

SUSTAINABILITY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM



Hoteles
más Verdes

Application regulations



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Hoteles más Verdes
Sustainability Certification Program
Application Regulations

Second Edition

June, 2017

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Asociación de Hoteles de Turismo de la República Argentina

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Hoteles más Verdes Sustainability Certification Program Application Regulations

INTRODUCTION

The present application regulations of the **Sustainability Certification Program “Hoteles más Verdes”**, had been made by the **Hotelier Technological Institute** (Instituto Tecnológico Hotelero, **ITH** as per its initials in Spanish), of the **Argentine Association of Tourism Hotels** (Asociación de Hoteles de Turismo de la República Argentina, **AHT**, as per its initials in Spanish) being validated by the **Argentine Standardization and Certification Institute** (Instituto Argentino de Normalización y Certificación, **IRAM**, as per its initials in Spanish) and the participation of other private and public institutions involved in the development and application of this sustainable tourism certification program for tourist lodgings in Argentina.

This document has been developed, first of all, to describe the elaboration process and the subsequent revision of the **Sustainability Certification Program “Hoteles más Verdes”** in a clear way; secondly, to detail the different ways used by companies to connect with the program; next to specify the different steps to be postulated and the alternatives that can appear in the certification process, as well as to regulate the use of the different versions of “Hoteles más Verdes” ecolabel, according to the different application levels of the certification standard.

The sustainability certification program “Hoteles más Verdes” has, since 2013, the international recognition *GSTC-Recognized* from the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), due to the fact that it has been approved by an independent evaluation process that the certification standard of the program complies with the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria established by the GSTC.

The GSTC is an international organism supported by the OMT, created to promote the dissemination of knowledge about the sustainable tourism practices and its adoption by hotels, tour operators, destinations and tourist industry. The main functions of the GSTC are the development, recognition and accreditation of the sustainable tourism certification programs in the world.

This document replace in all of its articles the first version of the Reglament from the Regulations of the Sustainable Hotel Management Protocol, published in 2012 it will be currently since may 2017 until a new version of the document will be released.

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of these regulations is the establishment of the procedures to set up and apply the Sustainable Certification Program “Hoteles más Verdes”, including the application and use of terms for the distinctive certification of the ecolabel by tourism companies.

These regulations lay down the rules to request, award, maintain and renew the Sustainable Hotel Industry Ecolabel for those hotelier establishments that prove, through evaluations and external controls, to fulfil the requirements, specifications and criteria of some of the different application levels of the standard.

Along with the use of the Ecolabel, the hotel will be awarded a Sustainable Hotel Management Conformity Certificate (hereinafter, Certificate), issued by the AHT, where it is indicated the name of the certificated company, the significance of the certification, and the application level of the standard Bronze level (before named as initial), Silver Level (before advanced), and Gold Level (before excellence).

2. AREA OF APPLICATION

These Regulations will be applicable to Argentine-based hotel establishments that have implemented a sustainable management system and voluntarily wish to obtain an independent certification of their good practices about tourist sustainability, in order to access to the ecolabel that confirms its recognition level by the AHT (Gold, Silver and Bronze).

3. COMPETENT INSTITUTIONS

3.1. Competent institutions

ITH and IRAM are the competent Institutions and entities to apply the use of the sustainability Certification Program “Hoteles más Verdes”, encouraging the participation of other stakeholders in the sustainable tourism development in Argentina, and taking care of the transparency and integrity in its application.

Notwithstanding, GSTC attributions are acknowledged regarding the recognition and its approval of the program, as an international standard of sustainable tourism certification in the terms and clauses established by this international organism in its recognition declaration.

3.2. Certification bodies and entities

Competent bodies and entities to accomplish the sustainability certification processes included in the program, will be appointed by the technical equipment from the Hoteles más Verdes Program (HMTV as per its initials in Spanish).

These institutions and bodies will guarantee that the verification of the sustainable requirements from the program are being made in

a coherent, neutral, and reliable way, by an auditing team external to the organization evaluated. On the other hand, these processes must be based in the current national rules and in the Sustainable Global Tourism Criteria approved by the GSTC for the certification of sustainable tourism companies.

4. PREPARATION AND REVIEW OF THE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

4.1. *Elaboration of the certification program*

ITH developed the requirements, specifications and criteria set out in the Standards as well as these application regulations. For this, it consulted other competent institutions and organizations and made them become involved.

4.2. *Review of the Certification Program*

HMV will be authorized to do any review or modification of the certification standard, as well as the present regulations, specially to adequate it according to the changes in the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria approved by the GSTC and with the objective of maintaining the international recognition status of this program.

For this, bodies and institutions included in the point 3.1 must be consulted and collaborate when it comes to review the system. These bodies and institutions can suggest to HMV the beginning of the review process.

HMV will ensure that those responsible for the preparation or system review demonstrate to possess specialized knowledge and accredited experience in the field of hospitality and sustainable tourism, as well as the ability to direct the process with neutrality and in accordance with these regulations, for which may have expert and independent technical assistance.

4.2.1. Documentation needed for the review

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

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

4.2.2. Mandatory review

The Program as a whole shall be necessarily reviewed every six years from the date of its latest total or partial review, remaining unaltered if the assessment is not necessary. Such review shall be implemented as set out in these regulations.

4.2.3. Validation of the review

Program reviews shall be validated and approved by HMV.

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

5. LINK TO THE SUSTAINABILITY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

5.1. Preliminary Information about the Program

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

5.2. Adhesion of the Ecolabelling Program

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

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

5.3. Sustainability certification

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

5.3.1. Bronze level Certification

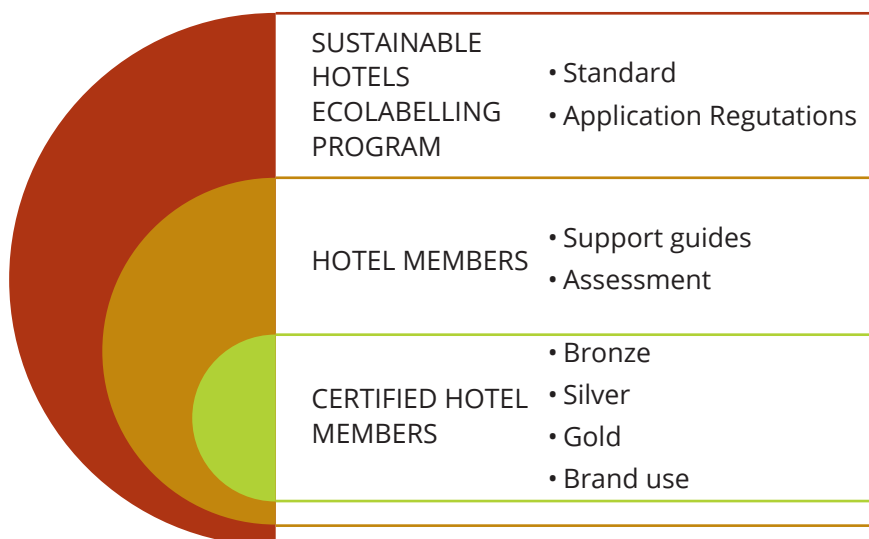
The audit to verify the compliance of the established requirements for the Bronze Level through the conformity evaluation will be made by the ITH audit team appointed for such purpose.

The certification will have with the recognition and validation of HMV.

5.3.2. Silver and Gold levels certification

The audit to verify the compliance of the established requirements for the Silver and Gold Levels through the conformity evaluation will be made by the ITH audit team appointed for such purpose.

The certification will have the recognition and validation of HMV.



6. REQUEST, AWARD, MAINTENANCE AND RENEWAL OF THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT ECOLABEL

6.1. Request of Sustainability Certification Program Membership

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

After receiving such request, HMV will open a file and provide the companies' web access to the support of the program tools.

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

As from the date of becoming a member of the Program, the hotel will have a maximum one-year period to request the certification audit from the competent bodies. If after the expiration of this term the hotel has not submitted such request, the file will be closed, it shall be notified about its membership cessation.

6.2. Certification request

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

Once the request is received, HMV will transmit it to the auditing body for the purpose of planning the audit process.

6.3. Certification process

6.3.1. Audit dates

The process to assess conformity with the Standard will be carried out on the agreed-upon dates among the hotel, HMV and the certification body, depending on the sustainable management level in which the hotel applies to be certified.

Requests with audit dates exceeding three months will not be considered.

6.3.2. Audit Certification

The assessment of the conformity with the Protocol requirements and criteria will take place through a qualified auditor's visit to the hotel, for the length of time and under the system established by the audit procedures of HMV, ITH and IRAM, or those of any other competent body authorized.

The designated auditor will send an audit plan to the hotel, sufficiently in advance so that the management of the establishment can plan his visit and ensure the availability of the facilities and the necessary interlocutors for the performance of the audit.

6.3.3. Audit report

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

6.3.4. Management of non-conformities

When the report includes non-conformities with the Standards, the hotel shall prepare a Corrective Actions Plan that specifies the activities or actions the hotel management has performed to correct the deviations detected and send them to HMV. The auditor must review and issue a resolution within a maximum of 1 month after the corrective actions

plan has been received. If such resolution is positive, the proposal to award the Ecolabel at the applicable level will be submitted to HMV.

6.4. Ecolabel award or refusal

6.4.1. Ecolabel award

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

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

6.4.2. Compliance with the immediately lower level

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

6.4.3. Ecolabel refusal

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

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

6.5. Certification maintenance

6.5.1. Certificate Validation

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

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

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

6.5.2. Validation Terms

6.5.2.1. Bronze Level of Aplicación

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

6.5.2.2. Silver and Gold Levels of Application

The term established for the Silver and Gold Levels of Application is one year.

6.5.3. Certificate Renewal

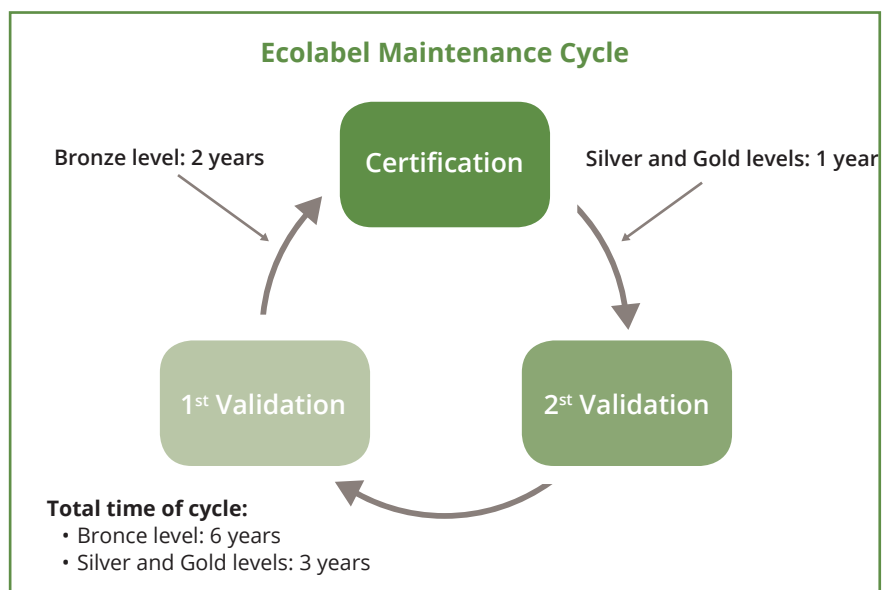
The effective period of the certification and use of the Ecolabel by a hotel is established depending on the certified level, provided that the organization evidences that the original conditions in which the certification was awarded remain the same through the validations made by the competent organizations.

6.5.3.1. Renewal of the Bronze level certificate

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

6.5.3.2. Renewal of the Silver and gold Levels certificate

The term established for the renewal of the Silver and Gold levels certificate is three years.



6.5.3.3. Training

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

- a) For the Bronze level, an annual six-hour training per employee.
- b) For the Silver level, an annual twelve-hour training per employee.
- c) For the Gold level, an annual fifteen-hour training per employee.

Training methods and themes made by hotels must be validated by the auditor during the audit process.

6.5.4. Commitments of certified hotels

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

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

6.6. Certificate Revocation

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

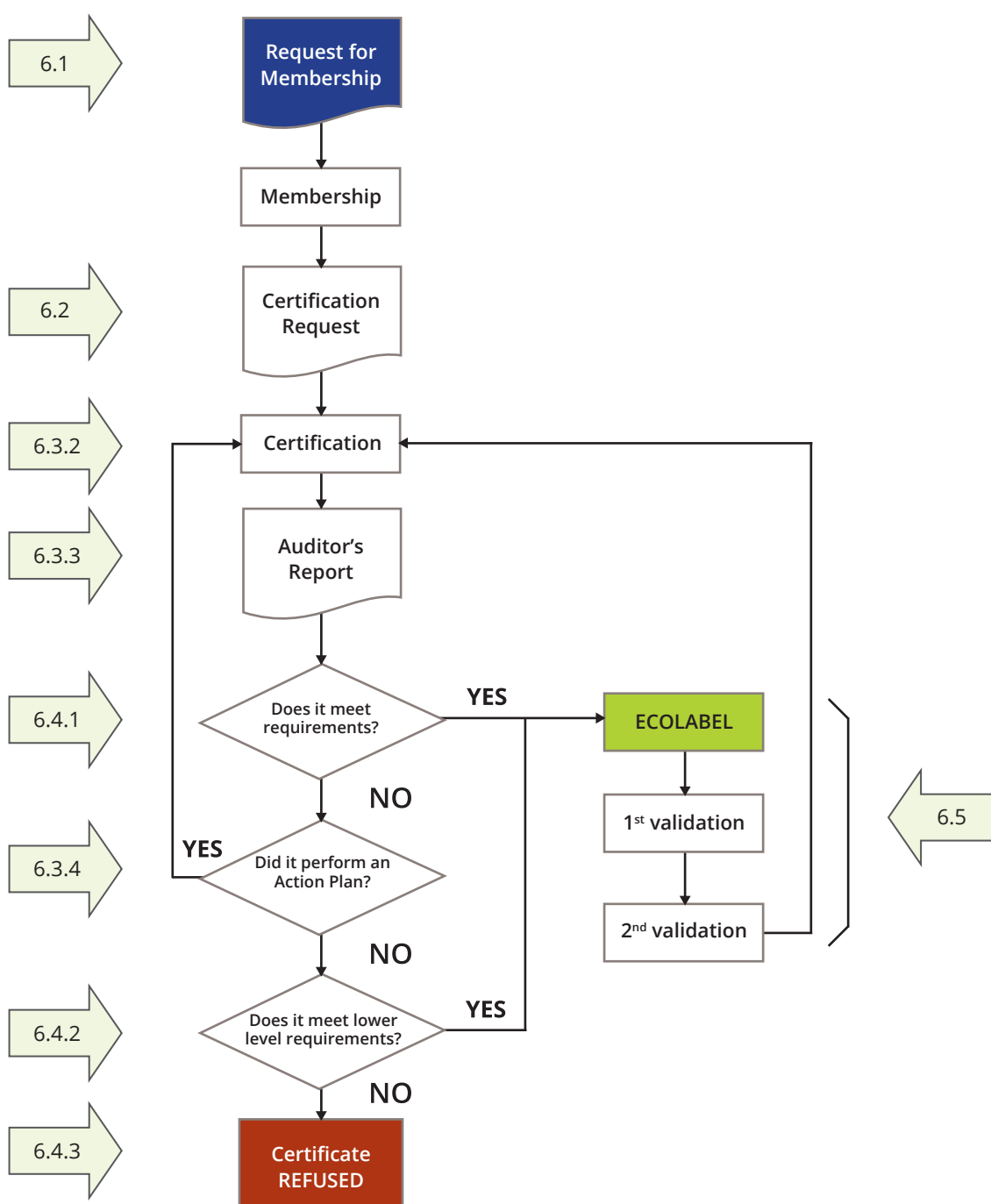
- a) When the hotel has been penalized for a serious noncompliance with effective laws.
- b) When a fraudulent or misleading use of the Ecolabel is verified.
- c) When the conditions under which the Certificate was awarded are no longer in place.
- d) When the hotel's Management expressly waives the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

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

7. CERTIFIED HOTELS REGISTER

Diagram representing stages and link to the Program

HMV will maintain an updated Register of hotels to which the Ecolabel has been awarded, the purpose of which is to inform the public and interested parties of the concession, validity of the Certification and the level reached. The Registry will be available to the public.



8. PROMOTION OF THE SUSTAINABILITY CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

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

These action plans will include information, awareness and training campaigns, aimed to promote the adoption of the system and of sustainable tourism global criteria among the Argentine tourist sector, and also to foster marketing campaigns among consumers, customers, tourists and public in general.

As the owner of this certification program, the AHT commits to spread and promote the ecolabel "Hoteles más Verdes" in the tourism markets, encouraging its recognition by the operators, institutions and national and international organizations linked to the sustainable tourism.

9. THE ECOLABEL "HOTELES MÁS VERDES"

9.1. Trademark

The **ecolabel "Hoteles más Verdes"** is a trademark managed by AHT. This trademark is subject to legal registration in Argentina and in other countries to ensure protection of its rights of use.

9.2. Vested Rights of the Distinction

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

9.3. Enabled Hotels

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

9.4. Use of the Ecolabel

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

9.5. Isologotype

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

10. CONFIDENTIALITY

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

Annex I. Isologotype

The **ecolabel “Hoteles más Verdes”** is a certification that is delivered to hotels in order to prove a sustainable management respectful with the environment, socially respectful with the community and with the tourist destination where the tourist activity is developed.

According to the characteristics fulfillment mentioned before, a specific certification is given. **“Gold”** certification corresponding with the highest level; **“Silver”** certification, corresponding with the medium level and **“Bronze”** certification corresponding with the lower level.

The sustainability certification programs will have the following ecolabel versions for each of the three application levels of the system.

Bronze level:



Silver Level:



Gold Level:



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

Requirements:

A.II.1. They shall be ensured at any time that institutional activities and those of management bodies or branches do not affect the confidentiality, objectivity and impartiality of the Ecolabelling system conformity assessment activities.

A.II.2. They shall be ensured independence of criteria and the absence of conflicts of interest with the Sustainability Certification Program member organizations.

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

A.II.4. They shall be ensured that it will be able to perform the conformity assessment and certification tasks assigned thereto in these Regulations, both if it is carried out by the own staff of both institutions or if it is carried out by third parties on its behalf and under their charge.

A.II.5. They must have:

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

Duties:

A.II.6. Of the AHT's program "Hoteles más Verdes"

- a) Validate the requirements, specifications and criteria set out in the protocol.
- b) Validate these application regulations.
- c) Validate the support material of the program.
- d) Elaborate and validate the isologotype and its brand versions or sustainable management ecolabel and its use conditions.
- e) Establish inspection and verification process of the requirements compliance of the system in the hotels which have been eco labeled.

- f) Establish the rates, taxes, and use fees of the ecolabel and verification process.
- g) Have the information, models, and access questionnaire for the hotel adhesion to the system
- h) Provide the adhered hotels with the documentation needed to start the implementation and certification process.
- i) Manage the audit request.
- j) Establish the verification and evaluation process of the protocol conformity.
- k) Approve or deny the ecolabel license.
- l) Maintain an updated register of the adhered hotels to the system and of the certificate hotels.
- m) Establish procedures that will regulate the revocation or annulation of the certificated hotels.
- n) Establish and lead the corresponding action plans for the program action.
- o) Keep the compliance in general of the system and the principles of these regulations.

A.II.7. Of ITH

- a) Validate the requirements, specifications and criteria established in the standard.
- b) Validate and accomplish these application regulations.
- c) Validate the support material of the program.
- d) Establish inspection processes and verification of compliance with system requirements in the hotels to which the ecolabel has been granted.
- e) Suggest to HMV the approval or refusal of the ecolabel use for the audited hotels.
- f) Report to HMV of any incident that can derive in an objective revocation of annulation of the certificate.
- g) Cooperate with HMV in the promotion of the Sustainability Certification Program.

A.II.8. Of IRAM

- a) Validate the requirements, specifications and criteria established in the protocol.
- b) Validate and respect this protocol.
- c) Validate the support material of the program

- d) Validate the evaluation and certification process of the ecolabelling standard conformity with Silver and Gold levels.
- e) Suggest to HMV the approval or refusal of the use of Ecolabel by audited hotels.
- f) Inform to HMV of any incident that can be objective cause for the revocation or annulation of the certificate.
- g) Collaborate with HMV in the promotion of the Sustainability Certification Program.

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**Sustainability Certification Program
HOTELES MÁS VERDES**

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