



ECOSTARS STANDARDS – SUSTAINABILITY CERTIFICATION FOR HOTELS

Version of this standards: v3 – March 27th, 2023



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Preamble

Ecostars is a sustainability certification for hotels with a global geographical scope, aiming to democratize and incentivize movement towards a greater sustainability, making it accessible to all hotels worldwide.

For this reason, Ecostars is a member of GSTC (Global Sustainable Tourism Council) and is pursuing the GSTC Recognition of its standards, which have been used as a guideline for Ecostars standards. In addition to that, Ecostars has been recognized and awarded by UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization) and collaborates with its Innovation department with the aim of making sustainable travel more accessible for everyone, everywhere.

Disclaimer

Sustainability evolves, being a live science. As part of this movement, Ecostars and its standards evolve too. Therefore, they are subject to modification and evolution.

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Additionally, some of our criteria cover social and environmental sciences, which are subject to interpretation. It's Ecostars' aim to offer standards and solutions to make sustainability as much quantitative, unsophisticated, and applicable to real world as possible, making a positive impact on our lives and planet and being able to measure and trace it. It's the responsibility of each hotel to adhere and implement that plan and permit a more sustainable travel.

About Ecostars

Ecostars is a sustainability certification for the world. Our aim is to, through collaboration with the other entities supporting sustainable tourism, facilitate travelers to have a lower impact on their trips, and hotels to develop more sustainable travel practices.



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SECTION A – LEGAL, ADMINISTRATIVE, AND ETHICAL COMPLIANCE

Legal, administrative, and ethical compliance is a pre-requisite and overarching principle to be applied not only to hotels, but to all organizations. Important law, administrative obligations or human ethical violations are not compatible with Ecostars standards.

1. Legal, administrative, and ethical compliance
 - a. The organization is in compliance with all applicable local, national and international legislation and regulations, which includes health, safety, labor and environmental aspects.
 - i. The organization does not employ children.
 - b. All rights related to hotel, and especially land and water rights, have been acquired in a legal manner and in compliance with local, communal, and indigenous rights, including their free, prior and informed consent, and does not require involuntary resettlement of inhabitants.
 - c. With regards to land use, and hotel planning, siting, design, construction, renovation, operation, and demolition:
 - i. Activities are in compliance with laws related to protected and sensitive areas, heritage considerations, zoning requirements, natural and cultural surroundings, and sustainable practices and materials.
 - ii. Activities have been assessed and are locally appropriate to the capacity and integrity of the surroundings.

SECTION B – ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Ecostars aims to facilitate travelers the selection of alternatives with lower environmental impact, being hence the footprint left minor, or even positive. Lower resource consumption, minor generation of waste, and better treatment to our planet and animals, not only directly but also indirectly, is incentivized.

1. Energy consumption
 - a. Energy consumption is measured by type, and actions are taken to minimize overall energetic consumption.
 - i. Digital energy monitoring is preferred.
 - b. Energy from cleaner/greener sources is preferred, especially renewable energy, either generated on-site (auto-generation) or by request to energy provider.
 - i. Boiler efficiency and usage of more sustainable fuels is encouraged.
2. Water consumption
 - a. Water consumption is measured by type, and actions are taken to minimize overall water consumption.
 - i. Digital water monitoring is preferred.
 - ii. Leakages are identified and controlled.
 - b. Water sources are indicated, and sourcing is sustainable and does not adversely affect environmental flows.
 - c. Wastewater and greywater are treated, and reused or released safely, with no adverse effects to the guests, local population or the environment.
 - d. Water risk is assessed and considered, and in areas of high-risk context-based stewardship goals are identified and pursued.
3. Waste generation and treatment
 - a. The organization understands the framework 'Reduce – Reuse – Recycle' to minimize its waste generation.
 - b. Reduce
 - i. The organization carefully manages the purchasing of consumable and disposable goods (including food), aiming to minimize waste.
 - c. Reuse
 - i. Mechanisms are in place to reduce waste, including reuse practices whenever possible.
 - ii. Reusable and refillable objects and containers are preferred, trying to reduce the use of single-dose items.
 - d. Recycle
 - i. The organization has established practices to separate waste generated and facilitate separated waste collection and recycling.
 - ii. The organization measures or weights solid waste (including food).

- iii. Residual waste disposal has no adverse effect on the local population or the environment.
 - iv. The storage, use, handling and disposal of harmful substances (incl. chemicals) are properly managed.
- 4. Procurement and supply chain
 - a. The organization has a purchasing policy that gives priority to suppliers and products that are environmentally sustainable, fair trade, and local, whenever these are available and of sufficient quality. This applies both for its physical (capital goods, food, beverages, building materials, consumables, etc.) and servicing purchases.
 - b. The use of harmful substances, including pesticides, paints, swimming pool disinfectants and cleaning materials, is minimized and substituted, when available, by innocuous products or processes.
- 5. Food, natural impact, biodiversity, and animal welfare
 - a. Food practices
 - i. The organization understands the huge impact of food on the following axes: environmental impact, animal welfare, and human health.
 - ii. Food sourcing is considered, to the extent possible, an axe of improvement in terms of sustainability development, with the organization seeking to purchase ingredients and products more natural, with lower CO2 footprint, higher animal welfare standards, and healthier for humans.
 - 1. Food produced under evident animal abuse or from endangered species is avoided.
 - b. Natural impact and biodiversity
 - i. The organization supports and contributes to biodiversity conservation and areas with natural protection and high biodiversity value, and manages its own property appropriately in accordance.
 - ii. Any disturbance of natural ecosystems is minimized and, if taken place, rehabilitated and compensated.
 - iii. The organization uses native species for landscaping and restoration wherever feasible, particularly in natural landscapes, and introduction of invasive species is avoided.
 - iv. Wildlife species are not illegally or unethically acquired, sold, traded, harvested, consumed, displayed, bred, or held captive, except for properly regulated activities and done by authorized and suitably equipped persons in compliance with local and international law.
 - v. Interactions with free roaming wildlife, taking into account cumulative impacts, are non-invasive and responsibly managed to avoid adverse effects on the animals concerned and on the viability and behaviour of populations in the wild.

- vi. Housing, care and handling of all wild and domestic animals meets the highest standards of animal welfare.
- 6. Environmental footprint and Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions
 - a. Significant greenhouse gas emissions from the organization are identified, calculated, controlled, and minimized.
 - b. Offsetting of the organization's emissions is encouraged.
 - i. If not offsetting itself, the organization may offer guests to compensate its environmental footprint.
- 7. Other direct and indirect environmental impact
 - a. The organization implements practices to minimize water, soil, erosion, air, ozone depleting, noise, light, runoff and any other type of pollution or negative externality.
 - b. Greener direct and indirect transportation alternatives are encouraged.
 - i. The organization seeks to reduce transportation requirements in its own operations.
 - ii. The organization actively encourages the use of cleaner and more resource efficient alternatives by customers, employees, and suppliers.
 - c. The organization facilitates to guests the information and infrastructure to minimize its environmental impact, both inside and outside the hotel, whenever possible and applicable.
 - i. As an example, the organization is encouraged to install electric vehicle charging stations for guests' cars.

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SECTION C – SOCIAL IMPACT

Ecostars aims to certify organizations with a strong care for the social agents with which the company coexists, not only minimizing its negative impact but delivering a positive footprint on its stakeholders, putting a special eye on its customers and guests, its employees, and the community.

1. Customers and guests
 - a. Customers and guests are offered a safe and healthy environment.
 - b. Access and information are provided for persons with special needs, where appropriate and applicable.
 - c. Customer satisfaction, including sustainability aspects, is monitored and corrective actions are taken where appropriate.
 - d. In order to minimize adverse impacts and maximize visitor fulfillment, the organization follows appropriate guidelines for the management, promotion, information, and visitor interpretation and behavior explanation of visits involving natural surroundings, local culture and cultural heritage, when applicable.
 - e. The organization has formulated and implemented a policy against commercial, sexual or any other form of exploitation and harassment, especially covering vulnerable groups (e.g. children, adolescent, women, minorities, etc.).
2. Employees
 - a. The organization offers equal employment opportunities (incl. access to management positions) without discrimination by gender, race, religion, disability or in other ways.
 - b. Labor rights are respected and working environment is secure and safe. Whenever possible, negative effects from working conditions are looked out and avoided, especially for the most vulnerable staff (e.g. housekeepers, receptionists)
 - c. Employees are paid fairly (at least a living wage) and are offered opportunities for professional advancement.
 - i. The organization could consider implementing compensation schemes that include bonus for performance, aligning company targets with individual targets.
 - d. The organization employs internal staff whenever possible, trying to reduce the outsourcing of workers, especially the most vulnerable ones (e.g. housekeepers)
3. Community
 - a. Local residents are given equal opportunity for advancement and employment, including employment in management positions.
 - b. The organization supports educational, health and/or ecological initiatives and trainings for local infrastructure and social community development.

- c. The organization supports local entrepreneurs in the development and sale of sustainable products and services that are based on the area's nature, history, and culture, whenever possible.
- d. The activities of the organization do not jeopardize or adversely affect the provision of basic services (esp. land and aquatic resource use, rights-of-way and transportation, housing, and access to food, water, energy, health, sanitation, and education) nor local access to livelihoods to neighboring communities.
- e. The organization is involved, to the extent of its possibilities and relationship with the community and surroundings, in the protection and promotion of the cultural heritage of its region.
 - i. The organization follows international, national, and local good practice and guidance for the management and promotion of visits to indigenous communities and culturally or historically sensitive sites in order to minimize adverse impacts and maximize local benefits and visitor fulfillment.
 - ii. The organization contributes to the protection, preservation and enhancement of local properties, sites and traditions of historical, archaeological, cultural and spiritual significance and does not impede access to them by local residents.
 - iii. The organization values and incorporates authentic elements of traditional and contemporary local culture in its operations, design, decoration, cuisine, or shops, and respects the intellectual property rights of local communities.
 - iv. Historical and archaeological artefacts are not sold, traded, or displayed, except as permitted by local and international law.

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SECTION D – GOVERNANCE AND BEST PRACTICES

Ecostars seeks to distinguish and support organizations with the highest standards, companies that have a role to play for a better world, and hence consider themselves actors for a fairer and more sustainable travel ecosystem.

1. Governance principles
 - a. The organization operates with integrity, objectivity, competence, confidentiality, and professionalism.
 - b. Adapted to its scale, the organization is governed by a diverse and transparently selected and compensated Board.
2. Reporting and communication
 - a. The organization communicates its sustainability policy, actions, and performance to stakeholders (including customers), and seeks their support and feedback in delivering its sustainability policy.
 - b. Greenwashing and falsehood control.
 - c. Marketing communications and promotional materials are transparent, honest, accurate and proportionated to the organization and its products and services, and do not promise more than can be delivered by the organization, especially with regards to sustainability claims.
3. Continuous improvement
 - a. Sustainability Management System (SMS)
 - i. The organization has a long-term sustainability management system (SMS) covering issues of environment, social and cultural, economic and quality, human rights, health and safety, and risk and crisis management, that is suitable to its size and scope.
 - ii. SMS is being implemented in order to drive continuous improvement, and organization' staff is engaged with its use and development.
 - b. Staff receives periodic training with respect to the dimensions and issues covered on the SMS.
 - c. The organization is involved with sustainable tourism planning and management in the destination, where such opportunities exist.

SECTION E – DIGITALIZATION

One of Ecostars differentiating factors is the understanding of sustainability not only as a social and qualitative science but as a dimension that can and must be measured, analyzed through data and technology, and consequently continuously developed. Hence, digitalization and data analytics are an important sustainability lever.

1. Data capture

- a. The organization believes in technology and data (Big Data) as an important tool to better understands its operations and ESG impact.
- b. The organization actively measures and captures data on its main consumption areas (energy, water and waste).
- c. The organization considers measuring and capturing data on additional areas related to sustainability that can be quantitatively monitored (air quality, water quality, noise, etc.).
- d. The organization considers implementing more granular data capturing methods, both in terms of:
 - i. Precision of data – more detailed and specific
 - ii. Recurrency of data capturing – more timely, aiming for real time measuring through IoT (Internet of Things).

2. Data analytics and monitoring

- a. Advanced data analytics tools are used to scan, control and analyze data captured, calculating operative, economic and ESG indicators (KPIs) that are monitored.
- b. Indicators are used to better understand organization performance and impact, leading to corrective actions when appropriate.
- c. Benchmarking of indicators is used to understand the relative performance of the organization.
- d. The effect of corrective actions is monitored through monitoring of indicators.

3. Performance reporting

- a. ESG indicators (KPIs) are determined and calculated, with historical evolution.
- b. Significant and non-confidential selected indicators are quantitatively reported as a measurement of operative and ESG performance.
- c. Reported indicators are transparent and have not been distorted or misrepresented.

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