Green Key Criteria and Explanatory Notes

1 October 2026 – 31 December 2031

Conference Centres

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I. Introduction.

Green Key provides an independent, third-party certification scheme for tourism and hospitality establishments, enabling verification of conformity with defined sustainability criteria. The programme ensures that these establishments meet robust sustainability standards within the following 7 sections: Sustainable Management, Guest Awareness and Involvement, Water, Energy and Carbon, Waste, Procurement, and Living Environment.

The Green Key Conference Centre criteria are applicable for fully operational conference centres located in one permanent setting or located within another Green Key category that is entirely externally managed offering regular conference services. Establishments undergoing major construction/renovation works can only obtain the certificate when works are finalised. While establishments offering temporary/occasional services do not fall under the scope of this category, seasonal establishments may be eligible if they are fully operational during the time of the audit. The conference centre is located in one permanent setting, can have auditoriums, lecture halls and/or meeting/conference rooms, and offers its services to the general public.

Eligibility:

To be eligible for the Green Key Conference Centre criteria, the applicant establishment's main activity is that of a conference centre. This can be verified if at least 1 of the following conditions is met:

1. The establishment holds official registration as a conference centre, with this function being officially registered as its main activity in accordance with national legislation.

2. The establishment's main activity is the provision of services of a conference centre

3. The establishment's marketing and communication towards clients, and the responses in the pre-screening confirm that the main activity is that of conference centre operations.

The Scope of Green Key certification, with specifications of included and excluded services, facilities and activities, is defined here.

A Glossary clarifying the terminology and concepts used in the Green Key criteria is available here.

II. Imperative and Guideline criteria

Criteria marked with (I) are imperative criteria, while criteria marked with (G) are guideline criteria. The applicant must conform with all imperative criteria and an increasing number of applicable guideline criteria according to the number of years for which the certificate has been held, as per the following table:

Certification period	Year	Percentage of total imperative criteria	Percentage of total guideline criteria
First	1-2	100%	0%
Second	3-4	100%	10%
Third	5-6	100%	20%
Fourth	7-8	100%	30%
Fifth	9-10	100%	40%
Sixth and thereafter	11-12 and onwards	100%	50%

III. Criteria

1. SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT Environmental Strategy & Management Involvement, Corporate Social Responsibility, Team Engagement		
Environmental Strategy & Management Involvement		
N.	**Criterion**	**Explanatory Notes**
1.1	The management is involved and appoints a Green Key Establishment Representative from amongst the staff of the establishment. (I) ⓘ	**Relevance** Appointing a Green Key Establishment Representative[1] helps guarantee coordination, continuity and communication across all sustainability efforts. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment management are involved in the administration of sustainability initiatives and appoints a Green Key Establishment Representative from the staff. To ensure continuity during absence or leave of the Green Key Establishment Representative, the management also appoint a named substitute. The names and contact details of both the Green Key Establishment Representative and the substitute are shared with Green Key during the application process and whenever a change occurs. The Green Key Establishment Representative is a permanent staff member at the establishment. The main functions of the Green Key Establishment Representative include: • acting as the primary contact for all sustainability matters to management, staff, suppliers and Green Key, auditor and decision-making representatives; • instructing and supporting other staff members on sustainability matters (see criterion 1.20);

[1] See glossary p. 4.

		• coordinating the sustainability related staff training[2] (see criterion 1.21); • ensuring that all performance and business data[3] required for the Green Key application are collected and submitted (including cleaning chemicals/schedules, waste, and the efficient use of energy and water); • monitoring the implementation of the strategic sustainability targets[4] (see criterion 1.2) and the annual action plan (see criterion 1.3) of the establishment; • collecting and processing sustainability initiative suggested by staff and guests; • overseeing the communication in relation to the application or re-application for Green Key; and • ensuring, if the Green Key Establishment Representative is not part of the management, regular participation in management meetings to present sustainability developments. It is strongly recommended that the establishment forms a Green Committee[5] with representatives from all departments. The Green Committee oversees the implementation of sustainability initiatives and strategy in cooperation with the Green Key Establishment Representative and keeps staff members informed. Ultimate responsibility for the Green Key certification lies with the senior management or leadership of the establishment. ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In DK, the management appoints two Green Key Establishment Representatives from amongst the staff of the establishment. **Audit evidence** During the visual inspection, an interview[6] confirms that the Green Key Establishment Representative(s) can answer questions about the work done at the establishment regarding general sustainability matters and Green Key criteria.
1.2	The establishment formulates strategic sustainability	**Relevance** Formulating strategic sustainability targets[7] provides a strong and goal-oriented framework for the establishment's sustainability work. It ensures alignment, continuous improvement, and the integration of sustainability into core operations. **Expectations for implementation** The management and staff of the establishment (e.g. under supervision of the Green Key Establishment Representative)

[2] See glossary p. 4.
[3] See glossary p. 4.
[4] See glossary p. 4.
[5] See glossary p. 4.
[6] See glossary p. 4.
[7] See glossary p. 4.

	targets. (I)	formulates strategic sustainability targets that are more ambitious than compliance with legislation and serve as commitment to continuous improvement, tracking progress/monitoring and guiding decision-making. The targets focus on long-term direction rather than specific actions or how to handle them (this is covered in criterion 1.3). Strategic sustainability targets specify a timeline for review, are formulated up to maximum 6 years into the future and are assessed every certification period (every 2 years) to ensure continued relevance and ambition. The targets are directly linked to the annual action plan (criterion 1.3) and are used to evaluate the success of the action plan and the establishment's overall sustainability performance. For establishments with more than 50 employees, a minimum of 4 strategic targets, and for establishments with less than 50 employees, a minimum of 2 strategic targets are formulated. Establishments may choose which areas to focus on, provided that the targets cover at least 2 different areas, for example energy, water, waste, social sustainability[8]/CSR (e.g. staff equity, inclusion, community engagement etc.), biodiversity protection, sustainable procurement, risk and crisis management, etc. The targets are grounded in actual performance data or assessments from a clearly defined baseline period and directly respond to identified issues, risks, or areas for improvement. Examples of underlying data include energy, water, waste or carbon data; water risk or biodiversity assessments; or guest and staff feedback on CSR performance (e.g. from criteria 3.1, 4.1, 5.6, 7.12). Where available, it is encouraged that regional benchmarks are taken into account to ensure relevance and ambition. First-time applicants who may not yet have complete annual data should base their targets on the most accurate and representative data available (for example, based on the minimum 3 months of data that must be submitted for other criteria). Examples for strategic targets include: a) reducing greenhouse gas emissions (Scope 1 and 2) by at least 20% by 20XX compared to baseline year 20XX, equivalent to approximately a 5% annual reduction in line with the Paris Agreement; b) restoring at least 20% of the premises (by area) to natural or semi-natural habitat by 20XX (for further examples, see criterion 7.11), or any other biodiversity targets, for example following the Nature Positive Tourism[9] approach of protecting local or international biodiversity; c) reducing energy consumption for heating and cooling by 15% by 20XX, compared to baseline year 20XX; d) eliminating all single-use plastic items by the end of 20XX; e) reducing total water consumption per guest night by 10% by 20XX, compared to baseline year 20XX performance data; f) achieving gender balance in management positions (at least 40% women) by 20XX;

[8] See glossary p. 4.

[9] See glossary p. 4.

		g) conducting annual anti-harassment and safeguarding training for all staff, with special focus on protecting children, women and vulnerable groups; h) contributing at least 1% of annual profits or revenue to local community projects or partnerships; and/or i) adopting a local hiring target: ensure at least 60% of permanent staff are residents of the local area. Strategic sustainability targets are co-developed by management and staff, ensuring that both groups contribute to the identification and prioritisation of sustainability ambitions. Management is responsible for the accuracy of targets, their implementation, and follow-up. If a target is not met, a critical reflection of the reasons for lack of fulfilment is provided and if justified, the establishment may continue working on the same target in the next period. Targets are communicated to staff (e.g. during onboarding) and may be made accessible to guests, where appropriate (e.g. website, lobby, in-room materials). To strengthen local relevance, it is recommended that they are co-created with other relevant stakeholders such as community members. When preparing the strategic sustainability targets, the Green Key criteria can serve as inspiration. It is recommended that the establishment also formulates a sustainability vision and mission statement. Targets should support and be consistent with this long-term direction. If the establishment is part of a chain, collective chain-level strategic targets may serve as inspiration, provided that these are translated into specific individual/local targets. If adopted without modification, the establishment justifies their relevance (e.g. timeframe, focus, percentage goals). Chain-wide documents can be accepted as evidence if the establishment demonstrates that the actions are implemented at their property and appropriate for their structural, geographical and cultural context. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents its written, dated strategic sustainability targets. It is verified that they: • have been communicated internally and are available to staff; • cover at least 2 of the different areas listed above; • are less than 2 years old; and • were developed by staff and management. The Green Key Establishment Representative furthermore carries responsibility for accuracy and follow-up.
1.3	The establishment formulates an action plan aligned with its	**Relevance**

	strategic sustainability targets. (I)	To translate the establishment's strategic sustainability targets[10] (criterion 1.2) into measurable and goal-oriented actions, an action plan is required. It ensures the practical implementation of strategic objectives and provides a framework for tracking progress and continuous improvement. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment formulates an action plan that outlines specific steps to implement its strategic sustainability targets (criterion 1.2). The action plan is a central operational tool of the establishment's sustainability management system that reflects relevance to the specific context of the property. For example, if water scarcity is a regional concern, the action plan places greater emphasis on water-saving initiatives. The action plan covers the entire certification period (24 months), with actions clearly divided by year to track progress and enable annual updates. For establishments with more than 50 employees the plan includes a minimum of 4 actions per certification period. For establishments with less than 50 employees, a minimum of 2 actions per certification period are included. Actions cover at least 2 Green Key areas, for example energy, water, waste, social sustainability/CSR (e.g. staff equity, inclusion, community engagement etc.), biodiversity protection, sustainable procurement, risk and crisis management, etc., and each action relates to at least 1 strategic sustainability target. If developed as part of criterion 1.2., the plan also reflects the vision, mission and thematic priorities of the targets, ensuring a coherent and goal-driven approach. When preparing the annual action plan, it is recommended to use the Green Key criteria for inspiration, both regarding conformity with guideline criteria not yet implemented and to further improve engagement in already implemented imperative and guideline criteria. Actions that are already fulfilled are not included in the annual action plan, and listing a Green Key guideline criterion as an action is not sufficient. However, it is acceptable to include supporting actions that contribute to the future implementation of a guideline criterion (e.g. conducting a feasibility study in preparation for meeting a specific guideline criterion). All actions are measurable (e.g. number, percentage, quantity or completed task). For each action, the following is clearly documented: • a description of the action, its timeline and the intended outcome; • the responsible department or staff members; and • the link to the strategic sustainability target/s it supports. The actions are co-developed by management and staff (e.g under supervision of the Green Key Establishment

[10] See glossary p. 4.

		Representative) ensuring that both groups contribute to the identification and prioritisation of actions. Management is responsible for the accuracy of actions, their implementation, and follow-up. If an action has not been fulfilled, the establishment provides a clear and documented justification explaining the reasons (e.g. financial, structural, contextual, timing constraints) and present a concrete plan of action for either completing the same action in the next certification period or replacing it with a more feasible alternative. If the establishment is part of a chain, collective chain-level actions may serve as inspiration, provided that these are translated into specific individual/local actions. If adopted without modification, the establishment justifies their relevance. Chain-wide actions/documents can be accepted as evidence if the establishment demonstrates that the actions are implemented at their property and appropriate for their structural, geographical and cultural context. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents the written annual action plan for the coming certification period. It is checked that the plan: • includes a minimum of 4 actions (for establishments with more than 50 employees) or 2 actions (for establishments with less than 50 employees) per certification period; • contains actions linked to 1 or more strategic sustainability targets[11]; • includes timelines and responsible departments or staff members; and • is communicated internally and available to staff. In specific circumstances, for re-applicants, the establishment presents evidence of progress or completion of the previous action plan. This may include reports, photos, contracts, partnership agreements, training[12] records, or other verifiable documentation. Examples include: a) an invitation to or record of a staff sustainability event (e.g. volunteering, awareness-raising); b) a contract, partnership agreement, or MoU with an NGO or sustainability organisation; c) proof of membership in a sustainable or social initiative connected to a sustainability action; and/or d) reports, minutes, or activity records connected to the action. If actions were not fulfilled, for re-applicants, a documented justification and a plan explaining whether the unfulfilled actions will be implemented in the next certification period (and how), or why they are not considered feasible for the establishment, is presented.

[11] See glossary p. 4.
[12] See glossary p. 4.

Corporate Social Responsibility		
1.4	The establishment ensures fair labour practices, including written contracts, equal pay for equal work, and remuneration at or above the living wage for all employees and subcontracted workers. (I)	**Relevance** Ensuring fair labour practices is essential for safeguarding employee well-being, promoting equality and fostering responsible business conduct. In a diverse workforce, transparent and lawful employment conditions help to reduce inequalities and promote a safe, respectful workplace. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment ensures fair labour practices for all employees (including subcontracted staff, outsourced staff[13] and service providers working on-site). This includes written contracts, equal pay for equal work, and remuneration at or above the living wage for all employees and subcontracted workers. To conform with this criterion, the establishment: • ensures that all employees are paid at least the legal minimum wage per hour or, where no legal benchmark exists, a minimum living wage calculated in accordance with the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) principles of estimating the living wage; • provides written employment contracts for all staff that include details on salary, working hours (or, where applicable, number of workdays per year) and job descriptions. The contracts are explained in a language or format the employee understands, with translation or verbal support provided as needed. Employees furthermore receive payslips detailing the number of hours worked or days accounted, pay received and any overtime or compensatory leave; • guarantees equal pay for equal work, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, or disability status and ensures that pay scales are transparent (unless national legislation determines otherwise). A documented pay structure (e.g. salary matrix, pay scale or remuneration framework), reflecting factors such as experience and length of service, is recommended; and • requires contracts with all internally managed subcontracted service providers that confirm that the same wage and fair labour principles are met. If any facilities are externally managed, the establishment formally informs and encourages them in writing to follow the same standards. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents supporting documentation demonstrating conformity with fair labour practices. During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts samplings[14] of the supporting documentation by reviewing a sample of 3 employment contracts in comparison with payroll and pay structure documentation[15] (e.g. payroll overview, salary matrix,

[13] See glossary p. 4.
[14] See glossary p. 4.
[15] See glossary p. 4.

		pay scale or remuneration framework) to verify that written contracts exist for all staff; salary levels align with legal minimum wage or living wage requirements; and that equal pay for equal work is ensured (methodology C). If necessary, the documents may be shown in anonymised form. In specific circumstances, when subcontracted or outsourced staff work on-site, the auditor conducts samplings[16] of the supporting documentation by reviewing a sample of 3 written agreements to confirm that they adhere to the same wage and labour principles (methodology C). If the auditor observes inconsistencies or suspects irregularities, at least 1 anonymous interview with selected employees and subcontracted staff is conducted to confirm compliance with legal minimum wage requirements and living wage benchmarks.
1.5	The establishment does not use or accept child labour and ensures the protection of minors in employment. (I)	**Relevance** Preventing child labour and protecting minors in the workplace are essential aspects of responsible business conduct and human rights due diligence. Ensuring that no children are employed and that young workers are safeguarded supports social sustainability, aligns with international labour conventions, and contributes to the protection and well-being of children in local communities. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment ensures that no child under the age of 14 is employed and that any involvement of minors under the age of 18 in the workplace is strictly regulated, protective in nature and compliant with national and international child protection standards. The establishment furthermore ensures that no supplier using child labour is contracted. The establishment therefore: • refrains from the employment of children under the age of 14 under any circumstance; • follows national legislation and, where it does not exist or is weaker than the criterion, complies with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and ILO Conventions No. 138 (Minimum Age) and No. 182 (Worst Forms of Child Labour); and • respects children's rights and protects children from all forms of exploitation, including sexual exploitation. If persons under 18 are employed (e.g. through internships, apprenticeships, paid or unpaid positions), the establishment ensures that: • written permission from a parent or legal guardian is obtained; or that there is a written agreement with the educational institution, specifying the nature of tasks, and work hours; and

[16] See glossary p. 4.

		• all applicable labour laws are followed, including those related to maximum working hours, minimum rest periods and breaks, days off and annual leave, compensation and insurance (if required). In the absence of national legislation, ILO Guidelines are followed. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents: • a signed declaration confirming that no children under the age of 14 are employed. The visual inspection further confirms this; and • guardian's written consent or agreements with educational institutions (if applicable), records showing compliance with applicable labour laws for any individual under the age of 18 working at the establishment. The documents may be shown in anonymised form, but anonymisation is not required as no copies are collected; the check is purely visual.
1.6	The establishment provides accessible and non-retaliatory grievance and whistleblower mechanisms for reporting exploitation, discrimination and harassment. (I)	**Relevance** Effective grievance and whistleblower systems are essential for safeguarding human rights, workplace integrity and ethical behaviour. The establishment ensures that all staff (including subcontracted personnel) and guests have access to a secure, confidential mechanism for reporting exploitation, discrimination and harassment without fear of retaliation. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment implements a basic, clear and accessible system for reporting concerns. At minimum, the establishment has: • a written grievance and whistleblower procedure that explains how to report a concern, who receives it, the steps for follow-up and investigation, expected timelines, and assurances of confidentiality and non-retaliation; • at least 1 confidential or anonymous reporting channel, such as access to an independent external whistleblower network (e.g. FEE whistleblower platform) or equivalent third-party channel; • information for staff on how to use the system, ensuring that all employees (including subcontracted workers) know where to report concerns and understand their rights to safe, confidential reporting. The information is accessible and understandable to all staff; and • guest reporting options, enabling visitors to confidentially report any form of exploitation or misconduct they observe. This information is available in guest materials (e.g. info books, digital welcome pages, signage, etc.). This criterion applies to establishments with more than 50 employees. Establishments with fewer than 50 employees are encouraged to work on other proportional reporting options (e.g. simplified internal reporting, staff representative, open-door reporting practices). **Audit evidence**

		During the audit, the establishment presents: • the written grievance and whistleblower procedure, including reporting steps, designated responsible persons, confidentiality measures and non-retaliation provisions; • proof of communication to staff (e.g. onboarding materials, internal notices, training records) that demonstrates employees are informed about the reporting system and know how to access it; • confirmation of an anonymous or confidential reporting channel, such as a link to an external whistleblower platform or documentation of an equivalent third-party mechanism; and • guest-facing materials showing how visitors are informed about available reporting mechanisms (e.g. screenshots, photos, printed pages). During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts at least 1 interview with staff present during the audit to confirm that they are aware of the mechanisms and feel able to use them without fear of retaliation.
1.7	The establishment has procedures in place to ensure a safe and healthy working environment. (I)	**Relevance** Safe and supportive working environment is essential to employee health, satisfaction and performance, and forms the foundation for responsible and sustainable business operations. By ensuring strong occupational health and safety practices and promoting staff wellbeing, the establishment helps prevent workplace injuries and stress and fosters a positive organisational culture that benefits both employees and service quality. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment ensures occupational health and safety of all staff by: • providing written health and safety policies and emergency procedures that are accessible and clearly communicated to all staff; and • ensuring that health and safety measures are reflected in practical day-to-day operations, and not only in written documentation. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents: • written health and safety policies and emergency plans accessible to all staff; and • evidence that these procedures are communicated and implemented in practical day-to-day operations (e.g. signage in staff area).
1.8	The establishment actively	**Relevance**

	cooperates with a defined number of relevant external stakeholders on environmental or social community development initiatives. (I)	To foster meaningful engagement between the establishment and the surrounding community, this criterion aims to promote measurable, long-term cooperation with external stakeholders to support environmental education, local cultural heritage and the sustainable development of the destination. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment actively cooperates with relevant external stakeholders on sustainable development issues, such as environmental, social, cultural, educational, economic, quality, human rights, health, risk and crisis management issues. Where relevant, cooperation with stakeholders involved in the protection and enhancement of local historical, archaeological, cultural and spiritually significant sites and traditions is encouraged. It is strongly recommended to select cooperation partners based on the local context, or issues, risks, or areas for improvement identified in criterion 1.2. For establishments with more than 50 employees, a minimum of 2 active cooperations with relevant stakeholders are in place. Establishments with less than 50 employees have a minimum of 1 active partnership cooperation with a relevant stakeholder. At least 1 cooperation focuses on the area surrounding the establishment (regional/local); where 2 partnerships are required, the second cooperation could focus on the support of projects in other geographical areas. Cooperations may focus on environmental education or awareness-raising, social-cultural collaboration, or sustainable regional development. Relevant stakeholders include (but are not limited to) non-governmental organisations, local community groups, local authorities, residents, local schools, management authorities of protected areas, heritage institutions, or sustainability-focused civil society organisations, etc. To be approved, it is an active two-way cooperation between the establishment and the relevant stakeholders, providing benefits for both parties. An active cooperation is a mutually beneficial relationship involving at least 1 form of interaction during the certification period, such as: co-organisation of an event or public initiative; joint development and implementation of educational or community-based projects; employee volunteering during work hours; joint fundraising efforts or in-kind support that go beyond one-off donations. Passive support, such as donations alone without interaction, the sole purchasing of products, or one-sided communication, does not qualify as active cooperation. If the establishment is part of a chain, collaborations may align with the broader chain's strategic collaborations, provided that they are tailored to the specific applicant establishment. Examples of active collaborations include: a) protection of natural and culturally sensitive areas; b) projects addressing the impacts of climate change; c) creation of outdoor infrastructure (establishment of environmentally friendly boat mooring places, nature trails) that can also be used by the public; d) activities with schools or communities working with environmental or educational initiatives;

		e) activities with people with additional needs (vulnerable and/or less-resourced groups); f) activities promoting social justice and equal rights; g) provision of basic food, water, and energy services, as well as health and sanitation services in communities; h) supporting museums to promote local heritage; and/or i) cooperation with local community groups/destination management organisations/authorities on sustainable tourism planning and management in the destination, local infrastructure and social community development projects (e.g. sanitation). Collaborations based solely on purchasing local products or supporting standalone biodiversity conservation activities do not fulfil this criterion (the latter is covered in criterion 7.11). **Audit evidence** During the audit, establishments with more than 50 employees present evidence of a minimum of 2 active cooperations. Establishments with less than 50 employees present evidence of 1 active cooperation. (e.g. meeting minutes, activity reports, co-developed materials). The submitted evidence (e.g. meeting minutes, activity reports, co-developed materials) demonstrates the active cooperation with relevant stakeholders, defined as a mutually beneficial relationship involving at least 1 documented interaction during the certification period. In specific circumstances, for first-time applicants, the establishment presents the cooperation contracts/agreements and planned actions.
1.9	The establishment demonstrates respect for Indigenous Peoples in its operations and representations. (I)	**Relevance** Tourism and hospitality operations can unintentionally harm Indigenous Peoples by disrupting cultural traditions, restricting access to land or resources, or disregarding Indigenous rights and knowledge systems. Where Indigenous Peoples are present, respectful engagement and informed decision-making are essential to prevent harm, avoid cultural appropriation, and support the protection of cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and community well-being. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment ensures that its operations, developments, and guest experiences respect Indigenous Peoples while safeguarding their rights and access to essential resources and culturally significant sites. This includes a commitment to cultural integrity, equitable benefit-sharing, and the protection of social and environmental well-being. To conform with this criterion, the establishment assesses whether Indigenous Peoples are present within a 100km radius of the establishment. When assessing the presence of Indigenous Peoples, the establishment may refer to publicly available or locally recognised information, including: • recognised Indigenous people or territories in the area;

		• Indigenous cultural, historical, archaeological, or spiritual sites, routes, traditions, or practices; and • UNESCO World Heritage or Intangible Cultural Heritage designations associated with Indigenous people. If the assessment confirms that no Indigenous Peoples or Indigenous cultural assets are present within this radius, this criterion is considered Not Applicable (N/A). Where Indigenous Peoples are identified, the establishment ensures that its guest-facing activities, site management, and development decisions respect Indigenous rights, culture, and access to resources. This means that the establishment ensures that: • all representations of Indigenous people (e.g. guest materials, performances, crafts, storytelling, décor) are developed in consultation with relevant Indigenous people. This includes written consent, and fair compensation, where applicable; • the authenticity and essence of Indigenous rituals, dances or ceremonies shared with tourists are preserved and presented in alignment with community-approved practices, including those recognised as UNESCO intangible cultural heritage; • any re-design of community spaces or biodiversity-related initiatives (e.g. green space creation, native species planting, habitat restoration, nature-based tourism experiences) integrates traditional or Indigenous ecological knowledge and includes consultation to identify and mitigate risks of cultural or social degradation (e.g. displacement, loss of traditions); • access to essential services and resources (e.g. food, water, healthcare, sanitation, education, livelihoods, natural resources, or culturally significant sites) is not restricted or compromised by the establishment's operations; • if applicable, free, prior, and informed written consent (FPIC) is obtained for the use or acquisition of land and water resources, and strictly complies with local zoning, heritage, and environmental protection regulations; and • essential on-site services (e.g. medical facilities) are shared with surrounding communities when such services are otherwise unavailable. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents an overview of the assessment identifying Indigenous Peoples, cultural assets, and heritage sites, or a justified explanation if the assessment shows that none are present. In specific circumstances, and depending on the outcome of the mapping, the establishment presents: • examples of guest-facing materials (e.g. guest brochures, storytelling elements, décor) that accurately reflect approved Indigenous content and credit cultural knowledge holders or creators; • if applicable, demonstration of how the essence of traditional rituals, dances, or ceremonies is preserved, e.g. evidence of consultation with Indigenous people, such as meeting minutes, written agreements, or letters of consent;

		• if applicable, site maps, zoning compliance documentation, and agreements (FPIC) with Indigenous people confirming that the establishments' operations do not prevent access for Indigenous people to essential resources and culturally significant sites. If the auditor observes inconsistencies or suspects irregularities, at least 1 anonymous interview with Indigenous people is conducted to verify that no evidence of active disputes, legal complaints, or documented conflicts related to access exists; • if applicable, in cases of re-design of community spaces or biodiversity-related initiatives, documentation of any biodiversity-related or community-based initiatives (e.g. design plans, project descriptions) that show the integration of traditional ecological knowledge and inclusive planning processes; and/or • where relevant, confirmation that public-facing services (e.g. medical facilities, shops) are accessible to Indigenous people.
1.10	The establishment has procedures in place either focusing on equitable recruitment or equitable development regardless of ethnicity, gender identity, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion, or socio-economic background. (I)	**Relevance** Equitable access to recruitment and development opportunities supports a healthy workplace culture and reduces risks of exclusion or bias. Fair pathways for growth further help strengthen staff well-being and organisational resilience. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment selects 1 focus area, either equitable recruitment or equitable development, and integrates procedures into its general recruitment or employment policies, ensuring fairness regardless of ethnicity, gender identity, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or socio-economic background, including in management positions. The establishment furthermore implements at least 1 documented action linked to the selected focus area. The implemented actions are documented, relevant to the context of the establishment (e.g. location, workforce composition), and evaluated or reviewed every 4 years. For the focus area of equitable recruitment, the establishment uses fair and non-discriminatory hiring processes that minimise bias in job advertising, shortlisting and interviewing. For the focus area of equitable development, the establishment ensures fair access to training[17], skill-building and advancement opportunities, with decisions on promotions and benefits based solely on skills, performance and experience. This criterion applies to all levels of employment, including advancement into leadership and management roles. The selected focus area is supported by a written equal opportunity policy that sets out zero tolerance for discrimination and outlines mechanisms to ensure inclusivity in the relevant processes. The policy may be a stand-alone one-page document or be part of another internal document (e.g. Code of Business Conduct), is shared with relevant staff (e.g. management, HR), formally approved by management and reviewed at least once every 4 years. Examples of acceptable actions:

[17] See glossary p. 4.

		a) blind recruitment practices such as anonymous first-round CV screening, removing identifying information such as name, gender, ethnicity, or address, to reduce bias in shortlisting. *(applies to equitable recruitment);* b) setting inclusive hiring targets (where legally permissible), or development targets, or non-sensitive monitoring systems (e.g. gender ratio in management, local vs. non-local staff etc.). *(applies to equitable recruitment);* c) promotion and support of the completion of basic education level amongst all staff (only relevant for staff without finalised formal education). *(applies to equitable development);* d) internal mentorship or career development programmes targeting underrepresented groups, with measurable outcomes such as promotions or role progression. *(applies to equitable development)*; and/or e) mandatory annual DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) training[18] for the Green Key Establishment Representative[19] or relevant HR personnel, which includes topics such as non-discrimination and inclusive hiring principles, bias reduction (e.g. unconscious bias), inclusive leadership and workplace culture. *(Applies to both focus areas.)* The collection of numerical data on gender, local employment, disability or ethnic representation is recommended only where legally permitted, ethically appropriate and voluntarily disclosed. Data must remain aggregated and anonymised. This criterion is imperative for establishments with more than 50 employees. For establishments with fewer than 50 employees, this criterion is guideline. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents documentation showing how it ensures equity in either recruitment or professional development. The documentation includes: • the written policy (stand-alone document or within CSR/Code of Business Conduct, if available); and • evidence of at least 1 implemented action. Depending on which of the listed actions has been selected, this evidence could include: a) proof of DEI training completion and action taken; b) proof of promotion and support of the completion of basic education level amongst staff; c) recruitment or HR records showing fair process mechanisms e.g. anonymised screening templates, partnerships with local groups, (if chosen as 1 action); d) training and career development records (e.g. training calendars, participation records, or mentorship programme reports) to demonstrate that all employees have equal access to training, advancement and feedback (if chosen as 1 action); or e) number of promotions or role progression of staff due to implemented career development programme.

[18] See glossary p. 4.
[19] See glossary p. 4.

1.11	The establishment provides access for people with additional accessibility needs by focusing on minimum 1 defined accessibility category and implementing the required minimum measures for that category. (I)	**Relevance** Providing inclusive access for people with additional accessibility needs helps remove physical, sensory and cognitive barriers, enabling all guests to participate fully and independently in services and experiences. This supports social sustainability and aligns with international human rights principles. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment provides access for people with additional accessibility needs. Recognising that establishments may not be able to cover all types of disabilities, the establishment focuses its accessibility improvements on minimum 1 specific category of need: physical mobility, visual impairment or cognitive/hearing impairment. To reach conformity, the following minimum accessibility elements are in place when focusing on physical accessibility: • at least 1 accessible entrance with ramp or level access (meeting slope and width standards); • at least 1 accessible toilet in public/common areas; • at least 1 accessible guest room including bathroom (if accommodation is provided); • accessible restaurant seating or common dining area; and • 1 accessible meeting/conference room, if applicable. It is furthermore recommended that resting points (e.g. benches) are provided for guests with limited mobility throughout longer walking areas. The slope and width of entrances, signage, and handrail availability are verified in accordance with national accessibility guidelines or, where available, UN/WHO accessibility recommendations. To reach conformity, the following minimum accessibility elements are in place when focusing on visual accessibility: • high-contrast signage and/or tactile floor markers and/or adequate lighting and glare reduction in key areas (e.g. entrance, reception, toilets, corridors) according to visual impairment needs; • at least 1 accessible toilet in public/common areas; • at least 1 accessible guest room including bathroom (if accommodation is provided); • accessible restaurant seating; reception or service desk, and either auditory cues or verbal guidance or braille/large-print menus/information guides; and • 1 accessible meeting/conference room, if applicable. For cognitive disabilities or hearing impairment, the following minimum accessibility elements are in place to reach conformity: • an accessibility plan outlining how cognitive or sensory needs (hearing impairments) are addressed; and • at least 2 implemented tangible actions focusing on either cognitive disabilities and/or hearing impairments: o examples of actions focusing on cognitive accessibility include simplified and pictogram-based instructions in key areas (reception, dining, safety information); quiet check-in or queue-free service for guests who need

		it; staff training focusing on the sensibilisation of needs for people with cognitive disabilities; availability of sensory-friendly maps or simple orientation guides; predictable routines for activities communicated clearly to guests. ○ examples of actions for hearing impairments include availability of portable hearing loops at reception or meeting rooms; captioned videos and visual alarms in key areas (if feasible); staff training focusing on the sensibilisation of needs for people with hearing impairments (e.g. trained in international sign language). For the actions to be approved, the improvements are substantial, functional and clearly documented in the accessibility plan. The establishment also informs about the minimum accessibility elements in place on their website. Even if pets are generally not allowed in the establishment, service animals (e.g. guide dogs) are always permitted. This aspect is respected by all staff. The level of access is clearly and accurately communicated on the establishment's website. Descriptions specify accessible facilities (e.g. room layout, grab bars, step-free access, high-contras signage, visual alarms, etc.) and whether the establishment complies with specific standards (e.g. local building codes or accessibility certifications). The establishment is encouraged to consult with or seek approval from national or local disability organisations when planning accessibility features. During the onboarding, all staff are trained and informed about the establishment's accessibility provisions, regulations and the rights of guests with disabilities. Management and other guest-facing staff[20] receive additional follow-up training regarding the available equipment in the establishment. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents evidence of: • staff awareness and training on accessibility procedures; and • availability of information about accessibility on the website. In specific circumstances, where the establishment provides access for people with cognitive disabilities needs or hearing impairments, an accessibility plan outlining how these needs are addressed is presented. During the visual inspection, the auditor confirms the presence and condition of accessible infrastructure (at minimum of the listed areas above). For this purpose, the auditor conducts samplings[21] in at least 1 public restroom, 1 common area/entrance, 1 restaurant, and 1 meeting room, and in guest rooms following methodology A as described in the glossary.

[20] See glossary p. 4.
[21] See glossary p. 4.

1.12	Plants, and animals, as well as historical and archaeological artefacts, are only sold, traded, or displayed in accordance with international law. (I)	**Relevance** The trade and display of threatened species and unauthorised artefacts contribute to biodiversity loss, illegal wildlife trade and cultural exploitation. By prohibiting such practices, establishments help protect endangered species, safeguard cultural heritage and demonstrate responsible corporate and environmental stewardship. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment does not harvest, sell, trade, or display plant or animal species or their parts and products that are listed as *Threatened* (i.e. Vulnerable, Endangered, or Critically Endangered) on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. This includes both regulated and unregulated trade, as well as the unsanctioned collection of wild flora and fauna. The prohibition applies to items sold or displayed in all areas of the establishment (for products such as souvenirs, decorative items, traditional medicines, or live specimens). Commercial activities involving *Threatened* species are not permitted, even if the species or products are legal to sell under national legislation, unless explicitly permitted under international conservation guidance and used exclusively for educational or awareness-raising purposes. Additionally, to protect cultural heritage, historical and archaeological artefacts are not sold, traded, or displayed unless lawfully acquired and presented for an educational or cultural purpose. In such cases, collaboration with relevant institutions (e.g. museums, conservation organisations, or Indigenous groups) is encouraged to ensure respectful and meaningful interpretation. **Audit evidence** During the audit, in specific circumstances (if cultural heritage, historical and archaeological artefacts are displayed), the establishment presents documentation showing legal provenance and explaining how the display contributes to education or conservation awareness. During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts samplings[22] in at least 1 public area such as gift shops, receptions and decorative areas, following methodology A as described in the glossary.
1.13	The establishment does not offer,	**Relevance**

[22] See glossary p. 4.

	promote, or facilitate entertainment, excursions, or activities that involve the exploitation or suffering of animals. (I)	The use of animals for entertainment in tourism can involve practices that compromise animal welfare and promote exploitation[23]. By prohibiting such activities, establishments ensure ethical treatment of animals, align with global welfare standards and foster respect for nature among guests. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment does not offer, promote, or facilitate entertainment, excursions, or activities that involve involving the exploitation or suffering of animals. This applies both to on-site activities and to suppliers or external activities recommended, sold/contracted, or arranged through the establishment. The use of wild animals[24] for entertainment, handling, or close interaction is strictly prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to: • animal shows or performances; • staged photo opportunities; • direct contact with or feeding of captive wild animals; • animal fights, races, or rides that compromise welfare (e.g. elephant rides, reindeer races, rodeos); and • off-site events or attractions known to harm animals (e.g. bullfighting, circuses with wild animals, hunting safaris). The establishment assesses external suppliers and activities it promotes or contracts with third parties to ensure they do not involve these practices. Domestic animals[25] may participate in welfare-based, educational, or culturally rooted activities (e.g. interactive farms, husky safaris, horseback riding), whether offered on-site or promoted/facilitated off-site. On-site animals are always housed under conditions that comply with animal welfare regulations and standards, including those outlined in criterion 1.14. **Audit evidence** During the audit, in specific circumstances (where animal-related activities are offered, promoted or facilitated), the establishment presents: • a written statement, Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)[26] or policy confirming that no entertainment, excursions, or activities that involve the exploitation of animals are offered, promoted or facilitated; and/or • if available, the in-house entertainment plan for the guests. Where appropriate, a visual inspection confirms the presence of animals on-site, evaluated against the educational standards

[23] See glossary p. 4.
[24] See glossary p. 4.
[25] See glossary p. 4.
[26] See glossary p. 4.

		described above.
1.14	Animal welfare guidelines are followed when the establishment keeps animals on its premises. (I)	**Relevance** Ensuring high standards of animal welfare in tourism prevents suffering, protects biodiversity and promotes ethical guest experiences. By following recognised animal welfare frameworks and national legislation, establishments safeguard the physical and emotional well-being of animals on their premises while demonstrating responsible and sustainable practices. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment follows animal welfare guidelines when animals are kept on its premises. This includes full compliance with national animal welfare legislation and, at minimum, adherence to the Five Domains Model of animal welfare, as defined in ABTA's Global Welfare Guidance for Animals in Tourism. The Five Domains focus on the animals' physical and emotional well-being. This includes: • positive conditions that are ensured: o good feeding: animals have constant access to clean water and are given enough food that meets their nutritional needs and natural feeding behaviours; o comfortable living conditions: animals live in an environment that suits their species, providing space, shelter, appropriate temperatures and enrichment opportunities (e.g. natural materials, shade, bathing areas); o healthy bodies: animals receive proper care to stay physically healthy and any injuries or illnesses are treated quickly; o freedom to behave naturally: animals can move freely and express normal behaviours (like socialising, digging, flying, climbing, or playing) depending on the species; and o positive experiences and emotional well-being: animals feel safe, comfortable, stimulated and content. • negative conditions that are avoided: o hunger or thirst: animals are not deprived of food or water; o poor living conditions: dirty, overcrowded, or overly harsh environments are unacceptable; o illness or injury: sick or hurt animals are not left untreated; o restricted behaviour: chaining, caging, or preventing animals from moving or behaving normally is not allowed; and o suffering or stress: practices that cause pain, fear, boredom, frustration, or emotional distress are avoided. A veterinary assessment is conducted at least once per year to confirm animal health and welfare. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents:

		• written confirmation that it has read, understood and follows animal welfare practices based on ABTA's latest guidelines and in compliance with national animal welfare laws (e.g. by presenting the establishment's animal welfare commitment or the written Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)[27] for the maintenance of and care for the animals including a checklist based on the Five Domains); and • records of annual veterinary assessments confirming the animals' health and well-being. Where possible, a visual inspection confirms that animals present on-site do not exhibit the negative conditions described in the Five Domains.
1.15	*The establishment develops and implements a Code of Business Conduct. (G)*	***Relevance*** *The Code of Business Conduct is a foundational element of the establishment's corporate social responsibility framework, and helps ensure ethical, lawful and responsible operations across the organisation, building trust with stakeholders and supporting long-term social sustainability.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment develops and implements a Code of Business Conduct. This is a dated, internal document, and covers all of the following key dimensions:* • *policies and corporate culture: how the organisation fosters ethical business conduct and an integrity-driven corporate culture;* • *anti-corruption and bribery: policies aligned with international frameworks (e.g. UN Convention against Corruption) and identification of at-risk functions;* • *business ethics: upholding values of fairness, transparency and integrity;* • *corporate governance: structures defining decision-making, accountability and control;* • *human rights and social safeguards: commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including protections against abuse, exploitation and harassment (with attention to vulnerable groups); and* • *animal welfare: where applicable, policies addressing the welfare of animals on-site.* *The Code of Business Conduct is:* • *formally approved by general management and dated;* • *reviewed at least once every 4 years; and* • *shared with all staff (e.g. via onboarding, handbook, training[28]) and made publicly available upon request.*

[27] See glossary p. 4.

[28] See glossary p. 4.

		A chain-wide Code of Business Conduct may be used, provided that it demonstrably applies to the applicant establishment (relevant brand, country, property type); staff at the establishment are aware of and have access to it; and the establishment can show how the Code of Business Conduct is implemented in practice at property level. Chain-wide documents alone are not sufficient; the establishment still demonstrates awareness and implementation during the audit. ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents a dated and management approved Code of Business Conduct document covering all required dimensions.* *When relevant, the auditor also verifies:* • *evidence of staff awareness and training (e.g. onboarding materials); and* • *interviews with management and staff if the auditor has any doubt about implementation or understanding.*
1.16	*The establishment actively promotes the physical and mental wellbeing of employees by implementing at least 1 tangible initiative per year or maintaining permanent, free or subsidised facilities that support staff wellbeing. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Employee wellbeing contributes to a healthy workplace culture, improved performance, and long-term staff satisfaction. Supporting the physical and mental health of employees helps reduce stress, prevent burnout, and foster a positive and resilient working environment.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment implements at least 1 initiative per year, or maintains ongoing facilities or services, that promote staff physical or mental wellbeing.* *Examples of acceptable wellbeing initiatives include:* *a) team-building events, appreciation activities, or wellness days;* *b) free or subsidised access to exercise facilities, sports activities, or wellness equipment during or after working hours;* *c) training sessions, workshops, or briefings on mental health, stress management, resilience, emotional wellbeing, or work–life balance;* *d) awareness campaigns or workshops addressing substance use, nutrition, occupational health, or health-related risks;* *e) preventive health initiatives such as regular health check-ups (where feasible), flu vaccinations, or ergonomic assessments;* *f) facilities that support staff wellbeing needs, such as breastfeeding rooms, quiet rooms, or prayer spaces;* *g) challenges or competitions encouraging healthy habits (e.g. steps challenge, cycling-to-work month); and/or* *h) family-friendly initiatives, such as allowing employees to bring their children to work under safe and appropriate conditions, or providing access to designated childcare spaces, children's clubs, or partnerships with nearby childcare providers.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents either:*

		a) documentation demonstrating the implemented wellbeing initiative(s), such as HR communications, programme descriptions, photos of facilities, event summaries, participation records, or agreements with external partners; or *b) evidence of existing facilities, during a visual inspection, where applicable (e.g. breastfeeding rooms, exercise areas, quiet rooms, childcare spaces).* *During the visual inspection, the auditor may conduct interviews with staff to confirm their awareness of the wellbeing initiative(s).*
1.17	*The establishment provides traineeships and part-time or flexible employment opportunities for long-term unemployed individuals or people with limited employability. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Offering employment opportunities to individuals from vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds, people with disabilities, or those facing barriers to traditional employment contributes to social equity and community wellbeing. It helps reduce inequalities, supports skill-building and workforce integration and fosters a more inclusive and supportive workplace culture.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment has implemented at least 1 of the following initiatives during the last certification period (2 years) or during the last 12 months for first-time applicants:* *a) a traineeship or apprenticeship lasting at least 3 months for long-term unemployed individuals;* *b) active promotion of the recruitment, retention and development of staff with disabilities;* *c) part-time or flexible employment contracts for people with limited employability, as some individuals may not be able to work full time (e.g. due to disabilities, age, or health conditions) and flexible arrangements support their inclusion in the workforce;* *d) employment or training[29] opportunities for individuals with limited language skills, or from vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds (e.g. migrants, survivors of violence, single parents, or economically disadvantaged individuals); and/or* *e) active collaboration with programmes or partnerships that facilitate the transition from school or social support into employment for disadvantaged groups.* *Overall, the establishment supports workplace inclusion and equal treatment by adapting roles, working hours, or conditions to the abilities and needs of the individuals (e.g. flexible working hours or adjusted responsibilities).* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents evidence corresponding to the implemented initiative(s). Accepted evidence includes, depending on the initiative(s) selected:* *a) employment or traineeship records (e.g. contracts, attendance logs, certificates of completion, or HR reports, if legally permitted), demonstrating a duration of at least 3 months within the past certification period (or up to 12 months for first-time applicants). Collaboration documents with employment agencies or social services may also be shown;*

[29] See glossary p. 4.

		b) records of reasonable accommodation measures (e.g. adapted workstations or flexible tasks), staff training materials supporting disability inclusion, or documentation of cooperation with disability employment organisations, job centres, or NGOs; *c) employment contracts indicating part-time, flexible, or adjusted hours; HR summaries showing the number of staff benefiting from such arrangements; internal policies outlining flexible work options; or records of participation in welfare-to-work or social employment schemes, where applicable;* *d) evidence of employment or training contracts (anonymised where necessary), documentation of language support or training programmes, records of internships, entry-level training, or mentorship opportunities, as well as agreements or cooperation evidence with NGOs, migrant support organisations, or social service providers demonstrating engagement in such initiatives; and/or* *e) cooperation agreements, partnership contracts, participation records, or project descriptions with relevant institutions.* *During the visual inspection, the auditor may conduct interviews with management that confirm the implementation of 1 of the listed initiatives and the support measures provided to these employees.*
1.18	*The establishment provides access for people with additional accessibility needs by focusing on minimum 2 defined accessibility categories and implementing the required minimum measures for those categories. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Providing inclusive access for people with additional accessibility needs helps remove physical, sensory and cognitive barriers, enabling all guests to participate fully and independently in services and experiences. This supports social sustainability and aligns with international human rights principles.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment provides access for people with additional accessibility needs. Recognising that establishments may not be able to cover all types of disabilities, the establishment focuses its accessibility improvements on minimum 2 specific category of need: physical mobility, visual impairment or cognitive/hearing impairment.* *To reach conformity, the following minimum accessibility elements are in place when focusing on physical accessibility:* • *at least 1 accessible entrance with ramp or level access (meeting slope and width standards);* • *at least 1 accessible toilet in public/common areas;* • *at least 1 accessible guest room including* bathroom *(if accommodation is provided);* • *accessible restaurant seating or common dining area; and* • *1 accessible meeting/conference room, if applicable.* *It is furthermore recommended that resting points (e.g. benches) are provided for guests with limited mobility throughout longer walking areas. The slope and width of entrances, signage, and handrail availability are verified in accordance with national accessibility guidelines or, where available, UN/WHO accessibility recommendations.*

		To reach conformity, the following minimum accessibility elements are in place when focusing on visual accessibility: • *high-contrast signage and/or tactile floor markers and/or adequate lighting and glare reduction in key areas (e.g. entrance, reception, toilets, corridors) according to visual impairment needs;* • *at least 1 accessible toilet in public/common areas;* • *at least 1 accessible guest room including bathroom (if accommodation is provided);* • *accessible restaurant seating; reception or service desk, and either auditory cues or verbal guidance or braille/large-print menus/information guides; and* • *1 accessible meeting/conference room, if applicable.* *For cognitive disabilities or hearing impairment, the following minimum accessibility elements are in place to reach conformity:* • *an accessibility plan outlining how cognitive or sensory needs (hearing impairments) are addressed; and* • *at least 2 implemented tangible actions focusing on either cognitive disabilities and/or hearing impairments:* o *examples of actions focusing on cognitive accessibility include simplified and pictogram-based instructions in key areas (reception, dining, safety information); quiet check-in or queue-free service for guests who need it; staff training focusing on the sensibilisation of needs for people with cognitive disabilities; availability of sensory-friendly maps or simple orientation guides; predictable routines for activities communicated clearly to guests.* o *examples of actions for hearing impairments include availability of portable hearing loops at reception or meeting rooms; captioned videos and visual alarms in key areas (if feasible); staff training focusing on the sensibilisation of needs for people with hearing impairments (e.g. trained in international sign language).* *For the actions to be approved, the improvements are substantial, functional and clearly documented in the accessibility plan. The establishment also informs about the minimum accessibility elements in place on their website.* *Even if pets are generally not allowed in the establishment, service animals (e.g. guide dogs) are always permitted. This aspect is respected by all staff. The level of access is clearly and accurately communicated on the establishment's website. Descriptions specify accessible facilities (e.g. room layout, grab bars, step-free access, high-contras signage, visual alarms, etc.) and whether the establishment complies with specific standards (e.g. local building codes or accessibility certifications).* *Where applicable, the establishment is encouraged to consult with or seek approval from national or local disability organisations when planning accessibility features. During the onboarding, all staff are trained and informed about the establishment's accessibility provisions, regulations and the rights of guests with disabilities. Management and other relevant guest-facing staff[30] receive additional follow-up training regarding the available equipment in the establishment.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents evidence of:*

[30] See glossary p. 4.

		• *relevant staff awareness and training on accessibility procedures; and* • *availability of information about accessibility on the website.* *In specific circumstances, where the establishment provides access for people with cognitive disabilities needs or hearing impairments, an accessibility plan outlining how these needs are addressed is presented.* *During the visual inspection, the auditor confirms the presence and condition of accessible infrastructure (at minimum of the listed areas above). For this purpose, the auditor conducts samplings[31] in at least 1 public restroom, 1 common area/entrance, 1 restaurant, and 1 meeting room, and in guest rooms following methodology A as described in the glossary.*
1.19	*The establishment offers local micro or small entrepreneurs the possibility to sell sustainable products that are based on the area's nature, history and culture. (G)*	***Relevance*** *To strengthen local economies, preserve cultural heritage and reduce environmental impacts linked to long supply chains, establishments support local micro or small entrepreneurs. By providing a platform for sustainably made, locally relevant products, establishments foster local socio-cultural and economic development and create awareness of their corporate social responsibility.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment offers local micro or small entrepreneurs the possibility to sell sustainable products that are based on the nature, history and culture of the local area. This can be in the form of a small shop or stand within the premises of the establishment. Alternatively, the establishment purchases and offers such local products to its guests.* *The focus of this criterion is on products and services offered to guests that are not part of the regular service operations (e.g. standard restaurant service) but rather provide added value through showcasing local culture, craftsmanship, or heritage. Products produced within 100 km from the establishment are considered as locally produced.* *The definition of local micro or small entrepreneurs follows national standards. If these do not exist, 1 of the following conditions applies:* *a) micro enterprise: fewer than 10 employees; or* *b) small enterprise: fewer than 50 employees.* *Sustainable products and services are defined as those that are:* • *produced in a manner that respects environmental, social and cultural sustainability principles;* • *based on the local area's nature, history and culture;* • *manufactured without the use of internationally recognised threatened or protected species; and* • *free from non-durable, unsustainable materials such as single-use plastics or other disposable materials.*

[31] See glossary p. 4.

		Audit evidence *During the audit, the establishment presents agreements with local micro or small entrepreneurs whose products are sold by or through the establishment.* *A visual inspection confirms that local micro or small entrepreneurs are able to sell products, or that their products are offered to guests within the establishment.*
Team Engagement		
1.20	The management briefs the staff at least 2 times per year on the establishment's sustainability initiatives. (I)	**Relevance** Regular communication and engagement with staff is essential, as it enables them to understand their role in sustainability, respond confidently to guest enquiries, and contribute meaningfully to environmental and social initiatives. **Expectations for implementation** The management, the Green Key Establishment Representative[32] and/or the Green Committee[33] ensure a consistent flow of information and actively engage staff in sustainability efforts. Staff receive updates on both ongoing and new sustainability initiatives to help them understand their role and the impact of their actions. The briefing is delivered either in person (e.g. through staff meetings), in writing or via e-learning. The topics typically include environmental management areas such as water, energy, waste, cleaning practices, Food & Beverages (F&B) and circular economy principles (reduce, reuse, recycle), as well as other sustainability issues such as local biodiversity and community engagement. Information about the Green Key programme is also communicated. The management briefs staff at least 2 times per year. Consideration is given to including seasonal staff to ensure wide participation. This criterion applies to both internal and outsourced staff[34] working on-site. Establishments that are seasonal and/or have 5 or fewer staff members brief the staff at least 1 time per year. For first-time applicants, at least 1 briefing has taken place prior to the audit.

[32] See glossary p. 4.
[33] See glossary p. 4.
[34] See glossary p. 4.

		Audit evidence During the audit, the establishment presents written evidence (e.g. documents, or presentations, or screenshots/exports from digital platforms) outlining: • which topics were covered; • participating department(s) (e.g. housekeeping department); and • the date of provision. During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts at least 1 random interview[35] with staff to validate their awareness of sustainability initiatives and confirm that regular communication has occurred. In specific circumstances, for establishments with fewer than 5 staff members, the information about sustainability initiatives can be provided orally. In this case, no documentation is required, and staff knowledge is still validated through interviews[36].
1.21	Annual sustainability training is provided to the staff. (I)	**Relevance** Providing role-specific and relevant training[37] on environmental and sustainability topics ensures that staff contribute effectively to the implementation of the establishment's sustainability strategy and daily operations. **Expectations for implementation** Hotels and Hostels (HH) and Campsites and Holiday Parks (CHP), provide 1 general sustainability training per year for permanent staff and at least 1 departmental or role-specific (e.g. housekeeping, kitchen etc.) sustainability training per year. Small Accommodations (SA), Restaurants/Cafés (R), Attractions (A), Conference Centres (CC), and seasonal establishments provide at least 1 sustainability training per year for staff. Suggested training topics include: a) waste sorting and reduction (including hazardous waste); b) sustainable Food & Beverage (F&B) practices; c) eco-friendly cleaning and use of chemicals; d) circular economy principles (reduce, reuse, recycle); e) climate change; f) biodiversity preservation; g) community engagement;

[35] See glossary p. 4.
[36] See glossary p. 4.
[37] See glossary p. 4.

		h) guest awareness and communication; and/or i) human rights, equality, and non-discrimination. Annual sustainability training demonstrates progressive development, ensuring that staff expand or deepen their knowledge each year rather than receiving identical training content. Training takes place on-site or online (e.g. written modules, e-learning) and is delivered internally or externally. New staff members normally receive training within the first 4 weeks of employment. It is strongly encouraged that outsourced and seasonal staff[38] participate in the same training. Green Key provides a standard reporting format for the training plan, which establishments may adapt to local operational needs. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents a document detailing**:** • which training topics were covered; • which departments received training (specifying the role of specific staff members, if the training is not provided to the full department); • the date(s) of provision and training duration (one day, monthly etc.); and • the format of training (internal/external, online, etc.). In specific circumstances, for first-time applicants, the establishment presents a written draft of the training plan and commits to follow it within the first certification period (24 months). During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts at least 1 interview[39] with a selected permanent staff member present during the audit to verify their participation in and understanding of the training sessions during the general and the departmental/role-specific training.
1.22	Informative and educational material is displayed in staff areas to	**Relevance** Displaying informative and educational material in staff areas helps strengthen staff awareness and engagement in sustainability efforts. It encourages staff to adopt environmentally and socially responsible behaviour and supports the daily implementation of the establishment's sustainability practices.

[38] See glossary p. 4.
[39] See glossary p. 4.

	promote responsible behaviour. (I)	**Expectations for implementation** The establishment displays informative and educational material in staff areas that supports staff understanding of and participation in sustainability efforts. The material encourages staff to use resources wisely (e.g. switching off the light/taps, using less paper, etc.) and supports efficient use of equipment and machines (e.g. the dishwasher, laundry machines, vacuum cleaners, etc.). Where relevant, the material also addresses topics such as the protection of local biodiversity and social responsibility (e.g. how to report discrimination). Communication material[40] is informative, visually engaging and it is maintained up to date. Informative and educational material may take the form of staff notice boards, posters, stickers, leaflets, newsletters, digital screens or apps, and may be directed at individuals, groups, departments or all staff members. **Audit evidence** During the visual inspection, the auditor confirms that informative and educational material is displayed in staff areas and aligns with the requirements above.
1.23	*The establishment provides its staff with the opportunity to evaluate its environmental and social performance annually and has a procedure for responding to this feedback. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Allowing staff to evaluate the environmental and social performance of the establishment encourages active participation and continuous improvement. It also helps identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities for enhancing sustainability performance at the site level.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment implements an annual, structured feedback process through which staff evaluate the establishment's environmental and social performance.* *The feedback is collected, analysed and used to inform actions or improvements. The process not only gathers suggestions but also monitors trends in staff perceptions and satisfaction related to sustainability and management engagement. Results are shared with staff, and responses to the feedback are formulated and communicated within 2 months.* *Feedback is collected through regular surveys, feedback meetings, or digital/physical suggestion boxes managed by the Green Key Establishment Representative[41] or another responsible person. Feedback may be anonymous, and multiple formats are offered to ensure inclusiveness.*

[40] See glossary p. 4.
[41] See glossary p. 4.

		Green Key provides a standardised staff survey (available in the Green Key Toolbox[42]) that may be used or integrated into the feedback process. *For first-time applicants, a written plan describes how the staff feedback process will be implemented and how results will be reviewed and used to support improvements.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents:* • *evidence showing that a staff feedback system is in place (i.e. how feedback is collected);* • *evidence of regular use (e.g. dates, participation rates);* • *documentation analysing the results of the most recent feedback round, identifying key insights and areas for improvement; and* • *a summary of actions taken in response to staff feedback, which may be linked to the establishment's sustainability action plan (see criterion 1.3).* *In specific circumstances, for first-time applicants, the establishment presents a written plan describing how the staff feedback process will be implemented and how the results will be reviewed and used to support improvements.* *During the visual inspection, at least 1 staff member present during the audit is interviewed to confirm their awareness of the feedback process, their satisfaction with it, and their perception of how management responds to their input.*

[42] See glossary p. 4.

2. GUEST AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT Guest Involvement, Responsible Tourism		
Guest Involvement		
N.	**Criterion**	**Explanatory Notes**
2.1	The Green Key certificate and information about the programme are displayed in a highly visible and frequently accessed area. (I)	**Relevance** Displaying the Green Key certificate and standard information in highly frequented areas helps build guest trust, reinforces transparency and strengthens the visibility of the Green Key certificate as a symbol of sustainability. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment displays the Green Key certificate and standard information material about the programme in a highly frequented and guest-accessible area, such as the reception desk or main entrance. Additional copies of the certificate may be displayed in internal staff areas, such as the canteen or notice board, to promote internal awareness. The standard information about Green Key contains the same key points as the official template available in the Green Key Toolbox[43], while allowing for adaptation of design to fit with the establishment's branding guidelines. The Green Key logo[44], in the shared and officially approved format, is displayed as part of the information. If additional content is included alongside the standard information, the establishment ensures that all sustainability-related communication materials[45] (whether printed, spoken, or digital) accurately reflect current practices and do not exaggerate claims. Information about Green Key may also be made available at additional guest touchpoints, including public areas (e.g. lobby, lifts), guest or meeting rooms, TV monitors, digital screens, printed brochures and/or guest apps. If the establishment's Green Key certificate is suspended, withdrawn or not renewed, the certificate and information about

[43] See glossary p. 4.
[44] See glossary p. 4.
[45] See glossary p. 4.

		Green Key are removed immediately from public display to prevent misleading communication. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents the location where the Green Key certificate for the current certification period and the standard information are displayed in a prominent, clearly visible and guest-accessible area. It is checked that the display is up-to-date and in good condition (e.g. not faded or damaged). The auditor confirms that the displayed information matches the official content provided through the Green Key Toolbox, is clearly visible and accessible. In case the establishment has included additional information, the auditor checks that the claims are objective and that it only includes what is currently implemented at the site level. In specific circumstances, for first-time applicants, the establishment presents a written draft of the standard information and indicates the proposed location for future display of the certificate and information.
2.2	Information about Green Key is available on the establishment's website. (I)	**Relevance** Displaying information about the Green Key certification on the establishment's website enhances transparency, builds guest trust and encourages engagement with the establishment's sustainability commitments. It also reinforces the credibility of the Green Key certificate by referencing official sources. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment's website contains brief information about its Green Key certification. Links to the international Green Key website (www.greenkey.global) and/or national Green Key website are included**.** The Green Key logo[46] is displayed in the shared and officially approved format. The information may be presented in accordance with the establishment's branding guidelines and is clearly visible, meaning that it is placed where guests are likely to see it and engage with it (e.g. booking page, homepage). It is recommended that, in addition to the information on its website, the establishment also provides information about Green Key through its social media channels. The establishment ensures that all communication about Green Key accurately reflects the establishment's current practices, does not exaggerate claims, and uses the official Green Key website as the primary source to ensure information remains accurate and up to date.

[46] See glossary p. 4.

		Audit evidence During the audit, the establishment presents the information about Green Key on its website**.** The auditor confirms that the communication is accurate, relevant, well-placed, and, where appropriate, multilingual. In specific circumstances, for first-time applicants, the establishment presents a written draft of the website information and publishes the information within 6 months after receiving certification.
2.3	The establishment keeps guests informed about its sustainability initiatives and actively encourages participation. (I)	**Relevance** Clear and accessible communication about sustainability efforts helps guests understand, support and participate in the establishment's work towards more responsible operations. It builds trust, encourages responsible behaviour and strengthens the overall impact of the site's initiatives. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment presents accurate, clear and easily understandable information about its sustainability initiatives. This information is displayed consistently across multiple guest-accessible touchpoints, including public areas (e.g. lobby, lifts), guest or meeting rooms, TV monitors, QR codes, digital screens, printed brochures and/or guest apps. "Visible" means that the information is placed on site, where guests are likely to see and engage with it (e.g. at check-in desks, in-room welcome folders, or mobile booking confirmations). In addition to describing sustainability policies and achievements, the materials clearly invite and encourage guests to participate in specific sustainability actions. This may include water and energy conservation, waste sorting and recycling, reducing food waste, supporting local biodiversity efforts, or contributing to social or environmental charities. The call to action is clear and motivational, outlining simple steps guests can take and the positive impact they can have. It is recommended that the information is available in more than 1 language, based on guest demographics, and is presented in a visually engaging format that attracts attention and is easy to understand. To further motivate engagement, the establishment may also implement a reward or points system that recognises guests who participate in the establishment's responsible practices during their stay, provided the incentives themselves are sustainable and do not encourage overconsumption. The establishment ensures that all sustainability-related communication (whether printed, spoken or digital) accurately reflects current practices, does not exaggerate claims, and is kept up to date. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents the information about sustainability undertakings provided to guests, including

		materials that encourage guest participation in sustainability initiatives. In specific circumstances, for first-time applicants, the establishment presents the draft information for the guests.
2.4	Guest-facing staff are able to inform guests about Green Key and the current sustainability initiatives of the establishment. (I)	**Relevance** The guest-facing staff[47] play a key role in communicating the establishment's sustainability values. Ensuring they are well-informed about Green Key and site-specific initiatives helps build guest trust, increase engagement and maintain the integrity of the certification. **Expectations for implementation** All guest-facing staff are able to clearly explain what Green Key is and describe the main sustainability initiatives implemented at the establishment. Staff are prepared to communicate: • a basic explanation of Green Key and its purposes; • main sustainability initiatives and policies specific to the site (e.g. towel reuse policy, local sourcing, energy-saving initiatives, etc.); and • how guests can contribute to these initiatives during their stay. It is strongly recommended that a brief verbal or written "sustainability welcome message" is provided during check-in. This may include a short statement such as: "This establishment is certified by Green Key for its sustainability commitment. You can find more about our sustainable actions by scanning this QR code, or feel free to ask us about activities, water-saving policies, or other initiatives." It is strongly recommended that the establishment uses the standardised and customisable communication materials provided by Green Key through the Green Key Toolbox[48]. These materials are adapted to the local context and designed to be visually clear and accessible. The establishment ensures that all communication about the establishment's sustainability actions is accurate, clear and easy to understand. Guest-facing staff do not overstate or misrepresent the sustainability performance of the establishment. **Audit evidence** During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts an interview with at least 1 guest-facing staff member present during the

[47] See glossary p. 4.
[48] See glossary p. 4.

		audit to verify that they can accurately and confidently provide basic information about Green Key and the key sustainability actions of the establishment. The responses are accurate, clear and easily understandable.
2.5	The establishment informs and encourages guests to use sustainable transportation alternatives. (I)	**Relevance** Encouraging guests to use sustainable modes of transportation helps reduce carbon emissions, air pollution and resource consumption. Providing clear and accessible information enables guests to make informed, eco-friendly travel choices during their stay. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment informs and encourages guests to use sustainable transportation alternatives, where feasible and safe, instead of private cars or taxis. Alternative means of transportation include: a) local public or private transportation systems (e.g. bus, train, metro, tram, boat, etc.); b) shared taxis or minibus systems; c) taxis operated by companies with an environmental policy[49] (e.g. using electric cars); d) shuttle buses provided by the establishment; and/or e) other means of transportation, including e-scooters, bicycles, and electric bikes. The information provided is accurate, clearly worded and visually engaging. It is available on the establishment's website and/or in the welcome email, where the address and the modes of transportation to reach the establishment are indicated. The information may also be included in guest-accessible materials at the reception, in-room folders or on digital screens/QR codes. The validity of the information is checked at least 2 times per year to ensure it remains up to date. Information about local transportation alternatives may additionally be communicated orally by guest-facing staff[50]. **Audit evidence** During the audit the establishment presents the communication materials used to inform guests about sustainable transportation alternatives, including examples of physical and/or digital displays, check-in scripts or templates. It is checked that the information is accurate, clear, visually engaging, easily understandable, and up to date.

[49] See glossary p. 4.
[50] See glossary p. 4.

2.6	*The establishment provides its guests with the opportunity to evaluate its sustainability performance. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Guests' feedback is essential to understanding and improving the quality and sustainability of an establishment's operations. It increases transparency, builds trust, and supports the continuous improvement of environmental and social practices.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment implements a structured feedback process through which guests evaluate the establishment's sustainability performance and provide comments or suggestions for improvement. Feedback is actively collected, analysed, and used to evaluate and enhance the establishment's sustainability performance. As part of the process, the establishment identifies trends in guest perception and satisfaction related to the sustainability performance and implements needed improvements. If feedback highlights issues that require corrective action, the establishment addresses them promptly, where feasible.* *Guests are invited to participate in the feedback process during their stay, at check-in or check-out, in person or via digital means (e.g. email, QR code, app).* *Green Key provides a standardised guest survey (available in the Green Key Toolbox[51]) that may be used or integrated into the feedback process.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents:* • *evidence showing that a guests' feedback system has been implemented (i.e. how feedback is collected);* • *a document analysing the results of the most recent feedback round, identifying key insights and areas for improvement; and* • *documentation of actions implemented in response to guest feedback, which may be linked to the establishment's action plan (see criterion 1.3).* *In specific circumstances, for first-time applicants, the establishment presents a written plan describing how guest feedback will be collected, reviewed and used.*
2.7	*The establishment actively communicates its sustainability*	***Relevance*** *Public sharing of sustainability efforts increases guest awareness, strengthens credibility, and encourages the wider adoption of responsible practices across the tourism sector.* ***Expectations for implementation***

[51] See glossary p. 4.

	practices and engages with Green Key activities on digital media. (G)	*The establishment actively communicates its sustainability practices, progress and engagement with Green Key through its own digital media channels. These may include social media channels, the establishment's website, newsletters, or other digital media managed by the establishment.* *Communication is planned and implemented at key moments in the certification cycle, including:* • *the release of the Green Key certificate; and* • *at least 1 intermediate update.* *The establishment is encouraged to engage with Green Key on social media by following official Green Key channels (e.g. LinkedIn, Instagram), re-posting relevant content, participating in Green Key awareness initiatives and amplifying sustainability messages. During each certification year, the establishment submits at least 1 verified Good Practice to Green Key International or its National Operator for potential promotion and peer learning. It is furthermore recommended that the establishment uses Green Key's sustainability awareness calendar (available in the Green Key Toolbox[52]) and international campaign materials for content inspiration and alignment.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents a summary of its communication activity, including links or screenshots of social media posts.*
Responsible Tourism		
2.8	*Information about nearby parks, beaches and other ecologically sensitive nature areas is available to guests. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Providing guests with information about nearby natural areas fosters environmental awareness, supports responsible tourism behaviour, and strengthens the establishment's sustainability profile. By encouraging nature-based recreation and education, the establishment helps guests connect with local ecosystems while promoting their protection and long-term preservation.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment offers written information about nearby natural areas, such as parks, landscapes, nature conservation zones, beaches and other ecologically sensitive areas. The information is shared together with the material required under criterion 2.9.* *This communication material[53] encourages guests to engage in outdoor or nature-based activities for awareness-raising and personal well-being, such as walking, jogging, bicycling, swimming, sailing, canoeing, birdwatching, picnicking, or visiting outdoor playgrounds.*

[52] See glossary p. 4.
[53] See glossary p. 4.

	ⓘ	*The information includes encouragement to follow international and national good practices and local recommendations to minimise negative impacts and enhance both local benefits and guest experience. Activities are promoted in a way that avoids harm to biodiversity and, where possible, contributes positively to its protection.* *The information is clearly visible, relevant to the guest experience and visually engaging (ensuring it draws attention), and is placed in guest-accessible areas, such as at the reception or concierge desk, in an environmental corner in the lobby, via TV monitors in public or conference areas, in guest or conference room binders, QR codes, and/or guest apps. It is recommended that the information is available in more than 1 language, depending on the typical guest profile.* *Although the information is directed primarily at guests, it is recommended that the establishment provides similar material to staff to support guests and raise awareness.* ⓘ ***Note on national adaptation:*** *In NL, this criterion is imperative for all establishment categories.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents the information provided to guests about nearby natural areas. This includes any interpretative content, visitor guidance and codes of conduct. It is checked that the material is accurate, clearly displayed, multilingual where appropriate and visually engaging.*
2.9	*Information promoting responsible tourist behaviour in the destination is provided to guests.* *(G)*	***Relevance*** *Promoting responsible visitor behaviour helps prevent overtourism, minimise disturbance to local communities, and foster respect for local culture and traditions. By informing guests about appropriate conduct and local guidelines, the establishment supports socially sustainable tourism and positive relations with the host community.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment provides written information to guests that promotes responsible behaviour in the destination. The information includes, where appropriate, reference to national or local tourist conduct guidelines, including those from ministries of tourism or local tourism authorities. It is recommended that official national, regional or municipal relevant websites are consulted when developing the content.* *Examples of conducts addressed include:* *a) general norms that help preventing overtourism[54];* *b) guidelines for respectful behaviour towards local communities and the local environment;*

[54] See glossary p. 4.

		c) sightseeing norms; *d) recommended behaviour when visiting religious and historical institutions/places; and/or* *e) guidance on avoiding littering and protecting public spaces.* *The information is clear, accurate, visually engaging, up to date and easily accessible to guests in areas such as reception, guest rooms, digital platforms or booking confirmation emails.* *Customisable communication templates are available in the Green Key Toolbox[55].* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents the materials shared with guests that promote responsible tourist behaviour. It is verified that these materials meet the requirements above and reflects the specific local context.*
2.10	*The establishment provides and actively promotes at least 4 awareness-raising activities for guests focused on sustainable development, the environment and the local community. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Providing and actively promoting awareness-raising activities for guests increases understanding of sustainable development, encourages responsible behaviour, and strengthens engagement with environmental and social issues relevant to the destination and local community.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment implements and actively promotes at least 4 awareness-raising initiatives per certification period (e.g. 2 activities per calendar year). These include:* • *1 initiative focused on environmental issues (e.g. Earth Day, clean-ups, biodiversity conservation); and* • *1 initiative focused on social aspects (e.g. charity initiatives, public commemorations, fundraising events).* *Awareness-raising activities include guest participation and engagement, such as:* *a) participation in events, for example Earth Hour, Earth Day, Energy Saving Week, Waste Reduction Week, World Food Day, World Vegan Day, World Vegetarian Day, World Environment Day, etc;* *b) promotion of car-free activities, guided nature tours within or near the premises, participation in tree-planting events or other climate-action initiatives;* *c) establishment of pollinator-friendly green areas[56], activities protecting local flora and fauna;* *d) harvesting and food-picking activities; and/or* *e) beach clean-up events, educational activities with schools, charity events.*

[55] See glossary p. 4.
[56] See glossary p. 4.

		All activities, including harvesting and food-picking activities, are carried out as regulated activities, sustainable and comply with local, national and international laws. *Guest participation is actively ensured and documented. Staff-only activities do not fulfil this criterion. Recurring awareness days (e.g. Earth Hour) are acceptable, provided that guest participation is documented.* *It is recommended that the establishment also uses Green Key's sustainability awareness calendar (available in the Green Key Toolbox) and international campaign materials (e.g. Good Practices) for content inspiration and alignment.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents documentation showing the awareness-raising activities held within the last full calendar year, and the ones planned for the upcoming 2 calendar years. Accepted evidence includes:* *a) a dated list of activities (including location and approximate number of participants);* *b) communication materials; and/or* *c) photos with timestamps and any materials used to promote guest involvement.*
2.11	*The establishment offers or facilitates access to non-motorised transportation rental for guests. (G)* ⓘ	***Relevance*** *Promoting or offering access to bicycles and/or other forms of non-motorised transportation (e.g. canoes, kick sleds, snowshoes, or cross-country skis) reduces greenhouse gas emissions, supports sustainable mobility, and promotes guests' health and well-being. Providing or facilitating access to bicycles enables low-impact travel within the destination and contributes to more environmentally friendly guest experiences.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment offers or facilitates access to non-motorised transportation for guests. This includes either:* *a) offering the possibility of borrowing or renting bicycles or other forms of non-motorised transportation (e.g. canoes, kick sleds, snowshoes, cross-country skis) directly at the establishment; or* *b) referring guests to a reliable external rental service, where direct provision is not feasible.* *Electrical bicycles and electric scooters do not fulfil this criterion (see criterion 2.5).* *Information about available non-motorised transportation is accessible to guests in areas such as the reception desk, concierge desk, environmental corner, TV monitors, via guest apps, QR codes or in binders in the guest/meeting rooms.* ⓘ **Note on national adaptation**: In BE, this criterion is imperative.

		Audit evidence *During the visual inspection, the auditor confirms at least 1 of the following:* *a) the availability of non-motorised transportations and the promotion of that service; or* *b) the presence of clearly communicated information referring guests to external rental services.*

3. WATER

Water Management, Water Pollution

Water Management

N.	Criterion	Explanatory Notes
3.1	The total water consumption is recorded at least once a month. (I)	**Relevance** To effectively manage and reduce environmental impacts and operational costs, establishments monitor, record and understand their water use. Monthly registration of water consumption enables early detection of inefficiencies or leaks, supports data-driven decision-making and aligns with good practices in sustainability reporting. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment records its total water consumption at least once per month. It is recommended that the establishment records the total water consumption more frequently than once a month and/or records the water consumption intensity (per bed night/area/visitors, etc.) as it will allow for better tracking of efficiency and performance trends. Readings are systematic and stored in a traceable format. The data collection methodology is documented (e.g. data from utility bills, sub-metres, automated online or manual readings). The source and uses of water are indicated (e.g. municipal metered or unmetered supply, on-site withdrawal, etc.). This enables the establishment to distinguish between changes in consumption levels and water source.

		Where water is not delivered through a public supplier, the establishment holds documentation confirming that its water supply is legally authorised and compliant with local or national requirements. In regions or during periods where water scarcity, shortages or abstraction restrictions are officially declared by local or national authorities, the establishment also ensures that its water abstraction or use is authorised by the competent local authority and does not adversely affect the environment or local supply. Where monthly data are not directly available (e.g. due to structural constraints, utility limitations, locations without metering infrastructure or shared-use buildings), the establishment provides the most precise monthly estimate possible. Acceptable estimation methods include: a) allocation by floor area, occupancy, or comparable benchmarks; b) estimates based on tank capacity and refill frequency; or c) pumping logs or delivery records. In such cases, it is strongly recommended that the establishment installs separate water metres to improve data accuracy over time. If any major changes[57] or larger water consumption occur, the establishment immediately investigates what may be the reason and implements corrective actions. The water tracking data collected under this criterion may be used as baseline data to support the establishment's sustainability targets under criterion 1.2 and criterion 1.3. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents: • monthly water consumption records for the last 2 calendar years for each water source used (first-time applicants or newly opened establishments submit data from the previous full calendar year, or a minimum 3 months of data where no historical data is available); and • supporting documentation outlining the data collection methodology used (e.g. utility bills, manual logs, automated online readings, photos of the metres where consumption is shown where logs are not available). The auditor conducts samplings[58] of the supporting documentation by reviewing a sample of 3 relevant items (methodology C)[59]. Where multiple water sources, years, sites, or systems are involved, the auditor selects the sample to reflect this spread.

[57] See glossary p. 4.
[58] See glossary p. 4.
[59] See glossary p. 4.

		In specific circumstances, the establishment presents: • documentation that the water supply is legally authorised and compliant with local or national requirements, where the water is not delivered through a public supplier. Additionally, in regions or during periods where water scarcity, shortages or abstraction restrictions are officially declared by local or national authorities, the establishment attaches a permit or statement from the competent local authority confirming that water abstraction or use does not adversely affect the environment or local supply; and/or • the estimated data and the methodology of estimation, in cases where monthly data are not accessible.
3.2	Water outlets are actively monitored and leaks promptly repaired. (I)	**Relevance** Dripping and leaking water outlets (taps, showers, toilets, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, etc.) in public areas, guest rooms and staff areas increase water consumption unnecessarily and negatively affect the establishment's environmental footprint. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment actively monitors water outlets and repairs leaks without delay. A written Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)[60] is implemented and defines regular checks and repair procedures for visibly leaking water outlets. The SOP[61] defines the frequency of checks according to outlet type and usage, as follows: • high-usage or high-risk outlets (e.g. public restrooms, guest rooms, pool facilities, outdoor taps) are checked at least each time the area is cleaned; • medium-usage outlets (e.g. staff bathrooms, back-of-house kitchens) are checked at least once per week; and • low-usage or seldom-used outlets (e.g. seasonal outdoor showers, maintenance sinks) are checked at least once per month or prior to expected use. When leaking water outlets are identified, the establishment implements corrective actions to fix the leaks. Detected leaks and corresponding response actions are recorded in an incident log or maintenance record. Staff responsible for inspections (e.g. housekeeping, technicians, etc.) are aware of the procedures in place. It is recommended to install an automatic water leakage detecting system to quickly discover leaks and to use a digital auditing checklist. For outdoor or indoor swimming pools, monitoring may include visual inspections around the swimming pool, but a better solution is to install a separate water meter monitoring water consumption of the swimming pool (see criterion 3.7) or a water leak detector.

[60] See glossary p. 4.
[61] See glossary p. 4.

		Audit evidence During the audit, the establishment presents the written SOP[62] for checking water outlets according to the above frequency. In specific circumstances, when leaking water outlets have been observed, the establishment presents the incident log and corrective actions after observing the leaks. During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts samplings[63] in at least 1 public area (e.g. lobby/public bathroom), 1 staff/back-office, and in guest rooms following methodology A as described in the glossary. If leaks are observed, the establishment demonstrates that corrective measures are implemented.
3.3	Water flow in at least 80% of the handwashing taps does not exceed 8 litres per minute. (I) ⓘ	**Relevance** Reducing tap water flow in taps helps lower the environmental footprint by conserving water in areas of frequent and less frequent use. Efficient tap systems play a critical role in daily water savings across guest and staff spaces. **Expectations for implementation** The water flow in at least 80% of the handwashing taps (including taps with sensors) in guest rooms, staff areas and other public areas such as public toilets, spa areas or gyms/fitness centres does not exceed 8 litres (or 2.81 US gallons) per minute. In many cases, the water flow in the taps could be further reduced. To conform with the criterion, the establishment can either choose to have taps built with restricted water flow or have water restricting devices installed on the tap. The reduced water flow is often achieved by mixing water with air in tap aerators. A short-term solution can also be to reduce the water pressure in the water distribution system. Some water-efficient tap models may require more frequent cleaning or adjustment to maintain hygiene and usability, particularly in high-traffic areas. Establishments are encouraged to select taps with proven performance and ease of maintenance, and to consider cleaning needs and user comfort when making procurement decisions. To further support water-saving behaviour, it is recommended that the establishment includes signage or behavioural nudges near taps in guest bathrooms and staff areas, encouraging users to turn off the tap when they are finished. This criterion applies only to handwashing taps and does not apply to kitchen or utility taps. The establishment maintains a documented overview of the total number of handwashing taps (taps with sensors are

[62] See glossary p. 4.
[63] See glossary p. 4.

		included). Before the audit, the establishment conducts self-checks of handwashing taps water flow to demonstrate conformity. For first-time applicants, self-checks are carried out on at least 80% of the total number of handwashing taps, demonstrating that these taps do not exceed 8 L/min. For re-applicants, self-checks are carried out on at least 50% of the taps that were included in the previous 80% group, demonstrating that they continue to not exceed 8 L/min. All measurements are documented in a traceable format and updated at least once within the last 6 months prior to the audit. ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In BE, DK, FI, MX, NL, NO, PT, SE, water flow in at least 90% of the handwashing taps does not exceed 6 litres per minute. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents the overview of self-checks conducted as per the above requirements. During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts samplings[64] in at least 1 public area (lobby/toilet), 1 staff/back-office, and in guest rooms, following methodology A as described in the glossary, to check the taps' water flow in each of the listed areas (methodology B).
3.4	Urinals have sensors, water saving devices, or are water-free. (I)	**Relevance** Low-flow, sensor-based, or water-free urinals in the establishment can contribute to a reduced environmental footprint by lowering water consumption. Traditional urinals can waste large volumes of water through inefficient flushing mechanisms. **Expectations for implementation** Where urinals are present, they either have individual detection sensors, a "push" button (flushing no more than 3 litres or 0.79 US gallons per flush) or are water-free. Where water-free urinals are used, the system is maintained according to manufacturer specifications. Some water-efficient or water-free urinal models may require more frequent maintenance or cleaning to ensure hygiene and odour control, particularly in high-use public areas. Establishments are encouraged to select urinals with proven performance and durability, and to include appropriate maintenance planning and staff training[65] as part of the procurement and installation process. This criterion applies to urinals located in public areas of the establishment (e.g. lobbies, restaurants, common facilities) and

[64] See glossary p. 4.
[65] See glossary p. 4.

		staff areas. **Audit evidence** During the visual inspection, the auditor confirms that the urinals are fitted with individual detection sensors, push-button flushing systems with restricted flow, or are water-free.
3.5	Newly purchased toilets have a dual flush system with maximum 3/6 litres per flush or maximum 4.5 litres for sensor-based flushing systems. (I) ⓘ	**Relevance** To minimise environmental impact and reduce water consumption, newly installed toilets must meet high water efficiency standards. Efficient fixtures[66] play a critical role in conserving freshwater resources and supporting responsible facility management. **Expectations for implementation** Toilets purchased within the past 24 months (for re-applicants) and within the past 6 months (for first-time applicants) for guest rooms, public areas and staff areas are either: a) dual flush toilets with a maximum of 3/6 litres per flush (0.79/1.59 US gallons); or b) toilets with sensor-based flushing systems allowing a maximum of 4.5 litres per flush (1.19 US gallons). The required water efficiency is achieved through a permanent technical specification or built-in restriction, not through a temporary user-adjustable setting. Other water-efficient models that achieve equivalent or better performance are accepted (e.g. high-efficiency toilets, vacuum-assisted models), provided that technical specifications demonstrate that average water use per flush cycle is equal to or less than 3/6 litres for dual flush toilets or 4.5 litres for sensor models. To further support water-saving practices for older models, it is recommended to install physical devices that reduce flush volume where feasible, and to consider signage or behavioural nudges to encourage low-flush use. Some low-flush toilet models may require more frequent cleaning to maintain hygiene standards, particularly in high-use public areas. Establishments are encouraged to select water-efficient toilets with proven flushing performance and include maintenance planning as part of the procurement decision. ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In FR and PT, newly purchased toilets are equipped with a dual-flush system with a maximum of 3/6 litres per flush, or a maximum of 4.5 litres for sensor-based flushing systems. Additionally, 50% of all existing toilets

[66] See glossary p. 4.

		have a maximum of 6 litres per flush. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents invoices for toilets purchased in the past 24 (for re-applicants) or 6 months (for first-time applicants) with the date of purchase and the flush volume of each unit indicated.
3.6	Newly purchased dishwashers and laundry machines are water efficient. (I)	**Relevance** Dishwashers and laundry machines are a major source of water consumption in hospitality operations. Ensuring that all newly purchased models are efficient reduces environmental impact and operating costs, while supporting sustainable procurement. **Expectations for implementation** Dishwashers and laundry machines purchased within the past 24 months (for re-applicants) or within the past 6 months (for first-time applicants) meet low-water consumption requirements as listed below, according to appliance type. For dishwashers: • professional cover or tunnel dishwashers do not exceed 3.5 litres (or 0.92 US gallons) per basket. Where only programme-level consumption data are available, the establishment demonstrates that average consumption does not exceed 3.5 litres per basket equivalent; and • domestic or smaller dishwashers demonstrate low water use per cycle, supported by recognised international or national standards (e.g. among one of the 2 highest efficiency classes/ratings available on the market, with equivalent international standards accepted such as EU Energy Label water efficiency class, Energy Star water efficiency thresholds, or other national/regional efficiency labels). For laundry machines: • professional or commercial machines do not exceed 7 l/kg linen. Where models meeting this threshold are not reasonably available on the market, the most stringent efficiency threshold available locally is met; and • domestic or smaller machines demonstrate low water use per cycle, supported by recognised national or international standards (e.g. among one of the 2 highest efficiency classes/ratings available on the market, with equivalent international standards accepted such as EU Energy Label water consumption per cycle for the Eco 40–60 programme, Energy Star water efficiency thresholds, or other national/regional efficiency labels). Where litres-per-kilogram data are available, the establishment demonstrates that performance is equivalent to these high-efficiency models or labels.

		The establishment ensures that the appliance type and capacity match the operational scale of the establishment. For example, professional kitchens[67] use commercial-grade dishwashers, while smaller kitchens, apartments, or low-usage situations (e.g. bars with minimal dishwashing or handling only uniforms) may justify domestic appliances if they meet the water efficiency thresholds. Proper use and maintenance of the equipment (as per the manufacturer's instructions) is ensured to maintain the intended water efficiency and longevity of the equipment. This criterion applies to all relevant areas of the establishment, including common kitchen/laundry areas and apartments. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents: • a list of appliances purchased within the past 24 months (for re-applicants) or within the past 6 months (for first-time applicants); and • corresponding water consumption specifications (e.g. technical specifications, efficiency ratings/labels or supplier data showing litres per cycle or per kg linen).
3.7	*Separate water metres are installed in areas with a high-water consumption. (G)*	***Relevance*** *To better trace water consumption from the different parts of the establishment and support meaningful water reduction goals, more detailed monitoring is required, particularly in areas with high water demand. Sub-metering provides critical data that can be used to identify inefficiencies, locate leaks and prioritise actions.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment installs at least 2 additional separate water metres (or devices with similar functionality deployed on a meaningful scale, such as smart showerheads that record consumption), in areas with a high-water consumption[68] or where sub-metering supports meaningful water consumption reduction goals. If the establishment is large with many guest and meeting rooms, separate water metres for different parts (or each room) of the establishment could be installed.* *With more water metres installed, the consumption at each water meter is obtained and recorded. Ideally, water consumption from the different metres is recorded more frequently than once a month, as this will produce more detailed information.* *Sub-meter data are integrated into the overall water tracking system (criterion 3.1) to support comprehensive analysis. Providing more accurate information about water use through additional separate water metres enables the establishment to prepare better*

[67] See glossary p. 4.
[68] See glossary p. 4.

		targets for the reduction of water consumption. The water tracking data collected under this criterion mays also be used as baseline data to support the establishment's sustainability targets under criterion 1.2. ***Audit evidence*** *During the visual inspection, the auditor confirms the presence of sub-meters and the methodology in place to monitor the consumption.*
3.8	*A water risk assessment appropriate to the local context and operational scale has been carried out within the past 6 years. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Sustainable water management requires an understanding of local water-related risks to ensure long-term access, community resilience around shared resource and environmental protection. A comprehensive water risk assessment enables the establishment to anticipate challenges (such as scarcity, contamination, or flooding) and to take proactive, evidence-based actions.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment carries out a water risk assessment appropriate to its local context and operational scale. The assessment identifies potential water-related risks on the premises, which may include, but are not limited to: water scarcity or stress (particularly relevant in urban or arid areas), droughts, flooding, infrastructure vulnerability and water quality issues such as contamination or salinity, ice/snow-related risks, as well as risks exacerbated by climate change, such as increased frequency of extreme weather events or shifting rainfall patterns.* *The water risk assessment includes an analysis of both current and projected local water conditions, taking into account seasonal variations, regional water governance and demand from surrounding communities or industries, areas at risk of flooding, as well as potential sources of contamination. It results in a report outlining identified risks, the level of exposure and vulnerability and recommended mitigation or adaptation action.* *If water-related risks are identified in the assessment, the establishment develops or adapts a response plan taking the recommended actions into consideration, in cooperation with other relevant stakeholders (e.g. local authorities, water utilities, community groups, etc.). The findings inform decisions on water sourcing, infrastructure investments, emergency preparedness and conservation efforts.* *The assessment is carried out by a relevant and suitable authority or external company (such as a certified consultancy or local water authority), or internally by the establishment if the appropriate expertise and methodology are available and documented (e.g. conducted by the Green Key Establishment Representative, engineer, or equivalent training[69], using WWF's Water Risk Filter, WRI Aqueduct Water Risk Atlas, CEO Water Mandate, ISO 14046:2014 and/or eventual national/regional assessments).*

[69] See glossary p. 4.

		Where applicable, the assessment may reference existing national or regional frameworks (e.g. drinking-water risk assessments required by applicable regulations). In urban areas where water supply and quality risks are managed by public utilities, official data or reports from the local water authority may serve as the basis for the assessment. *The assessment is reviewed and updated at least once every 6 years or sooner if there are major changes in the local context, water availability, or site operations.* *The data collected under this criterion may be used as baseline data to support the establishment's sustainability targets under criterion 1.2 and criterion 1.3.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents its latest water risk assessment.* *In specific circumstances, where risks have been identified, the establishment presents documentation showing how the findings have been addressed (e.g. response plan developed because of identified risks).*
3.9	*Rainwater and/or AC condensate is collected and used for suitable purposes. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Collecting and reusing rainwater and/or AC condensate reduces the demand for potable freshwater and supports long-term water conservation. This practice is especially relevant and strongly encouraged in areas affected by water scarcity or high cooling demand, where reducing dependency on freshwater resources is critical for long-term resilience.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *Rainwater and/or AC condensate is collected using tanks, cisterns, or open systems such as ponds or reservoirs. Collected rainwater and/or AC condensate is used for purposes such as:* *a) irrigation of gardens and green areas[70];* *b) toilet flushing;* *c) cleaning of vehicles, outdoor areas, or surfaces;* *d) cooling systems;* *e) laundry (where permitted by national or regional regulations); and/or* *f) human consumption after proper treatment (where permitted by national or regional regulations).*

[70] See glossary p. 4.

		The collection and use of rainwater and/or AC condensate are carried out safely, with proper maintenance and in accordance with the intended purpose, ensuring no adverse effects on the guests and staff of the establishment, the local population and the environment. *It is recommended that, where feasible, the establishment installs a water meter to track the amount of rainwater and/or AC condensate collected and used, and to document the purposes for which the rainwater and/or AC condensate is used.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the visual inspection, the auditor confirms the presence of installations for collecting rainwater and/or AC condensate.* *In specific circumstances, where the collected rainwater and/or AC condensate is used for human consumption purposes, the establishment presents documentation from the relevant authority confirming that the water complies with applicable health and safety standards.*
3.10	*Water flow in all handwashing taps is maximum 5 litres per minute. (G)* ⓘ	***Relevance*** *Reducing tap water flow helps lower the environmental footprint by conserving water in areas of frequent and less frequent use. Efficient tap systems play a critical role in daily water savings across guest and staff spaces.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The water flow in all the handwashing taps (including taps with sensors) in guest rooms, public areas and staff areas does not exceed 5 litres (or 1.65 US gallons) per minute. In some cases, the water flow in the taps could be further reduced.* *To conform with the criterion, the establishment can either choose to have taps built with restricted water flow or have water restricting devices installed on the tap. The reduced water flow is often achieved by mixing water with air in tap aerators. A short-term solution can also be to reduce the water pressure in the water distribution system.* *Some water-efficient tap models, especially those with very low flow rates or sensor-based systems, may require more frequent cleaning or adjustment to maintain hygiene and usability, particularly in high-traffic areas. Establishments are encouraged to select taps with proven performance and ease of maintenance, and to consider cleaning needs and user comfort when making procurement decisions.* *To further support water-saving behaviour, it is recommended that the establishment includes signage or behavioural nudges near taps in guest bathrooms and staff areas, encouraging users to turn off the tap when they are finished.* *This criterion applies only to handwashing taps and does not apply to kitchen or utility taps.*

		The establishment maintains a documented overview of the total number of handwashing taps (taps with sensors are included). Before the audit, the establishment conducts self-checks of handwashing taps water flow to demonstrate conformity. For first-time applicants, self-checks are carried out on at least 80% of the total number of handwashing taps, demonstrating that these taps do not exceed 5 L/min. For re-applicants, self-checks are carried out on at least 50% of the taps that were included in the previous 80% group, demonstrating that they continue to not exceed 5 L/min. All measurements are documented in a traceable format and updated at least once within the last 6 months prior to the audit. ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In BE, DK, MX, NL, NO, PT, SE, water flow in all the handwashing taps is maximum 4 litres per minute. ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents the overview of self-checks conducted as per the above criterions.* *During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts samplings[71] in at least 1 public area (lobby/toilet), 1 staff/back-office, and in guest rooms, following methodology A as described in the glossary, to check the taps' water flow in each of the listed areas (methodology B).*
3.11	*All public handwashing taps are equipped with automatic water cut-off systems. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Public restrooms are frequent sources of water waste, especially when taps are unintentionally left running. Installing automatic water cut-off handwashing taps helps significantly reduce water consumption, while also supporting public hygiene when using timed or touchless operation. This is especially impactful in large venues.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *All public area handwashing taps are fitted with automatic water cut-off systems such as sensor-activated or push-button taps, delivering only the amount of water needed per handwashing cycle.* *Taps are configured with appropriate preset flow times (e.g. 5–10 seconds per activation) to ensure water efficiency without compromising usability. Establishments are responsible for regular maintenance, including battery replacements and sensor calibration, to ensure continued functionality and accuracy.* *This criterion does not apply to private guest rooms, kitchen sinks, or bidet showers.* ***Audit evidence***

[71] See glossary p. 4.

		During the visual inspection, the auditor confirms the presence and functionality of automatic water cut-off systems on eligible public handwashing taps.
Water Pollution		
3.12	All wastewater is treated. (I)	**Relevance** Proper treatment and safe discharge of wastewater[72] are critical to reducing the environmental footprint of the establishment, protecting water bodies and safeguarding communities. This also ensures alignment with legal and ethical standards in sanitation and environmental management. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment is either connected to an existing public sewage system or has the wastewater treated in its own sewage system. On-site treatment systems include septic systems, biodigesters, constructed wetlands, or other biological treatment systems. This criterion includes wastewater generated from guest rooms, kitchens, bathrooms, laundries, swimming pools, meeting rooms, thermal baths, spa or wellness facilities and other operational areas. All wastewater is treated in accordance with national and/or (possible) local legislation. If there is no legislation on the matter, the wastewater is treated according to the most advanced treatment possible that is technically and economically feasible for the establishment's context, ensuring removal of key pollutants (e.g. BOD, pathogens, suspended solids) to levels that allow safe reuse or release. i.e. with no adverse effects on the local population and the environment. If the establishment is connected to a sewage system, it presents a licence, written confirmation from the relevant authority or other proof of connection (e.g. utility invoices, service contracts, third-party verification). If the auditor suspects irregularities or where required by regulation, the establishment also demonstrates compliance with applicable wastewater discharge requirements. If the establishment uses an on-site system, it provides relevant evidence of legal authorisation and effective operation, such as a valid installation/operating permit, licence or written confirmation from the relevant authority, and maintenance records. If such a licence is not delivered by any authority, the establishment submits recent water quality test results (e.g. BOD, pH,

[72] See glossary p. 4.

		turbidity) demonstrating that the system treats wastewater effectively and in accordance with national or international discharge or reuse standards. This criterion concerns greywater and blackwater. Stormwater is excluded unless it is collected and discharged through the same wastewater system. After treatment, the treated wastewater is reused, where possible (see criterion 3.14). **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents the licence, other adequate documentation and/or relevant evidence as described above, showing conformity with the requirements for wastewater treatment, discharge and/or transfer to the sewage system. Where possible, a visual inspection confirms conformity with the requirements.
3.13	At least 1 grease trap is installed in professional or commercial kitchens. (I)	**Relevance** Well-functioning grease traps (also known as grease interceptors) contribute to the reduction of the environmental footprint by saving water and chemicals and avoid fat, oil and grease (FOG) from blocking the drains. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment has at least 1 grease trap serving all relevant drainage points where FOG is likely to be discharged, such as sinks, dishwashers, or floor drains in food preparation areas. This applies only to establishments with a professional or commercial kitchen[73]. Grease traps are emptied and maintained in accordance with manufacturer specifications and applicable national/local regulation. They are cleaned at regular intervals to ensure functionality and prevent odour or overflow (as required by national standards or based on usage volume). Where appropriate, alert systems or sensors may be installed. The collected FOG waste is handled according to the requirements in criterion 5.4. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents records or invoices for grease trap cleanings from the full last 2 calendar years (first-time applicants present records from the last full calendar year).

[73] See glossary p. 4.

		Where possible, a visual inspection confirms the presence of well-functioning grease traps in kitchen drains. It is verified that the systems are adequately sized, regularly maintained and effectively operating. The inspection may include inspection of components such as seals, covers, inlet/outlet pipes, and check for rust or excessive organic waste.
3.14	*The establishment reuses treated wastewater from on-site or authorised external systems and may supply treated wastewater externally. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Reusing treated wastewater[74] helps reduce the demand for freshwater resources and minimise the environmental footprint of the establishment. When done safely, this practice supports water conservation and climate resilience, especially in water-scarce regions.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment treats and reuses wastewater on-site or uses treated wastewater from an authorised external utility. Conversely, establishments with on-site treatment facilities may donate or supply treated wastewater to a municipal or authorised third-party reuse system.* *The reused wastewater is treated and used in accordance with national or regional regulations and applicable public health and environmental safety standards (e.g. national wastewater reuse standards, WHO guidelines, or the EU Water Reuse Regulation). It is only used for safe, non-potable purposes, such as irrigation of green areas[75], toilet flushing, or cooling systems, and is never used for human consumption or direct contact, including irrigation of food crops or edible plant gardens. Blackwater may only be reused if the establishment holds the required permit and follows the associated treatment and monitoring conditions for its intended non-potable use.* *Systems are designed and maintained to prevent contamination of potable water networks, exposure to aerosols, or other routes of pathogen transmission. The reused water is handled safely, with no adverse effects on the local population or environment. Clear signage and safety procedures are preferably in place where treated wastewater is used.* *It is recommended that the reused volume of treated wastewater is monitored and recorded (e.g. in cubic metres per month, with the help of a water meter).* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents technical documentation and/or a written protocol describing how treated wastewater is sourced, treated on-site, reused and/or supplied to a third-party system.*

[74] See glossary p. 4.
[75] See glossary p. 4.

		In specific circumstances, where legally required or available, the establishment presents a permit or license from the competent authority confirming that reuse is legally authorised. This documentation is mandatory for any reuse of blackwater. *Where possible, a visual inspection confirms that the treated wastewater system is in use and operated safely.*

4. ENERGY AND CARBON

Energy Management, HVAC, Equipment and Lights, GHG

Energy Management

N.	Criterion	Explanatory Notes
4.1	Energy use by source is recorded at least once a month. (I)	**Relevance** Tracking energy use by source helps manage and reduce environmental impacts and energy costs, while enabling early detection of inefficiencies, supporting data-driven decisions, and aligning with good practices in sustainability reporting. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment monitors, records and understands its energy use. Energy consumption is recorded at least once a month by energy source (e.g. electricity, gas, district heating, fuel, renewable energy sources). Readings are taken systematically and stored in a traceable format. Photos or screenshots are not an acceptable format, and the Green Key International/National Office may require a specific format to provide the data, as indicated in this document's introduction. The methodology of data collection is documented (e.g. data from utility bills, building management systems, sub-metres or manual readings). Where monthly data are not directly available (e.g. due to structural constraints, utility limitations, locations without metering infrastructure or shared-use buildings), the establishment provides the most precise estimation possible of its monthly energy consumption. Acceptable methodologies include allocation by floor area, occupancy, or defined benchmarks. In such cases, it is strongly recommended that the establishment installs separate energy metres to improve data accuracy over time.

		The energy tracking data collected under this criterion can serve as baseline data to support the establishment's sustainability targets under criterion 1.2 and criterion 1.3. Should any major changes[76] or larger energy consumption occur, the establishment immediately investigates the cause and implements corrective actions. Where separate energy metres are installed across different areas of the building, it is recommended that the establishment analyses these readings to have a comprehensive overview on relevant actions and targets to be set under criteria 1.2 and 1.3. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents: • the monthly records of energy consumption from the full last 2 calendar years for each energy source used (first-time applicants and newly opened establishments submit data from the last full calendar year, or a minimum of 3 months of data, if no historical data is available); and • supporting documentation outlining the methodology of data collection (e.g. utility bill extracts, BMS outputs, manual logs). If a data log is not available, the applicant submits photos of the metres showing consumption. In specific circumstances, the establishment presents the estimated data and the methodology of estimation, where monthly data are not accessible. During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts samplings[77] of the supporting documentation by reviewing a sample of 3 items (e.g. data from utility bills, Building Management System outputs, sub-metre readings or manual logs) from 3 different months within the reporting period (methodology C). If multiple energy sources, years, sites or systems are included, the sample is selected to reflect this variation.
4.2	The establishment sets a standard temperature for cooling and heating. (I)	**Relevance** To reduce the environmental footprint, align with energy efficiency good practices and improve energy management, maintaining appropriate temperature setpoints for cooling and heating is essential. Establishing standard temperature ranges helps optimise comfort while reducing unnecessary energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment sets a standard temperature for cooling and heating in rooms, with a focus on guest and meeting rooms.

[76] See glossary p. 4.
[77] See glossary p. 4.

		For Restaurants/Cafés (R), Attractions (A) and Conference Centres (CC), this applies to the entire area. As a general standard: if the outside temperature is higher than 22°C (72°F), the cooling temperature in the room is set to no lower than 22°C (72°F). If the outside temperature is lower than 22°C, the heating temperature is set to no higher than 22°C. Where applicable, local energy regulations or climate zone guidance may require adjusted thresholds. The temperature settings remain within accepted comfort ranges (e.g. ISO 7730, ASHRAE 55), and the use of a temperatureband[78] approach is encouraged. The standard temperature (setpoint) is set automatically from a central system or manually in each room. Guests may still adjust the temperature in the guest or meeting rooms manually or by contacting reception; however, it is encouraged that guest-controlled adjustments are limited to a maximum deviation of 3°C (5°F) from the standard setpoint. The use of dynamic control systems such as programmable thermostats, occupancy sensors, or Building Energy Management Systems (BEMS) is encouraged to improve energy performance and guest comfort. The establishment is encouraged to refer to national building energy codes or guidelines where they exist to ensure compliance and contextual relevance. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents its written Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)[79] for setting and managing temperature (e.g. via thermostats, central systems, or guest interface). In specific circumstances, where local standards or climatic adaptations apply, this is documented and justified. During the visual inspection: • for HH, CHP and SA, the auditor conducts samplings[80] in at least 1 meeting room and in guest rooms following methodology A as described in the glossary to confirm the set standard temperature and that any override controls remain within the allowed range; and • for R, A and CC, the auditor conducts samplings[81] in at least 1 of each relevant public areas of the entire establishment to confirm the set standard temperature and that any override controls remain within the allowed range, following methodology A as described in the glossary.

78 See glossary p. 4.
79 See glossary p. 4.
80 See glossary p. 4.
81 See glossary p. 4.

4.3	The establishment has an automatic or manual procedure to turn off lights and electrical appliances when guestrooms, rental properties, and meeting rooms are unoccupied. (I)	**Relevance** To ensure energy is not wasted on heating, cooling, or powering unused equipment, the establishment implements procedures to switch off lighting and electrical appliances in unoccupied rooms and meeting spaces. This practice improves energy efficiency, reduces operational costs, and lowers the carbon emissions associated with electricity use, contributing to broader sustainability and climate goals. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment has an automatic or manual procedure to turn off unnecessary electrical appliances and lighting when guestrooms, rental properties, and meeting rooms are unoccupied. Where the procedure is manual, the establishment has a written Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)[82] that describes the process for managing energy use in unoccupied rooms. The procedures include: • measures for short-term room vacancy (e.g. up to 2 nights/days), describing energy-saving actions in temporarily unused guest and meeting rooms. This includes, for example: turning off all lights, air conditioning units (electrical appliances) and TVs (including disabling standby mode where feasible); and • measures for energy reduction during low occupancy periods (e.g. below 75% occupancy), defining additional energy-saving actions during such periods. This preferably includes measures like consolidating guests in specific areas of the property and closing off entire wings or floors to minimise energy use and is applicable to both guest and meeting rooms. The SOP is practical, staff-oriented, and reviewed according to operational needs and technical system updates. Where automated systems are used, acceptable solutions include: a) occupancy sensors; b) motion/body heat detectors; c) guest Room Management Systems (GRMS) or Building Energy Management Systems (BEMS); and/or d) mobile-based access controls integrated with IoT (Internet of Things) and smart automation platforms. While traditional key card systems may still be found in some establishments and are acceptable for the purpose of this criterion, modern and more efficient solutions are strongly encouraged for their superior performance, flexibility and positive guest experience. Where applicable, the selected system aligns with national/local energy performance or smart building requirements (e.g. EU

[82] See glossary p. 4.

		Energy Efficiency Directive, local smart building or establishment codes). **Audit evidence** During the audit, where manual systems are used, the establishment presents a copy of the SOP for managing energy use in guest and meeting rooms empty for short periods (up to 2 nights/days) and during low occupancy (e.g. <75%), including any procedures for partial closure or system optimisation. In this case, a visual inspection confirms the energy-saving practices in unoccupied areas. During the visual inspection, where automatic systems are used, the auditor conducts samplings[83] in at least 1 rental property, 1 meeting room, and guest rooms following methodology A as described in the glossary, to confirm the presence of an automatic system turning off lights and electrical appliances.
4.4	*The establishment produces or purchases 50% of the energy used for heating and cooling from renewable sources. (G)*	***Relevance*** *To reduce the establishment's environmental footprint and greenhouse gas emissions, energy used for heating, cooling, hot water production, and cooking should increasingly come from renewable sources. Transitioning from fossil fuel–based systems to renewable energy supports climate goals, enhances energy independence, and promotes long-term operational sustainability.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *At least 50% of the energy used for heating and cooling at the establishment is supplied from renewable sources for a minimum continuous period of 3 months. This criterion also applies to energy used for hot water and cooking processes.* *Renewable electricity may be produced on-site or sourced externally, preferably from a nearby supplier.* *Acceptable alternatives to fossil fuel-based and nuclear-based systems include:* *a) solar thermal energy systems (e.g. solar collectors for hot water or space heating);* *b) geothermal systems and aerothermal heat pumps (e.g. ground or air-source);* *c) biogas and the biodegradable portion of biomass fuels (e.g. wood chips, agricultural waste);* *d) wind energy;* *e) hydropower (if applicable and managed sustainably);* *f) photovoltaic-powered electric heating and cooling (when the electricity is from certified renewable sources);* *g) air-source and ground-source heat pumps powered by renewable electricity;* *h) certified renewable electricity, including electricity from solar pv, wind, hydro, or other verified renewable sources, used to power climate control systems;*

[83] See glossary p. 4.

		i) district heating or cooling networks where the primary energy source is geothermal, and/or certified sustainably sourced biomass, and/or industrial waste heat recovery used within a renewable energy framework; *j) certified sustainable biofuels (e.g. biodiesel) that comply with the EU renewable energy directive (red ii / red iii) or globally recognised certification schemes (e.g. RSB, ISCC);* *k) efficient biomass systems, such as modern wood pellet stoves or boilers meeting EN 303-5 (class 5) or equivalent standards for energy efficiency and low emissions; and/or* *l) certified biomass fuels (e.g. wood pellets, chips, or briquettes) verified under schemes such as FSC, PEFC, or equivalent.* *Peat is not considered a renewable energy source and does not contribute to the required 50% share. When hybrid systems are in place, the renewable share is calculated as a percentage of the total annual energy demand for heating and cooling, using reliable data (e.g. utility bills, smart metres, or third-party assessments).* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents the following most recent documentation demonstrating that it produces or purchases 50% of the energy used for heating and cooling from renewable sources and no more than 50% of fossil fuels are used for the same purposes:* • *system specifications, invoices, or installation certificates for all heating, cooling, hot water and cooking equipment used in the establishment;* • *energy source disclosure documents, such as energy supplier contracts, fuel delivery invoices, or certificates of renewable origin for biofuels or electricity (when purchasing the energy from a supplier);* • *sustainability certification or technical standard documentation for biomass or biofuel systems (if such systems are used);* • *documentation showing technical specifications of the renewable energy systems, energy production data (e.g. from metres or system dashboards); and* • *calculations demonstrating that at least 50% of the heating/cooling demand is met through on-site renewable energy (when energy is produced on-site).* *Where energy is produced on site, a visual inspection confirms the presence and functionality of the systems.*
4.5	*The establishment produces or purchases all energy used for heating and cooling from renewable*	***Relevance*** *To reduce the establishment's environmental footprint and greenhouse gas emissions, energy used for heating, cooling, hot water production, and cooking should increasingly come from renewable sources. Transitioning from fossil fuel–based systems to renewable energy supports climate goals, enhances energy independence, and promotes long-term operational sustainability.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *All energy used for heating and cooling at the establishment is supplied from renewable sources. This criterion also applies to energy*

	sources. (G)	*used for hot water and cooking processes.* *Renewable electricity may be produced on-site or sourced externally, preferably from a nearby supplier.* *Acceptable alternatives to fossil fuel-based and nuclear-based systems include:* *m) solar thermal energy systems (e.g. solar collectors for hot water or space heating);* *n) geothermal systems and aerothermal heat pumps (e.g. ground or air-source);* *o) biogas and the biodegradable portion of biomass fuels (e.g. wood chips, agricultural waste);* *p) wind energy;* *q) hydropower (if applicable and managed sustainably);* *r) photovoltaic-powered electric heating and cooling (when the electricity is from certified renewable sources);* *s) air-source and ground-source heat pumps powered by renewable electricity;* *t) certified renewable electricity, including electricity from solar pv, wind, hydro, or other verified renewable sources, used to power climate control systems;* *u) district heating or cooling networks where the primary energy source is geothermal, and/or certified sustainably sourced biomass, and/or industrial waste heat recovery used within a renewable energy framework;* *v) certified sustainable biofuels (e.g. biodiesel) that comply with the EU renewable energy directive (red ii / red iii) or globally recognised certification schemes (e.g. RSB, ISCC);* *w) efficient biomass systems, such as modern wood pellet stoves or boilers meeting EN 303-5 (class 5) or equivalent standards for energy efficiency and low emissions; and/or* *x) certified biomass fuels (e.g. wood pellets, chips, or briquettes) verified under schemes such as FSC, PEFC, or equivalent.* *Peat is not considered a renewable energy source and does not contribute to the required 100% share. When hybrid systems are in place, the renewable share is calculated as a percentage of the total annual energy demand for heating and cooling, using reliable data (e.g. utility bills, smart metres, or third-party assessments).* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents the following most recent documentation demonstrating that it produces or purchases all energy used for heating and cooling from renewable sources and no more fossil fuels are used for the same purposes:* • *system specifications, invoices, or installation certificates for all heating, cooling, hot water and cooking equipment used in the establishment;* • *energy source disclosure documents, such as energy supplier contracts, fuel delivery invoices, or certificates of renewable origin for biofuels or electricity (when purchasing the energy from a supplier);* • *sustainability certification or technical standard documentation for biomass or biofuel systems (if such systems are used);* • *documentation showing technical specifications of the renewable energy systems, energy production data (e.g. from metres or system dashboards); and*

		• *calculations demonstrating that at least all heating/cooling demand is met through on-site renewable energy (when energy is produced on-site).* *Where energy is produced on site, a visual inspection confirms the presence and functionality of the systems.*
4.6	*The establishment produces or purchases at least 50% renewable and/or eco-labelled electricity. (G)*	***Relevance*** *This criterion promotes a transition to cleaner energy systems and demonstrates the establishment's commitment to climate mitigation, as renewable and eco-labelled electricity significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with energy use.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment uses electricity from renewable sources (solar panel, wind power, biomass, biogas from organic waste, hydroelectric or geothermal heat, etc.) for at least 50% of its total electricity consumption.* *Renewable electricity may be produced on-site or sourced externally, preferably from a nearby supplier.* *Acceptable alternatives to fossil fuel-based and nuclear-based systems include:* *a) solar photovoltaic systems;* *b) wind energy;* *c) hydropower, where applicable and sustainably managed;* *d) geothermal energy;* *e) electricity generated from biogas or from the biodegradable portion of biomass;* *f) electricity produced from certified sustainably sourced biomass; and/or* *g) electricity supplied through certified renewable electricity contracts, including solar, wind, hydro, or other verified renewable sources.* *The establishment is strongly encouraged to ensure that all its electricity consumption derives from renewable sources, but to conform with this criterion, at least 50% of the electricity consumption in the establishment derives from renewable sources.* *Where available, the establishment is also encouraged to purchase third-party verified electricity with recognised sustainability requirements (e.g. biodiversity considerations, contribution to renewable infrastructure, or social impact), such as international or national eco-labelled electricity. These sources have significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions compared to fossil fuels and are consistent with the definitions set out in the EU Renewable Energy Directive (RED II/RED III) and equivalent international frameworks.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents:*

		• *contracts, certificates or external written proof showing the electricity provider(s) and the percentage of renewable or third-party verified (e.g. eco-labelled) electricity;* • *the latest electricity invoice; and* • *guarantees of origin (GOs) or equivalent tracking systems in other regions (e.g. RECs, I-RECs), documenting the renewable share.*
4.7	*The establishment produces or purchases only renewable and/or eco-labelled electricity. (G)* ⓘ	***Relevance*** *This criterion promotes a transition to cleaner energy systems and demonstrates the establishment's commitment to climate mitigation, as renewable and eco-labelled electricity significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with energy use.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment uses electricity from renewable sources (solar panel, wind power, biomass, biogas from organic waste, hydroelectric or geothermal heat, etc.) for 100% of its total electricity consumption.* *Renewable electricity may be produced on-site or sourced externally, preferably from a nearby supplier.* *Acceptable alternatives to fossil fuel-based and nuclear-based systems include:* *h) solar photovoltaic systems;* *i) wind energy;* *j) hydropower, where applicable and sustainably managed;* *k) geothermal energy;* *l) electricity generated from biogas or from the biodegradable portion of biomass;* *m) electricity produced from certified sustainably sourced biomass; and/or* *n) electricity supplied through certified renewable electricity contracts, including solar, wind, hydro, or other verified renewable sources.* *Where available, the establishment is also encouraged to purchase third-party verified electricity with recognised sustainability requirements (e.g. biodiversity considerations, contribution to renewable infrastructure, or social impact), such as international or national eco-labelled electricity. These sources have significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions compared to fossil fuels and are consistent with the definitions set out in the EU Renewable Energy Directive (RED II/RED III) and equivalent international frameworks.* ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In SE this criterion is imperative for all categories. In NO, this criterion is imperative for H&H. ***Audit evidence***

		During the audit, the establishment presents: • *contracts, certificates or external written proof showing the electricity provider(s) and the percentage of renewable or third-party verified (e.g. eco-labelled) electricity;* • *the latest electricity invoice; and* • *guarantees of origin (GOs) or equivalent tracking systems in other regions (e.g. RECs, I-RECs), documenting the renewable share.*
4.8	*75% of the windows are energy efficient at a higher standard than the national/local regulation. (G)* ⓘ	***Relevance*** *Windows can be a significant contributor to increased energy consumption in the establishment due to heat loss in winter and heat gain in summer, increasing the need for heating or cooling. Poorly insulated or single-glazed windows are especially inefficient, leading to higher energy use for maintaining indoor comfort.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment has windows designed or upgraded to reduce heat loss or heat gain, according to the local climate context. Establishments located in areas with a cold climate ensure a high degree of thermal insulation (e.g. triple glazing) and establishments in areas with a hot climate have windows that are energy efficient in other ways (e.g. sun-reflecting material on the windows, blinds or other types of shade, etc.). In areas with a very hot or cold climate, the establishment may also apply restrictions on the ability to open windows.* *To conform with this criterion, at least 75% of the windows on site have appropriate thermal insulation or energy-efficient solutions that exceed national/local regulatory standards. Where full window replacement is not feasible, it is recommended to install thermal insulation aids such as curtains or insulating films for non-conforming windows.* ⓘ ***Note on national adaptation:*** *In FR, 75% of the windows have double-glazing or higher energy efficiency and this criterion is imperative.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents a summary document containing:* • *a description of the thermal insulation or energy-efficient features of all windows (e.g. glazing type, reflective film, shading, or insulation aids for older windows); and* • *a statement (preferably from an external expert e.g. architect/engineer/consultant) confirming that minimum 75% of the windows exceed national/local standards, or that appropriate compensatory measures are in place.*

		During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts samplings[84] in at least 1 lobby, 1 restaurant, 1 conference space, 1 corridor, 1 staff area, and in guest rooms, following methodology A as described in the glossary, to confirm the types of windows (methodology B).
4.9	*An external energy audit is conducted at least once every 6 years. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Conducting regular external energy audits provides a comprehensive understanding of where and how energy is consumed within the establishment, thus supporting informed decision-making for energy-saving measures.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment conducts an external energy audit at least once every 6 years. The energy audit aims at reducing the overall amount of energy consumed in the establishment as well as increasing the percentage of renewable energy sources used.* *The energy audit is carried out by an external qualified professional, such as an independent energy consultant or a professional advisor from local or national authorities. An energy certificate or declaration alone does not fulfil the requirements of this criterion.* *The energy audit identifies areas with significant energy consumption in the establishment. The audit report also includes advice and an action plan with suggestions for reduction in energy consumption, the estimated effects, financial cost and expected payback period of such interventions. It is also highly recommended to include in the audit a thermographic survey, to detect temperature differences on the surfaces of buildings and identify specific areas where energy is being lost (e.g. through poorly insulated walls, windows, doors, roofs, or around HVAC systems).* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents the report from the energy audit carried out within the last 6 years.* *In specific circumstances, where the establishment is located within a larger building and the has limited influence over shared infrastructure, the audit may be limited to the energy consumption and systems within the establishment's operational area.*
4.10	*At least 1 sustainable insulation measure is implemented. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Improving thermal insulation reduces heat loss and unwanted heat gain, significantly enhancing the building's energy efficiency and thermal comfort. Effective insulation lowers energy consumption for heating and cooling, cuts operational costs, and contributes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.* ***Expectations for implementation***

[84] See glossary p. 4.

		The establishment takes at least 1 insulation measure to improve the building's thermal performance. This may include: *a) insulation of hot water pipes or supply/exhaust duct;* *b) thermal insulation in at least 1 area such as attics, walls, floors, or ceilings; and/or* *c) installation of heat-reflective panels behind radiators.* *Before selecting or installing insulation, the establishment carries out a professional assessment or follows documented expert guidance (e.g. as part of an external energy audit), to ensure that the most impactful measure(s) are taken, depending on the site's location and/or characteristics.* *Only sustainable insulation materials are used, such as wood wool, cork, hemp, cellulose wadding, or other low emission, renewable, or recycled materials with verified environmental profiles.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents evidence of the insulation work and the materials used. Acceptable documentation includes invoices, installation reports, product specifications, or photographs. Evidence of a professional assessment or consultation is also provided.*
4.11	*Separate metres are installed at strategically important places for energy monitoring. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Providing more accurate information through additional/separate metres about the different levels of energy use in the establishment enables it to prepare better target strategies for reduction in energy consumption.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment installs additional or separate metres for electricity, gas, or other locally relevant energy sources (e.g. district heating), particularly in areas with high degrees of energy consumption (e.g. kitchens, heated swimming pools, gym and spa areas, externally managed businesses, etc.).* *Acknowledging that certain energy sources, such as gas, may not be relevant or commonly used in all countries, the focus is on applicable local energy sources based on the establishment's context.* *Where additional metres are installed, it is necessary that the consumption data from each meter is collected and recorded. If the readings from the different metres can be collected more frequently than once a month, it produces more detailed information about the consumption.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the visual inspection, the auditor confirms the presence of sub-meters and the methodology in place to monitor the*

		consumption.
HVAC, Equipment and Lights		
4.12	Control systems are in place for ventilation, comfort heating, and comfort cooling. (I)	**Relevance** Heating, cooling, and ventilation systems are among the largest consumers of energy in hospitality buildings. Efficient control of these systems reduces energy use and lowers greenhouse gas emissions. Smart zoning and responsive control measures ensure comfort without unnecessary energy waste. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment has a system in place to control the ventilation, comfort heating, and comfort cooling, to improve energy efficiency. The establishment may use a centralised or decentralised, partially or fully automated system (a building management system) to adjust or shut down the ventilation, heating and cooling system to save energy. Control measures may include, for example, occupancy-controlled or CO_2-controlled ventilation, reduced operating hours, or temperature control of heating and cooling. Where a partially computerised system is used, procedures for managing the system are demonstrable. Where the control system is manual, the establishment applies written procedures describing how ventilation, heating, and cooling are adjusted (e.g. adjusting thermostats in guest rooms or setting ventilation timers in conference rooms) for the relevant staff. Supporting measures such as keeping curtains or shades closed to reduce heat gain or loss may also be applied. Where applicable, the establishment divides the premises into separate zones (e.g. guest rooms, conference rooms, spa facilities) so that ventilation, heating, and cooling and ventilation can be adjusted independently for each area. The control system considers seasonal changes and patterns of use or non-use across different parts of the establishment (e.g. guest rooms, conference rooms, restaurant areas, other public areas, etc.), in line with the temperature thresholds specified in criterion 4.2. **Audit evidence** During the audit, where manual systems are used, the establishment presents the written procedures for controlling ventilation, heating, and cooling, shared with the relevant staff.

		During the visual inspection, the auditor confirms the presence of an automated or manual building management system.
4.13	Ventilation, comfort heating, and cooling systems are checked at least once a year and adequately maintained. (I)	**Relevance** Well-maintained ventilation, heating, and cooling systems reduce energy consumption, prevent unnecessary emissions, and ensure indoor air quality and thermal comfort. Routine checks also extend equipment lifespan and help detect inefficiencies or refrigerant leaks early. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment checks and maintains ventilation, heating and cooling systems at least once per year. Checks are preferably conducted by an external certified professional; however, internal checks are acceptable if the establishment has qualified personnel and complies with national regulations. Ventilation system checks include at least: • filter replacement; • cleaning of ducts, diffusers, and visible vents; • inspection and cleaning of heat exchangers, supply/exhaust systems; and • verification of filter sealing and correct airflow distribution, where relevant. Heating and cooling system checks (e.g. boilers, heat pumps, district systems, chillers, AC) include at least: • inspection of key components (e.g. pressure, valves, fluid levels, vibration); and • cleaning or replacement of filters and cleaning of heat exchangers. Manual checks are carried out even where automated alarms or monitoring systems are in place. Any identified issues (e.g. leaks, broken thermostats, blocked ducts) are resolved within 2 months. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents: • a maintenance protocol or written Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)[85] describing the systems, check frequency, responsible personnel, and repair timeframe; and • reports or checklists from the last 12 months (internal or external).

[85] See glossary p. 4.

4.14	At least 80% of all light bulbs in the establishment are LED or demonstrate equal or superior performance in terms of energy efficiency, luminous efficacy, and lifespan. (I) ⓘ	**Relevance** Using energy-efficient lighting technologies significantly reduces electricity consumption, lowers greenhouse gas emissions, and decreases long-term operational costs. Transitioning to LEDs or equivalent high-performance lighting supports sustainable energy management and improves overall building efficiency. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment ensures that at least 80% of all light bulbs used across guest rooms, public areas (including lobbies, restaurants, conference spaces and corridors) and staff areas are either LED bulbs or alternative lighting technologies that match or exceed LEDs in energy efficiency, luminous efficacy (light output per watt) and rated lifespan. It is recommended that, when purchasing new lights bulbs, the establishment selects the ones with the highest energy efficiency available in the market. Technologies such as incandescent, halogen, or CFLs do not meet this benchmark and are phased out. ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In DK, NL and PT, at least 90% of all light bulbs in the establishment are LED or demonstrate equal or superior performance in terms of energy efficiency, luminous efficacy, and lifespan. In FR, at least 80% of all light bulbs in the establishment are LED or demonstrate equal or superior performance in terms of energy efficiency, luminous efficacy, and lifespan and are ranked as energy efficient by national authorities. **Audit evidence** During the audit the establishment presents documentation (e.g. list) with the estimated number of installed light bulbs, indicating the type of bulb (e.g. LED, CFL), or invoices, demonstrating conformity with the 80% threshold. During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts samplings[86] in at least 1 lobby, 1 restaurant, 1 conference space, 1 corridor, 1 staff area, and in guest rooms, following methodology A as described in the glossary, to confirm the types of light bulbs (methodology B).
4.15	Outdoor lighting is minimised and/or has automatic turn-off sensors	**Relevance** To reduce the environmental footprint and operational costs, the establishment manages outdoor lighting to minimise unnecessary energy use. Responsible lighting design helps reduce light pollution and its negative impact on local biodiversity, while maintaining functionality and safety.

[86] See glossary p. 4.

	installed. (I) ⓘ	**Expectations for implementation** The establishment has a system in place for the reduction of energy consumption of outdoor lighting. The establishment minimises outdoor lighting energy either by turning off lights in certain periods of the night, and/or by installing sensors that turn on lighting only when detecting movement. Lighting systems are adapted to the specific function and safety requirements of different outdoor areas, while minimising unnecessary usage. The establishment is encouraged to align its lighting strategies with national and international energy performance standards for buildings (e.g. IEA Energy Efficiency Policies for Buildings), which recognises that digital controls such as timers and smart lighting can reduce energy usage by up to 40%. Particular attention is given to biodiversity-conscious lighting design, especially in ecologically sensitive areas, where light pollution is mitigated through: a) shielded luminaires to direct light downward; b) use of low-intensity, warm colour temperature lighting (<3000K); c) minimising lighting near natural habitats or nesting areas; d) sensor-based street lighting; and/or e) other relevant methodologies. ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In FR, outdoor lighting is turned off during daytime wherever safe and legally permitted; decorative lighting is turned off during night off-peak hours, and pathway lighting is regulated through sensors or time controls, in accordance with safety requirements. **Audit evidence** During the visual inspection, the auditor checks the adopted lighting solutions, including types of control systems and their placement across outdoor areas. It is checked that the reported measures for reducing outdoor lighting are adapted.
4.16	Refrigeration and thermal equipment are regularly maintained following national legislation and manufacturer recommendation	**Relevance** Refrigerators, cold/freezing storage units, ovens, and heating cupboards operate continuously and represent significant energy loads in hospitality operations. Regular maintenance (including seal checks and defrosting) ensures optimal performance, supports food safety and lowers environmental impact. Proper procedures aligned with national legislation and manufacturer recommendations are essential for ensuring safety, compliance, and sustainability. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment carries out regular maintenance of all refrigerators, cold stores, freezers, heating cupboards, and ovens at least once per year (preferably more frequently). As part of regular maintenance, the establishment ensures that: the equipment has intact door seals that close properly and show no signs of damage or deformation, excess ice in freezing

	s. (I)	devices is absent, and door seals are repaired or replaced immediately when found to be defective. Maintenance procedures comply with national regulations regarding food safety, energy performance and workplace safety, and follow the manufacturer maintenance and servicing recommendations for each type of appliance. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents evidence of implementation, such as maintenance logs or checklists showing seal inspections and defrosting actions completed within the past year and invoices or service reports for any repairs or replacements carried out. During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts samplings[87] in at least 1 kitchen following methodology A as described in the glossary, to check that door seals are intact on a sample of at least 2 appliances (1 cooling and 1 heating unit if applicable) and the absence of excess ice in at least 1 freezing device, or verify an automatic defrost system (methodology B).
4.17	Newly purchased refrigeration, ventilation, heating, and cooling, equipment use refrigerants that are free from HCFCs or CFCs. (I)	**Relevance** Phasing out ozone-depleting and high global-warming refrigerants such as HCFCs and CFCs reduces greenhouse gas emissions and supports compliance with international environmental protocols. Selecting equipment that uses safe, low-impact refrigerants contributes to climate protection and sustainable operations. **Expectations for implementation** None of the refrigeration, ventilation, heating, and cooling, equipment (e.g. chillers, heat pumps, split systems, commercial fridges/freezers) purchased during the last 24 months (for re-applicants) or 6 months (for first-time applicants) by the establishment contains HCFC (hydrochlorofluorocarbon) compounds, including transitional refrigerants such as R-22 and R-123, as these are greenhouse gases and contribute to ozone depletion. When second-hand equipment is purchased, they do not contain CFC refrigerants. All equipment complies with national and local legislation related to refrigerant phase-outs and environmental safety. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents documentation (e.g. technical datasheets, purchase records, system specifications) confirming that all refrigeration, heating, cooling, and ventilation equipment purchased within the last 24 months (for re-applicants) or 6 months (for first-time applicants) conform with the requirements listed above.

[87] See glossary p. 4.

4.18	An annual leak check is carried out for systems containing refrigerants, and refrigerant refills from the last full calendar year are recorded. (I)	**Relevance** Refrigerants are powerful greenhouse gases. Tracking refill events helps identify leaks, supports legal compliance and enables accurate climate impact calculations. This is a key step in reducing emissions and transitioning to low-impact alternatives. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment carries out an annual leak check for all systems containing refrigerants and documents all instances of refrigerant refills within the last full calendar year. For each refrigerant refill, the establishment records at minimum: • the type of refrigerant used (e.g. R404A, R134a, R600a, R290; and • the quantity of refrigerant refilled, expressed in kilograms (kg) or CO2e. This documentation is signed by a certified technician or authorised in-house personnel, in compliance with national regulations governing F-gas handling and refrigerant circuit interventions. Any refrigerant refill is also recorded as a leakage event and reflected in the establishment's carbon accounting or climate calculation (see criterion 4.25). If no refrigerant refill occurred during the previous calendar year, the establishment provides a written declaration from a certified technician or authorised in-house expert that no leakage was detected and no refill was necessary. Systems with a refrigerant charge below 5 tonnes CO_2-equivalent and hermetically sealed system with a charge below 10 tCO_2e are exempt from leak checking requirements. Preventive maintenance is, however, highly recommended. Where applicable, the establishment is strongly encouraged to prioritise equipment using natural refrigerants such as R600a (isobutane), R290 (propane), or others with a GWP below 100. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents refrigerant logs or reports showing the type and amount of any refrigerants refilled in the previous year. In specific circumstances, when no refills occurred, the establishment presents official proof confirming inspection and compliance.
4.19	*Newly purchased electronic devices in the establishment are rated as energy efficient*	***Relevance*** *Electronic devices such as televisions, kettles, air conditioning units, and fans are widely used and can contribute significantly to energy consumption. Choosing energy-efficient models reduces the environmental footprint and operational costs of accommodation facilities.* ***Expectations for implementation***

	according to a recognised national or regional energy label system. (G) ⓘ	*Where the establishment has purchased electronic devices within the past 24 months (for re-applicants) or 6 months (for first-time applicants), those devices are rated as energy efficient according to a recognised national or regional energy label system (e.g. EU Energy Label, Energy Star, South Korean EHS, etc.).* *Where no label or energy rating exists for a specific device type, the establishment chooses one of the most energy-efficient options available on the local market, based on a comparison of at least 3 comparable models.* ⓘ ***Note on national adaptation:*** *In NL, this criterion is imperative for all categories.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents:* • *a list or invoices of electronic devices purchased within the 24 months (for re-applicants) or 6 months (for first-time applicants), including purchase date, brand/model, location (e.g. room number or block); and* • *technical specification sheets or energy labels showing daily energy consumption in kWh/day, or classification in a recognised national energy label scheme.* *In specific circumstances, where no energy label is available, the establishment presents a short market comparison of a minimum of 3 comparable products, showing that the selected model has lower or equal energy consumption than other comparable products available at the time of purchase.*
4.20	*A heat or cooling recovery system is installed. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Heat or cooling recovery systems allow establishments to capture and reuse excess heat or retain cooling generated by energy-consuming equipment, leading to substantial energy savings and lower environmental impact* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment installs a heat or cooling recovery system. The recovery system, usually a heat exchanger, captures surplus heat or cooling from major energy-using systems such as ventilation, refrigeration equipment or swimming pools. Recovered energy is reused for at least 1 of the following purposes:* *a) preheating of incoming ventilation air in colder climates;* *b) pre-cooling of incoming ventilation air in warmer climates;* *c) heating of domestic hot water; and/or* *d) space heating in areas such as indoor parking garages.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents technical specifications or a system operation card showing the presence of a heat or*

		cooling recovery system.
4.21	*Ventilation, heating, and/or cooling is demand controlled. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Demand-controlled systems ensure that heating, cooling, and ventilation are only provided when and where they are needed, thus significantly reducing environmental impact and operational costs. This is particularly important in the hospitality sector, where room occupancy levels and usage patterns fluctuate frequently.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The ventilation, heating and/or cooling systems are automatically adjusted by sensors according to the current demand to optimise energy consumption.* *For demand-controlled ventilation, control could be based on:* *a) increasing airflow when carbon dioxide (co_2) levels exceed 1200 ppm;* *b) adjusting ventilation based on relative humidity above 70%; and/or* *c) presence of occupants in the rooms (e.g. motion sensors).* *For demand-controlled heating or cooling, control is based on maintaining temperatures within +/- 3 °C of the standard setpoint for the relevant climate zone and season.* *Time-based control alone (e.g. fixed on/off schedules) is not accepted, as time-based controls operate on predictive, fixed assumptions, whether DCV systems respond to actual, real-time occupancy and air quality, leading to more accurate control, greater energy savings and better comfort outcomes.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents system logs or equivalent (e.g. overview system screenshots from the building management system (BMS) data showing system operation during different load conditions (high and low occupancy) from the last 12 months.*
4.22	*Heating, cooling, and ventilation systems automatically switch off in all the rooms when*	***Relevance*** *A significant amount of energy from heating, cooling, and ventilation systems (HVAC) systems is wasted if they are in use while windows and doors are open, as the system will then have to use additional energy to adjust the temperature to the set level.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The heating, cooling, and ventilation systems in guest and meeting rooms (and in the main dining area for the Restaurant (R) category)*

	windows and/or doors are open. (G)	*are equipped with an automatic shut-off function when windows and/or doors are opened* *The criterion does not apply to rooms with windows and/or doors that are permanently sealed and cannot be opened.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit the establishment presents documentation (e.g. technical specifications, sensor system overviews, area compliance list), showing that all the guest and meeting rooms, or dining area for the Restaurant (R) category, have the heating, cooling, and ventilation systems automatically switching off when windows and/or doors are opened.* *During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts samplings[88] in at least 1 meeting room, and in guest rooms following methodology A as described in the glossary, and in the main dining for the Restaurant (R) to verify that the system in each of the listed areas turns off accordingly when windows/doors are open (methodology B).*
4.23	*All the lighting fixtures in public and staff areas have motion detectors, timers, or are reduced when spaces are unoccupied. (G)* ⓘ	***Relevance*** *This criterion reduces unnecessary electricity consumption by ensuring that lighting in public and staff areas operates only when spaces are occupied. By limiting lighting use to actual needs, it lowers associated greenhouse gas emissions and supports more efficient energy management.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment uses automated lighting controls in public areas and staff areas (lobby, corridors, restrooms, staff rooms, kitchens, back-of-house spaces, storage areas etc.), wherever safe and legal to do so, enabling lights to be turned off or reduced when people are not present. All the lighting fixtures[89] (not area) in public areas and staff areas in the establishment are equipped with motion detection, timers, or automatic dimming/reduction controls.* *This can be achieved through passive infrared (PIR) sensors, ultrasonic sensors, dual-technology sensors, smart control systems, or scheduled timers. An alternative solution is that the lighting in public areas is dimmed, or the lighting intensity is reduced when people are not present.* *The establishment is encouraged to gradually extend motion-based or smart control lighting systems to additional areas beyond the scope of this criterion.* ⓘ ***Note on national adaptation:*** *In FR, this criterion is imperative for HH, CHP and R in public corridors, public stairs and public*

[88] See glossary p. 4.
[89] See glossary p. 4.

		bathrooms, wherever safe, legal, technically and financially possible to do so. ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents documentation listing:* • *the type of control installed (motion sensor, timer, dimming, or always-on); and* • *the control technology used (e.g. PIR, ultrasonic, timeclock, smart system).* *During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts samplings[90] in at least 1 public area and 1 staff area, following methodology A as described in the glossary.*
4.24	*The establishment offers access to charge electric vehicles. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Providing access to EV charging infrastructure supports sustainable mobility, reduces transport-related emissions and meets growing guest expectations for climate-friendly travel options.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment offers access to charge EVs. Charging stations are located within the premises of the establishment or, when the establishment has fewer than ten own parking spots, charging stations may be located within 200 metres of the premises, provided they are accessible to guests of the establishment. Establishments with ten or more parking spots have at least 1 charging station available for EVs within the premises.* *The establishment ensures that the charging infrastructure complies with relevant national legislation and that they can be used both by the guests of the establishment and by the staff (see criterion 6.9). Consideration is given to ensuring that chargers are compatible with multiple vehicle brands.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the visual inspection, the auditor confirms the presence of the EV charging stations.*
Greenhouse Gas		
4.25	The establishment calculates its	**Relevance** This criterion supports climate action by helping the establishment identify, calculate and monitor its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Estimating the annual carbon footprint enables the establishment to track fluctuations over time and work toward

[90] See glossary p. 4.

	Scope 1 and 2 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions using a carbon measurement system that aligns with the internationally recognised GHG Protocol. (I)	emissions reductions. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment identifies its sources of GHG emissions and uses its measured annual energy consumption and other sources of GHG emissions to make an estimate of its total annual carbon footprint for scope 1 and 2. The carbon footprint is calculated using a carbon measurement tool that aligns with the GHG Protocol. The establishment calculates emissions for both the last full reporting year and the previous reporting year. First-time applicants calculate emissions for the last full reporting year. As a minimum, the following information is reported annually: • calculation method used; • total emissions (yearly, decimal value); • scope 1 emissions (yearly, decimal value); and • scope 2 emissions (yearly, decimal value). When available, producer-specific Emission Factors (EFs) verified by third party entities are used for the calculation. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents the complete carbon footprint calculation for the last full reporting year and the preceding reporting year, including the results, all input data, and the calculation method or tool used. This includes consumption records, utility bills, emission factors, and estimation methodologies to allow the auditor to verify data accuracy and calculation quality. In specific circumstances, for first-time applicants, the establishment submits the last full reporting year calculation.
4.26	*The establishment calculates and reports its Scope 3 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions using a carbon measurement system that aligns with the*	***Relevance*** *To ensure full climate accountability and identify indirect emissions across the value chain, the establishment assesses and reports its significant Scope 3 GHG emissions.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment assesses and reports its significant Scope 3 GHG emissions in accordance with the GHG Protocol Corporate Value Chain (Scope 3) Accounting and Reporting Standard.* *The Scope 3 assessment:*

	internationally recognised GHG Protocol. (G)	• *identifies and includes all relevant categories defined by the GHG protocol (e.g. purchased goods and services, employees commuting, waste generated, use of sold products, etc.);* • *is based on the establishment's own materiality assessment of which categories are significant to its operations;* • *includes a description of the methodology used (e.g. spend-based, activity-based, supplier-specific); and* • *uses the GHG protocol's technical guidance for calculating scope 3 emissions as a reference for emissions factors and estimation methods.* *The establishment is strongly encouraged to:* • *set reduction targets for significant scope 3 emissions (see criterion 1.2);* • *engage suppliers and partners in improving emissions transparency and performance; and* • *integrate scope 3 data into climate action plans and reporting.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents the complete carbon footprint calculation for the last full reporting year and, if calculated, for the precedent previous reporting year, including the results, all input data, and the calculation method or tool used. This includes consumption records, relevant bills, and estimation methodologies to allow the auditor to verify data accuracy and calculation quality.*
4.27	*The establishment sets and annually reviews a concrete target to reduce its carbon footprint and identifies actions to achieve it. (G)*	***Relevance*** *This criterion encourages the establishment to take proactive steps to reduce its climate impact by setting clear, measurable carbon reduction targets based on its calculated footprint. Regular review and strategic planning support accountability and continuous improvement.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment uses its calculated carbon footprint as a basis for formulating a target to further reduce carbon emissions by a certain percentage. The site specifies the base year and the target year with associated, values, the scope(s) of emissions included and the targets unit. The target is updated and reviewed annually and should prioritise internal reductions in Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions before considering actions addressing Scope 3 emissions.* *The establishment also identifies the actions needed to reach the target, e.g. reduction in energy consumption, increasing efficiency measures and/or installing on-site renewable energy systems. Chain-wide actions or documents can be accepted as evidence if the establishment demonstrates that the actions are implemented at property-level and are appropriate for their structural, geographical and cultural context.* *Removals or avoided emissions are not counted as gross greenhouse gas reductions.*

		Audit evidence *During the audit, the establishment presents the annual carbon reduction target, methodologies adopted, as well as defined actions to reach it. This may be included in the annual action plan (see criterion 1.3).*

5. WASTE

Waste Management, Waste Reduction

Waste Management

N.	Criterion	Explanatory Notes
5.1	The establishment separates waste as required by national legislation and in all cases into at least 3 recyclable categories; staff receive clear instructions on waste handling. (I)	**Relevance** Effective waste separation promotes recycling, reuse and responsible management of materials, reducing the environmental footprint of waste treatment. It also supports circular economy principles and helps establishments to comply with national and local waste regulations, while fostering a culture of sustainability among staff and guests. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment separates waste in accordance with national (including local) legislation and, in all cases, into a minimum of 3 recyclable categories. Waste separation categories may include paper, cardboard, metal, cans, glass, plastic, bottles with refund, organic waste, garden waste, cooking oil, wood, textiles, electronic waste etc. General waste, other waste and hazardous waste are not considered as a category (hazardous waste is covered in criterion 5.4). Where national legislation requires multiple waste types to be collected in a single bin and separated off-site, this collection counts as 1 recyclable category only. All waste is stored safely in accordance with relevant national and local legislation, and order and cleanliness in the waste area are mandatory. Sorting stations are easily accessible to staff and clearly marked with instructions and signage indicating how to properly separate waste. These include both written explanations and icons or illustrations to aid understanding. It is

	ⓘ	recommended that explanations are also provided in Braille. Before the audit, photos of waste sorting points that clearly show as required by national legislation and in all cases into at least 3 recyclable categories with its labels, signage and instructions, reflecting the system in actual use, are submitted. In addition to main sorting stations, staff are able to separate waste into at least 3 of the same categories in 1 additional back-office area. It is recommended that sorting stations are installed in all areas with high waste generation. For establishments with kitchens, the suggested location for this additional sorting point is within or near the kitchen itself. Furthermore, if customers can sort waste in the guest rooms, housekeeping staff are also able to separate waste generated in guest rooms (e.g. through designated compartments or containers on their cleaning trolleys). Where local infrastructure limits the ability to separate all waste streams, the establishment analyses which types of waste are most environmentally and contextually relevant to separate (considering factors such as the material's impact on nature, local resource scarcity, or the distance required to transport replacements) and uses this analysis to prioritise separation efforts and to inform staff and guests. Where possible, the establishment prioritises waste separation for reuse over recycling, by identifying opportunities for materials like cardboard, glass, or containers to be collected by third parties for direct reuse, resale, or return systems. This criterion mainly covers the waste separation on-site, while the handling and transportation of waste after separation is covered in criterion 5.2. If, due to national or local legislation, certain waste types are collected in 1 bin and subsequently separated by the waste management facilities, on-site separation of these categories is not mandatory. However, staff must still receive training[91] on waste management practices. ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In DK, the establishment separates waste as required by national legislation and in all cases into at least 10 recyclable categories. In FR, the establishment separates waste as required by national legislation and in all cases into at least 6 recyclable categories. **Audit evidence** During the visual inspection of the waste sorting facilities, the auditor confirms that: • waste is being correctly separated per national (including local) legislation and in all cases into minimum 3 recyclable waste categories according to the submitted photos of waste sorting points; • staff are able to separate waste into at least 3 (or 6 in FR) of the same categories in 1 additional back-office area, in addition to the main sorting station; • clear and easily understandable instructions or signage are in place; and

[91] See glossary p. 4.

		• waste is correctly separated according to these instructions (this is verified by opening bins to assess proper separation). If incorrect sorting is observed, follow-up staff training[92] on waste management principles is required. For this purpose, records of corrective actions, staff training documents, or similar evidence may serve as supportive documentation. In specific circumstances, where certain waste types are collected in 1 bin and subsequently separated by the waste management facilities due to national or local legislation, the establishment presents written confirmation (e.g. a letter from the competent authority) verifying compliance with the relevant legislation.
5.2	All separated waste categories are handled individually by the local or national waste management facilities, by a private entity or by the establishment's own facilities. (I)	**Relevance** The correct handling of separated waste (such as maintaining material purity and avoiding contamination) as part of criterion 5.1 is essential for high-quality recycling and supports circular economy principles. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment ensures that all waste categories separated on-site are handled individually and appropriately after collection. The subsequent waste handling includes, (where appropriate) further sorting/separation, recycling, and disposal, and is managed appropriately to the corresponding waste category. For the collection and subsequent handling of separated waste, the establishment may enter into an agreement with public national/local waste management authorities and/or private companies. The establishment may also have its own facilities for treating certain types of separated waste (e.g. composting organic or garden waste, see criterion 5.7) or use equipment to reduce the volume of waste before collection, such as cardboard compactors. If the waste is managed by a public entity, invoices or contracts showing that waste categories are collected and transported separately by this entity are provided. If the waste is managed by a private company, invoices are provided together with 1 of the following documents: a) a contract confirming that the waste categories are collected and transported separately for further handling; or b) a written confirmation from the private waste handling entity that the waste is collected and managed in accordance with environmental and health standards. If the establishment treats the waste on-site, it must comply with all applicable legislation. Where specific requirements are not covered by law, the establishment ensures that: • a risk assessment has been carried out to confirm there are no adverse environmental or health impacts; and • the waste is indeed being recycled or processed appropriately.

[92] See glossary p. 4.

		The responsibility of ensuring that waste is being collected and transported separately also applies to any waste that is shipped abroad, whether from the point of creation at the establishment or via a waste handling facility. In cases, where waste management options are limited (due to the location of the property or a lack of local infrastructure) and unless this is prohibited by law, it is recommended that the establishment explores alternative solutions, such as on-site treatment, collaboration with private individuals for pickup, or partnerships with other organisations to develop joint waste handling system. For collaborations with private individuals or other organisations, the establishment creates an agreement that formalises rights of the parties involved and includes financial reimbursements/agreements, documentation explaining how the collected waste is used and any other structural regulations of the cooperation. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents evidence confirming that all waste categories are collected and transported separately, and, where applicable, treated appropriately. Depending on the type of waste handling arrangement, the auditor verifies the following evidence: a) For waste collected by a public entity: invoices or contracts from the past 24 months (for re-applicants) or 6 months (for first-time applicants), showing that the separated waste categories are collected and transported separately are provided; b) For waste collected by a private entity: an invoice, and either a contract confirming that the waste categories are collected and transported separately for further handling, or a written confirmation from the private waste handling entity that the waste is collected and managed in accordance with environmental and health standards from the past 24 months (for re-applicants) or 6 months (for first-time applicants) are provided; or c) For waste treated on-site by the establishment: a risk assessment confirming that there are no adverse environmental or health impacts, and documentation showing that the waste is recycled or processed appropriately (e.g. Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)[93], composting procedures) are provided. The facilities are furthermore visually inspected during the audit. A visual inspection of the bins confirms that the collection frequency and the number of containers is sufficient to collect the entire volume of sorted waste (e.g. if overflowing containers are observed, the collection frequency or the number of containers must be adjusted).
5.3	The establishment offers its guests	**Relevance**

[93] See glossary p. 4.

	practical means to separate their waste in at least 3 categories. (I) ⓘ	To create awareness among guests on waste separation and recycling, visible and accessible sorting opportunities help encourage responsible behaviour and participation in the establishment's environmental efforts. Guest involvement in proper waste separation supports the overall waste management system, improves recycling quality, and reduces landfill waste. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment offers guests a clear and practical opportunity to separate their waste. The waste that guests sort is properly collected and ultimately placed into the corresponding waste bins at the waste management stations. It is essential that the guest-facing system aligns with the establishment's overall waste management practices (criterion 5.1). The possibility to sort waste is provided in at least 1 strategic main public area, such as the lobby, conference area/room, corridors, restaurants. At a minimum, 3 waste categories are available for separation, and general waste is required to be 1 of these categories. The waste separation can be done through separate bins for different waste types or 1 bin with separation for different waste types. It is required that bins are clearly labelled with text and pictograms or illustrations, indicating the different bins/compartments for the different types of waste. It is also recommended to provide waste sorting opportunities in guest rooms, and in additional public areas, such as public restrooms, or parking areas. Alternatively, it is possible to have a system for guests of placing separated waste in distinct locations (e.g. paper and newspaper on the table, bottles and cans next to the bin and other waste in the bin) in the guest rooms. However, in such systems, it must be clear to the guest where which waste belongs, and (if permitted per law), the staff furthermore controls if the waste has been separated correctly, before transferring it to the main containers. In cases of higher waste generation by guests (e.g. in self-catering units such as holiday homes or apartments with guest kitchens), in-room sorting is provided. The information for guests about waste sorting possibilities is included in the information about the general environmental undertakings of the establishment (through the guest room binders, TV-monitors in guest rooms or public areas, information in public areas or conference areas, etc.) (see criterion 2.3). The establishment ensures communication materials[94] are accurate, clear and easily understandable. ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In DK and FR, since legislation requires establishments to separate more than three (3) waste categories, guests are provided with the same separation options. **Audit evidence** During the visual inspection, the auditor confirms that: • a guest-accessible waste separation system is present in at least 1 public area; • it is possible for guests to separate at least 3 categories (including general waste);

[94] See glossary p. 4.

		• bins are properly labelled and informational signage is clear and understandable (text and pictograms); • in-room waste separation system is available in holiday homes or apartments with guest kitchens; and • the sorting system offered to guests is consistent with the overall waste handling system of the establishment.
5.4	Hazardous chemicals and waste are managed, stored and transported safely to an approved reception facility. (I)	**Relevance** Hazardous substances and waste (whether liquid or solid) pose significant risks to human health and the environment if not stored, handled and disposed of properly. In tourism settings, improper management can lead to staff exposure, leaks, spills, contamination of soil and water and long-term environmental damage. Responsible handling and disposal protect people, reduce risks and ensure compliance with legislation. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment provides a list of the types of hazardous waste it typically generates and ensures that: • all hazardous chemicals and waste are handled with extra care and in compliance with national/local legislation and the safety recommendations in their Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS); • hazardous waste is stored in sealed, clearly labelled containers or bins, made of compatible materials, separated by type to prevent adverse reactions, and placed on drip trays or secondary containment/retention tanks, where appropriate. Depending on the chemical and local regulations, these can be located indoors or outdoors, provided they are designed to prevent environmental contamination; • containers and storage areas are regularly (as internally defined) inspected for leaks or deterioration, with corrective actions taken when required. These inspections may be documented within the establishment's general Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)[95] for safety/maintenance. • it is strongly encouraged that the hazardous chemicals and waste are located in a locked, properly ventilated room separated from other material/waste to avoid a health and safety risk for staff entering the room. Installing hydrocarbon separators in uncovered parking lots is recommended to prevent runoff contamination; and • hazardous chemicals and waste are transported safely to an approved reception facility in compliance with national/local regulations. Public authorities or private companies approved to deal with transportation of hazardous waste are preferably in charge of the transportation of the hazardous waste to the nearest appropriate reception facility. Alternatively, the establishment may oversee transportation of the hazardous waste if this can be done in an environmentally and health-wise safe way complying with national/local regulation for the transportation of hazardous waste. In the hospitality and tourism industry, common examples of hazardous chemicals include cleaning agents such as detergents, disinfectants, or oven cleaners containing ammonia or bleach; swimming pool chemicals such as chlorine and other disinfectants; pesticides used for pest control in and around establishments (only allowed in exceptional cases; see criterion

[95] See glossary p. 4.

		7.8); polishes, waxes and air fresheners that often contain volatile organic compounds; paints and solvents including thinners and removers; liquid FOGs such as cooking oil, gasoline, diesel and lubricants; and any other chemicals that are marked with a "Danger" symbol, indicating their hazardous nature. Typical examples of hazardous solid waste in tourism and hospitality establishments include used batteries (e.g. from remote controls, flashlights, guest amenities); fluorescent light bulbs; used toners and printer inks (may contain toxic residues and microplastics); solid FOGs (such as waste scraped from grills, drains, or grease traps, also oil waste and oil filters); electronic waste containing hazardous substances (e.g. discarded appliances containing batteries); pharmaceutical waste (e.g. expired or unused medications stored on-site); varnish and glue residues, spray cans, solvents; impregnated wood. Please note that the above lists are not exhaustive and should be reviewed based on national/local regulations and the specific operations of the establishment. In specific countries, where, due to local limitations, potential types of hazardous waste e.g. light bulbs, are not separated from other types of waste after pick-up, the establishment provides evidence of such local limitations and further proves that the necessary efforts to identify other existing options have been taken. In addition, safe storage prior to disposal is ensured and the establishment actively remains informed about new developments on the market. It is possible for the establishment to cooperate with other establishments for joint transportation of separated hazardous waste if it is done safely and without compromising the subsequent treatment of such waste. It is highly recommended to explore alternative, more sustainable solutions to hazardous products (e.g. eco-labelled batteries, liquid chemicals, toners and inks). Establishments are furthermore encouraged to regularly evaluate the types and quantities of hazardous chemicals used and waste generated in order to identify opportunities for avoidance, substitution with less harmful alternatives, or reduction in disposal frequency through more efficient use. **Audit evidence** The establishment presents a list of hazardous waste that it typically generates. In addition, 1 of the following types of evidence showing how hazardous waste is transported to an approved reception facility is provided: a) If the hazardous waste is transported by public authorities or licensed private companies approved to handle such waste: contracts or confirmations from licensed collectors; b) In countries where the treatment of hazardous chemicals is not regulated by national environmental legislation: a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)[96] showing that the transportation of the hazardous waste to the nearest approved reception facility is done safely. The establishment furthermore provides the treatment method, and environmental protection measures in place at the final treatment facility; or

[96] See glossary p. 4.

		c) If the establishment is responsible for transporting its own hazardous chemicals and waste (e.g. to a public collection point such as a grocery store or local depot): a document showing the address and the type of dropping point (e.g. collective collection point, recycling centre etc.) or permits for self-transport of hazardous, to demonstrate full compliance with national and local regulations governing the transport of hazardous waste. A visual inspection confirms the appropriateness and durability of the separate containers for the different types of hazardous solid/liquid chemicals and waste and that there are no leaks from these containers. If a leakage or concern is observed during the audit, the auditor may request to see the relevant procedures and records of regular leakage checks.
5.5	A waste bin is available close to every toilet. (I)	**Relevance** Flushing hygiene items can cause blockages in the sewage system, damage wastewater[97] treatment infrastructure and lead to pollution of natural water bodies. These products can contain plastic or other synthetic materials that are non-biodegradable and harmful to the environment. **Expectations for implementation** To ensure safe and private disposal of sanitary and healthcare-related items, a waste bin is available within arm's reach (no more than 1 metre) from each toilet. This applies to toilets located in the bathroom or separate toilet in the guest rooms, staff restrooms and public restrooms. It is strongly recommended that a sign is placed near the toilet, or that clear information is made available in the room or restroom area, advising users not to flush hygiene waste or other non-flushable items. Instead, such waste should be placed in the nearby bin. **Audit evidence** During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts samplings[98] in a minimum of 1 public restroom, 1 staff restroom, and in guest rooms following methodology A as described in the glossary, to confirm the presence of a waste bin within arm's reach (no more than 1 metre) from each toilet (methodology B).
5.6	The establishment records the total amount of	**Relevance** Tracking waste generation by stream helps manage and reduce environmental impacts, while enabling early detection of irregularities, improving recycling quality, supporting data-driven decisions, and aligning with good practices in sustainability

[97] See glossary p. 4.
[98] See glossary p. 4.

	waste, residual/mixed waste, and food waste. (I) ⓘ	reporting. The waste tracking data collected under this criterion can also serve as baseline data to support the establishment's sustainability targets and actions under criteria 1.2 and 1.3. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment has a monthly and yearly record of the amount of total waste (all tracked streams combined), residual/mixed waste (non-recyclables), and food waste. It is furthermore recommended to record the monthly and yearly data for all other types of waste for which separation and collection are practiced (based on criterion 5.1) and/or are legally required in the country (e.g. glass, paper, cardboard, metal, plastics). The reported "total waste" figure clearly indicates which waste streams have been included in the calculation. Hazardous waste tracking is not mandatory but strongly recommended. The waste data is recorded using a consistent unit of measurement for each tracked waste stream, either by weight (e.g. kilograms or tonnes) or by volume (e.g. litres or cubic metres). At a minimum, monthly and yearly records of waste data from the full last 2 calendar years for the total amount of waste, residual/mixed waste, and food waste are provided (first-time applicants submit data from the last full calendar year, or a minimum of 3 months of data, if no historical data is available). In cases, where waste contractors provide monthly or quarterly data, this data must be used. Where monthly data is not directly available (e.g. due to structural constraints, contractor limitations, shared buildings, collection points shared with neighbours), the establishment provides the most accurate estimation possible based on available data. Acceptable methodologies include: a) quarterly contractor data divided by 3 months; b) tracking-based estimation using "tracking weeks" (1 week per quarter), where actual waste volumes are measured and extrapolated. This involves collecting and measuring actual waste data during 1 representative week per quarter and extrapolating the results. This means that there is at least 4 documented "tracking weeks" each year, one per quarter, on which estimations are based; or c) tracking by number of collections per waste stream. If none of these options is feasible, and if the establishment uploads documentation from the contractor confirming that monthly or quarterly figures are unavailable, annual data can be provided instead. The use of estimates, such as simply dividing a known annual total by 12 to generate monthly figures, is not sufficient. In situations, where guests themselves bring the waste to collecting points shared with other businesses or houses, such as in certain campsites or holiday parks, the establishment is still responsible for tracking the operational waste generated within its own premises. This includes, for example, kitchen waste, staff area waste, maintenance waste and cleaning waste. It is strongly recommended that establishments begin tracking item-level usage for high-volume operational products (such as bin bags, cling film, cleaning product containers, disposable slippers, or single-use water bottles). Tracking by units

		purchased annually, with corresponding weight and cost data allows the establishment to identify which items are driving overall usage and to prioritise interventions. ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In FR, PT, FI and DK, the establishment records the total amount of waste, residual/mixed waste, food waste and recyclable waste. In DK and FI, the establishment additionally details each recyclable waste fraction/type of waste. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents monthly and annual waste data for the total waste (all tracked streams combined), residual/mixed waste (non-recyclables), and food waste, clearly showing how the total waste figure was calculated. In specific circumstances, the establishment presents: • written confirmation from the waste contractor stating what data can be provided (annual only, or quarterly only) when monthly or quarterly data are not available; • documentation of the method used (quarterly/3-month allocation or tracking weeks), including records of tracking weeks where relevant, when estimation is used; and/or • at least 3 months of data, for newly opened or first-time applicant establishments having limited access to previous performance data. Where appropriate, a visual inspection confirms waste collection and measurement practices on-site.
5.7	*Organic waste is composted or used for other purposes. (G)* ⓘ	***Relevance*** *Organic waste makes up a significant portion of total waste in hospitality operations. When managed properly, it can be turned into a valuable resource, supporting soil health, reducing methane emissions from landfills and contributing to circular economy solutions such as compost, animal feed, or biogas. Separating and reusing organic waste reduces the environmental footprint of an establishment and enhances operational sustainability.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment has a system for the separation and reuse of organic waste. Organic waste includes food scraps and garden waste, as well as other biodegradable materials such as coffee grounds, vegetable and fruit peels, tea leaves and compostable packaging where applicable. To ensure that food waste and garden waste remain uncontaminated and suitable for their respective treatment pathways, the establishment maintains a clear separation between sources of organic waste before choosing any of the listed processing methods (e.g. composting, biogas, external collection).* *The establishment adopts at least 1 of the following approaches to manage organic waste:*

		a) *Organic waste is composted on-site: composting on-site is encouraged and includes all food and garden waste that is suitable for composting. In this case, the establishment designates a responsible person for the composting process. This person has received appropriate training[99] or guidance in composting procedures and safety, and the training should be documented. The establishment explains how the compost is used, such as in landscaping, gardening, or local farming. The use of compost as fertiliser for on-site greenery or vegetable gardens is highly recommended;* b) *Organic waste is collected by an external provider for composting, biogas production, or other forms of environmentally sound processing. This may include composting facilities, anaerobic digesters, or industrial processors that create energy or fertilisers from the organic matter. If this method is chosen, the establishment provides documentation confirming the name of the service provider; the type of organic waste accepted (e.g. food waste, yard waste, biodegradable containers) and the final use or processing method (e.g. composting, biogas, agricultural use); and/or* c) *Food scraps and other suitable organic waste are collected and distributed to local farms for use as animal feed. This practice is permitted only if national or local legislation allows the use of food waste for animal consumption. In such cases, the establishment complies with all applicable hygiene, storage and transportation regulations and provides documentation of its compliance. If this practice is restricted or prohibited by law, the establishment follows those legal requirements.* *For on-site composting, local and national laws/legislations as well as the following practices are followed:* • *balance nitrogen-rich ("green") and carbon-rich ("brown") materials to ensure effective decomposition;* • *aerate the compost regularly (as internally defined) to maintain oxygen levels;* • *monitor moisture content to avoid anaerobic conditions or drying out;* • *protect the compost from pests and heavy rainfall using appropriate covers or containment systems; and* • *the compost is located and managed in a way that avoids unpleasant odours and does not interfere with guest or staff areas.* ⓘ ***Note on national adaptation:*** *In FR, this criterion is imperative.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents the following, depending on the chosen option:* a) *For on-site composting: the composting setup (compost pile, bin, or system) during visual inspection; the name and training background of the person responsible; a clear explanation of how the compost is used;* b) *For external processing: a service contract or agreement with the external provider; documentation showing what type of waste is collected and how it is treated (e.g. for biogas or compost production); or* c) *For animal feed distribution: documentation confirming that this practice is permitted under national/local law and show records of the process and any collaboration with local farms.* *In all cases, during the visual inspection, the auditor verifies the existence of a source-specific organic waste separation system and*

[99] See glossary p. 4.

		assess whether the practice is in line with the selected approach.
Waste Reduction		
5.8	No single-use food-service items are used for in-house F&B services. (I) ⓘ	**Relevance** Single-use food-service items are resource-intensive, contribute significantly to waste generation in tourism and hospitality establishments and are rarely recycled effectively. Eliminating them reduces environmental impact and promotes a shift toward more sustainable and circular consumption patterns. Prioritising reuse over disposability also aligns with broader waste reduction and climate action strategies. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment does not use single-use food-service items (referring to all disposable items used for in-house Food & Beverage (F&B) services), such as cups/glasses, plates, cutlery, straws, coffee stirrers, etc. This includes, amongst others, any single-use food-service items used in restaurants, bars, conference areas, snack bars, room service, water fountains, guest rooms, bathrooms, tea/coffee stations, or any other areas where single-use items might be offered. Single-use items may only be provided for take-away[100] purposes (e.g. take-away coffee/tea/food, breakfast bags, for standing buffets with more than 100 guests, and in exceptional cases where safety concerns or local safety regulations require their use (e.g. pool areas, hygiene-critical settings). These single-use items intended for F&B products are not made of conventional plastic. Instead, the establishment uses certified biodegradable or compostable plastic alternatives (verified by an external or third-party certification body) or non-plastic materials such as paper (preferably without plastic coating), cardboard, wood, cornstarch or other plant-based materials. It is recommended that all alternative materials used are also certified biodegradable or compostable. Take-away single-use items are not presented as the default or only option; the establishment actively minimises their use, for example by avoiding the open display of disposable cups or lids. For take-away items or if single-use food-service items are unavoidable due to safety concerns, it is furthermore recommended that the establishment implements quantitative tracking and monitoring mechanisms, including: • annual reduction in units of single-use food service items; • phasing out of all single-use items, even compostable ones, as a long-term goal; and • monitoring of exceptions (e.g. documenting how many single-use items are still used in pool areas or similar).

[100] See glossary p. 4.

		ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In SE, FR no certified biodegradable or compostable plastic alternatives (even if verified by an external or third-party certification body) are used. Take-away items are solely made out of non-plastic materials such as paper (preferably without plastic coating), cardboard, wood, cornstarch or other plant-based, biodegradable materials. **Audit evidence** During the visual inspection, the auditor confirms that no single-use food service items are in used in all guest areas (e.g. guest rooms, restaurants, bars, conference areas etc.). The auditor conducts samplings[101] in at least 1 storage area following methodology A as described in the glossary to furthermore verify conformity. In specific circumstances, for take-away items, standing buffets with more than 100 guests, or where single-use items are unavoidable due to safety requirements, the auditor verifies that: • no plastic single-use items are used, and • any single-use items provided are made of certified biodegradable or compostable plastic alternatives, or non-plastic materials such as paper (preferably without plastic coating), cardboard, wood, cornstarch or other plant-based, biodegradable materials. Where necessary, the auditor may request product certificates or the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) to confirm the material's composability or biodegradability and the conditions required.
5.9	No more than 5 types of F&B products per catering offer are in individually packaged single servings. (I)	**Relevance** Individually packaged single-serving Food & Beverage (F&B) items contribute significantly to packaging waste and undermine efforts to promote sustainability. Limiting their use supports waste prevention, reduces the environmental footprint of catering services and encourages the shift toward reusable and more resource-efficient alternatives. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment limits the use of individually packaged single-serving F&B products in its main service areas. No more than 5 types of F&B products per catering offer are offered in individually packaged single servings.

[101] See glossary p. 4.

	ⓘ	This criterion applies to all areas such as restaurants, cafés, bars, staff canteens and room service (including guest room coffee stations[102]). This criterion does not apply to take-away[103] services, kiosks, or minibars[104], although the establishment is encouraged to minimise the use of single-use products in those areas as well. The F&B products include milk/cream, sugar, butter, honey, jam, yoghurt, cheeses, salt/pepper, tea, sauces such as ketchup, mayonnaise etc. The following products belonging to the same functional category may be counted as 1 type: coffee (all types); jam (all types); tea (all types); salt/pepper (all types); sugars (all types). The following products are exempted from this criterion and therefore do not have to be included in the calculation of the maximum 5 types of products: commercially bottled beverages sold in their original sealed containers, such as sodas, beers, or wine bottles, products offered due to allergies or food intolerances e.g. gluten- or lactose-free items, meal trays ordered from a caterer, and ready-to-eat-convenience snacks, such as ice creams, children's desserts, etc. In addition, single-use items for room service may be accepted, if there is no 24/7 kitchen service and/or when the kitchen is closed. All products offered to guests without further processing into a different product or dish are included in this criterion. Products cannot arrive at the establishment in single-use servings and then be transferred to reusable containers for guest use. It is strongly encouraged to replace all individually packaged single servings. Instead, the establishment can provide single portions in reusable containers, e.g. in small glasses. The use of single-use plastics (SUPs) is discouraged unless specifically required for health and safety reasons. In such cases, the establishment provides evidence of the regulatory requirement necessitating their use. For all types of products that are individually packaged, it is strongly recommended to ensure recycling of the packages. It is also recommended that the establishment: • aims to phase out all single-use F&B products over time; and • implements quantitative tracking to monitor the annual reduction in units of single-use products and progress toward phasing out single-use items. ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In NL, in addition to the requirements listed above, the following five types of F&B products are not permitted to be offered in individually packaged single-use servings: muesli, cornflakes, cheese, meat products (e.g. ham), coffee-milk, milk and yoghurt. **Audit evidence** During the visual inspection, the auditor confirms that there are no more than 5 types of individually packaged single-serving

[102] See glossary p. 4.
[103] See glossary p. 4.
[104] See glossary p. 4.

		F&B products per catering offer in the establishment.
5.10	Soap, shampoo, conditioner and shower gel are provided in dispensers. (I)	**Relevance** Individually packaged soap, shampoo, conditioner and shower gel generate significant plastic and product waste, increasing the environmental footprint of guest amenities. Refillable dispensers drastically reduce single-use packaging and promote responsible resource use while maintaining hygiene standards. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment provides soap, shampoo, conditioner and shower gel in refillable dispensers instead of individually packaged travel-sized containers. This applies to bathrooms in guest rooms, toilets in public areas and toilets/showers in staff areas. No additional individually packaged travel-sized toiletries of the same product type are allowed to be offered in the guest rooms. A refillable dispenser is a permanent fixture or non-permanent container designed to be refilled multiple times, either by the establishment or by the product manufacturer. Where possible, it is recommended to cooperate with product suppliers to collect, clean, reuse and refill these dispensers. Single-use or semi-reusable bulk containers in larger sizes (for example in cases where refillable dispensers are not allowed by law) that are discarded after the product is used up (including containers that combine dispenser and packaging in 1 unit that is disposed of) are only considered acceptable dispensers, if the following applies: • the establishment recycles the materials; • the written Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)[105] of the housekeeping specify that bottles can only be thrown out once completely empty; and • if product suppliers offer a service to collect, reuse and refill their dispensers, the establishment provides documentation proving that the dispensers are being reused/refilled by the producer (e.g. invoices, agreements, tracking documentation). Solid soap bars are only permitted if they are packaged in cardboard or paper and the establishment has an active cooperation or plan in place to recycle the leftover soap (applicable only in countries where soap reuse is permitted). **Audit evidence** During the visual inspection, the auditor confirms the presence of dispenser and checks the following:

[105] See glossary p. 4.

		• either refillable dispensers or semi-reusable bulk containers in larger sizes are used. If the latter are used, the establishment provides evidence that the bulk containers are recycled, and the written SOP[106] of the housekeeping include information that bottles can only be thrown out once completely empty; • proof of compliance with national regulations where appropriate; and • no additional single-use toiletries of the same type are provided: the auditor conducts samplings[107] in at least 1 storage area, and in guest rooms following methodology A as described in the glossary.
5.11	*For take away F&Bs, the establishment offers the possibility for the guests to bring their own containers or to use returnable containers. (G)* ⓘ	***Relevance*** *Take-away[108] Food & Beverage (F&B) services are major sources of single-use packaging waste, much of which ends up unrecycled or improperly disposed once it leaves the premises. Offering reusable or returnable containers significantly reduces waste, encourages circular practices and engages guests in more sustainable behaviours.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *Unless prohibited by law, the establishment offers 1 of the following options of reusable or returnable containers for take away F&Bs inside and outside the premises:* *a) allowing guests to bring and use their own reusable takeaway containers; or* *b) providing a system of reusable containers operating on a returnable deposit basis (e.g. glass jars, stainless steel boxes, or other durable materials).* *The establishment has visible communication of this option through appropriate channels such as posters, menus, digital platforms in place. While this criterion is particularly relevant for all-inclusive hotels, campsites and holiday parks with kiosks or food courts, where take-away meals are common and the volume of packaging waste can be high, it generally applies to all establishments offering take away F&Bs inside or outside the premises.* *To encourage guest participation, it is recommended that the establishment sets up deposit systems, partnerships with reusable container networks, or offers token discounts for guests who bring their own containers.* ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In FR and NL, this criterion is imperative. ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents the system in place for reusable or returnable containers. The auditor reviews*

[106] See glossary p. 4.
[107] See glossary p. 4.
[108] See glossary p. 4.

		communication materials (e.g. signs, menu mentions, website notes) and may verify the availability of returnable containers on-site.

6. PROCUREMENT

Administration/Other Procurement, Food & Beverage, Washing & Cleaning

Administration/Other Procurement

N.	Criterion	Explanatory Notes
6.1	The establishment implements and follows a Sustainable Procurement Policy that guides the selection of goods, services and suppliers based on environmental, social and cultural	**Relevance** Sustainable procurement plays a crucial role in minimising the environmental and social harms associated with tourism operations and influencing the broader supply chain toward responsible practices. By aligning purchasing decisions with sustainability principles, establishments can help reduce resource use, pollution and packaging waste; support fair labour conditions; promote animal welfare; and protect cultural heritage. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment develops and implements a Sustainable Procurement Policy that provides clear guidance on how environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability considerations are integrated into all purchasing decisions. The policy applies to the procurement of: • capital goods; • Food & Beverage (F&B) products; • durables including furniture, carpets, tableware, etc (e.g. purchasing second hand furniture[109] and fixtures[110]); • building materials and construction-related services;

[109] See glossary p. 4.
[110] See glossary p. 4.

	sustainability. (I)	• all third-party service providers and suppliers involved in the operation, refurbishment, or construction of the establishment; • other products relevant for the services of the establishments such as cleaning products; and • services such as laundry. The Sustainable Procurement Policy includes: • specific commitments to minimise waste generation, e.g. selecting products and suppliers that reduce unnecessary packaging, and single-use plastics; • reference to animal welfare standards, where appropriate (e.g. food purchasing, material sourcing); • clear expectations regarding compliance with national and international labour laws, especially during construction or refurbishment; • clear expectations towards suppliers, for example in connection to human rights practices; and • guidance that requires proper rest and work areas for workers and encourages the employment of local labour where possible. In addition, the expectations towards suppliers formulated in the Sustainable Procurement Policy are distributed to all suppliers at least once every 2 years (e.g. through a supplier communication form, contract clauses, or written requirements). The policy is formally documented, shared with all relevant staff and management, reviewed at least once every 4 years and revised as needed to reflect evolving sustainability goals or changes in procurement context. If the establishment is part of a chain, a group-wide procurement policy may be used, provided that it is adapted to the local context and applicable to the individual establishment. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents: • a dated Sustainable Procurement Policy that has been formally approved by management. An addendum or supplement to the policy is accepted as equivalent evidence; and • documentation demonstrating that all suppliers received expectations towards them, for example regarding human rights practices (e.g. signed supplier forms, emails, or contract clauses) at least once every 2 years.
6.2	The establishment informs all third-party operated shops and businesses located on its	**Relevance** To ensure a consistent sustainability approach across the entire establishment, all third-party operated shops and businesses located on the premises are involved in the Green Key efforts. These businesses significantly influence the guest experience and environmental footprint of the establishment. **Expectations for implementation** All third-party operated shops and businesses are regularly informed about the environmental and social sustainability

	premises about its sustainability initiatives and Green Key and encourages them to manage their activities in the same spirit. (I)	initiatives of the establishment, including information about Green Key. Third-party operated shops and businesses include, for instance, hairdressers, cafés, pubs, restaurants, gyms, spa facilities, travel and tourism agencies, souvenir shops, clothes shops, kiosks, bike rental companies, etc. The establishment ensures that information about sustainability initiatives and Green Key is communicated to these third-party operated businesses at least once every 2 years. Information may be provided through written communication, during joint meetings, etc. All third-party shops and businesses are encouraged to follow the same sustainability principles as Green Key, with clear examples provided: waste reduction (e.g. minimising single-use plastics); energy efficiency (e.g. use of LED lighting, energy-saving equipment); water conservation (e.g. water-saving fixtures[111]); sustainable procurement (e.g. avoiding harmful materials, offering eco-labelled products) etc. Where possible, employees in third-party operated shops and businesses receive training[112] in the same way as the staff in the establishment. For services or facilities that are managed and owned by the same entity as the applicant establishment; or operated under a contract, whereby management of the applicant establishment retains control of the service; the lease or agreement includes a clause requiring the business to follow the applicable Green Key criteria. The clause specifies that the business is expected to work towards Green Key-aligned sustainability goals and can be added to an existing agreement, if one is already in place. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents: • information about third-party operated shops and businesses within its premises; and • documentation (e.g. meeting minutes or communication via email, agreements, etc.) showing that the third-party operated shops and businesses are regularly (minimum every 2 years) informed about the environmental and sustainability initiatives of the establishment and encouraged to manage their activities in the same spirit following the Green Key criteria. In specific circumstances, for services or facilities that are managed and owned by the same entity as the applicant establishment or operated under a contract (whereby management of the applicant establishment retains control of the service), the establishment presents the lease agreements containing a commitment to follow Green Key standards. An addendum/supplement to the agreement is accepted as equivalent evidence.

[111] See glossary p. 4.
[112] See glossary p. 4.

6.3	At least 75% of newly purchased printing paper, envelopes and printed paper-based materials produced or ordered by the establishment are eco-labelled. (I) ⓘ	**Relevance** Eco-labelled and recycled paper reduces deforestation, water use, chemical pollution and greenhouse gas emissions associated with paper production, while promoting responsible forestry and sustainable consumption. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment prioritises the purchase and use of internationally and nationally recognised eco-labelled printing paper, envelopes and printed paper-based materials. At least 75% of printing paper, envelopes and printed paper-based materials (e.g. menus, key-card holders, leaflets and branded or personalised amenities packaging) purchased or ordered within the last 24 months (for re-applicants) or 6 months (for first-time applicants) have an eco-label. The criterion includes office paper (e.g. copy paper, letterheads, printed guest invoices, administrative documents and forms used at reception or in back-of-house areas). Conformity with the criterion is demonstrated based on the quantities (i.e. number of units, such as items, boxes, packages, etc.) of printing paper, envelopes and printed paper-based materials produced or ordered in the past 24 or 6 months (depending on certification year), using purchase records as the basis for calculation. ⓘ **Note on national adaptation**: In DK, and NL, at least 90% of newly purchased printing paper, envelopes and printed paper-based materials produced or ordered by the establishment are eco-labelled. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents documentation (list or invoices), which shows: • the total number of units of printing paper, envelopes and printed paper-based materials produced or ordered in the past 24 or 6 months (depending on certification year); and • the material that holds an internationally or nationally recognised eco-label (and which one), to demonstrate conformity with the 75% threshold. During the visual inspection, the auditor selects a random sample of 3 listed printing paper, envelopes, or printed paper-based items and confirms that the corresponding eco-labels are present on the materials selected (methodology C).
6.4	The establishment takes at least 2 initiatives to reduce the use	**Relevance** Reducing paper use lowers energy demand, raw material extraction and waste generation linked to paper production and disposal. By minimising unnecessary paper consumption, establishments cut costs, reduce their environmental footprint and promote more sustainable operational practices.

	of paper at the front desk, in offices and/or in guest/meeting rooms. (I) ⓘ	**Expectations for implementation** The establishment develops an action plan that identifies reduction opportunities and outlines the initiatives to be implemented. In the action plan, the establishment takes at least 2 initiatives to reduce the use of paper at the front desk, in offices, guest rooms and/or meeting rooms: a) examples of measures in guest and meeting rooms: o limiting paper availability (e.g. smaller format like A5, fewer sheets, or available only upon request); o making paper only available at a central table in meeting rooms; and/or o providing pens and paper only when requested. b) examples of measures at the front desk: o issuing invoices and receipts only upon request; and/or o avoiding the use of envelopes for printed materials. c) examples of measures in offices and back-of-house areas: o encouraging double-sided printing; o setting printers to default eco-settings; o reusing paper for notes; and/or o limiting unnecessary printing through digital document sharing. As a first step, it is recommended that the establishment carries out an inventory of where and how paper is used (e.g. at reception, in guest rooms, for back-office administration, or in meeting facilities) to identify the most impactful opportunities for reduction. This inventory may be based on the same list or format used for criterion 6.3. The establishment is also encouraged to set a voluntary reduction target. For example, a reduction of 10–15% in purchased volumes over a 24-month period compared to the previous certification period (for re-applicants). Staff in all relevant departments are made aware of and involved in implementing the paper reduction plan and measures. ⓘ **Note on national adaptation**: In NL, the establishment takes at least 6 initiatives to reduce the use of paper at the front desk, in offices and/or in guest/meeting rooms. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents an action plan describing the selected paper-reduction initiatives. In specific circumstances, for re-applicants, a visual inspection confirms that at least 2 measures are taken to reduce the use of paper at the front desk, in offices and/or in guest/meeting rooms.
6.5	*At least 1*	***Relevance***

	product categories of newly purchased or rented textiles are socially or environmentally certified. (G)	*Textiles are among the most resource-intensive product groups in hospitality, with high impacts from fibre cultivation, chemical use, water and energy consumption and labour practices in supply chains. By sourcing textiles with recognised environmental or social certifications, establishments reduce their footprint, promote fair labour and ensure more responsible production and use.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment ensures that at least 1 product category of textiles (e.g. towels, bed sheets, pillowcases, duvet covers, tablecloths, textile napkins, housekeeping uniforms, kitchen/Food & Beverage (F&B) uniforms, front-of-house uniforms, curtains, other textile products) purchased or rented in the last 24 months (for re-applicants) or 6 months (for first-time applicants) carries an internationally or nationally recognised product certification that addresses either environmental or social sustainability aspects.* *Certifications apply to the textile products themselves (not only to the factory or production site) and cover 1 or more of the following aspects:* *a) raw material (e.g. organic, recycled, fair trade);* *b) production process (e.g. reduced energy or chemical use); and/or* *c) working conditions (e.g. ethical labour standards).* *As part of responsible textile management, the establishment considers the full life cycle of textiles: sourcing (e.g. high quality and long-lasting), use phase (e.g. wash durability, shedding) and end-of-life options (e.g. easily recyclable where end-of-life options exist locally). The establishment also avoids textiles treated with harmful chemical finishes (e.g. flame retardants), unless these are legally required. Where such treatment is required, inherently fire-retardant fibres or certified low-impact treatments are favoured.* *Second-hand, refurbished, or repurposed textiles are also accepted for this requirement, provided they are safe, fit-for-purpose, and do not increase long-term environmental impacts.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents purchase or rental records from the past 24 or 6 months (depending on certification year) demonstrating that at least 1 product category of textiles carries an accepted certification.* *During the visual inspection, the auditor selects a random sample of 3 textile items from the concerned textile category and confirms that the corresponding certifications are present on the items selected (methodology C).*
6.6	*At least 50% of the establishment's suppliers are eco-certified. (G)*	***Relevance*** *As the establishment works closely with suppliers of goods and services, it has the opportunity and responsibility to promote higher environmental and social standards throughout its supply chain. This criterion encourages establishments to engage primarily with suppliers that are formally certified in sustainability-related areas.*

	ⓘ	***Expectations for implementation*** *At least 50% of the establishment's suppliers hold a recognised third-party eco-certification at the supplier or company level (not just for individual products). This applies to all suppliers that the establishment cooperates with during the certification period.* *Supplier certifications are related to verifiable sustainability standards. Accepted certification categories include, but are not limited to: environmental management systems, fair labour practices and human rights; animal welfare standards: sustainable business certifications, etc. Product-specific certifications (e.g. a certified organic product) do not fulfil this criterion unless the supplier entity itself is certified.* ⓘ **Note on national adaptation**: In NO, at least 75% of the establishment's suppliers are eco-certified. ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents documentation (e.g. list), which shows:* • *all suppliers used during the certification period; and* • *those suppliers holding valid eco-certifications, to demonstrate that certified suppliers represent at least 50% of the total supplier count. This is accompanied by proof e.g. copy of certificates confirming the listed suppliers currently hold a recognised eco-certification.* *During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts samplings[113] of the documentation by reviewing a sample of 3 valid copies of certifications from the listed suppliers (methodology C).*
6.7	*If the laundry service is outsourced, the provider is either located within 100 km from the establishment or eco-certified. (G)*	***Relevance*** *To support the local economy, and to reduce the carbon footprint associated with the transportation of laundry and the environmental impact of laundry services through chemical use, water and energy consumption and wastewater[114] discharge, the establishment outsources laundry services only to companies that are either located within 100 km of the establishment, or hold a valid third-party environmental certification* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment outsources laundry services only to an external provider that is either located within 100 km of the establishment or is eco-certified.* *Where the provider is selected based on verified environmental performance rather than distance, the provider holds a valid third-party environmental certification, which demonstrates conformity with recognised environmental management standards across its*

[113] See glossary p. 4.
[114] See glossary p. 4.

	ⓘ	*operations. The certification is current and issued by an independent, accredited body.* *In the rare case that, due to the location of the establishment, no provider can be found within the 100 km radius, the next closest provider is used. In such cases, evidence showing it is the nearest feasible provider and justification for this choice (e.g. mountainous terrain, island locations, national road limitations, service unavailability) are provided. For establishments located in countries with a land area exceeding 1 million km², the general maximum acceptable distance is 500 km.* *Even though the laundry services are outsourced, the establishment remains responsible for ensuring that the environmental impacts of those services are minimised, including through continued monitoring and reassessment of the provider's practices over time. If an establishment is taking care of all the laundry service in-house, this criterion is Not Applicable (N/A).* ⓘ **Note on national adaptation**: In BE and PT, if the laundry service is outsourced, it is located within 50km from the establishment. ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents documentation showing the name, address, as well as contract or invoices with the external laundry service provider. In addition, 1 of the following types of evidence is presented:* *a) proof that the provider is located within 100 km;* *b) justification explaining why a provider beyond 100 km was selected, including evidence that no closer option exists and the selected provider is the next closest alternative (e.g. a map, correspondence with local providers, or transport constraints); or* *c) a copy of the environmental certificate of the laundry provider.*
6.8	*At least 75% of the vehicles and transport means owned or rented by the establishment are electric or cargo-bikes. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Motorised transport contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution and energy use. By transitioning to electric vehicles or cargo bikes, establishments lower their carbon footprint, reduce noise and air pollution and demonstrate leadership in sustainable mobility.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *At least 75% of vehicles and transport means owned, rented or leased by the establishment are electric vehicles or cargo-bikes (including electric and non-motorised cargo-bikes).* *The criterion applies to all vehicles that are owned, rented, leased, or otherwise under the operational control of the establishment, such as cars, scooters, golf carts and other vehicles used for internal circulation, guest or staff transport and Food & Beverage (F&B) deliveries. This does not apply to contracted taxi services, third-party shuttle operators, or public transport providers, unless the*

		service is exclusively arranged by the establishment under a recurring contract. However, in those cases, the establishment is encouraged to prioritise providers who operate low- or zero-emission fleets whenever feasible. ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents a written overview of all vehicles and transport means that are used (owned, rented or leased) with an indication vehicle type, energy source and use case.* *During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts samplings[115] of a sample of 3 of the listed vehicles and/or transport means. The sample includes, where applicable, different vehicle types, energy sources, and use cases (methodology C).*
6.9	*The establishment actively promotes and supports sustainable and health-conscious commuting options for staff. (G)* ⓘ	***Relevance*** *Staff commuting patterns can significantly contribute to local air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. By encouraging low-emission and active modes of transport, establishments reduce their environmental footprint while supporting staff health, safety and overall well-being.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment actively encourages all staff to commute using low-emission, health-conscious modes of transportation. The establishment takes an active role in engaging staff by promoting these options through awareness campaigns, facility upgrades and/or incentive programmes. Examples of support measures include but are not limited to:* *a) written communication (including digital channels such as email or staff platforms) sent at least once every 6 months;* *b) customisable and visually engaging posters, infographics, or digital materials (preferably using standard templates available through the Green Key Toolbox[116]);* *c) physical materials placed in prominent staff areas (e.g. entrances, break rooms, locker areas);* *d) provision of infrastructure (e.g. safe and covered bike parking, charging stations for EVs); and/or* *e) financial or logistical incentives (e.g. subsidised public transport tickets, free parking/charging for EVs, shuttle services, or organised car-pooling support).* *All communications highlight the dual benefits of sustainable commuting: reduced environmental impact and improved personal and community health.* *Sustainable staff transportation options include active transport (e.g. walking, bicycles), public transport (bus, train, tram, metro, boat), electric and hybrid vehicles, car-pooling and ride-sharing programmes, shuttle bus systems organised by the establishment.*

[115] See glossary p. 4.
[116] See glossary p. 4.

		ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In BE, this criterion is imperative. ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents evidence of internal communications encouraging sustainable commuting (e.g. emails, posters, intranet messages), with proof of circulation at least once every 6 months.* *In specific circumstances, if option d) and/or e) is chosen, the establishment presents documentation of any implemented incentive programmes, support measures, or infrastructure provided (e.g. staff memos, purchase or installation records, incentive policies).* *The photographic or physical evidence of visual materials used demonstrates they are informative, appealing and clearly accessible to all staff.*
6.10	*The establishment takes initiatives to reduce the environmental impact of IT systems. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Digital systems (including IT equipment, online services, and data infrastructure) have significant environmental impacts throughout their life cycle. These include energy consumption, raw material extraction, and data-related emissions (often called digital pollution). By managing IT responsibly, establishments can reduce both their physical and digital environmental footprint.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment takes action to manage its digital practices and IT equipment responsibly, with the aim of lowering energy use, extending equipment lifespans and reducing unnecessary data transmission and storage.* *The establishment implements a minimum number of measures depending on the number of employees in the establishment:* • *Establishments with less than 50 employees implement at least 1 measure; and* • *Establishments with ≥50 employees implement at least 3 measures.* *Examples of measures:* *a) optimise digital communication by reducing the frequency or size of mass emails and newsletters, unsubscribing from unused platforms or digital services and deactivating unnecessary auto-play or automatic cloud sync functions;* *b) choose lower-impact digital infrastructure by selecting data services or web hosting providers that demonstrate lower carbon emissions or use renewable energy-powered data centres. Preference should be given to providers with published environmental performance goals or sustainability reporting;* *c) procure low-impact IT equipment, such as:* o *energy-efficient models (e.g. Energy Star, EPEAT);* o *refurbished or second-hand equipment in good working condition; and/or* o *equipment with longer lifespans and repairability guarantees.* *d) encourage responsible digital use among staff through policies or internal awareness on topics such as:*

		○ *turning off idle monitors and devices;* ○ *avoiding unnecessary streaming or lowering video resolution;* ○ *archiving or deleting unused digital files and emails;* ○ *using energy-saving settings (e.g. dark mode, eco mode); and/or* ○ *using AI tools responsibly.* *e) limit guest-side digital emissions, for example by:* ○ *not offering high-emission entertainment services (e.g. streaming platforms) in guest rooms; and/or* ○ *providing eco-mode or low-energy display settings on public devices.* *f) organise awareness or training[117] activities for staff on Responsible Digital practices and the environmental impacts of IT systems, optionally involving guests (e.g. signage, e-learning, digital guides). These sessions may cover topics such as eco-design of digital services, ethical data use, inclusion, and accessibility (encouraging a culture of digital responsibility within the establishment); and/or* *g) reduce the environmental footprint of the establishment's digital presence by:* ○ *assessing or certifying the website's environmental performance only when the establishment has the tools or internal capacity to improve it; and/or* ○ *optimising the website for energy efficiency (e.g. lightweight design, reduced media size, renewable-powered hosting).* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents:* • *a short description or internal policy outlining the selected digital sustainability measures (at least 1 for establishments with less than 50 employees; at least 3 for establishments ≥50 employees); and* • *procurement records, equipment inventory, training materials (where appropriate) or other relevant documentation to confirm implementation.* *During the visual inspection, the auditor may confirm actions such as screen settings, signage, or equipment in use with a visual inspection or staff interview.*
6.11	*Furniture, fixtures and supplies are refurbished, upcycled, or donated to*	***Relevance*** *Extending the lifespan of furniture[118], fixtures[119] and other durable goods reduces demand for new production, lowers waste generation and minimises carbon emissions. When items can no longer be used on-site, responsible donation to charitable or repurposing organisations further prolongs their lifecycle, supporting both environmental and social value.*

[117] See glossary p. 4.
[118] See glossary p. 4.
[119] See glossary p. 4.

	extend their lifecycle. (G)	***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment prioritises prolonging the life of durable goods (furniture, fixtures, materials and supplies) through:* *a) refurbishment or upcycling, carried out internally or by a third-party provider, where the intervention extends the lifespan of the item and avoids the purchase of a new equivalent; and/or* *b) donation of items that cannot be reused internally to charitable or repurposing organisations that enable further use (e.g. resale, redistribution, remanufacturing).* *Special attention is given to items that require specific handling or preparation before donation (e.g. data wiping for tech donations). It is strongly recommended that donated items meet basic donation conditions, ensuring items are clean, safe and in good working condition to prevent shifting disposal burdens to recipient organisations.* *Food donations are covered under criterion 6.15.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents:* *a) documentation of refurbishment or upcycling activities carried out within the past 24 months (for re-applicants) or 6 months (for first-time applicants); and/or* *b) agreements, donation receipts, or written correspondence with receiving organisations from the past 6 months.*
Food & Beverage		
6.12	The establishment purchases and promotes different categories of F&B products that are either organic, and/or eco-labelled and/or fair-trade labelled and/or locally produced.	**Relevance** This criterion promotes sustainable food systems through reduced CO_2 emissions, improved animal welfare and support for local economies and small producers. Prioritising certified or local Food & Beverage (F&B) products helps reduce negative environmental impacts from industrial agriculture and intensive food production, which are major contributors to land and soil degradation, chemical and pesticide pollution and biodiversity loss. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment purchases and promotes F&B products that are either organic, and/or eco-labelled and/or fair-trade labelled and/or locally produced. Hotels & Hostels (HH), Campsites and Holiday Parks (CHP), Small Accommodation (SA), Conference Centres (CC) and Attractions (A) purchase at least 5 qualifying F&B products. Restaurants/cafés (R) purchase at least 10 qualifying products. These products are used in significant quantities and/or daily and cover at least 5 or 10 different product categories (depending on the establishment's category). Qualifying product categories include:

	(I) ⓘ	a) hot drinks (e.g. coffee, tea, hot chocolate); b) cold non-alcoholic drinks (e.g. juices, kombucha); c) alcoholic beverages (e.g. wine, beer, liqueurs); d) dairy products (e.g. milk, yogurt, cheese, plant-based alternatives); e) baked goods (e.g. bread, pastries); f) fruits/vegetables (including dried/preserved); g) grains and starches (e.g. pasta, rice, flours, potatoes); h) deli meats, fish, poultry and eggs; and/or i) condiments, spreads and sweeteners (e.g. honey, jam, sugar, sauces). Organic, eco-labelled or fair-trade products are certified by national or international authorities. Products are, whenever possible, produced locally to reduce the environmental footprint through reduced transportation and to stimulate the local economy. Locally produced products are produced within 100 km of the establishment. This includes products grown on the premises as well as products wild-caught or wild-harvested within the same radius. In addition, local producers must qualify as Small or Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), in accordance with the national standard definition. In the rare case that, due to the location of the establishment, no producers can be found within the 100 km radius, the next closest producer is used. In such cases, the establishment provides written, signed justification, why this specific producer has been used (this could be e.g. because of particular sustainability mission of the producer). For establishments located in countries with a land area exceeding 1 million km², the general maximum acceptable distance is 500 km. Preference should also be given to local producers with demonstratable sustainable practices, animal welfare standards, or certifications. Where applicable, the selection of certified products should consider animal treatment, breeding, living conditions and slaughter practices. However, sustainable practices or animal welfare alone are not sufficient for this criterion. Establishments are furthermore encouraged to plan product selection based on seasonal availability and local harvest cycles. It is strongly recommended to clearly indicate which products are either organic, and/or eco-labelled and/or fair-trade labelled and/or locally produced (unless this is prohibited by law). This could be done on the menu or by signs on the buffet. The indication is done by using icons or other easily understood means of communication. It is furthermore recommended that fish/meat products always state the origin of the product, and that allergens are indicated on the menu and buffet. It is also strongly recommended that the establishment progressively expands the number and scope of such products over time, aiming to cover a broader portion of the overall F&B offering. Although this criterion mainly relates to F&B products offered to guests, it is recommended to implement it in the staff canteen as well. Ready-made meals prepared in a warming kitchen are exempt from this criterion. If conformity with this criterion is not possible due to national legislation or restrictions applicable at national level, 6.12 is marked as Not Applicable (N/A) and criterion 6.17 applies as an imperative criterion.

		ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In FR, SE and NO, the criterion to purchase and promote different categories of organic, eco-labelled, fair-trade and/or locally produced F&B products applies to each catering offer within the establishment, meaning each breakfast buffet or menu, each lunch and dinner buffet or menu, and the room service menu (except where room service is externalised or pre-made). Coffee stations in guest rooms and snacking offers are not included. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents a list of a minimum of 5 or 10 (depending on the establishment's category) F&B products that are certified or locally produced, covering at least 5 or 10 product categories. The list clearly states any certifications, eco-labels or other evidence confirming that the listed products are organic, eco-labelled, fair-trade labelled and/or locally produced. In specific circumstances, where applicable, the establishment presents justification for sourcing from specific local producers when beyond the 100 km limit. During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts samplings[120] in the storage area or restaurant of the establishment to ensure conformity of the listed F&B products, following methodology A as described in the glossary. If the auditor observes inconsistencies or suspects irregularities, invoices, purchase orders or contracts with the address of the suppliers may be requested to confirm that the listed products are organic, eco-labelled, fair-trade labelled and/or locally produced (e.g. to verify the certification evidence issued by national or international bodies, or the proximity of the suppliers).
6.13	The establishment does not purchase fish, seafood and meat from threatened or protected species. (I)	**Relevance** The consumption of fish, seafood and meat from threatened or protected species contributes directly to biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystems. By avoiding these products, establishments protect vulnerable species, support sustainable sourcing practices and align with international conservation efforts. **Expectations for implementation** As part of the purchasing policy, the establishment does not buy fish, seafood and meat products derived from threatened species or from species whose trade is prohibited or restricted under international or national protection rules. To check the status of species, it is recommended to use the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species or the CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) Appendices. The establishment does not purchase species that are labelled as

[120] See glossary p. 4.

		Vulnerable, Endangered, or Critically Endangered and species whose commercial trade is prohibited or restricted. To check the status of fish and seafood, it is recommended to use a (local) fish and seafood guide (e.g. Good Fish Guide, Mr. Good Fish, Seafood Watch, or equivalent recognised guide), and in general species with a 'red/avoid' rating are avoided. Where appropriate, global guides such as the WWF Seafood Guides may also be used. Furthermore, recognised eco-labels for certified aquaculture may help identify products that are not derived from and do not contain threatened species. Products derived from practices that are inherently harmful to biodiversity due to their direct destruction of habitats, high bycatch rates, contribution to species decline, or large-scale ecosystem conversion (e.g. bottom trawling, cyanide fishing) are strictly excluded. Relevant staff involved in purchasing, menu planning and food preparation (e.g. procurement staff, chefs/kitchen management, Food & Beverage (F&B) managers) are aware of the establishment's commitment not to purchase threatened or protected species. They have access to, and know how to use, an up-to-date reference list/guide to verify species status before ordering or accepting deliveries. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents: • the latest updated menu; and • a related list identifying the species of fish seafood and meat used for menu items with, where available, supplier invoices/purchase records (specifying species name and any certifications, if applicable) from the past 24 months (for re-applicants) or 6 months (for new applicants). A visual inspection of the fridge, freezer and storage areas confirms conformity.
6.14	At least 1 vegetarian starter; 1 vegetarian main course and either 1 vegan starter or main course are offered, and	**Relevance** Offering vegetarian[121] and vegan[122] alternatives is essential for reducing the environmental footprint of food services. Industrial animal agriculture is a major driver of climate change, deforestation, biodiversity loss, water pollution and land degradation. By contrast, plant-based meals typically require fewer natural resources, produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions and may support regenerative and sustainable food systems. This criterion also responds to the increasing demand for healthy, ethical and environmentally responsible dietary choices among guests and staff. **Expectations for implementation**

[121] See glossary p. 4.
[122] See glossary p. 4.

	these options are clearly indicated on the menu/buffet. (I)	At least 1 vegetarian starter; 1 vegetarian main course and either 1 vegan starter or main course are offered across all types of food services (e.g. breakfast, lunch, dinner) and in all internally managed restaurants, kiosks, snack bars, and the options are clearly marked on the menu or on the buffet. This indication is done by using icons or other easily understood means of communication. Vegetarian and vegan dishes are also made available on request in the staff canteen. For restaurants operating on weekly menus, daily vegetarian/vegan options are offered, and vegetarian/vegan meals vary weekly to ensure diversity and nutritional balance. For restaurants with a fixed menu, such as those offering multi-course menus, vegetarian options are offered and presented. Alternative menu systems are encouraged, such as default vegetarian menus with optional meat/fish add-ons, or dishes that can be ordered in either vegetarian or non-vegetarian versions. Restaurants are encouraged to include a short statement on the menu about the environmental and health benefits of plant-based eating. It is furthermore recommended that plant-based dishes follow balanced meal guidelines: approximately 1/3 legumes or other protein sources (e.g. tofu, tempeh, beans, lentils, algae), 1/3 whole grains or cereals and 1/3 vegetables or fruits. The use of whole-food and minimally processed ingredients is strongly encouraged to reduce resource-intensive processing. **Audit evidence** During the visual inspection, the auditor confirms the following: • the required number and type of vegetarian and vegan dishes are available, and these are clearly indicated on the menus/buffets across all types of food services and in all internally managed restaurants (e.g. with icons, signs etc.); and • menus rotate vegetarian/vegan offerings to avoid repetition.
6.15	The establishment takes initiatives to reduce the level of food waste. (I) ⓘ	**Relevance** To reduce the environmental footprint of food services and cut unnecessary costs, the establishment takes proactive measures to reduce the quantity of food waste generated. The priority is on preventing food waste ("upstream"), followed by responsible management of leftover food through reuse or redistribution ("downstream"), and only as a final step, through recycling or composting. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment implements at least 2 actions focusing on food waste reduction. Hotels & Hostels (HH), Campsites and Holiday Parks (CHP), Conference Centres (CC), Restaurants/cafés (R) and Attractions (A) furthermore prepare and implement a food waste reduction plan. This plan identifies the main sources of food waste generated in the establishment and presents concrete actions for reducing food waste in different stages of the food preparation and serving process. The plan contains both upstream prevention measures and downstream reuse or redistribution strategies. For Small Accommodation (SA), it is recommended (but not required) to develop such a plan.

		The plan considers a range of issues such as: a) Can the quantities and types of food be adjusted? b) Can the plates be of a smaller size or can half portions be offered at a lower price? c) Can the food be stored and served in a better way to last longer? d) Can serving be changed from buffets (that are continuously filled up) to portions? e) How can food that is left be reused or donated? It is recommended that the plan includes a monitoring system that tracks the quantity, type and cost of food waste generated, which should serve as a tool to evaluate the success of certain actions. The establishment may focus on at least 2 of the following examples of upstream or downstream actions: a) portion control strategies, such as using smaller plates or offering half portions at a lower price; b) demand forecasting, taking into account occupancy rates, advance guest check-ins, or group bookings; c) improved menu planning to optimise the use of perishable ingredients and avoid overproduction; d) stock rotation systems, such as FIFO (First In, First Out), to reduce spoilage; and/or e) staff training[123] on food storage, preparation and stock management, including modules on how to plan menus with minimal waste and creatively repurpose ingredients. It is also recommended that kitchen teams receive training in zero food waste practices, including preparation of dishes from trimmings and leftovers, correct packaging and smart inventory techniques. Examples of accepted downstream actions include: a) using leftover ingredients or cooked food in other dishes (e.g. soups, stews, or pastries); b) donating surplus food to external organisations, such as food banks or charities (in line with local food safety laws); c) promoting “anti-waste” dishes made from surplus ingredients; d) offering discounts at the end of service to encourage customers to purchase unsold dishes (e.g. sandwiches made from breakfast leftovers); e) making leftovers available to staff, where appropriate; and/or f) offering guests the option to take away uneaten food with while adhering to the requirements of criterion 5.8, if permitted by food hygiene regulations. It is strongly encouraged that guests are informed about and involved in the ambition of reducing food waste. The establishment provides clear, proactive communication materials[124], for example through signs at buffets, encouraging guests

[123] See glossary p. 4.
[124] See glossary p. 4.

		to take only what they can eat; information in menus highlighting portion choices or anti-waste options; sustainability messages in guest rooms or breakfast areas, outlining the establishment's efforts and inviting guests to be part of the solution. ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In SE, FI, and NL, the establishment implements a minimum of 5 actions focusing on food waste reduction. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents evidence for the implemented actions to reduce food waste, which can include kitchen training logs, photographic proof of buffet signage, or donation records; and In specific circumstances, for Hotels (HH), Campsites and Holiday Parks (CHP), Conference Centres (CC), Restaurants/cafés (R) and Attractions (A), the establishment presents the food waste reduction plan. Where possible, a visual inspection also confirms the implemented actions.
6.16	Where the water quality is of an adequate standard, tap water is offered to guests. (I)	**Relevance** To reduce the environmental footprint associated with bottled water (including emissions from transport, the production and disposal of packaging materials such as plastic, aluminium and glass), the establishment offers tap water to guests wherever the local water quality permits it. **Expectations for implementation** Tap water is, at a minimum, offered in restaurants, meeting rooms and staff areas, but it could also be offered at the reception, gym, etc. In guest rooms, the establishment either offers tap water in containers that are directly refilled in the establishment, provides glasses in the rooms or informs about the drinkability of tap water through educational signage, in-room information, or digital communication material[125]. Purchasing and serving any type of single-use externally bottled water (including reusable glass bottles) does not fulfil this criterion. The possibility for offering tap water depends on its quality and the tap water supply in the establishment. If the quality of the tap water allows it, it can be offered as it is, or it can be filtered before being served. Bottled water cannot be offered as standard to guests, though it may still be available for purchase upon request. If the quality of the tap water does not comply with national standards for drinking (e.g. because of levels of pesticides, heavy metals, etc.), then this criterion is Not Applicable (N/A). In these cases, the establishment presents documented evidence, such as a recent water quality analysis, or a report from a competent authority or certified water supplier. In case the national

[125] See glossary p. 4.

		authorities stipulate that hygiene regulations are in contradiction with this criterion, the establishment follows the official national regulations. In regions where the water is officially potable but may be poorly tolerated by tourists due to different microbial profiles, the establishment provides a certified water analysis determining whether additional filtration is necessary. If the water is determined to be unsuitable for drinking, the following applies: • the establishment is encouraged to install appropriate water filtration systems (e.g. activated carbon filters, reverse osmosis) to improve water quality and make it suitable for guest consumption; • the establishment furthermore conducts an assessment to identify the most sustainable alternative (e.g. reusable large-volume water dispensers, country-specific deposit systems). The reasoning is documented and considers local infrastructure (e.g. lack of deposit/reuse schemes); and • the use of small, bottled water units is avoided, wherever possible. Large reusable containers (e.g. 10–20L jars or water fountains) are preferable. In case the establishment can prove that its classification demands that additional complimentary water is offered in the guest rooms, tap water is still offered as the first option. In this case, the establishment also provides a refill station or access to safe water for bottle refills and encourages the use of reusable water bottles (e.g. by selling or providing them). **Audit evidence** During the visual inspection, the auditor confirms that tap water is available in all required guest-facing and staff-facing areas. In specific circumstances, the establishment presents: • required evidence as stated above, when the establishment claims that this criterion is Not Applicable (N/A) (e.g. legal exemption or water analysis); and/or • proof that the classification of the establishment demands that additional complimentary water is offered in the guest rooms (e.g. extract from classification checklist in combination with prove of classification approval), in case the establishment can prove that its classification requires additional complimentary water. In that case, a visual inspection confirms that a refill option exists and is communicated to guests.
6.17	*At least 10% of all F&B products used in the establishment are either organic, and/or eco-labelled and/or fair-trade labelled*	***Relevance*** *This criterion promotes sustainable food systems through reduced CO_2 emissions, improved animal welfare, and support for local economies and small producers. Prioritising certified or local Food & Beverage (F&B) products helps reduce transport emissions, reinforces regional food infrastructure, and supports ethical and eco-conscious farming practices.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *At least 10% of all F&B products used in the main service areas, including breakfast, lunch, dinner, bar/café, and room service (if managed internally), are either organic and/or eco-labelled and/or fair-trade labelled and/or locally produced. These products should*

	and/or locally produced. (G) ⓘ	*preferably be used in significant quantities and/or daily. If room service is outsourced, the criterion does not apply to room service offerings.* *The 10% threshold is calculated based on the total weight, volume and/or monetary value of F&B products purchased within the past 24 months (for re-applicants), or within the past 6 months (for first time applicants). To conform to this criterion, the establishment presents documentation demonstrating the total weight, volume and/or monetary value of F&B products purchased during the relevant period, along with invoices or a list showing the corresponding weight, volume and/or monetary value of those F&B products that are either organic, eco-labelled, fair-trade labelled and/or locally produced.* *Organic, eco-labelled or fair-trade products must be recognised by national or international authorities. Products are, whenever possible, produced locally to reduce the environmental footprint through reduced transportation, and to stimulate the local economy. Locally produced products are defined as products that are produced within 100 km of the establishment. This includes products grown on the premises as well as products wild-caught or wild-harvested within the same radius. In addition, local producers must qualify as Small or Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), in accordance with the national standard definition. In the rare case that due to the location of the establishment, no producers can be found within the 100 km radius, the next closest producer is used. In such cases, the establishment provides written, signed justification, why this specific producer has been used (this could be e.g. because of particular sustainability mission of the producer). For establishments located in countries with a land area exceeding 1 million km², the general maximum acceptable distance is 500 km.* *Preference should also be given to local producers with demonstratable sustainable practices, animal welfare standards, or certifications. However, focussing solely on sustainable practices or animal welfare is not enough to meet this criterion. Where applicable, the selection of certified products should consider animal treatment, breeding, living conditions, and slaughter practices. Establishments are furthermore encouraged to plan product selection based on seasonal availability and local harvest cycles.* *It is strongly recommended that the establishment progressively expands the number and scope of such products over time, aiming to cover a broader portion of the overall F&B offering. Although this criterion mainly relates to F&B products offered to guests, it is also recommended to implement this criterion in the staff canteen.* ⓘ **Note on national adaptation**: In SE, this criterion is imperative. In DK, at least 15% of all F&B products used in the establishment are organic, meaning that eco-labelled, fair-trade labelled or locally produced items are not accepted to conform with this criterion. ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents documentation (list or invoices), which shows:* • *the total weight, volume and/or monetary value of F&B products purchased within the past 24 months (for re-applicants), or within the past 6 months (for first time applicants); and*

		• *the F&B products that are organic, eco-labelled, fair-trade labelled and/or locally produced, to demonstrate conformity with the 10% threshold.* *Where applicable, the establishment presents justification for sourcing from specific local producers when beyond the 100 km limit.* *During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts samplings[126] in at least 1 storage area or 1 restaurant to ensure conformity of the listed F&B products, following methodology A as described in the glossary.*
6.18	*At least 25% of all F&B products used in the establishment are either organic and/or eco-labelled and/or fair-trade labelled and/or locally produced. (G)* ⓘ	***Relevance*** *This criterion promotes sustainable food systems through reduced CO_2 emissions, improved animal welfare, and support for local economies and small producers. Prioritising certified or local Food & Beverage (F&B) products helps reduce transport emissions, reinforces regional food infrastructure, and supports ethical and eco-conscious farming practices.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *To conform with this criterion, the establishment ensures that at least 25% of all F&B products used in the main service areas, including breakfast, lunch, dinner, bar/café, and room service (if managed internally), are either organic and/or eco-labelled and/or fair-trade labelled and/or locally produced. These products should preferably be used in significant quantities and/or daily. If room service is outsourced, the criterion does not apply to room service offerings.* *The 25% threshold is calculated based on the total weight, volume and/or monetary value of F&B products purchased within the past 24 months (for re-applicants), or within the past 6 months (for first time applicants). To conform to this criterion, the establishment presents documentation demonstrating the total weight, volume and/or monetary value of F&B products purchased during the relevant period, along with invoices or a list showing the corresponding weight, volume and/or monetary value of those F&B products that are either organic, eco-labelled, fair-trade labelled and/or locally produced.* *Organic, eco-labelled or fair-trade products must be recognised by national or international authorities. Products are, whenever possible, produced locally to reduce the environmental footprint through reduced transportation, and to stimulate the local economy. Locally produced products are defined as products that are produced within 100 km of the establishment. This includes products grown on the premises as well as products wild-caught or wild-harvested within the same radius. In addition, local producers must qualify as Small or Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), in accordance with the national standard definition. In the rare case that due to the location of the establishment, no producers can be found within the 100 km radius, the next closest producer is used. In such cases, the establishment provides written, signed justification, why this specific producer has been used (this could be e.g. because of particular sustainability mission of the producer). For establishments located in countries with a land area exceeding 1 million km^2,*

[126] See glossary p. 4.

		the general maximum acceptable distance is 500 km. *Preference should also be given to local producers with demonstratable sustainable practices, animal welfare standards, or certifications. However, focussing solely on sustainable practices or animal welfare is not enough to meet this criterion. Where applicable, the selection of certified products should consider animal treatment, breeding, living conditions, and slaughter practices. Establishments are furthermore encouraged to plan product selection based on seasonal availability and local harvest cycles.* *It is strongly recommended that the establishment progressively expands the number and scope of such products over time, aiming to cover a broader portion of the overall F&B offering. Although this criterion mainly relates to F&B products offered to guests, it is also recommended to implement this criterion in the staff canteen.* ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In DK, at least 25% of all F&B products used in the establishment are organic, meaning that eco-labelled, fair-trade labelled or locally produced items are not accepted to conform with this criterion. ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents documentation (list or invoices), which shows:* • *the total weight, volume and/or monetary value of F&B products purchased within the past 24 months (for re-applicants), or within the past 6 months (for first time applicants); and* • *the F&B products that are organic, eco-labelled, fair-trade labelled and/or locally produced, to demonstrate conformity with the 25% threshold.* *In specific circumstances, where applicable, the establishment presents justification for sourcing from specific local producers when beyond the 100 km limit.* *During the visual inspection, the auditor conducts samplings[127] in at least 1 storage area or 1 restaurant to ensure conformity of the listed F&B products, following methodology A as described in the glossary.*
6.19	*At least 30% of all offered starters and main dishes in the establishment are vegetarian, or, alternatively, at*	***Relevance*** *Reducing the frequency of meat consumption and increasing plant-based food choices is a key strategy to lower greenhouse gas emissions, reduce pressure on land and water resources and support healthier diets.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment either ensure that:*

[127] See glossary p. 4.

	least 1 day per week only vegetarian or vegan meals are offered to both guests and staff. (G)	*a) 30% of all offered starters and main dishes are vegetarian[128]. This applies to all internally managed restaurants in an establishment, to buffets (30% of the offer on buffets must be vegetarian) and to staff canteens; or* *b) alternatively, at least 1 day per week, only vegetarian and/or vegan[129] food options are served across all meals (i.e. breakfast, lunch and dinner), and in all internally managed restaurants and staff canteens. In addition, if any Food & Beverage (F&B) services are part of the core accommodation offer (e.g. breakfast, half-board meals, conference catering), conformity with the vegetarian/vegan day criterion is mandatory, even if those are externally managed.* *For all externally managed restaurants on the premises, the establishment formally informs and encourages them in writing to align with the initiative.* *The vegetarian food offer or vegetarian day are clearly reflected in all menus, and should be communicated in a positive, informative and engaging manner to both guests and staff (e.g. through signage, menu boards, or digital menus). The establishment is required to submit a photo of the menu or promotion of vegetarian day to prove conformity with this criterion.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, 1 of the following types of evidence is accepted:* *a) a visual inspection confirms the presence of at least 30% vegetarian starters and main dishes in all internally managed restaurants, on buffets and the staff canteen; or* *b) the establishment presents the weekly menu, showing that only vegetarian/vegan dishes are served during breakfast, lunch and dinner on at least 1 day per week.* *The establishment also presents evidence that the staff food conforms (e.g. menu plan or statement from management). For all externally managed restaurants, a written statement (e.g. via e-mail) informing them about the initiative and encouraging them to participate is presented.* *The auditor may further request photos or screenshots of physical or digital menu displays and communication materials or signage promoting the vegetarian day or 30% of vegetarian dishes (these must be clearly indicated on the menus/buffets of all internally managed restaurants).*
6.20	*The establishment offers at least 1*	***Relevance*** *As vegan[130] food has a smaller environmental footprint than meat-based and dairy-based food, the establishment offers vegan*

[128] See glossary p. 4.
[129] See glossary p. 4.
[130] See glossary p. 4.

	vegan starter, 1 vegan main dish and 1 vegan desert. (G) ⓘ	*options. This criterion also addresses the growing demand by guests for alternatives to the regular meat, and dairy-based menus.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment offers at least 1 vegan starter, 1 vegan main dish and 1 vegan desert. This applies to all internally managed restaurants and buffets (at least 1 vegan starter, 1 vegan main dish and 1 vegan desert), and it is recommended to apply it in staff canteens.* *The vegan options are clearly indicated on the menu or by signs on the buffet, and the establishment is required to submit a photo of the menu to show conformity with this criterion. The indication is done by using icons or other easily understood means of communication.* *It is encouraged to implement or offer additional vegan dishes on the breakfast buffet.* ⓘ **Note on national adaptation**: In NL, the establishment offers at least 2 vegan starters, 2 vegan main dishes, and 2 vegan desserts. ***Audit evidence*** *During the visual inspection, the auditor confirms that the establishment offers at least 1 vegan starter, 1 vegan main dish and 1 vegan desert. In addition, it is checked that vegan dishes are clearly indicated on the menus/buffets of all internally managed restaurants.*
Washing and Cleaning		
6.21	At least 75% of the chemical cleaning products used for routine cleaning have a recognised eco-label. (I)	**Relevance** To lower the environmental footprint and minimise the use of harmful substances, the establishment prioritises the use of cleaning products that are both effective and environmentally responsible. This includes reducing overall chemical dependency and ensuring that any products used are as safe as possible for people and the environment. **Expectations for implementation** At least 75% of the chemical cleaning products used for routine cleaning (e.g. daily, every 2 days, after guests' departure, etc.) in all parts of the establishment have an internationally or nationally recognised eco-label. This includes products used for the routine cleaning of guest rooms, conference areas, restaurants, public areas (excluding swimming pools) and staff areas (excluding kitchen and laundry areas).

	ⓘ	It is further recommended that, where possible, eco-labelled versions of products used less frequently (e.g. weekly or monthly) are also purchased to ensure consistency in sustainable procurement practices. Conformity with the criterion is demonstrated based on the quantities (in volume or weight) of routine cleaning products purchased over the reporting period, using purchase records as the basis for calculation. The reporting period corresponds to the past 24 months prior to the audit (or the past 6 months for first-time applicants). ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In FR, and NL, 100% of the chemical cleaning products used for routine cleaning and in DK, FI, SE, and NO, 90% of the chemical cleaning products used for routine cleaning in all parts of the establishment have an internationally or nationally recognised eco-label. This includes the products used for the routine cleaning of the guest rooms, conference areas, restaurants, public areas (excluding swimming pools) and staff areas (excluding kitchen and laundry areas). In FR, the criterion also applies to 100% of products for laundry areas and to 75% of products for kitchens. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents documentation (list or invoices), which shows: • the total quantity (in volume or weight) of chemical cleaning products used for routine cleaning in the past 24 or 6 months (depending on certification year); and • the products with an internationally or nationally recognised eco-label (and which one), to demonstrate conformity with the 75% threshold. During the visual inspection, the auditor selects a random sample[131] of 3 cleaning products and confirms on-site that the corresponding eco-labels are present on the products selected (methodology C)[132].
6.22	Use of disinfection substances is restricted to cases of clear hygiene or health-critical risk. (I)	**Relevance** Disinfection substances[133] can have serious environmental and health impacts if overused or misapplied. Their use must be limited to cases of clear necessity to avoid contributing to chemical pollution, antimicrobial resistance and unnecessary occupational exposure. Prioritising safer alternatives and using disinfection only when justified supports both environmental responsibility and human health concerns. **Expectations for implementation** Routine cleaning of guest rooms, public areas, or general surfaces that do not present hygiene-critical risks does not involve disinfection substances. The use of disinfection substances is restricted to documented cases of clear hygiene or health-

[131] See glossary p. 4.
[132] See glossary p. 4.
[133] See glossary p. 4.

	ⓘ	critical risk, such as when insects, fungi, bacteria, or viruses pose a safety concern, and where the disinfection cannot be replaced by other methods. Disinfection substances comply with national laws and regulations and are only used at the prescribed concentration and contact time described in their Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) and/or other technical data sheets. Disinfection may only be applied by trained staff or external contractors licensed for the purpose. Correct storage, handling and disposal of these substances is ensured by the establishment (see criterion 5.4). Hand disinfection is not included in this criterion. ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In FR, for the cases referred to above, where the use of disinfection substances is permitted, only eco-certified products or non-chemical alternatives are used. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents its written Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)[134] or integrated cleaning/hygiene procedures, identifying which disinfection substances are used, where, and for what purpose.
6.23	All tissue paper products are certified with an eco-label. (I)	**Relevance** Tissue paper products are widely used in hospitality operations and contribute to a higher environmental footprint through raw material consumption, water use and chemical processing. Eco-labelled tissue paper products ensure that these products are sourced and manufactured in a more sustainable way, supporting responsible procurement and reducing the overall ecological footprint of the establishment. **Expectations for implementation** All tissue paper products (e.g. paper towels, facial tissues, toilet paper, sauna tissue, napkins, kitchen paper, etc.) used is certified with an internationally or nationally recognised eco-label. Where eco-labelled paper products are not available on the market, non-chlorine-bleached paper is accepted as an alternative, provided the establishment can document the lack of availability. Conformity with the criterion is demonstrated based on the tissue paper products purchased over the reporting period, using purchase records as the basis for calculation. The reporting period corresponds to the past 24 months prior to the audit (or the past 6 months for first-time applicants).

[134] See glossary p. 4.

		Audit evidence During the visual inspection, the auditor selects a random sample[135] of 3 tissue paper products and confirms on-site that the corresponding eco-labels are present on the products selected where applicable (methodology C)[136]. In specific circumstances, where the establishment uses non-chlorine-bleached paper due to lack of eco-label availability, it also presents documented evidence of market unavailability (e.g. supplier statements, screenshots/catalogues from local distributors, procurement records showing no eco-label option, etc.).
6.24	*All the dishwashing detergents and rinsing agents have a recognised eco-label. (G)* ⓘ	***Relevance*** *Dishwashing detergents and rinsing agents can contribute to water pollution and resource depletion if overused or selected without environmental consideration. Proper dosage and the use of eco-labelled products reduce chemical discharge, support safer cleaning practices and lower the overall environmental footprint of cleaning operations.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The use of dishwashing detergents and rinsing agents is kept at a minimum (using the correct dosage) and all these products have an internationally or nationally recognised eco-label. This applies to both handwashing and machine detergents and excludes soaking agents, drying agents and descaling agents.* *Conformity with the criterion is demonstrated based on the quantities (in volume or weight) of routine cleaning products purchased over the reporting period, using purchase records as the basis for calculation. The reporting period corresponds to the past 24 months prior to the audit (or the past 6 months for first-time applicants).* ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In FR, this criterion is imperative. In DK, FI, NO, and SE, it is imperative that 90% of the dishwashing detergents and rinsing agents have a recognised eco-label. ***Audit evidence*** *During the visual inspection, the auditor selects a random sample[137] of 3 dishwashing detergents and/or rinsing agents and confirms on-site that the corresponding eco-labels are present on the products selected (methodology C).*
6.25	*All the laundry detergents have a*	***Relevance***

[135] See glossary p. 4.
[136] See glossary p. 4.
[137] See glossary p. 4.

	recognised eco-label. (G) ⓘ	*Laundry detergents contribute to water pollution and chemical discharge if not used responsibly. Optimising dosage and selecting eco-labelled products supports safer and more sustainable laundry operations, reducing the environmental impact while maintaining cleaning performance.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The use of laundry detergents is kept at a minimum (using the correct dosage) and all these products have an internationally or nationally recognised eco-label. This excludes specialty or auxiliary products such as detergent boosters, mop wash detergents, carpet cleaning detergents, fabric softeners, and stain removers.* *This criterion only applies to in-house laundry. If the laundry is outsourced, the establishment should encourage the laundry company to use detergents that have a recognised eco-label.* *Conformity with the criterion is demonstrated based on the quantities (in volume or weight) of routine cleaning products purchased over the reporting period, using purchase records as the basis for calculation. The reporting period corresponds to the past 24 months prior to the audit (or the past 6 months for first-time applicants).* ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In FI, FR, NO, and SE, this criterion is imperative. ***Audit evidence*** *During the visual inspection, the auditor selects a random sample[138] of 3 laundry detergents and confirms on-site that the corresponding eco-labels are present on the products selected (methodology C).*
6.26	*Concentrated chemical cleaning products and safe dilution system are used for routine cleaning. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Using concentrated chemical cleaning products helps reduce plastic packaging waste, lower transport emissions and improve dosing accuracy. On-site dilution ensures only the necessary amount of product is used, reducing chemical overuse and its environmental impact while promoting staff safety against exposure and operational efficiency.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *Chemical cleaning used for routine cleaning (e.g. daily, every 2 days, after guests' departure, etc.) are received concentrated and are diluted on-site. The cleaning products should preferably come in closed-loop systems preventing direct contact with the chemicals as well as spills.*

[138] See glossary p. 4.

		The establishment has an effective and safe dilution system[139] to prevent overuse of chemicals and ensure proper calibration for effective and efficient cleaning. Automatic dosing (dilution) systems are preferred. Controlled manual systems are acceptable where they ensure accurate dilution and minimise exposure (e.g. sealed/dosed pump systems with no contact). *Tablet (solid) formats are also accepted for routine cleaning, particularly in smaller establishments without dosing systems, provided they are used according to manufacturer dilution instructions and dissolved in refillable containers where possible.* *Cleaning and laundry staff are informed about the correct product usage and dosing. In specific cases where manual addition is necessary, staff handling chemicals manually receive documented training[140] on correct use and safety.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents supplier or product documentation (e.g. product information sheets, technical datasheets, or purchase records) confirming that routine cleaning products are purchased in concentrated form or in tablet/solid concentrated format.* *In specific circumstances, where manual dosing is used, the establishment also presents training records on chemical safety and handling for the relevant staff.* *A visual inspection confirms the presence of an effective dilution system which is functional and calibrated according to manufacturer instructions.*
6.27	*All cosmetic products have a nationally or internationally recognised eco-label. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Cosmetic products can contribute to chemical pollution and increase the establishment's environmental footprint. By selecting eco-labelled products, establishments reduce harmful ingredients, support safer formulations and promote sustainable production practices.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *All the cosmetic products (soap, shower gel, shampoo, lotion and conditioner) used by the establishment have a nationally or internationally recognised eco-label. This applies to products in bathrooms of guest rooms, staff areas, as well as public areas.* *In addition to having an eco-label, it is strongly recommended that cosmetic products are paraben-free, do not contain Sodium Lauryl Sulphate (SLS) and unsustainable palm oil.*

[139] See glossary p. 4.
[140] See glossary p. 4.

		Audit evidence *During the visual inspection, the auditor selects a random sample[141] of 3 cosmetic products and confirms on-site that the corresponding eco-labels are present on the products selected (methodology C).*
6.28	*Reduced-chemical or chemical-free cleaning methods are used. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Traditional chemical cleaning agents can harm ecosystems, reduce indoor air quality and pose risks to staff and guest health if overused or improperly applied. By adopting reduced-chemical or chemical-free cleaning methods, establishments significantly lower their environmental footprint and improve workplace safety, while maintaining high hygiene standards.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment uses reduced-chemical or chemical-free cleaning methods that minimise or eliminate the need for chemical agents for at least 1 defined area, activity, or service, on a regular basis (e.g. daily or weekly). These methods may include the use of deionised water, high-pressure water cleaning, steam cleaning, or other effective alternatives that reduce reliance on traditional chemical-based products.* *This criterion applies specifically to general surface cleaning in areas such as public spaces, guest rooms, or conference facilities. Kitchens, toilets, pools and spa areas are exempt from this criterion due to specific hygiene regulations.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents its written Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)[142] for regular cleaning in the relevant area, activity or service, demonstrating the use of reduced-chemical or chemical-free methods.* *Alternatively, a visual inspection confirms the presence of the reduced-chemical or chemical-free cleaning equipment.*
6.29	*Only fragrance- and perfume-free products are used in washing, cleaning, or room care. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Fragrance-containing products contribute to indoor air pollution, increase the risk of allergic reactions and introduce unnecessary chemical compounds into the environment. By using fragrance- and perfume products-free products in routine cleaning and washing practices, establishments protect guest and staff health, reduce their chemical footprint and support a safer indoor atmosphere.* ***Expectations for implementation***

[141] See glossary p. 4.
[142] See glossary p. 4.

		The establishment does not use any washing, cleaning, or room care products that contain fragrance or perfume, including sprays, detergents and surface cleaners. *This criterion applies to all areas of the establishment (including guest rooms, laundry rooms, public areas and conference rooms), both if the staff of the establishment oversees the washing and cleaning and if the work is outsourced to a third-party contractor.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the visual inspection, the auditor selects a random sample[143] of 3 products used for washing, cleaning and room care and confirms on-site that no fragrance or perfume is indicated on the products selected (methodology C).* *In specific circumstances, where the washing and cleaning is outsourced, the establishment presents a statement from the third-party entity confirming that the washing/cleaning products used do not contain fragrance or perfume.*

7. LIVING ENVIRONMENT

Indoor Environment, Biodiversity Preservation

Indoor Environment

N.	Criterion	Explanatory Notes
7.1	Indoor restaurant areas are non-smoking, and all other public areas are either non-smoking or	**Relevance** To protect the health and comfort of guests and staff, and to reduce indoor air pollution and environmental impacts from smoking or vaping, all indoor restaurants are non-smoking and public areas of the establishment are maintained as non-smoking or with clearly separated non-smoking zones. Establishing clear no-smoking policies improves indoor air quality, prevents exposure to second-hand smoke, and supports a healthier environment for all. **Expectations for implementation**

[143] See glossary p. 4.

	have clearly separated smoking areas. (I)	The indoor restaurant areas are non-smoking. Any other public areas are either non-smoking, or the non-smoking section (indoors and outdoors) is clearly physically separated from the smoking section, so that persons sitting in the non-smoking section are not affected by the smokers. Physical separation may include structural barriers (e.g. walls, screens, fencing), a fixed and clearly demarcated smoking zone at an appropriate distance, or other measures that prevent smokers from sitting or standing directly adjacent to non-smoking guests. The non-smoking and smoking sections are marked clearly with signs in an easily understandable way. The establishment furthermore provides ash trays or clearly marked, fire-safe cigarette disposal bins in designated smoking areas. It is recommended that the non-smoking area is larger than the smoking area. **Audit evidence** During the visual inspection, the auditor confirms that: • smoking is not allowed in all indoor restaurants; • all other public areas are either non-smoking or when there are both, a physical separation, and signs indicating the smoking and non-smoking parts of the public areas; and • all designated smoking areas are equipped with ashtrays or cigarette bins, and that these are used properly; meaning their surrounding area is free from cigarette litter. If cigarette litter is present, the establishment must implement training[144] or other measures to ensure proper use and maintenance of the smoking area.
7.2	All meeting and guest rooms are non-smoking. (I) ⓘ	**Relevance** Non-smoking indoor environments reduce health risks, prevent exposure to second-hand smoke, and help maintain clean and comfortable guest facilities. Ensuring smoke-free guest and meeting rooms supports guest satisfaction and reduces odours and residue that can accumulate from indoor smoking. **Expectations for implementation** All guest and meeting rooms are non-smoking. In countries where this is not feasible due to legislative or cultural requirements, meeting rooms are non-smoking without exception and a minimum of 75% of the guest rooms are non-smoking. In such cases, it is highly recommended that smoking rooms are located in a physically distinct area, such as a different wing or floor of the establishment, to ensure that they do not have any negative impact on guests in non-smoking areas/rooms (e.g. through smoke drift on balconies). It is furthermore ensured that all smoking rooms are aired out sufficiently (at least 1 hour) before new guests arrive. The areas with non-smoking and smoking guest rooms are clearly marked with signs in an easily understandable way, and the establishment develops a plan to ensure that 100% of guest rooms become smoke-free.

[144] See glossary p. 4.

		The establishment furthermore provides ash trays or clearly marked, fire-safe cigarette disposal bins in designated smoking areas. ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In BE and SE, all meeting and guest rooms are non-smoking without exception. **Audit evidence** During the visual inspection, the auditor confirms that all guest and meeting rooms are non-smoking. In specific circumstances, in countries where this is not feasible due to legislative or cultural requirements, the establishment presents: • documentation (e.g. an overview or room inventory) showing that all meeting rooms and at least 75% of guest rooms are non-smoking; and • evidence of a plan for progressing towards 100% smoke-free guest rooms. In this case, a visual inspection confirms the presence of clear physical separation between smoking and non-smoking guest rooms supported by visible signage, and designated smoking areas equipped with ashtrays or fire-safe cigarette bins, with the surrounding area free of cigarette litter.
7.3	The establishment has a personnel policy concerning smoking during working hours. (I)	**Relevance** To protect the health and comfort of staff and guests, it is important that smoking during working hours is regulated through a clear internal policy. Clear policies and designated smoking areas help to ensure that non-smokers are not exposed to second-hand smoke, and that a safe and healthy working environment is provided. **Expectations for implementation** The areas for the public and the staff are non-smoking. Where staff smoking is allowed, the establishment has a policy for the staff regarding smoking during working hours. The policy includes regulations about when and where the staff can smoke and applies to all kinds of cigarettes and pipes. Staff are only allowed to smoke in clearly physically separated areas, so that the smoke has no negative impact on guests or staff in non-smoking areas/rooms. The establishment furthermore provides ash trays or clearly marked, fire-safe cigarette disposal bins in designated smoking areas. It is strongly recommended that the smoking policy is gradually strengthened by, for example progressively limiting smoking during working hours. It is also recommended that the establishment organises annual awareness-raising training[145] for staff on the health and environmental harms of smoking.

[145] See glossary p. 4.

		In countries where there is legislation regulating smoking in public and staff areas, the establishment complies with these requirements in all circumstances. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents its written smoking policy for staff, including information about when and where smoking during working hours is allowed, and how the establishment ensures that it does not constitute a health risk and annoyance for non-smoking staff members and guests. A visual inspection confirms the presence of the designated staff smoking areas, that they are physically separated and that they have no impact on non-smoking guests and staff.
7.4	*Indoor air quality in at least 2 parts of the establishment is monitored at least once a year. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Indoor air quality directly affects the health, comfort, and well-being of staff and guests. Regular monitoring helps identify pollutants and ventilation issues early, ensuring a safe and healthy indoor environment while preventing long-term risks such as respiratory problems, mould growth, or chemical exposure.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The indoor air quality in the establishment is regularly monitored (including in spa areas, swimming pools and underground technical spaces). A regular monitoring system (monitoring at least once a year) is therefore installed in at least 2 parts of the establishment. The choice of areas to monitor considers those most at risk for poor air quality exposure.* *The monitored parameters include at least 3 from the following list, depending on the local context and identified risks:* *a) the number of air exchanges per hour;* *b) temperature and relative humidity, to prevent mould growth;* *c) carbon dioxide (CO_2);* *d) volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which are common emissions from furniture[146], fixtures[147] and equipment (FF&E), cleaning agents, air fresheners and synthetic fragrances;* *e) particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$ or PM_{10}) from airborne dust, smoke, external pollution;* *f) radon, especially in underground areas (depending on local geology and regulations); and/or* *g) nitrogen oxides (NOx), mainly in kitchens, parking garages, or areas near traffic.* *Local and national legislations/regulations are followed, and the monitored values do not exceed limits specified by relevant national or international standards (e.g. WHO Air Quality Guidelines, national occupational safety limits).*

[146] See glossary p. 4.
[147] See glossary p. 4.

		If the limit values are exceeded, responsive actions are taken, prioritising energy-efficient and low-impact solutions (e.g. ventilating the rooms by opening windows on a regular basis, changing the settings of the ventilation, installation of air purifiers or sanitation devices and the use of air-purifying plants, where suitable, etc.). *When replacing FF&Es, low-emission options are prioritised, but early replacement before end-of-life should be avoided. For consumable products such as detergents and air fresheners, shifting to low-VOC or fragrance-free options is recommended when restocking.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents documentation showing the results of the indoor air quality monitoring.* *In specific circumstances, where the limit values are exceeded, the responsive actions taken are presented.*
7.5	*Authentic elements of the local culture are incorporated in the operation or in connection with refurbishments or construction works. (G)*	***Relevance*** *To safeguard cultural heritage and support social sustainability, the establishment integrates authentic local materials, traditions and knowledge into its operations or physical structures. This strengthens community identity, respects local heritage and ensures that development enhances rather than erodes the cultural fabric of the destination.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment incorporates locally appropriate and sustainable practices and materials in its operations or in connection with refurbishments or construction works. The focus lies on respecting and integrating authentic aspects of traditional or contemporary local culture, social or cultural heritage, local craftsmanship, artistic expression, or regionally relevant design traditions.* *Both tangible (e.g. materials, construction methods) and intangible (e.g. traditional knowledge, cultural expressions) heritage are valued, with special attention to balancing the environmental sustainability of refurbishment or construction works with the cultural and social heritage benefits.* *The establishment is encouraged to involve and utilise local education, knowledge and expertise in relation to the use of materials, technologies and tools for sustainable refurbishment or construction. Where cultural expressions are used, the establishment seeks confirmation from appropriate local organisations or experts that the use is appropriate and respectful. The establishment always complies with national and local legislation and regulations in connection with refurbishment or construction of new buildings.* *The resilience of materials and construction works is also considered, ensuring that practices not only respect heritage but also enhance durability and long-term sustainability. However, this criterion focuses on the cultural and social sustainability aspects of the establishment's physical presence and operational practices, and environmental sustainability (e.g. energy efficiency, water*

		conservation) is covered separately. ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents:* • *evidence of the relevance of the used material or practices for the local culture, social or cultural heritage;* • *references to cooperation or consultation with local experts, craftspeople, cultural organisations, or community groups, where applicable;* • *photos, design plans, supplier descriptions, or written statements showing how local cultural heritage or knowledge was incorporated into operations, refurbishments, or construction works; and* • *a brief statement (e.g. from the establishment or consulted experts) confirming that cultural elements were used appropriately and respectfully.*
7.6	*Environmental and biodiversity impacts are assessed and addressed prior to any new development, expansion, or major construction/renovation work. (G)*	***Relevance*** *To minimise the environmental impact of land use and support biodiversity, healthy soils and natural water cycles, the establishment ensures that both new developments and renovation projects are planned and implemented with consideration for local ecosystems, ecological continuity (principles of green, blue and brown infrastructure, where soil continuity is recognised for its role in maintaining biodiversity) and environmental health.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *Prior to any new development, expansion, or major construction/renovation work[148], the establishment demonstrates how potential environmental and biodiversity impacts have been assessed and addressed.* *This usually takes the form of an ecological assessment (e.g. environmental impact assessment, biodiversity study, or equivalent) required by national or regional authorities. In that case, the establishment follows that process and retains documentation. Where such assessments are not required by authorities or do not explicitly address biodiversity, the establishment documents how biodiversity (e.g. preserving vegetated areas, avoiding harm to local species and habitats and maintaining existing ecological corridors on the site, etc.), soil, and water cycle impacts were considered. This may include consultation with relevant experts (e.g. protected area managers, environmental agencies/NGOs, or certified consultants) or the use of publicly available biodiversity maps, species registries, or planning tools.* *For all projects, the establishment prioritises the use of permeable or unsealed surfaces (e.g. gravel, permeable paving, vegetated ground cover). Sealed surfaces (e.g. asphalt, concrete) are avoided where feasible. If their use is justified due to technical or safety reasons, compensatory measures such as rain gardens, infiltration zones, or vegetated buffer zones are implemented.*

[148] See glossary p. 4.

		Audit evidence *During the audit, the establishment presents documentation of the ecological assessment or equivalent process carried out by the establishment/external experts for new development, expansion, or major construction/renovation work.* *In specific circumstances, where sealed surfaces are present, a visual inspection confirms that they are justified for technical or safety reasons and that compensatory measures (e.g. rain gardens, infiltration zones, vegetated buffers) are in place.*
7.7	*Sustainable materials are used for refurbishments or construction works that started and/or were completed in the past 24 months. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Refurbishment and construction work in hospitality can significantly affect the environment through the choice of building materials, which impact energy use, emissions, waste, and indoor air quality. By prioritising sustainable, low-impact, and durable materials, establishments reduce environmental harm, protect human health, and promote more responsible resource use.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *For refurbishment or construction carried out during the past 24 months (for re-applicants) or 6 months (for first-time applicants), the establishment demonstrates the use of sustainable building and finishing materials. The establishment ensures that at least 2 types of materials used in the works (e.g. paints/coatings/varnishes; wood and plant-based materials; flooring; insulation; adhesives/sealants; other relevant materials) meet the sustainable product requirements below. This applies to paints, coatings, varnishes, wood, flooring, insulation, adhesives, sealants, and other products used in the works.* *Accepted sustainable products include:* *a) paints and coatings carrying nationally or internationally recognised eco-labels and/or verified low VOC emissions, free from heavy metals;* *b) wood and plant-based materials carrying recognised certifications, ensuring sustainable harvesting practices and, where feasible, local sourcing; and/or* *c) flooring, insulation, adhesives, sealants, and other construction/refurbishment products with recognised eco-labels, low chemical emissions, or recycled content.* *Products used comply with national legislation, and selection should be based on minimising health risks to occupants and workers while reducing environmental harm.* *It is recommended, where safe, fit-for-purpose and where long-term impacts can be reasonably assessed, to prioritise second-hand or recycled materials to reduce resource use and waste. However, some materials (e.g. insulation, fire-retardant products) may not be suitable for reuse or recycling due to safety or performance requirements.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents:*

		• *a list of the sustainable materials purchased/used for the 2 selected material types during the past 24 or 6 months (depending on certification year); and* • *documentation for these materials (e.g. invoices, product specifications, or certificates) showing eco-labels, certifications, or other verified low-impact attributes as listed above.* *Where appropriate, a visual inspection confirms eco-labelled or certified sustainable products.*
Biodiversity Protection		
7.8	The use of agrochemical products is minimised and strictly controlled. (I)	**Relevance** To reduce risks to ecosystems, biodiversity and human health, the establishment restricts the use of agrochemical products. By prioritising organic or natural alternatives, the establishment supports ecological balance, healthier green spaces and more responsible land management. **Expectations for implementation** Routine use of agrochemical products such as pesticides (including herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, rodenticides, molluscicides, nematicides, plant growth regulators, defoliants and desiccants), fertilisers and plant growth regulators is not permitted. The establishment implements an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach or equivalent system, with the following hierarchy: • preventive and non-chemical methods such as mechanical weed control, gas flames, soil health management through composting, etc., are prioritised; • if intervention is still required due to cases of clear necessity (e.g. hygiene or safety-related risks, or specific soil fertility needs), organic or natural alternatives are used (e.g. organic fertilisers, natural soil conditioners, or pest repellents approved under organic standards); and • only when no organic or natural replacements are available, agrochemical products may be applied. In such cases, only "ready-to-use" products are used, preferably with slow release and applied once a year at the minimum possible level. The use of glyphosate and all other products listed by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) as Highly Hazardous Pesticides is strictly forbidden. Handling of agrochemical products can only be done by staff or external contractors trained/licensed for the purpose (see criterion 1.21). All relevant safety measures must be taken, such as the use of personal protective equipment during the application and the use of safety data sheets with recommended dosage. An annual schedule of application and written records of the application of the product (including the quantities used) must be kept. Chemical substances are stored

		properly (see criterion 5.4) and empty containers are correctly disposed according to the national/local legislation on the matter. It is strongly recommended to have an external expert conduct annual soil testing for fertiliser management and to monitor soil health over time. This criterion remains applicable when the establishment contracts an external company to carry out the maintenance of its green areas[149]. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents its written Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach or equivalent system, confirming agrochemical products are only applied due to clear necessity, as a last resort when no organic or natural alternatives are available. In specific circumstances, the establishment presents: • records of application, including the product name, purpose, dosage and frequency, if agrochemicals are used; and/or • the contractor's written policy on agrochemical uses in the establishment's grounds, if an external company carries out maintenance. During the visual inspection, and where applicable, the auditor checks a sample[150] of 3 application records against observed practices to confirm that agrochemicals are used only when necessary and as a last resort in line with the establishment's IPM approach (methodology C).
7.9	Newly purchased garden maintenance equipment is electrically or manually driven. (I)	**Relevance** Conventional fuel-powered garden equipment contributes to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, noise pollution and poor air quality, which negatively affect the environment, staff, guests and surrounding communities. By choosing manual or electric equipment, establishments reduce their carbon footprint, improve working conditions and promote more sustainable management of green areas[151]. **Expectations for implementation**

[149] See glossary p. 4.
[150] See glossary p. 4.
[151] See glossary p. 4.

		All garden maintenance equipment (including lawnmowers, trimmers, leaf blowers and similar machinery) purchased within the last 24 months (for re-applicants) or 6 months (for first-time applicants) is energy efficient, low in noise and low in carbon emissions. The equipment may be manual or electric. For robotic lawnmowers, it is strongly recommended that they do not operate at night and run only during daylight or early evening hours to minimise disturbance to wildlife. This criterion is Imperative (I) for establishments with up to 4,000 m² of lawn/grass area; for larger areas, this is a Guideline (G) criterion. This criterion remains applicable when the establishment contracts an external company to carry out the maintenance of its green areas. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents documentation showing that garden maintenance equipment purchased within the last 24 or 6 months (depending on certification year) by the establishment or by third-party contractors is electric or manual. In specific circumstances, if an external company carries out maintenance, the contractor's written policy on equipment/machinery uses on the establishment's grounds following the above guidelines is presented.
7.10	The establishment takes maintenance initiatives in its green areas according to the principles of ecological management. (I)	**Relevance** Green areas[152] enhance guest experience and biodiversity but can cause unnecessary water use and environmental impacts if poorly managed. Responsible maintenance ensures healthy vegetation while conserving resources, preserving the visual quality and function of outdoor spaces and supporting local ecosystems. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment ensures that green areas and ornamental landscapes on the premises are maintained according to the principles of ecological management. Maintenance practices are adapted to the local climate, environmental context and seasonal changes, while supporting ecological diversity and avoiding disruption to local wildlife. Action (a) below is always mandatory, and the establishment is encouraged to take at least 1 additional action. Examples of additional actions are listed in items (b)–(e):

[152] See glossary p. 4.

		a) efficient and targeted watering methods (e.g. drip irrigation, moisture sensors, early morning/evening/night watering particularly in hot or arid regions). The irrigation practices are adapted to the local climate, environmental context and seasonality to optimise efficiency and avoid unnecessary water loss; b) soil health care through composting or mulching; c) pruning, mowing and plant care timed to optimise plant resilience and reduce resource needs, e.g. maintaining areas of taller, undisturbed grass where access is not required; using higher mower settings; and adjusting mowing frequency according to vegetation growth and site use. The schedule of such activities considers the life cycles of local fauna, avoiding interference during sensitive periods such as nesting or breeding seasons; d) use of locally adapted and drought-resistant plant species. The selection of plant species is flexible and adapted to the specific local context, climate and environmental conditions. It also promotes ecological diversity by including a range of native species, various plant heights and layers (vertical stratification) and ensuring that flowering and fruiting periods are staggered throughout the year to support pollinators and wildlife; e) management of pedestrian and vehicle movement to prevent soil compaction, vegetation loss and erosion in sensitive areas (e.g. using designated footpaths and access routes, limiting vehicle access to marked areas, discouraging off-trail movement with signage or natural barriers). It is recommended to display codes of conduct for sensitive ecosystems (e.g. dunes, mangroves, forests, turtle nesting areas) when such environments are present, preferably referring to official sources such as the UNWTO Responsible Tourist; and/or f) prevention and control of invasive alien species through proper identification, monitoring and proportionate action. Staff responsible for green-area maintenance are trained to recognise invasive alien species, understand their ecological impact and apply suitable control measures. Depending on the species, actions may include preventing spread and containment measures, selective removal or targeted monitoring. Regionally and nationally invasive species lists, databases or official guidance are used to confirm species identification, and legal reporting obligations are followed where applicable. The criterion applies to both direct employees and to outsourced staff[153]/landscaping companies contracted by the establishment to carry out the maintenance of its green areas. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents photos or visual evidence of green areas[154] maintenance practices and/or installations (e.g. irrigation system, mulching, native plant beds). In specific circumstances, the establishment presents: • a short description or confirmation of how practices are implemented (this can be included in the existing written

[153] See glossary p. 4.
[154] See glossary p. 4.

		Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)[155]), where appropriate; and/or • the contractor's written policy on the maintenance of green areas on the establishment's grounds, if an external company carries out maintenance. During the visual inspection, and where appropriate, the auditor conducts samplings[156] in at least 1 area where efficient and targeted watering methods are used, and in 1 area where additional actions are taken to confirm maintenance practices and vegetation health.
7.11	The establishment takes initiatives to protect and support the local biodiversity on (or around) its premises. (I) ⓘ	**Relevance** Biodiversity is essential for the resilience of ecosystems, local food chains, climate regulation and overall environmental health. By actively enhancing biodiversity on and around their premises, establishments go beyond environmental mitigation to support regeneration, habitat protection and ecological stewardship, contributing to a net gain in nature. **Expectations for implementation** The establishment implements substantial biodiversity initiatives that favour conditions for the biodiversity on (or around) the premises (see also criterion 1.2 and 1.3). These actions always support the local (native/indigenous/ endemic/rare) species of flora and fauna and are adapted to the site's context and scale: • establishments with green areas[157] provide at least 2 biodiversity actions, with at least 1 action done in the establishments' green areas; and • establishments located in urban areas and/or without green areas provide at least 1 biodiversity action. Examples of actions include: a) rewilding of at least 10% of the outdoor area, adapted to the establishment's context (e.g. unmanaged natural areas, evolving vegetated spaces, shrublands, afforestation patches); b) establishing/maintaining pollinator-friendly green areas covering at least 10% of the total outdoor area; c) establishing/maintaining a green roof and/or vertical green walls covering at least 10% of the roof or wall area; d) using native or climate-adaptive, non-invasive species for the green roofs, green walls, gardens and other outside areas; e) providing favourable conditions for local species (e.g. bird houses, monospecific insect hotels, beehives, wildlife corridors and passageways, etc.). The installation must be appropriate for local species, correctly placed, and maintained regularly to ensure ecological suitability;

[155] See glossary p. 4.
[156] See glossary p. 4.
[157] See glossary p. 4.

		f) protecting habitats of local species (terrestrial or aquatic/marine, e.g. turtle nesting grounds, mangroves, coral reefs, meadows for pollinators (butterflies), dead wood and other natural features) on or near the premises by minimising light and noise (this includes outdoor wellness areas located in or near natural habitats). The habitat must be identified, and appropriate protective measures must be clearly implemented; g) identifying and eliminating potential ecological traps on the premises (e.g. filling or covering structural cavities, gaps or small enclosed spaces that may attract wildlife into unsafe areas); h) supporting at least once a year a local/regional/national association working on biodiversity protection in the area or region; i) participating in the rewilding, maintenance, or restoration of local parks or public green areas; j) collaborating with local/regional/national authorities or NGOs on urban greening initiatives (e.g. tree planting, pollinator corridors, rooftop gardens); and/or k) hosting or lending space for biodiversity-related seminars, awareness events, or expert workshops. In some contexts (e.g. some urban areas), beehives or large insect hotels are only suitable under specific ecological and regulatory conditions (with small, natural or dispersed features preferred), and alternative initiatives should be prioritised. Is it recommended that the establishment seeks support from external expert organisations or associations to design and implement biodiversity actions, and that the initiatives are based on the biodiversity and nature-related risk and opportunity assessment (criterion 7.12). The criterion applies to both direct employees and to outsourced staff[158]/landscaping companies contracted by the establishment to carry out the maintenance of its green areas[159]. ⓘ **Note on national adaptation:** In SE, the following applies: • establishments with smaller green areas (< 1000 m2) provide at least 2 biodiversity actions, with at least 1 action done in the establishment' green areas; • establishments with larger green areas (> 1000 m2) provide at least 3 biodiversity actions, with at least 2 actions done in the establishment' green areas; and • establishments located in urban areas and/or without green areas provide at least 1 biodiversity action. **Audit evidence** During the audit, the establishment presents: • its Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)[160] for supporting the local biodiversity; and

[158] See glossary p. 4.
[159] See glossary p. 4.
[160] See glossary p. 4.

		• a record of the biodiversity interventions and evidence of bi-annual review (for re-applicants). In specific circumstances, if an external company carries out maintenance, the contractor's written policy on local biodiversity protection on the establishment's grounds is presented. During the visual inspection, and where possible, the auditor conducts samplings[161] in at least 1 green area where on-site initiatives are taken to confirm how favourable conditions for local biodiversity have been created or how habitats of local species are protected, following methodology A as described in the glossary.
7.12	*The establishment assesses biodiversity and nature-related risks and opportunities on-site. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Understanding on-site biodiversity and nature-related risks is a prerequisite for responsible land management. A structured assessment helps identify ecological values, dependencies on ecosystem services and opportunities for positive action, strengthening environmental performance and resilience.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment undertakes a biodiversity and nature-related risk and opportunity assessment. This assessment establishes a baseline for biodiversity and highlights areas of ecological sensitivity or potential improvement. This can serve as a foundational step to the establishment's sustainability targets (criterion 1.2) and to the action plan (criterion 1.3) and could be implemented prior to other biodiversity-related criteria.* *This assessment includes:* • *identification of species present (e.g. trees, shrubs, pollinator-friendly plants, birds, or other visible fauna), major habitats, potential ecological corridors (green, blue, black), wetlands and ecologically functional soils;* • *identification of pressures exerted by human activities (e.g. landscaping practices, light/noise pollution, invasive species, habitat disturbance);* • *review of dependencies on ecosystem services and potential risks (e.g. pollination, water availability, flood regulation, drought);* • *opportunities for improvement (e.g. habitat restoration, nature-based guest experiences); and* • *preparation of a site mapping (recommendation).* *The assessment is limited to areas under the establishment's control, surrounding private or public land is excluded. Establishments with green areas[162] larger than 5 hectares use an external expert or consultancy to carry the assessment. Sites with smaller green*

[161] See glossary p. 4.
[162] See glossary p. 4.

		areas[163] may complete the assessment internally, using publicly available resources (such as regional or national biodiversity grids, species databases, public mapping tools or NGO toolkits). ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents a written biodiversity assessment and nature-related risks and opportunities assessment (conducted internally or by an external expert, depending on site size) that covers the required elements, with mention of supporting references or tools used (e.g. regional/national biodiversity grids, species databases, NGO toolkits, etc.).* *In specific circumstances, where available, visual documentation or mapping of habitats and species is presented.*
7.13	*The establishment monitors biodiversity supporting habitats and species present on or around its premises. (G)*	***Relevance*** *By regularly observing and documenting species and habitats, establishments strengthen ecological learning, engage staff and guests in nature-positive practices and contribute to national and regional biodiversity data.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment carries out regular observation and documentation of biodiversity-supporting features and of species present on or around its premises. This ecological monitoring involves observing and recording species, habitats and ecological changes over time. At the establishment level, this includes assessing how well biodiversity features (e.g. green roofs, native plantings, pollinator gardens, or wildlife shelters) function to support local wildlife and identifying opportunities for improvement.* *Monitoring is conducted at least once per year and can take diverse forms, including for example:* *a) using a simple biodiversity analysis grid by staff responsible for green area[164] maintenance to independently assess, once per year, how favourable the site is for local species (e.g. diversity of plant cover, presence of microhabitats, reduced disturbances);* *b) participation in citizen science protocols (e.g. bird or insect surveys, biodiversity day's events);* *c) uploading observations or photos to public platforms;* *d) submitting data to national biodiversity databases or programmes (e.g. national bird or pollinator monitoring schemes);* *e) organising staff or guest nature walks, species monitoring days, or ecological observation workshops; and/or* *f) inviting an ecologist, biodiversity guide, nature conservation associations (e.g. local NGOs) or private ecological consultants for an informal or formal assessment.*

[163] See glossary p. 4.
[164] See glossary p. 4.

		The aim is not to demonstrate specific outcomes (e.g. certain number of species observed), but to foster a habit of regular monitoring and learning. Conformity is therefore not based on observed results, but on the establishment's consistent effort to observe, document and reflect on biodiversity presence and function. *It is recommended to use national or regional species catalogues, biodiversity databases, or international references (e.g. IUCN lists, birds, pollinator identification guides, relevant applications, etc.) to help recognise which species are most likely to be observed in the area.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents evidence of the biodiversity monitoring activities carried out (e.g. internal observation notes, completed monitoring grids, species lists, photos or screenshots from apps/citizen science platforms, etc.), demonstrating that observations have been made and documented in line with the chosen monitoring approach.*
7.14	*The establishment takes at least 1 initiative in its green areas to promote sustainable food practices. (G)*	***Relevance*** *Food systems contribute heavily to climate change, biodiversity loss and resource consumption. By raising awareness and engaging guests, staff and the community in sustainable food practices, establishments help shift behaviours toward more responsible production and consumption, fostering long-term environmental and social benefits.* ***Expectations for implementation*** *The establishment engages its associates, guests and/or the community around the importance of sustainable food practices through at least 1 awareness-raising initiative in the green areas on its premises. These initiatives are linked to the themes of food production, food waste, biodiversity, or local sourcing and aim to foster understanding and action.* *Examples of initiatives include:* *a) a fruit, herb, or vegetable garden. The garden is permanent and includes herbs and/or food-bearing plants/trees. Where possible, the establishment invites the public or local schools to visit the garden for educational purposes;* *b) a greenhouse, raised beds, or a container-based cultivation system used to grow food or native plants, especially when coupled with educational signage or integrated into guided tours, workshops, or guest/staff engagement;* *c) an outdoor kitchen, cooking area, or food preparation zone where ingredients from the garden or greenhouse are used in interactive experiences, such as cooking classes, sustainability tastings, or garden-to-table meals;* *d) a wild meadow or food forest that contributes to local biodiversity and includes edible or educational plant species;* *e) other green spaces designed to raise awareness, such as a native or climate-adaptive plant garden with interpretive signage or spaces used for sustainability workshops or school visits; and/or* *f) beehives, with the honey or wax used on site. Setting them up follows ecological guidelines and does not negatively impact wild/native pollinators. They are managed in partnership with a local expert or beekeeper.*

		Initiative(s) are clearly designated as part of the establishment's operations. Their existence and produce serve an educational function and become part of the guest experience (e.g. by using produce for food or beverages in the establishment, offering products made of the produce in the gift shop, involving the guests in the harvest, etc.) and/or are used for staff meals. Even if a green space is not visible to guests, the establishment clearly communicates its presence and purpose, e.g. short videos at the front desk, description in guest information materials, etc. *The management of a green space follows the criteria regarding the use of pesticides and fertilisers (criterion 7.8) and management procedures (criterion 7.10). The management of this space and the use of any fruits/vegetables/herbs/produce must follow national and local legislation on the matter.* *Agricultural activities that generate the main revenue or a main part of the revenue of the establishment (such as vineyards, olive farms, etc.) are not part of the Green Key scope and can therefore not be certified.* ***Audit evidence*** *During the audit, the establishment presents records of the initiative(s), including species grown (if applicable), and evidence of how these initiatives are used to engage guests, staff and/or the community in sustainable food education.* *A visual inspection confirms the initiative(s)' presence, permanence and integration into the establishment's experience.*