Hoteles más Verdes” Sustainability Certification Program has the international recognition GSTC-Recognized from the **Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)**, as it has been shown in an independent evaluation process that the program certification standard aligns with and meets the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria established by the GSTC.

The **GSTC** is the international organization created with the support of the World Tourism Organization (WTO) to promote the dissemination of increased knowledge of sustainable tourism practices and their adoption by hotels, tour operators, destinations and the tourism industry. GSTC’s main duties are to establish and manage global sustainable tourism standards (known as GSTC Criteria) and recognize and accredit sustainable tourism certification programs and organizations around the world.

This document replaces all the articles of the second version of “Hoteles más Verdes” Sustainability Certification Program Application Regulations published in 2017 and shall remain in force from April 2022 to a new revision thereof.

1. Purpose

The purpose of these Regulations is to lay down the procedures to establish and apply AHT's "Hoteles más Verdes" Sustainability Certification Program, including the conditions for the request and use of the Ecolabel certification marks by tourism companies.

Accordingly, these Regulations establish the rules to request, award, maintain and renew the Certification for those tourist accommodations that show, through the evaluations and external controls described, alignment with the requirements, specifications and criteria for any of the different Standard application levels.

Along with the use of the Ecolabel, the tourist accommodation will be awarded a Sustainable Hotel Management Certificate (hereinafter, the Certificate) issued by AHT, which clearly states the name of the certified company, the scope of the certification and the Standard application level: Gold, Silver or Bronze.

2. Area of application

These Regulations shall be applicable to Latin American-based tourist accommodations that provide tourist accommodation services, that have implemented a sustainable management system and voluntarily wish to obtain an independent certification on their good tourism sustainability practices, which allows them to access the use of the Ecolabel that accredits their recognition level by AHT (Gold, Silver or Bronze).

3. Competent institutions and entities

3.1. Competent Institutions



The competent institutions and entities for the application of "Hoteles más Verdes" Sustainability Certification Program are ITH and IRAM, which will encourage the participation in the Program of other stakeholders involved in developing sustainable tourism and will seek transparency and integrity in its application.

3. Competent institutions and entities

Notwithstanding the foregoing, GSTC's powers are acknowledged regarding the recognition and, as the case may be, the approval of the Program as international sustainable tourism certification standard under the terms and conditions set forth by this international organization in its declaration of recognition.

3.2. Certification Entities and Organizations



The competent entities and organizations to carry out the sustainability certification processes contemplated in the Program shall be designated by the technical team of "Hoteles más Verdes" Program (hereinafter, HMV). These institutions and organizations shall ensure that the processes to verify compliance with the sustainability requirements set out in the Program are carried out consistently, neutrally and reliably by an auditing team independent from the organization evaluated and are based on domestic regulations in force and the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria approved by the GSTC for the certification of sustainable tourism companies.

4. Preparation and review of the certification program

4.1. Preparation of the Certification Program



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

4. Preparation and review of the certification program

4.2. Review of the Certification Program



HMV may decide at any time to review or amend the certification standard, as well as these Regulations, particularly to align it with the changes in the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria to be approved by the GSTC and in order to keep the international recognition status of this Program.

To such end, it shall consult the competent institutions and organizations specified in point 3.1 and make them become involved in the review of the program, who may also propose the beginning of such review process to HMV.

HMV shall ensure that those responsible for preparing or reviewing the program show to have specialized knowledge of and proven expertise in sustainable tourism and hotel industry, as well as the ability to lead the process neutrally and in conformity with these Regulations, for which purpose it may have expert and independent technical assistance.

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4.2.1. Necessary Documentation for the Review

Those responsible for preparing or reviewing the Program shall submit the following documents to the competent institutions and organizations:

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: Standard, Regulations and/or other supporting material.

4. Preparation and review of the certification program

4.2.2. Mandatory Review

The Program shall be necessarily reviewed as a whole every 6 years as from the date of its last full or partial review and may remain unaltered if thus determined by its review. Such review shall be implemented, as set forth in these Regulations.



4.2.3. Validation of the Program Reviews

The Program reviews shall be validated and approved by HMV.

In reviewing the Program, HMV shall ensure the non-introduction of certification requirements or criteria whose application entails disproportionate economic or administrative burdens that may not be borne by tourist accommodations, as main users of the program.

5. Joining the sustainability certification program

5.1. Preliminary Information of the Program



Through the enabled systems, HMV will provide all companies engaged in the hotel industry with preliminary information about the Program, including the necessary documentation to participate.

5. Joining the sustainability certification program

5.2. Program Membership



All companies providing tourist accommodation services that are 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 HMV or other HMV-related public or private organizations.

In no way does this Program membership entitle the member companies to make advertising, distinction or use of the Ecolabel.

5.3. Sustainability Certification



The Program is based on a certifiable three-level application: Bronze, Silver, and Gold, as defined in the Standard. These levels establish differential sustainable management requirements, from a lower to a higher degree of strictness and maturity.

5.3.1. Bronze-Level Certification

The audit that verifies compliance with the requirements established for the Bronze-level by evaluating the conformity therewith shall be conducted by ITH's auditing team designated for such purpose.

The Certification will have HMV's recognition and validation.

5. Joining the sustainability certification program

5.3.2. Silver- and Gold-Level Certification

The audit that verifies compliance with the requirements established for the Silver- and Gold-levels by evaluating the conformity therewith shall be conducted by IRAM's or ITH's auditing team designated for such purpose. The election shall be made by the tourist accommodation.

The Certification will have HMV's recognition and validation.



6. Request, award, maintain and renew the sustainability certification

6.1. Request for Program Membership



Any company providing tourist accommodation services that wants to become a member of the Certification Program shall complete a membership form, pay the fees determined in each case and send it to HMV through the channels established.

After receiving such request, HMV will open a file and enable the company's web access to the Program support tools.

6. Request, award, maintain and renew the sustainability certification

These documents will facilitate the self-assessment of the sustainable management of the tourist accommodation and the identification of the necessary areas of improvement to comply with the Standard, as well as the guides to be able to move forward in the process of implementing its sustainable management system, for which purpose it may also require the expert technical assistance from external specialists.

As from the date of becoming a member of the Program, the tourist accommodation will have a maximum one-year period to request the certification audit from the competent organizations. If after the expiration of this term the tourist accommodation has not submitted such request, the end of the membership shall be notified.

6.2. Certification Request



Once it has become a member, the tourist accommodation that wishes to obtain the certification and make use of the Ecolabel may submit, at any time, the appropriate request to HMV by completing the request 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 assurance, the mode and the competent organization chosen as auditor.

Once the request is received, HMV will communicate it to the auditing entity in order to plan the process.



6. Request, award, maintain and renew the sustainability certification

6.3. Certification Process



6.3.1. Audit Dates

The process of assessing conformity with the Standard shall be performed on the dates agreed among the tourist accommodation, HMV and the auditing entity, depending on the sustainable management level for which it applies to be certified.

The request shall be made with at least one month in advance prior to the audit.

6.3.2. Audit Modes

The assessment of conformity with the Standard's requirements and criteria may be made by three modes:

a) In person: it will take place by the qualified auditor's visit to the establishment, with the duration and according to the system established by the procedures for assessing conformity of HMV, ITH and IRAM or other competent organization authorized as auditing entity.

b) Remote: it will take place by a qualified auditor's documentary review and video-telephony interviews, with the duration and according to the system established by the procedures for assessing conformity of HMV, ITH and IRAM or other competent organization authorized as auditing entity.

c) Mixed: made up of a remote part and another in-person part, scheduled on different dates with a maximum six-month term of difference between one and the other. They shall be conducted by a qualified auditor, with the duration and according to the system established by the procedures for assessing conformity of HMV, ITH and IRAM or other competent organization authorized as auditing entity.

6. Request, award, maintain and renew the sustainability certification

6.3.3. Certification Audit

The establishment may choose the in-person or mixed audit mode, considering that it shall bear the auditor's travel, accommodation and food & beverage costs in the in-person mode.

The designated auditor will send an audit planning to the tourist accommodation, sufficiently in advance for the establishment's Management to be able to plan the visit and ensure the availability of the premises and the necessary spokespersons to conduct the audit.

6.3.4. Certification Report

After the performance of the audit process and within a maximum two-week term, the auditor will issue the related report on the tourist accommodation to HMV, 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 certifying entity's Ecolabel award proposal at the applicable level.

6.3.5. Solution to Non-conformities

When the report includes non-conformities with the Standard, the tourist accommodation shall prepare a Plan of Corrective Actions that specifies the activities or actions the tourist accommodation's Management has performed to correct the deviations detected and send them to HMV.

A maximum two-month term is established to send such Plan to HMV. The auditor must review it and issue the related resolution in a two-week term after receiving the Plan. If such resolution is favorable, the proposal to award the Ecolabel at the applicable level will be submitted to HMV.



6. Request, award, maintain and renew the sustainability certification

6.4. Ecolabel Award or Denial



6.4.1. Ecolabel Award

In view of the results of the certification process, AHT will make the decision to award or deny the Certification and use of the Ecolabel. This decision will be communicated to the tourist accommodation and to the auditing entity.

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

6.4.2. Lower-Level Certification

If the audit report reflects the noncompliance with the requirements for the sustainable management certification level the tourist accommodation applies for, but evidences compliance with all the requirements for a lower level, AHT may award the use of the Ecolabel for such level, with the conditions set out in these Regulations.

6.4.3. Conditional Certification

The conditional Certification will be awarded to the establishment that is assessed through a mixed audit to obtain the certification and the documentary audit of which has been successfully completed. To obtain the final certificate it will be necessary to proceed with the in-person assurance as last mixed audit stage in a period of time no longer than six months as from the date when the conditional certification is obtained. Obtaining the conditional Certification entitles to use the Ecolabel at the level reached.

6. Request, award, maintain and renew the sustainability certification

6.4.4. Ecolabel Denial

The Certification and use of the Ecolabel will be denied to those tourist accommodations that:

- a) Evidence a general noncompliance with the Standard during the applicable level audit process.
- b) Have not submitted the Plan of Corrective Actions or this is not approved by the competent organization.
- c) After obtaining the conditional Certification, do not schedule the in-person assurance within the terms established by these Regulations.
- d) Do not pay the audit in the term agreed with HMV.

6.5. Certification Maintenance



6.5.1. Certificate Validation

The Ecolabel maintenance during the effective period of the Certificate will require the tourist accommodation to be subject to two annual validations thereof, after which the related report will be issued with the procedure described above for the original certification.

These validation processes, by assuring and auditing compliance with the Standard at the certified level, will be shorter in length than the original certification process and will be performed according to the procedures established to such end.

6. Request, award, maintain and renew the sustainability certification

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

The establishment may choose the in-person- or remote-mode audit, considering that at the in-person instance it shall bear the auditor's travel, accommodation and food & beverage costs.

6.5.2. Validation Terms

The term established for validations at all levels (Bronze, Silver and Gold) is one year.

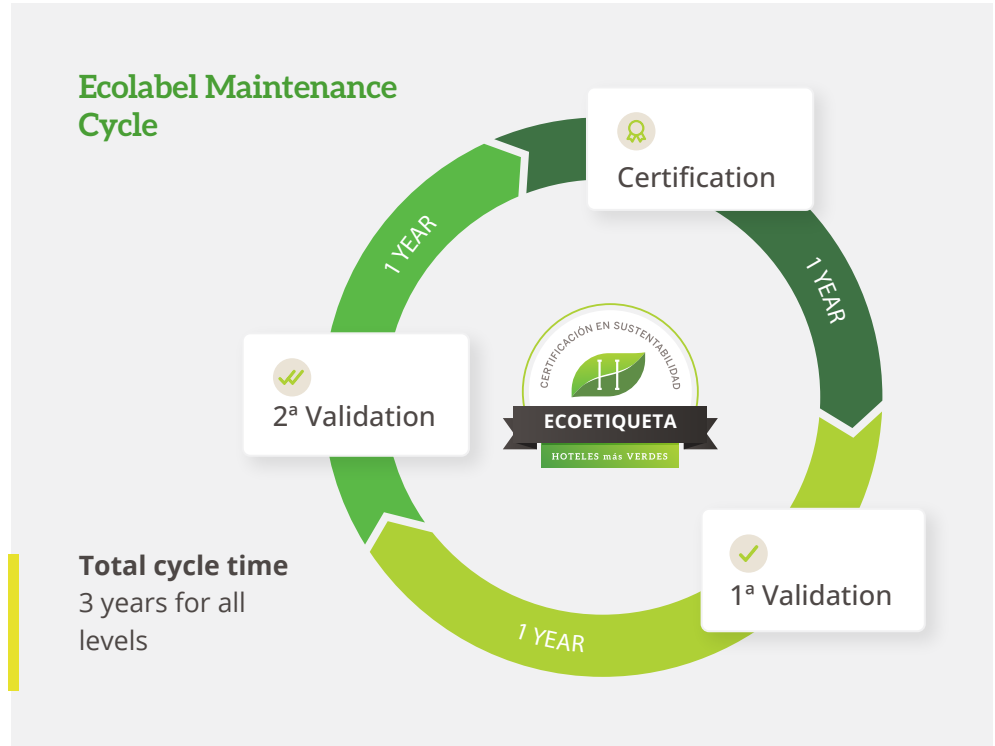


6.5.3. Recertification

The Ecolabel shall be renewed before the end of the effective period of the certificate by the competent organization's performance of an assurance and audit process identical to that described for the original certification.

The effective period of the certification and the use of the Ecolabel is three years, provided that the organization evidences that the original conditions under which the Certification was awarded remain the same by the competent organizations' performance of the related validations.

6. Request, award, maintain and renew the sustainability certification



6.5.4. Commitments of Certified Tourist Accommodations

During the effective period of the Certificate, the certified tourist accommodations will formally commit to:

- Meeting the requirements and specifications of the sustainable management level in which they have been certified.
- Allowing the competent institutions and organizations' access to their premises, the people and the necessary documentation to assess conformity with the Standard.
- Communicate in writing to the assessing competent institution or organization any substantial change in the original conditions in which the certificate was awarded (changes in premises, new services, changes in category, legal changes, etc.).
- Pay prices, rates or fees, as it may be determined.

6. Request, award, maintain and renew the sustainability certification

6.6. Certificate Revocation



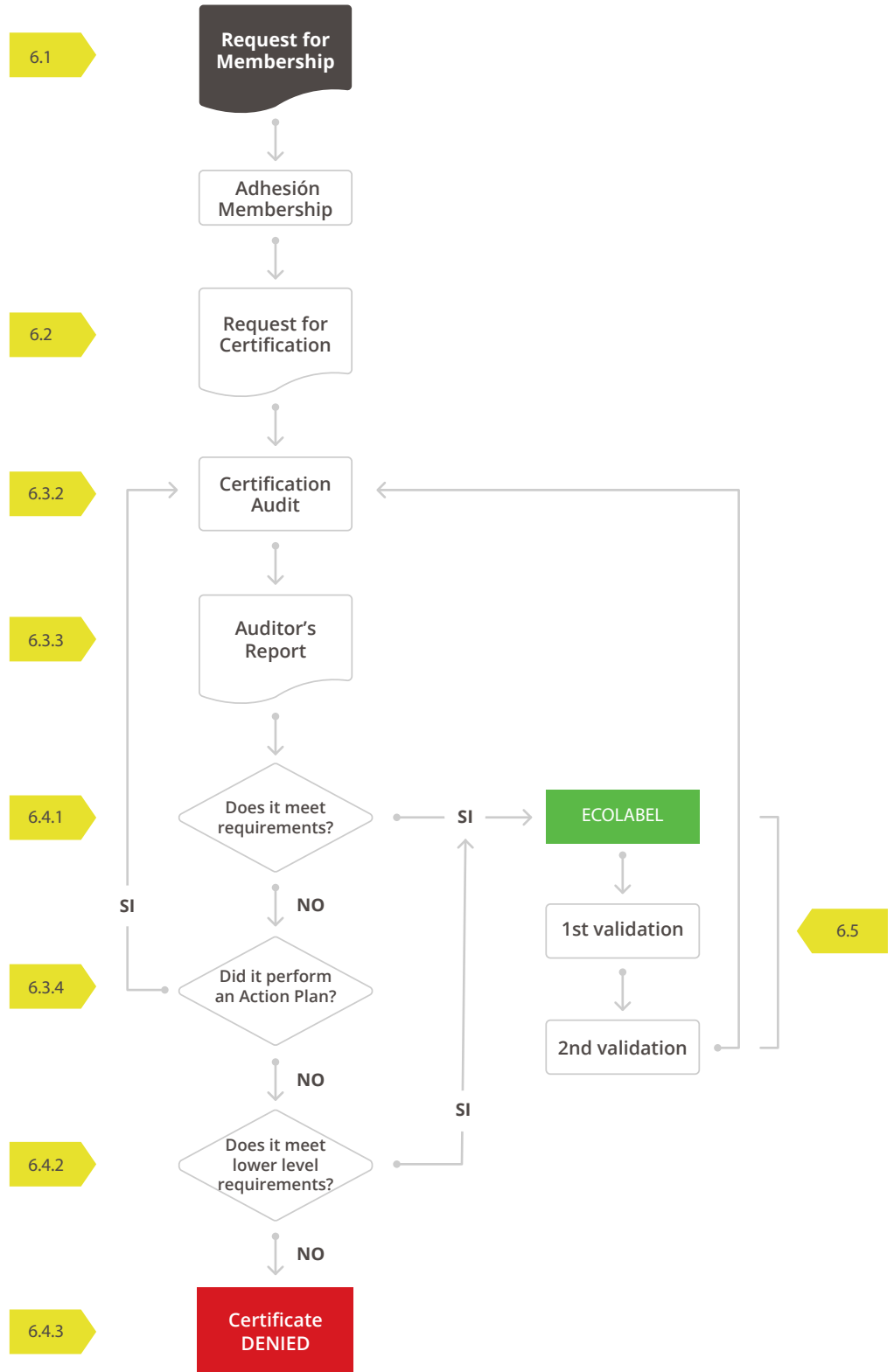
HMV may agree the annulment of the certificate and the revocation of the rights of use of the Ecolabel under any of the following assumptions.

- a) When the tourist accommodation has been penalized for a serious noncompliance with the effective laws.
- b) When a fraudulent or misleading use of the Ecolabel is verified.
- c) When the conditions under which the Certification was awarded do no longer take place.
- d) When the tourist accommodation's Management expressly waives the Certification in writing.

If there are claims by HMV's customers or other stakeholders from a tourist accommodation, it reserves the right to inspect it and agree, in view of the results of such inspection, to withdraw or suspend temporarily the Ecolabel.



Diagram
Representing
the Program
Instances and
Membership



7. Register of certified tourist accommodations

HMV will keep an updated register of tourist accommodations to which the Ecolabel has been awarded, the purpose of which is to inform the public and interested parties of the award, validity of the Certification and the level reached. The Register will be available to the public.



8. Promotion of the sustainability certification program

HMV will develop specific action plans to promote the application of the Sustainability Certification Program among the companies providing tourist accommodation services, in cooperation with other institutions and organizations engaged in the tourism and hotel industry.

These action plans will include information, awareness and training campaigns, aimed to promote the adoption of the program and of global sustainable tourism criteria among tourism sector, as well as marketing and promotion campaigns among guests, customers, tourists and public in general.

As the owner of this certification program, AHT also commits to spreading and advertising the "Hoteles más Verdes" Certification Program in the tourism markets, encouraging its recognition by the operators and the institutions and national and international organizations engaged in sustainable tourism.

9. The "hoteles más verdes" ecolabel

9.1. Registered Trademark



The "Hoteles más Verdes" Ecolabel is a trademark owned and 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 tourist accommodation's full compliance with the requirements set out will entitle it to public recognition and the use of the brand, isologotype and Ecolabel related to each sustainable management level, according to the conditions set out in these Regulations.

9.3. Enabled Tourist Accommodations



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

9. The "hoteles más verdes" ecolabel

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 and Versions



The isologotype of the Ecolabel and its versions are reproduced in Annex I and their uses and applications are described in the Certification Application Manual.

10. Confidentiality

HMV and the competent organizations will consider as confidential all the information, data or documents of the Program member tourism companies to which they may have access during the Ecolabel request, assurance, award, maintenance or renewal processes, making exclusive use of such information for the purposes contemplated in these Regulations.

Under affidavit, the tourist accommodation commits to submitting legitimate and true information and to safeguarding the auditors' confidential data to which they may have access during the audit process.

Annex I. Isologotype and its Versions

The "Hoteles más Verdes" Ecolabel has certifications that are delivered to tourist accommodations that prove a sustainable management environmentally respectful and socially responsible with the community and with the tourist destination where the tourist activity is carried out.

According to the level of compliance with the characteristics mentioned above, a specific certification is awarded. The "Gold" certification is the highest level; the "Silver" certification is the medium level and the "Bronze" certification is the elementary level.

The Sustainability Certification Program will have the following Ecolabels for each of the three application levels.



**Annex II.
Requirements
and Duties of
the Competent
Institutions and
Entities under
the
Sustainability
Certification
Program**

**9.4.
Requirements**



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A.II.1.

They shall ensure at any time that their institutional activities and those of their management bodies do not affect the confidentiality, objectivity and impartiality of the activities for assessing conformity with the certification program.

.....
A.II.2.

They shall ensure independence of criterion and absence of conflicts of interests with the member organizations of the certification program.

.....
A.II.3.

They shall carry out activities to assure and assess conformity with the greatest strictness and professionalism, ensuring that its staff has the required technical skills therefor by proven training and is free from any pressure or incentive that may have any influence on the results of the assessment.

.....
A.II.4.

They shall be capable of performing conformity assurance and assessment tasks, as allocated thereto in these Regulations, both whether they are performed by own staff of both institutions or whether they are performed by third parties in their name and under their responsibility.

Annex II. Requirements and Duties of the Competent Institutions and Entities under the Sustainability Certification Program

A-II.5.

They shall have:

- a) Enough staff with technical knowledge, training and appropriate experience to perform the certification program assurance tasks at the appropriate application levels.
- b) Procedures describing the processes of assurance and assessment of conformity with the Sustainable Management Standard for tourist accommodations that are members of the Program. These procedures shall consider the size and scope of the organizations assessed in order to determine the duration of such processes.
- c) Adequate structure to perform technical and administrative tasks related to conformity assurance and assessment activities.

Duties under the Program



A-II.6. Of AHT's "Hoteles más Verdes" Program

- a) Validate the requirements, specifications and criteria set out in the Standard.
- b) Validate these Application Regulations.
- c) Validate the Program's support material.

Annex II. Requirements and Duties of the Competent Institutions and Entities under the Sustainability Certification Program

d) Prepare and validate the isologotype and its versions of the trademark or Sustainable Management Ecolabel and conditions for use.

e) Establish processes for inspection and validation of compliance with the requirements of the Sustainable Management Standard at tourist accommodations that have been awarded the Ecolabel.

f) Establish the prices, rates or fees for use of the Ecolabel and assurance processes.

g) Have the request information, models and forms for the companies to become members of the Program.

h) Provide the member tourist accommodations with the necessary documentation to begin the implementation and certification process.

i) Start proceedings for audit requests.

j) Establish the processes for assurance and assessment of conformity with the Standard.

k) Approve or deny the award of the Ecolabel.

l) Keep an updated register of the Program member companies and certified tourist accommodations.

m) Establish the procedures that will govern the revocation or annulment of the certificate, as the case may be.

n) Establish and lead the appropriate action plans to promote the Program.

o) Ensure the general compliance with the Program and the principles of these Regulations.

Annex II. Requirements and Duties of the Competent Institutions and Entities under the Sustainability Certification Program

A-II.7. Of AHT's ITH

- a) Prepare and review the requirements, specifications and criteria set out in the Standard.
- b) Prepare and review these Application Regulations.
- c) Validate the Program's support material.
- d) Establish processes for inspection and validation of compliance with the requirements of the Program at establishments that have been awarded the Ecolabel.
- e) Suggest HMV to grant or deny the use of the Ecolabel to the audited establishments.
- f) Report to HMV any incident that may be an objective cause for revocation or annulment of the certificate.

A-II.8. Of IRAM

- a) Validate the requirements, specifications and criteria set out in the Standard.
- b) Validate and comply with these Application Regulations.
- c) Validate the Program's support material.
- d) Validate the processes for assurance and assessment of conformity with the Silver- and Gold-Level Sustainable Management Standard.
- e) Suggest HMV to grant or deny the use of the Ecolabel to the audited establishments.
- f) Report to HMV any incident that may be an objective cause for revocation or annulment of the certificate.
- g) Cooperate with HMV in promoting the Sustainability Certification Program.



Hoteles
más Verdes

**Sustainability
Certification Program**

Hoteles más verdes

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