

ECO Sustainable Tourism

Common Criteria for Tourism Accommodation Facilities

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1 Introduction

Tourism, a vital engine for economic growth and cultural exchange, plays a pivotal role among the Member States of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). As we embrace the opportunities and challenges presented by tourism, a fundamental need arises – the establishment of a cohesive set of standards for accommodation facilities. This document endeavors to create a unified framework that not only harmonizes regulations across the diverse landscapes of the ECO region but also aligns these standards with global best practices, recognizing the unique characteristics of our regional context.

The objectives of this Common Criteria as a regional standard are clear and multifaceted. We seek to safeguard our natural ecosystems, biodiversity, and historical heritage from irreversible harm, placing environmental preservation at the forefront. This standard is designed to be inclusive, applying to a diverse array of accommodation facilities within the ECO region, ensuring a comprehensive approach that caters to the varied nature of our hospitality sector.

Beyond mere compliance, the aim is to promote responsible tourism, encouraging facilities to not only meet basic comfort and safety standards but to actively contribute to environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and positive socio-economic impacts. Engagement with local communities, employees, and other stakeholders is embedded within the criteria, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for sustainable tourism practices.

2 Scope of the Document

This document specifies criteria and their associated actions for sustainable practices for all kind of accommodation facilities based in the ECO region. While the standard aims for inclusivity, we recognize that certain accommodations may face exceptional circumstances. Any limitations or exclusions from the standard will be transparently communicated, providing clarity on the scope and applicability of the criteria. This document does not bound legally tourism accommodation service providers but its adoption will be on voluntarily basis.

3 Terms and Definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

Accommodation Facilities: Establishments that provide lodging services to travelers, including hotels, hostels, guesthouses, lodges, and other types of temporary residences.

Biodiversity: The variety of life in a particular habitat or ecosystem, encompassing the diversity of species, genetic variation, and ecological processes.

Carbon Footprint: The total amount of greenhouse gases emitted directly and indirectly by an individual, organization, event, or product, expressed as carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e).

Cultural Heritage: The legacy of physical artifacts and intangible attributes of a group or society inherited from past generations, which may include traditions, languages, and historical sites.

Eco-friendly Practices: Methods and approaches that are not harmful to the environment and aim to promote sustainability and conservation.

Emergency Preparedness: The process of planning and preparing for potential emergencies, including natural disasters, to minimize their impact on the environment and the facility.

Energy-efficient Technologies: Tools and systems designed to use less energy while still providing the same level of performance, comfort, and convenience.

Environmental Preservation: The practice of protecting the natural environment from degradation and ensuring the sustainability of ecosystems and biodiversity.

Guest Feedback: Information and evaluations provided by guests regarding their experiences, which can be used to improve services and facilities.

Local Economy: The economic activities and transactions that occur within a specific locality, typically involving local businesses and communities.

Monitoring and Reporting: The systematic tracking of sustainability performance metrics, including energy and water use, waste production, and social impacts, along with documenting and communicating these findings.

Recycling Programs: Initiatives aimed at collecting, processing, and reusing materials that would otherwise be considered waste.

Sustainable Management System: A framework for managing an organization's practices in a way that promotes sustainability, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility.

Sustainable Practices: Actions and strategies that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, particularly in relation to environmental and social factors.

Waste Reduction: Efforts to minimize the amount of waste generated, particularly through practices like composting, recycling, and responsible consumption.

Water Conservation: Measures and practices aimed at reducing water consumption and protecting water resources from depletion and pollution.

Wildlife Protection: Actions taken to safeguard animal species and their habitats from threats such as habitat destruction, pollution, and poaching.

Stakeholder Engagement: The process of involving all relevant parties, including employees, guests, suppliers, and the community, in discussions and decisions related to sustainability efforts.

Tourism Certification: A formal recognition granted to accommodation facilities that meet established sustainability criteria and standards.

Universal Design Principles: Design approaches that ensure buildings and environments are accessible and usable by all people, regardless of age, ability, or status.

4 Sustainable Management System

4.1 Policy and Action Plan

All interested accommodation facilities shall adhere to the criteria adopting a policy including safeguarding ecosystems/environment, biodiversity, living culture and historical heritage from degradation or irreversible harm.

Accommodation facilities shall develop a three-years action plan, the format of which will be prepared by the ECO Secretariat, for the implementation of a sustainable management system. The action plan should include the following activities:

- Implementing energy-efficient technologies and practices, energy-efficient appliances, and energy management systems.
- Installing water-saving fixtures and implementing policies for reducing water consumption, utilizing wastewater treatment systems, adopting appropriate technologies to recycle the grey water and using centralized sewage system.
- Implementing recycling programs, reducing the use of single-use plastics, and minimizing waste through composting and recycling.
- Encouraging the use of local and sustainable products, including food, toiletries, and furnishings, to support the local economy and reduce the carbon footprint.
- Creating green spaces and maintaining eco-friendly landscaping practices, including the use of native plants and sustainable gardening techniques.
- Prioritizing green investments in the tourism sector by investing in renewable energy sources like solar panels and wind turbines to reduce reliance on non-renewable energy sources.
- Taking measures to preserve natural habitats in and around the facility.
- Avoiding the use of harmful chemicals or pesticides that can harm the environment and wildlife.
- Using native plants in landscaping to conserve water and support local biodiversity.
- Implementing practices to safeguard wildlife.
- Encouraging eco-friendly transportation options for guests, such as cycling or using electric vehicles.
- Offering options for guests to offset their carbon emissions from their stay.
- Preserving and protecting cultural, historical, and heritage sites.
- Creating facilities to ensure accessibility for all people, including guests with disabilities.

4.2 Capacity Building

- Staff shall be well-trained, professional, and courteous (Culturally Sensitive and respectful of the diverse backgrounds and traditions of guests).
- Ensure fair wages, safe working conditions, and professional development opportunities for staff. Promote diversity and inclusion in hiring practices.

4.3 Monitoring and Reporting

Facilities shall engage in self-assessment and periodic external audits.

Sustainable management system shall include monitoring and reporting on sustainability performance, including energy and water consumption, waste reduction, and social impact.

4.4 Guest Relations

Regular guest feedback shall be collected and used for continuous improvement. Accommodation facilities shall work on following:

- setting limits on visitor numbers, implementing crowd control measures, and carefully planning infrastructure to prevent the overuse of resources.
- conduct surveys and feedback mechanisms to measure tourist satisfaction with their experiences in determining the region's sustainable carrying capacity and monitor the number of visitors to prevent overcrowding and mitigate negative impacts.
- regularly conduct ecological and cultural impact assessments to gauge the effect of tourism on local environments and communities.

4.5 Emergency Preparedness

Accommodation facilities shall have a plan for dealing with natural disasters and environmental emergencies while minimizing the facility's impact on the environment.

4.6 Food and Beverage Services

Accommodation facilities shall,

- provide detailed information on the menu about the origins and sourcing of ingredients, including labels for organic and sustainable items,
- prioritize sourcing food locally and seasonally to support local farmers and reduce the carbon footprint associated with transportation,
- choose organic and sustainably grown produce to minimize the use of pesticides and chemicals while supporting environmentally friendly agriculture,
- source animal products from farms and suppliers that follow ethical and humane treatment practices for animals,
- implement practices to minimize food waste through careful portion control, inventory management, and food donation programs.

4.7 Hygiene and Sanitation

Accommodation facilities shall be encouraged to utilize sustainable hygiene products and sanitation practices and apply sustainable cleaning practices in the housekeeping services.

4.8 Natural Resources Conservation

Accommodation facilities shall utilize alternative energy, water conservation practices and low-impact development practices that reduce environmental disturbances, such as pollution and habitat destruction.

4.9 Buildings and Infrastructures

Accommodation facilities shall encourage and regulate the use of locally appropriate and sustainable building materials and construction practices to reduce the environmental impact of new developments.

Facilities shall be accessible to all, including persons with disabilities, in compliance with national accessibility guidelines and international standards (e.g., Universal Design principles) making available accessible information and communication materials in various formats, such as braille, large print, and digital formats, to cater to guests with diverse needs.

4.10 Protection of Culture and Heritage

Accommodation facilities shall engage with the local community and contribute to its well-being through partnerships, local hiring, and support for local initiatives.

They shall respect and support local cultures, traditions, and heritage by offering cultural experiences and respecting cultural sensitivity and utilize artifacts produced by local entrepreneurs.

4.11 Promoting Responsible Tourism

Accommodation facilities shall provide information travelers about the local environment, culture, and heritage, while promoting responsible behavior and fostering a deeper connection with the destinations they visit.

They shall exert efforts for providing information to guests about the facility's sustainability efforts and how they can participate and enhancing the guest experience with sustainable activities, such as eco-tours, bike rentals, or sustainable dining options.

4.12 Stakeholder Engagement

Accommodation facilities shall involve employees, guests, suppliers, and the local community in sustainability efforts to build a sense of ownership and shared responsibility.

5 Implementation of Standard and Awarding Mechanism

Applicants having at least ten rooms in ECO Member States wishing to be awarded by ECO in accordance with the criteria set out in this document, may submit the application directly to the ECO Secretariat and/or through national tourism authorities responsible for tourism certification of the Member States.

Applicants shall attach the documents proving that they have implemented the above-mentioned sustainable management system in their facilities to the application form attached to this document.

Applicants shall also submit an action plan within the scope of the sustainable management system to be implemented for three years following the approval of their application. The applications will be assessed by the ECO Working Group on Tourism Standardization (WGTS) with the support of relevant national accreditation bodies for verification.

WGTS shall follow the ECO's general rules and procedures for certifying the applicants who meet the requirements of this standard. The report of the WGTS meeting including the evaluation of the applicants shall be shared with the applicants as well. Formal and informal notifications to the ECO Secretariat of violations of the criteria will be considered by the WGTS and, at the discretion of the WGTS, the awarding of previously certified entities may be cancelled. The WGTS may cancel the awards of facilities that are closed or whose ownership is transferred upon written notification or withdrawal statement coming from the entities.

Upon the WGTS approval for awarding which is valid for three years, the list of awarded enterprises will be contacted to sign the conflict of interest with the ECO Secretariat. The Secretariat shall publish the list of awarded entities in the ECO Tourism Website and update it on annual basis. Granting award may be renewed for three year periods upon receipt of a request from the awarded entities through official channels and upon the decision made by WGTS.

The awarded entities shall pay to the Secretariat according to the prices to be determined annually by the ECO's relevant decision making bodies to receive physical plaque and are entitled to display the awarding logo in their relevant facilities attached to this standard.



6 Appendix

Annex A

Application Form

I. General Information

1. Facility Name: _____

2. Facility Type:

☐ Hotel

☐ Resort

☐ Guesthouse

☐ Hostel

☐ Eco-lodge

☐ Other (please specify): _____

3. Facility Address:

Street: _____

City: _____

Country: _____

Postal Code: _____

4. Facility Contact Information:

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Website: _____

5. Size of the facility (in number of rooms and in square meter):

6. Name of the Applicant (Owner/Manager/Authorized Representative):

Full Name: _____

Position: _____

Contact Phone: _____

Contact Email: _____

II. Sustainable Management System (Please attach the relevant documents)

Sustainable Management System Overview

(Please provide a summary of your sustainable management system. Attach the detailed system and action plan for three years of implementation).

Action Plan for Sustainability (Three-Year Plan)

(Please attach the action plan with the summary abovementioned with a maximum of 10 page, detailing the steps and strategies you plan to implement to achieve sustainability goals for the next three years).

III. Sustainable Tourism Certification

1. National Certification(s) Received (if applicable):

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please provide the certification details:

Certification Name: _____

Issuing Authority: _____

Validity Period: _____

2. International Certification(s) Received (if applicable):

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please provide the certification details:

Certification Name: _____

Issuing Authority: _____

Validity Period: _____

IV. Declaration and Certification

By signing this application form, I confirm that the provided information is accurate, and I understand that the submission of false information may result in disqualification from the Awarding. I also agree to provide additional supporting documents upon request and to cooperate with the ECO Secretariat and/or WGTS in verifying the submitted information.

Signature of Applicant: _____

Date: _____

Conflict of Interest Agreement

This agreement is established in accordance with international procedures concerning conflict of interest in awarding of ECO Sustainable Tourism Common Criteria for Tourism Accommodation Facilities promulgated by ECO Working Group on Tourism Standardization (WGTS) that shall be effective to all relevant persons, which are the employees in national tourism authorities in the ECO Member States and the representatives of the Member States within WGTS who can access to confidential information of the applicants/the certified entities.

I certify that I have no any interest in or relationship with the organization to be inspected or in the certification process of ECO Sustainable Tourism Common Criteria for Tourism Accommodation Facilities as follows:

1. Not working with or consulting that organization in the past 2 years;
2. Any immediate family member does not work with or consult that organization in the past 2 years;
3. Not being a shareholder or any immediate family member is not a shareholder in that organization or parent organization;
4. Not being in the position or any immediate family member is not in the position of the committee or does not have commercial management in that organization.

If I have any interest or relationship with that organization, I certify that I will inform WGTS and/or ECO Secretariat before working/conducting the assessment and inspection of the applicants and awarded entities.

Signed by.....Declarer (.....)

Date.....

Logo for the Awarding



Template Format for Sustainable Management System and Action Plan**1. GENERAL INFORMATION**

Name of Facility:
City and Country:
Facility Type: (e.g., Hotel, Guesthouse, Eco-lodge)
Facility Capacity: (number of rooms/beds)
Name of Contact Person:
Position/Title:
Email Address:
Phone Number:
Date of Submission:

2. SUSTAINABILITY POLICY DECLARATION

Attach or paste the facility's sustainability policy here. The policy should include a commitment to protecting the environment, biodiversity, cultural and historical heritage.

3. THREE-YEAR ACTION PLAN (20XX–20XX)

Implement a comprehensive SMS aligned with ECO Sustainable Tourism- Common Criteria for Tourism Accommodation Facilities.

YEAR ONE – 2026				
Activity Area	Planned Actions	Responsible Unit	Timeline	Expected Outcome
i.e. Energy Efficiency	Audit current energy use; install LED lighting; initiate energy-saving awareness for staff	Engineering / Maintenance	2026 January-July	Reduced energy use by 10%
i.e. Water Management	Install low-flow faucets/showers; start grey water	Housekeeping / Maintenance	2026 April – July	Reduced water use by 25%

	recycling study			
YEAR TWO - 2027				
i.e. Accessibility	Renovate common areas for disabled access	Maintenance	2027 January-April	100% accessible public spaces
i.e. Chemical Use	Replace harmful cleaning agents with eco-certified products	Housekeeping	2027 April-June	Cleaning with 100% eco-certified products
YEAR THREE – 2028				
i.e. Impact Assessment	Evaluate all SMS components and revise strategies	Management	2028 March	Comprehensive sustainability/ESG report
i.e. Heritage Sites	Partner with local authorities to co-manage nearby sites	Marketing / Corporate Responsibility	2028 May	New cultural experiences

4. MONITORING AND EVALUATION STRATEGY

Explain how your facility plans to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan and measure progress (e.g., KPIs, audits, guest surveys).

5. DECLARATION AND SIGNATURE

I hereby confirm that the information provided is accurate and that our facility is committed to implementing the Sustainable Management System over the proposed three-year period.

Name:

Position:

Signature:

Date: