

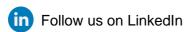
## Sustainability programme Swisstainable.

# Guidelines.

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## 1 SUSTAINABILITY IN SWISS TOURISM

## Why a sustainability programme for Swiss tourism?

Sustainability is no longer just a buzzword but plays an important role in the Swiss economy. Sustainability will continue to gain in importance as a criterion, particularly in view of demand from guests. Switzerland is also called upon to make an active contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the federal government's sustainability strategy and to implement these at a national level.

Sustainable development is highly relevant for the future development and positioning of Switzerland as a tourist destination – a sustainable tourism offering is a locational advantage in international competition.

Coherent and credible strategic positioning and implementation in the area of sustainability is a good fit for Switzerland as a tourist destination and has great potential for differentiation. There are already numerous tourism providers in Switzerland that are committed to sustainable development. However, it is difficult for guests to categorise the various offers in terms of sustainability.

The sustainability programme Swisstainable aims to motivate Swiss tourism, together with its stakeholders, to achieve a more sustainable development of Switzerland as a tourist destination and to make the sustainability efforts and activities of tourism service providers more visible to guests.

## 1.2 Sustainable development in tourism

The term «sustainability» is often used and sometimes interpreted in different ways. In the context of tourism, «sustainability» is understood to mean tourism development that:

- in addition to **economic performance** (strengthening the regional economy, long-term investment planning, etc.)
- ecological responsibility (energy efficiency and use of renewable energies, minimisation of adverse effects on natural resources such as nature and landscape, air, water, soil, etc.)
- and **social solidarity** (equal treatment, health, quality of life, education, participation, etc.)
- as well as the right to organise and maintain the options of future generations (grandchildren compatibility).

If quality means fulfilling customer expectations, sustainability means acting in the interests of future generations. In addition to the expectations of guests, sustainability must also take into account the demands of other stakeholders (stakeholder groups), whereby the natural environment must also be understood as a stakeholder.

If, on the other hand, sustainability is only used as a marketing term and cannot be experienced by the guest and is not communicated transparently, the commitment appears unattractive and untrustworthy.

Sustainable business management by the individual players in a tourism region forms the basis for sustainable experiences. However, only concrete offers make it possible to make the

commitment visible, to valorise sustainability aspects and thus to increase one's own attractiveness as a tourism provider and tourism destination.

## 1.3 Categorising the sustainability efforts of Swiss tourism

The sustainability programme Swisstainable is embedded in international and national strategies. These framework documents and reference works set out the objectives of sustainable (tourism) development. The most relevant of these include:

Sustainable Development Goals: At international level, efforts to achieve sustainable development are based on the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are to be achieved globally and by all UN member states by 2030. Switzerland is also called upon to implement the goals nationally.

While tourism is explicitly mentioned in some SDGs, it can directly or indirectly influence the implementation of most of the goals. The various sustainability topic areas of the sustainability check in the programme can be assigned to the individual goals.

GSTC Criteria: The criteria of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) aim to create a common understanding of sustainable tourism. They serve as a global basic standard for sustainability in the travel and tourism sector and are used for education, political decisionmaking, measurement and evaluation as well as a basis for certification. The orientation towards the GSTC criteria is relevant in the programme for the recognition of sustainability certificates.

The Confederation's Sustainable Development Strategy: In the 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy, the Federal Council sets out how it intends to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development over the next ten years. In the strategy, the Federal Council enshrines sustainable development as an important requirement for all federal policy areas. The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals form the reference framework for the strategy.

The Confederation's Tourism Strategy: With its tourism policy, the Confederation aims to contribute to an internationally competitive tourism industry and to an attractive and efficient tourism location in Switzerland. Sustainability and subsidiarity are named as the central principles of action. Accordingly, the guidelines and objectives of the Federal Council's current Sustainable Development Strategy are "fundamentally taken into account" when implementing the Confederation's tourism policy.

Switzerland Tourism strategy: In its 2025-2027 strategy, Switzerland Tourism has defined «Swisstainable» as one of its priorities and aims to promote sustainable travel in the long term. One of the goals is for Switzerland to be credibly recognised as a sustainability leader. The Swisstainable programme is intended to make a concrete contribution to implementing this strategy by making sustainability efforts visible and supporting tourism service providers in their commitment.

## 2 SWISSTAINABLE - THE SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMME OF SWISS TOURISM

#### 2.1 Goals and contents

Swiss tourism is aware of its responsibility towards the environment, society and the economy and would like to make a concrete contribution to the sustainable development with its sustainability programme. Specifically, the sustainability programme pursues the following objectives:

- Collection, bundling and communication of the activities and offers of tourism service providers in the area of sustainability
- Supporting the commitment of service providers to the comprehensive sustainable development of Swiss tourism
- Positioning Switzerland as a sustainable destination in the international travel market

The sustainability programme aims to give visibility to the sector's commitment and support tourism service providers in their efforts towards the comprehensive sustainable development of Swiss tourism. Existing certifications, initiatives and programmes are integrated and recognised, provided they meet certain standards. The programme does not constitute a new certification.

The focus of the sustainability programme is on tourism businesses/organisations. This includes tourism and tourism-related businesses as well as destination management organisations (DMO) and tourism organisations (TO). For the sake of simplicity, the term «business» is used in the following. The sustainability programme is applicable to different business categories and thus takes into account the cross-sectional nature of tourism.

In order to make the programme accessible to as many businesses as possible with different starting positions, there are three different participation options (levels) with different approaches and requirements.

## 2.2 Requirements and benefits

The sustainability programme is open to all tourism businesses in Switzerland from all tourism sectors. Participation is possible both for businesses that are just starting out on the path towards more sustainable development and for businesses that already have comprehensive sustainability certification.

The prerequisite for participation is that the business or organisation is willing to contribute to a more sustainable Swiss tourism and confirms this by signing the commitment to sustainability.

The commitment forms the basis of the programme and contains statements on the values and responsibility of the business/organisation. By signing the commitment, the industry associations and all participating businesses commit to making a contribution to the sustainable development of Swiss tourism in all dimensions of sustainability.

In addition, participation in the programme obliges you to introduce specific sustainability measures and to pay the annual fee (see table below).

**Table 1: Overview of annual contributions** 

Category	Level I – committed	Level II – engaged	Level III – leading
Annual contribution standard	CHF 300	CHF 250	CHF 200
Annual contribution micro-entreprise (1-10 employees/FTE)	CHF 150	CHF 125	CHF 100
Annual contribution member* (20% discount)	CHF 240	CHF 200	CHF 160
Annual contribution micro-entreprise member* (20% discount)	CHF 120	CHF 100	CHF 80

<sup>\*</sup> Direct membership of one of the following Swisstainable partner organizations applies:

GastroSuisse, HotellerieSuisse, Swiss Parks Network, Parahotellerie Schweiz, RDK, Switzerland Tourism, Swiss Alpine Club SAC, Swiss Travel Association, Swiss Tourism Federation, Cable Cars Switzerland, Swiss Snowsports, Association of Public Transport, Association of Swiss Shipping Companies, Association of Swiss Tourism Managers and zooschweiz.

For consolidated registrations we grant a contribution reduction of 10% to groups.

Contributions in CHF excluding VAT

Swisstainable partner businesses derive direct economic benefits from participating in the sustainability programme:

- Review and further develop own business in terms of sustainability.
- Becoming more competitive with regard to the growing target group of guests with an affinity for sustainability.
- Promoted as a responsible business by tourism umbrella organisations (associations, Swiss Tourism Federation, Switzerland Tourism).
- Increasing attractiveness on the labour market.
- Benefit from the exchange within the Swisstainable community.
- Making an important contribution to sustainable development in Switzerland.

Swisstainable partner businesses are part of a network that promotes the exchange of knowledge and expertise within the sector:

Support from the Swisstainable office of the Swiss Tourism Federation with the registration process and with questions about the sustainability programme (submission of documents, level changes, credential of sustainability, etc.).

- Access to the Swisstainable network, provision of relevant contacts and know-how in the field of tourism and sustainability by the Swisstainable office as well as networking opportunities and joint learning within the Swisstainable community.
- Participation in webinars and Q&A sessions on relevant topics for Swisstainable and sustainability in tourism.
- Attractive price reductions as a Swisstainable partner business, e.g. for events such as the Sustainable Tourism Days.
- Direct access to services and other projects of the Competence Centre for Sustainability (KONA) of the Swiss Tourism Federation.

Swisstainable partner businesses benefit from greater visibility:

- Use of the Swisstainable brand with level addition (I committed, II engaged, III leading) to position your own business.
- Cooperation with Switzerland Tourism enables effective marketing of Swisstainable and creates spillover effects for participating businesses.
- Interface with Switzerland Tourism grants listing on switzerland.com with corresponding addition as Swisstainable establishment.
- Recommendation and selection of Swisstainable businesses by the Swisstainable office for specific marketing campaigns by partner organisations in the area of sustainability (e.g. special inserts, campaigns, events).
- Presence within Swisstainable's partner communication (Swisstainable-Newsletter, LinkedIn, Swisstainable-Hub, etc.).

Further information on how the programme fits into Switzerland Tourism's overall strategy and Swisstainable campaigns can be found here.

#### 2.3 Overview

Taking into account the different starting positions and depending on the existing commitment. there are three different levels in the sustainability programme. The three levels are differentiated by different requirements.

Signing the commitment forms the basis for all three levels. For level I – committed and level II – engaged, a sustainability check is required, the analysis of which leads to specific measures. Those who can already provide recognised credential of sustainability can apply for Level II – engaged or Level III - leading.

Illustration 1: Three levels of the sustainability programme

Level I committed	Commitment to sustainability	Sustainability check	Sustainability measures	-
Level II engaged	Commitment to sustainability	Sustainability check	Sustainability measures	Sustainability credentials level II
Level III leading	Commitment to sustainability	_	=	Sustainability credentials level III

Credential of sustainability refers to recognised certifications, labels, initiatives or programmes that demonstrate a specific commitment in at least one area of sustainability or a combination of two such credentials (in accordance with the manual of recognised credentials).

## 3 THE THREE LEVELS OF THE SUSTAINABILITY **PROGRAMME**

#### 3.1 Level I – committed

Level I – committed of the sustainability programme is aimed at businesses that do not (yet) have any certifications or other credential of sustainability, but are committed to sustainable corporate management – hence «committed» - and would like to continuously develop their business in the direction of sustainability. The requirements are:



- Signing the commitment to sustainable development
- Name of the person or team responsible for sustainability
- Carrying out a sustainability analysis (self-declaration) with the help of the sustainability check
- Designation of at least 3 specific measures to be implemented within the next 3 years in the plan of measures

## 3.2 Level II – engaged

Level II – engaged of the sustainability programme is aimed at businesses that are committed to sustainable corporate management and have already developed their business in the direction of sustainability. Level II – engaged can be achieved by businesses that already have one or more recognised sustainability certificates – hence «engaged». Evidence that demonstrates a specific commitment in at least one area of sustainability or a combination of two such certificates (in accordance with the manual of recognised credentials) will be taken into account. The requirements are:



- Signing the commitment to sustainable development
- Name of the person or team responsible for sustainability
- Carrying out a sustainability analysis (self-declaration) with the help of the sustainability check
- Submission of an external verification or a combination of at least two verifications of specifically implemented sustainability aspects (in accordance with the manual of recognised credentials)
- Designation of at least 3 specific measures to be implemented within the next 3 years in the plan of measures

## 3.3 Level III - leading

Level III – leading of the sustainability programme is aimed at businesses that are committed to sustainable corporate management and want to continuously and coherently develop their business in the direction of sustainability – hence the term «leading». Level III – leading can be achieved by businesses that already have a recognised sustainability certification.



Comprehensive certifications that cover all dimensions of sustainability and are regularly audited externally are taken into account. The requirements are:

- Signing the <u>commitment</u> to sustainable development
- Name of the person or team responsible for sustainability
- Documentation of a recognised sustainability certificate for level III leading (in accordance with the manual of recognised credentials)
- Optional: Carry out a sustainability analysis (self-declaration) with the help of the sustainability check

## 3.4 Which level for my business?

Which level is suitable for a business depends primarily on whether it already has recognised sustainability certificates. Businesses that already have one or more of the listed certificates can aim for level II - engaged or Level III - leading. All other businesses start with level I committed.

Businesses first use the manual of recognised credentials to check whether one or more recognised certificates can already be presented.

sustainability credential Yes One credential (from list "Level At least two credentials (from At least one credential (from At least one credential (from list "Level III") II combination") list "Level II in combination" list "Level II direct")

Illustration 2: Which level is right for my business?

The manual of recognised credentials provides an overview of the recognised certifications, initiatives and programmes. If a business is already in the process or decides to develop a new certificate, the level can be changed at any time if the corresponding certificate is available.

## 4 REALISATION OF THE REQUIREMENTS

## 4.1 Commitment

The commitment forms the basis of the sustainability programme. It contains statements on the values and responsibility of the business. It also shows the 12 sustainability aspects that are to be assessed in the sustainability check with the help of two sub-aspects each.

The commitment is signed by the Managing Director and the Sustainability Officer. The employees are informed. The business can also use the commitment in its external communications.

## 4.2 Sustainability check

The sustainability check serves as a tool for systematically assessing the business' own activities in the area of sustainability. It takes into account the sustainability dimensions of environment, society and economy, incorporates the statements from the commitment and concretises these with two sustainability aspects in each case.

The sustainability check is used for internal analyses. Evidence for assessing the degree of fulfilment is not required. No minimum value has to be achieved, and the assessment is not published. The self-assessment should help the business to recognise strengths and weaknesses and serve as a basis for deriving measures.

Ideally, the sustainability check is developed together with employees or in a working group with representatives from different departments/divisions.

#### 4.3 Plan of measures

One requirement for level I – committed and level II – engaged is to define at least three measures on different aspects of sustainability that will be implemented over the next three years. These measures are recorded in the plan of measures.

No plan of measures is required for level III – leading because they already develop improvement measures as part of the certification process.

The sustainability check serves as inspiration and a basis for determining measures. The measures should be aimed in particular at eliminating weak points. However, they can also focus on partial aspects that contribute to the business' profile.

The individual action steps are planned in detail in the plan of measures with responsibilities and deadlines.

## 4.4 Manual of recognised credentials

For Swisstainable level II – engaged and level III – leading participation, a recognised credential of sustainability must also be submitted.

The manual with brief descriptions of the references and links to the relevant organisations can be found here.

#### 4.4.1 Recognised credentials

The differences between the various sustainability certificates are considerable. Among other things, the sustainability certificates differ in terms of the level of requirements, thematic breadth, binding nature, processes and verification. Swisstainable therefore recognises them at different levels: There are certificates for level III – leading, individual and combined certificates for level II - engaged. The certificates must fulfil certain minimum requirements and are reviewed by an external group of experts from the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts.

## 4.4.2 Recognition of further credentials

The list of recognised certificates is reviewed on an ongoing basis and amended as necessary. The Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts expert group decides on the recognition of new certificates.

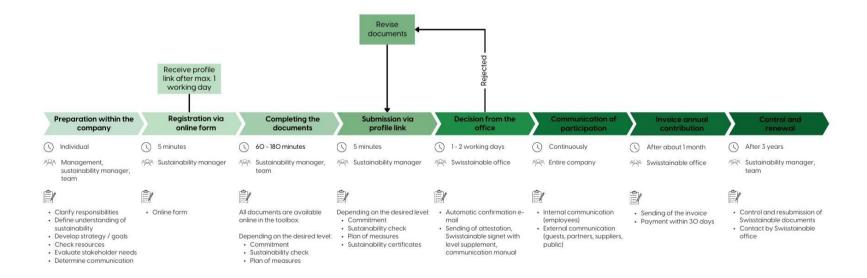
Organisations (e.g. foundations) and businesses (e.g. hotel groups) that offer a sustainability certificate that is not yet on the list of recognised certificates can submit an application for recognition. Applications should be sent to the Swisstainable office at swisstainable@stv-fst.ch.

## 5 STEPS FOR PARTICIPATION

## Swisstainable registration process

All businesses wishing to participate in the sustainability programme register using the registration form. The business will then receive further information on registration and how to upload all the required documents by e-mail A step-by-step guide to the Swisstainable registration process can be found here and is described in detail in the following illustration.

Illustration 3: Swisstainable registration process



Depending on the existing sustainability commitment, which can be proven by means of recognised evidence, the business can aim for level I - committed, level II - engaged or level III - leading.

#### 1.5.1 Procedure: Level I – committed

The procedure for participating in level I – committed of the sustainability programme consists of the following steps:

#### 1. Preparation

Businesses inform themselves about Swisstainable (strategy, manual, webinars on Swisstainable, etc.).

A person or team is appointed to ensure the implementation of the business' sustainability requirements (if not already in place). The preparation of the sustainability check is planned, and employees are informed about the sustainability commitment and the planned steps.

#### 2. Registration

Businesses can register for the programme here and will promptly receive all information on registration and uploading the necessary documents by e-mail.

#### 3. Signing of the commitment

The commitment can be downloaded as a PDF and is signed by the CEO/Director/Managing Director and the Sustainability Officer.

#### 4. Carrying out the sustainability check

The self-assessment should help to recognise the strengths and weaknesses of the business in the three dimensions of sustainability and serve as a basis for deriving measures. If possible, the sustainability check should be carried out as a team (management, sustainability team, employees from different departments/areas, etc.). When assessing the individual aspects in the team, ideas and measures are often already put forward as to how sustainability could be improved in the relevant area. These ideas can be noted right next to the assessment.

#### 5. Derivation of measures

Based on the self-analysis using sustainability checks, at least three measures relating to different aspects of sustainability must be planned and implemented over the next three years. The measures must be new and not yet fully completed when the Swisstainable documents are submitted

#### 6. Submission of information

The participating businesses submit the following documents:

Documents and information	Submission
Signed commitment	upload
Sustainability check, filled in as Excel or directly in the Swisstainable profile	upload or complete online
Completed plan of measures with at least three measures	upload

#### 7. Payment of the annual contribution

After submission of the documents and successful classification into a level, the Swisstainable office sends a digital invoice for payment of the annual contribution. The businesses receive a new invoice every year.

#### 8. Decision of the office

Once the documents have been successfully checked, the Swisstainable office issues the attestation of confirmation and the Swisstainable signet, which is valid for three years.

#### 9. Inspection and renewal

The participating businesses implement the planned measures. After three years, they are asked by the Swisstainable office to report on the implementation status of the submitted sustainability measures. They must also define three new measures to be implemented over the next three years.

A change to a different level is possible at any time after providing the corresponding credential of sustainability.

## 1.5.2 Procedure: Level II – engaged

The procedure for participating in level II – engaged of the sustainability programme consists of the following steps:

#### 1. Preparation

Businesses inform themselves about Swisstainable (strategy, manual, webinars on Swisstainable, etc.).

A person or team is appointed to ensure the implementation of the business' sustainability requirements (if not already in place). The preparation of the sustainability check is planned, and employees are informed about the sustainability commitment and the planned steps.

#### 2. Registration

Businesses can register for the programme here and will receive all information on registration and uploading the necessary documents by e-mail as soon as possible.

#### 3. Signing of the commitment

The commitment can be downloaded as a PDF and is signed by the CEO/Director/Managing Director and the Sustainability Officer.

#### 4. Carrying out the sustainability check

The self-assessment should help to recognise the strengths and weaknesses of the business in the three dimensions of sustainability and serve as a basis for deriving measures. If possible, the sustainability check should be carried out as a team (management, sustainability team, employees from different departments/areas, etc.). When assessing the individual aspects in the team, ideas and measures are often already put forward as to how sustainability could be improved in the relevant area. These ideas can be noted right next to the assessment.

#### 5. Derivation of measures

Based on the self-analysis using sustainability checks, at least three measures relating to different aspects of sustainability must be planned and implemented over the next three years. The measures must be new and not yet fully completed when the Swisstainable documents are submitted.

The measures primarily concern the elimination of weak points from the sustainability check or to raise the profile of the business.

#### 6. Preparation of the credential of sustainability

Official documents such as certificates, contracts or other documents are considered as credentials. It must be clear which credential is involved and how long it is valid. The participating business prepares the relevant certificate so that it can be uploaded as a result.

#### 7. Submission of information

The participating businesses submit the following documents:

Documents and information	Submission
Signed commitment	upload
Sustainability check, filled in as Excel or directly in the Swisstainable profile	upload or complete online
Completed plan of measures with at least three measures	upload
Sustainability credential according to the manual of recognised credentials	upload

#### 8. Payment of the annual contribution

After submission of the documents and successful classification into a level, the Swisstainable office sends a digital invoice for payment of the annual contribution. The businesses receive a new invoice every year.

#### 9. Decision of the office

Once all documents have been successfully checked, the Swisstainable office issues the attestation of confirmation and the Swisstainable signet. The period of validity of the attestation is linked to the validity of the credential submitted.

#### 10. Inspection and renewal

The participating businesses implement the planned measures. After three years, they are asked by the Swisstainable office to report on the implementation status of the submitted sustainability measures. They must also define three new measures to be implemented over the next three years.

If a submitted certificate loses its validity before this first check of the plan of measures, a current certificate must be sent to the Swisstainable office.

A change to a different level is possible at any time after providing the corresponding credential of sustainability.

## 1.5.3 Procedure: Level III – leading

The procedure for participating in level III – leading of the sustainability programme consists of the following steps::

#### 1. Preparation

Businesses inform themselves about Swisstainable (strategy, manual, webinars on Swisstainable, etc.).

A person or team is appointed to ensure the implementation of the business' sustainability requirements (if not already in place). The preparation of the sustainability check is planned, and employees are informed about the sustainability commitment and the planned steps.

#### 2. Registration

Businesses can register for the programme here and will promptly receive all information on registration and uploading the necessary documents by e-mail.

#### 3. Signing of the commitment

The commitment can be downloaded as a PDF and is signed by the CEO/Director/Managing Director and the Sustainability Officer.

#### 4. Carrying out the sustainability check & deriving measures (optional)

Completing the sustainability check is recommended but is not mandatory for level III leading. The development of new measures in the plan of measures is also optional.

### 5. Preparation of the credential of sustainability

The certification confirmation (certificate) is considered as a credential. It must be clear which certificate is involved and how long it is valid. The participating business prepares the corresponding certificate so that it can be submitted to the Swisstainable office.

#### 6. Submission of information

The participating businesses submit the following documents:

Documents	Submission
Signed commitment	upload
Sustainability credential according to the manual of recognised credentials	upload

#### 7. Payment of the annual contribution

After submission of the documents and successful classification into a level, the Swisstainable office sends a digital invoice for payment of the annual contribution. The businesses receive a new invoice every year

#### 8. Decision of the office

Once all documents have been successfully checked, the Swisstainable office issues the attestation and the Swisstainable signet. The period of validity of the attestation is linked to the validity of the credential submitted.

#### 9. Inspection and renewal

The participating businesses implement the measures defined as part of their certification. After the certification expires, the businesses are required to provide credential of certification again.

## 5.2 Further support

Further information is available in addition to this manual:

- Toolbox | FAQs: Here you will find the most important links, documents and questions and answers about the sustainability programme.
- Factsheet added value programme participation: The document explains the benefits and services of participating in the programme.
- Webinars | Q&A Sessions: Information on upcoming Swisstainable webinars and Q&A sessions can be found there. In addition, all past webinars are available for review.
- Swisstainable-Hub: With stories and good practice examples from Swisstainable and Swisstainable Destination service providers.
- Communication manual: The document is used by Swisstainable businesses to communicate their participation in the programme after successful classification in one of the three levels.
- Sustainability communication toolbox: This toolbox provides helpful tips and tricks on how to effectively raise the profile of your commitment to sustainability.
- As well as all other required documents, including in English.

If you have any questions about the sustainability programme, please contact the Swisstainable office at swisstainable@stv-fst.ch.

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