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SUSTAINABILITY PROTOCOL FOR SMES ACCOMMODATION

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1 INTRODUCTION

The development of this Sustainability Protocol (Deliverable D.2.4.1) is the result of a progressive and structured process carried out within Work Package 2 (WP2) of the MAST project, the remit of which is to define a sustainability framework for SME accommodation facilities. Prior deliverables established the foundation for the current document through a sequence of analytical and design activities.

Specifically, the deliverable D.2.1.1 entailed a comprehensive mapping and analysis of the ISO 21401:2018 standard, leading to the identification of its fundamental principles, criteria, and indicators pertinent to the sustainable management of accommodation services. This work enabled the project team to interpret the standard in a way that aligns with the characteristics and constraints of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Mediterranean tourism sector.

Deliverable D.2.2.1 concentrated on identifying the specific sustainability needs and challenges faced by SMEs in the partner regions, while the function of Deliverable D.2.3.1 was to perform a gap analysis between these needs and the ISO 21401 requirements. This comparison clarified which operational areas required targeted support and customisation.

The present protocol (D.2.4.1) integrates all previous findings and serves as a foundational framework to support the transition of SME accommodation providers towards a sustainable management system. It outlines the practices that these establishments should adopt to align with environmental, social, and economic requirements, as derived from ISO 21401:2018. The type of intervention will depend on their current level of sustainability, which will be assessed through the self-assessment tool developed in WP3.

The document is structured in three primary sections, corresponding to the three dimensions of sustainability – environmental, social, and economic – with each section further divided into specific areas of intervention. For each area, operational objectives, concrete activities, responsible actors, and possible timing of implementation time are presented and illustrated through reference tables. These tables offer practical guidance for SMEs in the tourism sector to improve sustainability performance by identifying actionable steps to enhance their environmental, social, and economic outcomes.



2 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AREAS OF INTERVENTION

The areas of intervention relating to environmental sustainability, as defined by the protocol based on ISO 21401:2018 (Annex A), aim to reduce the environmental impact of SME accommodation facilities through the adoption of specific practices detailed in the following categories:

- **Preparation and response to environmental emergencies** (Table 1.1) – It sets out the preventive and responsive measures that accommodation establishments should implement to handle environmental emergencies, such as fires, floods, or chemical spills. These measures encompass the formulation of emergency plans, the training of staff, and the provision of suitable safety equipment and communication protocols.
- **Natural areas, biodiversity, flora and fauna** (Table 1.2) – It provides guidance on the protection and promotion of local biodiversity. It encompasses a range of actions, including the limitation of land use changes, the prevention of disturbance to natural habitats, the integration of native plant species in landscaping, and the monitoring of impacts on local wildlife.
- **Architecture and local construction impact** (Table 1.3) – The primary objective of this section is to minimise the environmental impact of new constructions and renovations. The promotion of locally sourced, eco-friendly materials, energy-efficient design, and architectural styles that respect the local cultural and environmental context is also encouraged.
- **Landscaping** (Table 1.4) – It delineates sustainable landscaping practices, encompassing the utilisation of native or drought-resistant flora, the minimisation of paved surfaces, the incorporation of green roofs and vertical gardens, and practices that promote soil health and water retention.
- **Solid waste, effluents and emissions** (Table 1.5) – It addresses the management of waste and emissions, encouraging practices such as segregation and recycling, proper disposal of hazardous materials, wastewater treatment, and reduction of air and noise pollution.
- **Energy efficiency** (Table 1.6) – It identifies measures to reduce energy consumption, including the installation of LED lighting, motion sensors, energy-efficient appliances, and renewable energy systems (solar, biomass). It also includes regular monitoring of energy use.
- **Conservation and management of water usage** (Table 1.7) – It details methods for efficient water use and conservation, including the installation of low-flow fixtures, leak detection systems, the use of greywater for



irrigation, rainwater harvesting, and guest education on water-saving behaviour.

- **Hazardous substances management** (Table 1.8) – It presents safe management protocols for storing, using, and disposing of hazardous substances (e.g., cleaning chemicals, fuels). The protocol encompasses staff training, the application of labels, emergency procedures, and the substitution of less harmful alternatives when practicable.

For each area of intervention, the responsible actors and the estimated implementation timelines vary depending on the specific activities involved, as outlined in the reference tables. These variations ensure that the most appropriate professionals are assigned and that timelines align with the complexity and requirements of each task.

Table 1.1 Environmental sustainability areas of intervention (section: *Preparation and response to environmental emergencies*)

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Preparation and response to environmental emergencies	Set up systems to spot potential environmental risks and lower their impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct regular environmental audits and inspections (e.g., energy and water consumption audits; waste and recycling inspections; monitoring water discharge and water quality). • Develop and implement emergency response plans (e.g., fire emergency response plan; natural disaster preparedness, such as earthquakes, floods; regular staff emergency training). • Participate in local environmental initiatives and collaborations (e.g., active involvement in local environmental cleanup campaigns; partnerships with local environmental organizations; community environmental education and awareness). 	Environmental manager / Health & Safety Officer / Operational staff	2–3 weeks for initial assessments, followed by quarterly checks
	Review and update emergency plans to stay prepared and respond quickly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct regular emergency drills and simulations (e.g., fire evacuation drills; natural disasters and medical emergency simulations). • Update emergency response plans based on identified risks and lessons learned (e.g., post-drill evaluation and updates; risk assessment review; Incorporation of external recommendations). • Train staff on emergency procedures (e.g., periodic emergency response training; practical first aid and CPR training; new employee orientation). 	Health & Safety Officer / Operations Manager / Senior staff member	1 week to revise and test plans; 1–2 days for regular drills

Table 1.2 Environmental sustainability areas of intervention (section: *Natural areas, biodiversity, flora and fauna*)

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Natural areas, biodiversity, flora and fauna	Take care of natural areas and backs local conservation efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and maintain natural areas on the property (e.g., creation of native gardens; protected wildlife habitats; nature trails). • Support local conservation organizations through financial contributions or volunteer work (e.g., sponsoring local environmental initiatives; employee volunteer days; hosting fundraising events). • Participate in habitat restoration projects (e.g., reforestation projects; wetland restoration; beach and coastal restoration). 	Gardener / Environmental specialist / Partner NGOs	2–3 weeks for setup; seasonal maintenance afterwards
	Promote actions to protect wildlife and support biodiversity education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install bird boxes and bat houses. • Provide information to guests about local wildlife and how to minimize their impact (e.g., informational signage and brochures; room guides and digital platforms; guest orientations). • Offer educational programs on biodiversity conservation (e.g., nature walks and guided tours; interactive workshops). 	Front desk staff / Eco-tour guides	2–4 days to prepare materials; monthly recurring activities

Table 1.3 Environmental sustainability areas of intervention (section: *Architecture and local construction impact*)

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Architecture and local construction impact	Ensure architectural designs are harmonized with the surrounding environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use local architects and builders with expertise in sustainable design (e.g., partnering with local sustainable design firms; hiring builders specialized in eco-friendly construction). ● Incorporate natural ventilation and lighting into the design (e.g., use of skylights and daylighting strategies; building orientation optimization). ● Minimize the use of artificial materials and maximize the use of natural materials (e.g., use sustainably sourced wood and natural stone; reducing plastics and synthetic materials; natural insulation and finishes). 	Sustainable architects / Local construction contractors	1–2 months during planning phase
	Minimise the environmental impact of construction activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Minimize site disturbance during construction (e.g., clearly defined construction boundaries; preservation of existing vegetation; minimal excavation and grading). ● Implement erosion and sediment control measures (e.g., use of sediment barriers; temporary ground covers; stormwater management planning). ● Recycle and reuse construction waste (e.g., on-site waste sorting; reuse of demolition waste; partnerships with recycling facilities). 	Site supervisor / Environmental consultant	1 week to plan, implementation ongoing during construction
	Rehabilitate and restore degraded areas not in use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Restore native vegetation in disturbed areas (e.g., replanting native species and removal of invasive species). ● Create wildlife corridors (e.g., establishment of greenways and native plant corridors). ● Implement a revegetation plan (e.g., development of a detailed planting schedule; seed collection and propagation). 	Landscape team / Agronomists / Environmental volunteers	2–4 weeks initial restoration; follow-up as needed seasonally

Table 1.3 - *Continued*

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Architecture and local construction impact	Use locally sourced, traditional and sustainable construction materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Source building materials from local suppliers (e.g., <i>establishing local supplier relationships; local sourcing of timber and stones</i>). ● Use recycled and reclaimed materials (e.g., <i>reclaimed wood for furnishings; recycled-content concrete and metal; salvaged materials</i>). ● Avoid the use of materials with high embodied energy (e.g., <i>minimizing concrete usage</i>). 	Procurement officer / Designer / Construction company	2–5 days for sourcing and selection processes
	Promote design choices that preserve local identity and environmental harmony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Incorporate local architectural styles and materials (e.g., <i>traditional building designs; establish collaboration with local craftspeople</i>). ● Minimize the visual impact of the building on the surrounding landscape (e.g., <i>low-profile building design; earth-tone colour palettes; strategic site placement</i>). ● Use landscaping to blend the building into the natural environment (e.g., <i>vegetative screening; green roofs and vertical gardens</i>). 	Architect / Designer / Cultural consultant	1 week for research and integration into project

Table 1.4 Environmental sustainability areas of intervention (section: *Landscaping*)

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Landscaping	Plan and manage the landscape to minimize environmental impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use drought-tolerant plants (e.g., <i>water-efficient garden design; soil amendments and mulching</i>). • Minimize the use of pesticides and herbicides (e.g., <i>Integrated Pest Management (IPM): organic gardening practices and manual weed management</i>). • Implement a rainwater harvesting system (e.g., <i>rainwater collection tanks; rain gardens and swales; greywater reuse systems</i>). 	Landscaper / Maintenance team / Environmental technician	3–7 days for initial work; seasonal upkeep
	Provide guests with information about the main features of the landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create interpretive signage about the local flora and fauna (e.g., <i>educational signage along trails; interactive information panels</i>). • Offer guided nature walks and tours. • Provide guests with maps and brochures about the local environment. 	Front desk / Local guide / Communications staff	2 days to develop materials; updates as needed

Table 1.5 Environmental sustainability areas of intervention (section: *Solid waste, effluents and emissions*)

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Solid waste, effluents and emissions	Adopt practices for waste reduction, reuse, and recycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement a waste reduction and recycling program (e.g., <i>clearly labelled recycling stations; waste audits</i>). ● Use a composter for organic waste (e.g., <i>on-site composting facility</i>). ● Minimize the use of single-use plastics (e.g., <i>replace disposable amenities; eliminate plastic straws and utensils; offer reusable water bottles</i>). 	Environmental officer / Housekeeping / Maintenance	1 week to implement system; ongoing weekly monitoring
	Mitigate the environmental and health impact of wastewater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Install a wastewater treatment system (e.g., <i>on-site wastewater treatment plant</i>). ● Monitor wastewater quality regularly (e.g., <i>automated monitoring systems for routine water testing and wastewater discharge records</i>). ● Develop a contingency plan for wastewater spills (e.g., <i>spill response procedures; staff spill response training</i>). 	Technical operator / Maintenance team / Consultant	5–10 days for system setup; monthly monitoring afterward
	Reduce noise and emissions (gas, light, odour)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use low-noise equipment (e.g., <i>quiet HVAC and ventilation systems; electric gardening tools</i>). ● Minimize outdoor lighting (e.g., <i>dark sky lighting design; energy-efficient, timed lighting</i>). ● Control emissions from kitchen and laundry areas (e.g., <i>efficient ventilation systems; use eco-friendly detergents and cleaners</i>). 	Facility manager / Acoustic and lighting technician	2–4 days for assessment and equipment replacement; annual review

Table 1.6 Environmental sustainability areas of intervention (section: *Energy efficiency*)

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Energy efficiency	Implement measures to minimize energy consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install energy-efficient lighting and appliances (e.g., <i>LED lighting; ENERGY STAR-rated appliances; occupancy sensors and timers</i>). • Use renewable energy sources such as solar power (e.g., <i>solar photovoltaic systems</i>). • Implement a building automation system (e.g., <i>centralized energy management with guest room automation</i>). 	Electrician / Energy manager / Technician	1–2 weeks for installation; continuous monitoring thereafter
	Monitor and record energy consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install energy meters to track energy usage (e.g., <i>smart energy meters/sub-metering</i>). • Analyse energy consumption data to identify areas for improvement (e.g., <i>regular energy audits; comparative analysis; monthly reporting and action plans</i>). 	Facility manager / Energy technician	1–2 days for meter installation; monthly data analysis
	Set energy consumption objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish specific energy reduction targets (e.g., <i>annual energy reduction goals through equipment-specific targets</i>). • Track progress towards energy reduction goals (e.g., <i>monthly progress reports</i>). 	General manager / Energy advisor	2–3 days to define goals and performance metrics
	Use renewable energy sources where possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install solar panels or wind turbines. • Purchase Renewable Energy Credits RECs (e.g., <i>partnering with renewable energy providers to purchase RECs</i>). 	Renewable energy providers / Building contractor	1–3 months depending on system scale and funding
	Use architectural techniques to maximize energy efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use high-performance windows and insulation (e.g., <i>double or triple-glazed windows; enhanced wall and roof insulation; thermal window coverings</i>). • Design the building to maximize natural light and ventilation (e.g., <i>cross-ventilation strategies; open floor plans and atriums</i>). 	Architect / Construction company	Integrated into design; implementation over several weeks or months

Table 1.6 - *Continued*

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Energy efficiency	Reduce energy consumption in transport operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the use of public transportation or bicycles by guests (e.g., <i>on-site bike rentals and storage; public transportation incentives</i>). • Optimize delivery routes (e.g., <i>optimise delivery scheduling; local supplier selection</i>). • Use fuel-efficient vehicles (e.g., <i>hybrid or electric vehicles</i>). 	Logistics manager / Front office staff	1–2 weeks for infrastructure setup and guest awareness campaign
	Conduct energy-saving campaigns for guests and employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate guests and employees about energy conservation (e.g., <i>energy conservation signage</i>). • Provide incentives for energy-saving behaviour (e.g., <i>recognition programs for staff</i>). 	Communications team / HR / Front desk	2 days to prepare materials; campaigns run monthly or seasonally

Table 1.7 Environmental sustainability areas of intervention (section: *Conservation and management of water usage*)

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Conservation and management of water usage	Monitor and record water consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Install water meters to track water usage (e.g., <i>smart water meters/sub-metering</i>). ● Analyse water consumption data to identify areas for improvement (e.g., <i>regular water consumption audits; comparative analysis; water efficiency action plans</i>). 	Plumbing technician / Environmental manager	2–3 days for setup; ongoing monthly tracking
	Set water consumption objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish specific water reduction targets (e.g., <i>annual water consumption targets; fixture-specific water targets; operational water conservation targets</i>). ● Track progress towards water reduction goals (e.g., <i>regular review meetings</i>). 	Management / Facility supervisor	1–2 days to establish benchmarks and tracking
	Minimise water use and improve availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Install low-flow water-saving fixtures (e.g. <i>sink, taps, shower</i>). ● Use drought-tolerant landscaping. ● Implement a rainwater harvesting system. 	Plumber / Grounds team	5–7 days for installation and landscaping adaptations
	Implement inspection and maintenance to minimise leaks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct regular inspections of plumbing systems. ● Repair leaks promptly. 	Maintenance staff / Technical services	1 day for routine checks; reactive as needed
	Ensure water quality and safety for guests and operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Test water quality regularly. ● Installing water purifiers to make it drinkable. 	Maintenance team / Lab service provider	1–2 days for testing and system adjustment; regular intervals
	Adopt a circular water management model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reuse greywater for irrigation. ● Implement a water treatment system. 	Technical staff / Water management consultant	1–2 weeks for greywater systems and treatment setup

Table 1.8 Environmental sustainability areas of intervention (section: *Hazardous substances management*)

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Hazardous substances management	Manage the storage, use, and disposal of hazardous substances	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify and properly store all hazardous substances (e.g., use <i>safety data sheets</i>).• Minimize the use of hazardous substances (e.g., use <i>eco-friendly cleaning products and adopt integrated pest management</i>).• Dispose of hazardous substances properly (e.g., adopt a <i>hazardous waste disposal plan</i>).	Housekeeping / Storekeeper / Safety officer	2–3 days for initial sorting and staff training; ongoing compliance checks



3 SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AREAS OF INTERVENTION

The protocol, which is based on ISO 21401:2018 (Annex B), delineates precise areas of intervention in relation to social sustainability. These areas are further detailed through specific actions, actors involved and estimated timelines in the following categories:

- **Local communities** (Table 2.1) – It details strategies for engaging and supporting local communities. These include the following: collaboration with local organisations, sourcing of local products and services, encouragement of guest participation in community-based tourism, and ensuring that business activities contribute positively to local development.
- **Work and income** (Table 2.2) – It focuses on the creation of decent work opportunities and the promotion of fair income distribution. It encompasses provisions for the recruitment of local personnel, the provision of competitive remuneration, the promotion of employee career progression, and the contribution to the economic resilience of the region.
- **Work conditions** (Table 2.3) – It delineates the requirements for safe, inclusive, and dignified working environments. The table addresses several key areas, including fair labour practices, protection of workers' rights, workplace safety measures, gender equality, non-discrimination, and the promotion of work-life balance.
- **Cultural aspects** (Table 2.4) – It emphasises the preservation and promotion of local cultural heritage. Its actions encompass the integration of local traditions and crafts into the guest experience, the provision of support for cultural events, and the training of staff and guests in cultural sensitivity and respect.
- **Health and education** (Table 2.5) – It sets out the guidelines for supporting the well-being and education of employees and local stakeholders. The promotion of access to health services, training programmes, awareness campaigns on hygiene and well-being, and the inclusion of sustainability education in staff development are all recommended.
- **Native population** (Table 2.6) – The central theme of this table is the protection and preservation of the rights and cultural identity of indigenous or native populations. It encourages consultation with native groups, protection of their heritage and sacred sites, fair representation in decision-making processes, and ensuring tourism activities do not exploit or marginalize these communities.

Table 2.1. Social sustainability areas of intervention (section: *Local communities*)

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Local communities	Promote and actively support local community development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create or join local volunteer programs (e.g., clean-up days, tree planting). • Support local schools and educational programs (e.g., <i>organize educational workshops or provide scholarships or internships for local students</i>). • Volunteer time and resources to community projects (e.g., <i>contribute to local charity events or sponsor local cultural or environmental initiatives</i>). 	General Manager / CSR Liaison / Front Office	3–5 days to establish partnerships; recurring annually or per event
	Encourage employee participation in community activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow employees to take paid hours or days off to participate in volunteer activities in the community, as support for local authorities or social projects. • Reward employees who engage in community activities with public recognition and awards (e.g., <i>certificates, bonuses, etc.</i>). • Promote volunteering and social responsibility as corporate values (e.g., <i>city clean-up days, charity events, or collaborations with local associations</i>). 	HR / Operations Manager	1–2 days to define policies; annual review of participation
	Create a communication channel with the local community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold regular community meetings (e.g., <i>monthly meetings with residents to discuss concerns or suggestions for improving collaboration with the community</i>). • Establish a mechanism to collect community feedback anonymously (e.g., <i>suggestion box, online forum</i>). • Respond promptly to community concerns and complaints (e.g., <i>respond within 48 hours to a complaint about noise from the accommodation, provide updates on actions taken regarding local environmental concerns</i>). 	Community Relations Officer / General Manager	2–3 days to set up systems; monthly follow-up

Table 2.1 - *Continued*

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Local communities	Establish procedures to assess community satisfaction and complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct regular community satisfaction surveys (e.g., quarterly surveys sent by email or distributed in paper format at reception to gather opinions on the impact of the facility on the local community). • Analyze community feedback to identify areas for improvement (e.g., analyze survey responses to identify problem areas, such as noise or waste management, note recurring requests). • Implement changes based on community feedback (e.g., improve sustainability practices, enhance communication, offer local support). 	Front Desk / Guest Relations / Local Liaison	2–4 days setup; quarterly surveys and reports
	Evaluate the effectiveness of social actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track and measure the impact of community involvement initiatives (e.g., monitoring participation in local events and collecting impact data, such as the number of volunteers or funds raised). • Conduct regular evaluations of social action programs (e.g., annual evaluation of social programmes by surveying participants to gather feedback). • Adjust programs based on evaluation results (e.g., modify initiatives based on feedback, such as changing schedules or activities to improve effectiveness). 	CSR Manager / General Manager	1 week for analysis; annual review

Table 2.1 – *Continued*

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Local communities	Participate in social and environmental programmes with local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Partner with local organizations to offer health and wellness programs (e.g., collaborate with local gyms or nutrition experts to offer yoga, meditation, or healthy eating programmes for residents and employees). ● Conduct environmental education programs for guests and employees (e.g., organize workshops inviting experts to educate on topics such as waste reduction, responsible consumption, and environmental protection). ● Support community initiatives to improve quality of life (e.g., sponsor or participate in local events, cultural festivals or urban improvement initiatives, such as the creation of green spaces or recreational areas for the community). 	HR / Wellness Coordinator / Sustainability Officer	2–3 days planning; activity-dependent recurrence
	Avoid negative impacts such as sex tourism and sexual exploitation of children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Train staff on child protection issues (e.g., provide staff with training on child protection protocols, recognize signs of exploitation and report cases to the authorities). ● Develop a code of conduct for guests regarding child protection (e.g., display child protection posters in common areas, distribute information material on the risks of sexual exploitation and how to report it, possibly including emergency numbers). ● Support local organizations working to combat child exploitation (e.g., collaborate with NGOs, host awareness-raising events or fund projects against child exploitation). 	HR / Front Office Manager / Legal Advisor	1 week for training and materials; annual refresh

Table 2.2. Social sustainability areas of intervention (section: *Work and income*)

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Work and income	Hire local workers and promote vocational training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prioritize hiring local residents (e.g., <i>targeted recruitment campaigns within the community</i>). ● Partner with local training institutions to provide job training (e.g., <i>offer internships, apprenticeships, and training programs to locals for job opportunities in hospitality</i>). 	HR Manager / Operations Director	2–3 weeks for partnerships with local institutions
	Involve local people and adopt a fair remuneration policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include local residents in decision-making processes (e.g., <i>create local advisory committees that include employees and community representatives to participate in discussions on how to improve internal operations and policies</i>). ● Implement a fair wage policy (e.g., <i>establish a transparent wage policy, conduct regular audits to ensure that there are no wage disparities based on gender, age, disability or family status</i>). ● Promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace (e.g., <i>ensure inclusive hiring policies that prioritize equal opportunities for all genders, ages, and abilities, offer diversity and inclusion training, establish support groups for employees from diverse backgrounds</i>). 	HR / Payroll Officer	3–5 days to establish policy; review semi-annually
	Support local services, crafts and producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support local artisans and craftspeople (e.g., <i>organize events where guests can learn about and purchase local handicrafts, such as ceramics, handmade jewellery, or local food products</i>). ● Promote the use of local products in the hotel (e.g., <i>including local products in packages offered to guests, such as typical foods, handicrafts, and souvenirs, promote them through information materials in rooms and common areas</i>). ● Offer tours and activities that showcase local culture and traditions (e.g., <i>organize activities that involve both local residents and tourists, such as guided tours, local cooking workshops or cultural entertainment</i>). 	Purchasing / Front desk / Operations Manager	2 weeks for supplier mapping and tour design

Table 2.3. Social sustainability areas of intervention (section: *Work conditions*)

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Work conditions	Ensure wages respect at least the legal minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay all employees at least the minimum wage (e.g., ensure that all employees receive a wage that meets or exceeds the national or regional minimum wage standards, regularly review payroll to guarantee compliance). • Conduct regular wage reviews to ensure compliance with labor laws (e.g., conduct annual salary audits to check that all wages align with local labor laws, adjust wages when necessary). 	HR / Finance	1–2 days for payroll audit; yearly verification
	Ensure employee facilities meet minimum conditions of hygiene, safety and comfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain clean and safe working conditions (e.g., regularly clean workspaces, provide proper ventilation, ensure that all equipment is maintained and safe to use, inspect the workplace to identify and eliminate potential hazards). • Provide adequate employee facilities (e.g., restrooms, break rooms, provide flexible working hours or part-time options for employees with family or educational responsibilities to support work-life balance). • Ensure compliance with safety regulations (e.g., conduct regular safety training sessions for all employees, ensure that fire exits are clearly marked, and that first aid kits are readily available, perform routine safety audits to confirm compliance with local safety laws and regulations). 	Facility Manager / Safety Officer	1–2 weeks initial setup; monthly checks
	Ensure transparency in wages and benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly communicate wage and benefit information to employees (e.g., provide detailed pay slips that outline wage rates, benefits, and deductions). • Provide regular updates on wage and benefit policies (e.g., send out annual newsletters or email updates to employees about any changes to wage rates, benefits, or new company policies). 	HR / Payroll Manager	2 days to set up systems; annual updates



Table 2.3 - Continued

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Work conditions	Avoid misuse of internships or apprenticeships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay interns and apprentices a fair wage (e.g., ensure that interns and apprentices receive at least the minimum wage or a competitive salary for their work). • Provide meaningful training and development opportunities for interns and apprentices (e.g., offer mentoring programs, access to workshops or courses relevant to their field, assign them activities that can develop their skills and gain practical experience). • Ensure that internships comply with labor laws (e.g., regularly review internship contracts to ensure that they meet legal requirements, such as guaranteeing adequate pay and working hours). 	HR / Training Coordinator	3–5 days for program structuring and legal review
	Promote ethnic, social and gender equity and prevent child labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement policies to prevent discrimination in the workplace (e.g., establish a clear anti-discrimination policy that addresses issues such as gender, age, family status, and disability, provide regular training to all employees to recognize and address discrimination, set up a confidential process for reporting discrimination). • Promote equal opportunities for all employees (e.g., ensure that all job postings are accessible and inclusive, provide equal access to professional development programs and promotions, regularly review hiring practices to eliminate any bias related to gender, age, family status or disability). <p>Support initiatives to combat child labor (e.g., partnerships with organizations that work to prevent child labor, ensure that suppliers and partners adhere to ethical labor practices).</p>	HR / Compliance Officer / Operations Manager	3–4 days to implement and train; periodic review

Table 2.4. Social sustainability areas of intervention (section: *Cultural aspects*)

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Cultural aspects	Promote knowledge, preservation and respect for local culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize cultural events and workshops (e.g., collaborate with local artisans, guides, and cultural institutions to create cultural experiences). • Provide guests with information about local culture and traditions (e.g., offer guided tours to historical sites or nature trails, provide printed or digital information materials in rooms, such as leaflets or QR codes that link to content on local history, customs, and festivals, set up a cultural corner in the lobby with books, brochures, or videos on local traditions). • Support local cultural organizations (e.g., partnerships with local museums, art galleries, or cultural centres to promote their exhibitions or events, offer sponsorship of local festivals or performances, showcase the works of local artists in common areas of the hotel). 	Cultural Events Coordinator / Front desk / Guest Relations / Marketing manager	1–2 weeks for planning; implementation per event
	Avoid negative impacts on local culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a cultural impact assessment (e.g., define an internal checklist to assess and monitor the impact of tourism on local culture to be shared periodically with the local community to gather their perceptions and suggestions regarding these impacts). • Minimize the impact of tourism on local customs and traditions (e.g., organize workshops for guests on respecting local customs, offer cultural guidelines to visitors, create cultural exchange programs that allow tourists to experience local traditions without altering them). • Respect local cultural sensitivities (e.g., create guidelines for tourists on appropriate behavior and display them in guest rooms and common areas, ensure that guest interactions are respectful of local values and traditions, display signs or posters in the hotel with culturally relevant information). 	Community Liaison / Guest Relations / Marketing manager	3–5 days for assessments and communication design

Table 2.5. Social sustainability areas of intervention (section: *Health and education*)

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Health and education	Support local community health programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Partner with local healthcare providers (e.g., collaborate with local clinics or hospitals to sponsor community health initiatives, such as health screenings or wellness programs for residents in the area). ● Donate to local health charities (e.g., make financial contributions or organize fundraising events for local health charities, such as those supporting cancer research, mental health, or healthcare access for underserved populations). ● Support community health initiatives (e.g., host free workshops or events on topics such as healthy food, physical activity, and psychological well-being, sponsor local health campaigns like fitness programs or mental health awareness). 	HR / External Relations	1 week for planning partnerships; ongoing activities vary
	Implement health programmes for employees and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Offer health insurance and wellness programs to employees (e.g., provide basic health insurance coverage, offer affordable wellness programs such as on-site yoga sessions, organize wellness challenges such as walking or stretching, partnership with nearby gyms to offer discounted memberships or fitness classes to employees). ● Provide access to healthcare services for employees and their families (e.g., collaborate with nearby clinics or hospitals to offer discounted or free health checkups). 	HR / Wellness Coach / Insurance Provider	2–4 days to launch; periodic evaluation sessions



Table 2.5 - Continued

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Health and education	Support educational actions, including environmental education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize training courses for employees (e.g., offer in-house workshops on customer service, hospitality skills, or sustainability practices, and provide online courses on topics such as eco-friendly practices, health and safety, or cultural sensitivity, create short training videos on these topics, which employees can watch and earn points for completing, thus encouraging their engagement and knowledge retention). • Support environmental education programmes for the local community (e.g., collaborate with local schools or NGOs to organize workshops on recycling, sustainable agriculture, or renewable energy, sponsor community events like tree planting days or clean-up drives). • Promote environmental awareness among guests (e.g., place information in guest rooms and common areas about the hotel's sustainability efforts, such as water and energy conservation, encourage guests to participate in green initiatives like reusing towels or recycling, offer eco-friendly products such as sustainable toiletries or reusable water bottles). • Promote health awareness and behaviour among employees (e.g., wellness initiatives such as fitness challenges by creating WhatsApp groups or online communities where employees can challenge each other, share progress, and motivate one another, provide healthy snack options in break rooms, workshops on mental health and stress management to encourage a balanced lifestyle). 	Training Manager / Operations Manager / HR / Environmental Educator	1–2 weeks to develop content and delivery schedule

Table 2.6. Social sustainability areas of intervention (section: *Native population*)

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Native population	Respect for the customs, rights and traditions of the indigenous population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with indigenous communities on all relevant issues (e.g., hold regular meetings with indigenous leaders to discuss tourism plans and gather their feedback on potential impacts). • Obtain free, prior and informed consent from indigenous communities (e.g., ensure that any tourism project is fully explained in a transparent manner, obtain written or verbal consent through community representatives, and allow enough time for thorough discussion and consideration). • Ensure that indigenous communities benefit from tourism development (e.g., collaborate with indigenous communities to create and manage tourism initiatives, such as cultural or guided nature tours, ensure that part of the revenues is reinvested in community projects like education or health care). 	Community Liaison / Legal Advisor / Indigenous Representative	2–3 weeks for consultation and coordination mechanisms
	Involve indigenous population in accommodation's policies and programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct consultations with indigenous communities on all relevant policies and programs (e.g., organize focus groups or surveys to discuss tourism policies and gather indigenous feedback). • Ensure that indigenous communities have a voice in decision-making processes (e.g., include indigenous representatives in planning meetings and decision-making boards related to local development and tourism projects). • Share benefits with indigenous communities (e.g., establish a profit-sharing agreement with indigenous communities for tourism-related activities). 	Sustainability Manager / General Manager / Owner / Business Development Manager	1 month for agreement setup; ongoing collaboration



4 ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY AREAS OF INTERVENTION

As outlined in the protocol in accordance with ISO 21401:2018 (Annex C), the areas of intervention relating to economic sustainability are specified through concrete actions, classified in the following categories:

- **Economic viability of the organisation** (Table 3.1) – It focuses on the long-term financial sustainability of the accommodation provider. It encompasses a range of actions including cost control, revenue diversification, investment planning, financial risk management, and the integration of sustainability-related performance indicators into financial decision-making.
- **Quality and guest satisfaction** (Table 3.2) – It delineates the measures employed to ensure the provision of superior services and the satisfaction of guests. It emphasises the importance of continuous improvement through the implementation of feedback mechanisms, complaint resolution systems, staff training in customer service, and the integration of sustainability principles into the guest experience.
- **Health and safety of guests and workers** (Table 3.3) – This section addresses the implementation of health and safety protocols with a view to protecting both guests and employees. It encompasses hygiene standards, emergency preparedness measures, routine inspections, health education for staff members, and adherence to local and international health regulations.

Similarly to the environmental and social pillars, professional figures and implementation timeframes are identified for fulfilling the economic sustainability requirements.

**Table 3.1 Economic sustainability areas of intervention (section: *Economic viability of the organization*)**

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Economic viability of the organization	Plan economic sustainability in the short, medium and long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a long-term sustainability strategy (e.g., <i>a sustainability roadmap</i>). • Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of sustainability initiatives (e.g., <i>economic impact measurement; use monitoring financial performance</i>). 	General Manager / Sustainability Advisor	2–3 weeks for strategic planning; annual revision
	Develop and maintain a business plan, including financial risk analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and maintain a detailed business plan. • Conduct market research to identify target markets (e.g., <i>eco-tourism market analysis; market segmentation based on sustainability preferences</i>). • Analyse competitor pricing and develop a competitive pricing strategy (e.g., <i>price benchmarking and value-based pricing</i>). • Develop a marketing plan to promote the business (e.g., <i>promote sustainability achievements; perform sustainability storytelling</i>). • Conduct regular financial reviews and risk assessments (e.g., <i>risk management incorporating sustainability indicators; sustainability audits</i>). 	Finance Officer / Operations Manager	2–4 weeks to draft and validate the plan

Table 3.1 - *Continued*

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Economic viability of the organization	Maintain economic sustainability records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track key financial performance indicators (KPIs) (e.g., <i>percentage of revenue generated from sustainable products/services; operational cost savings from energy and water efficiency initiatives; ROI of sustainability investments</i>). • Maintain accurate financial records (e.g., <i>detailed accounting of sustainability investments</i>). • Conduct regular financial audits (e.g., <i>sustainability-focused audits</i>). 	Accountant / General Manager	1 week setup; monthly reporting
	Consult with the local community before implementing new accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct community consultations before implementing new accommodation (e.g., <i>community surveys and assessments</i>). • Assess the potential social and economic impacts of new projects (e.g., <i>socio-economic impact studies; cultural impact indicators; economic multiplier analysis</i>). • Mitigate any potential negative impacts and maximize positive impacts (e.g., <i>develop an impact mitigation plan</i>). 	Project Manager / Community Liaison Officer / Operations Manager / General Manager	2–3 weeks for assessments and public engagement

**Table 3.2 Economic sustainability areas of intervention (section: *Quality and guest satisfaction*)**

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Quality and guest satisfaction	Plan and implement services that reflect local traditions and guest expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct guest surveys to gather feedback on products and services. • Develop products and services that reflect local culture and traditions. • Offer personalized service to guests (e.g., <i>tailored excursions; customized local experiences</i>). 	Guest Relations / Marketing and Sales Manager	1–2 weeks to design and align offerings
	Identify guests' expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct guest satisfaction surveys. • Monitor online reviews and social media mentions (e.g., <i>social media sentiment analysis</i>). • Implement a system for collecting guest feedback (e.g., <i>an integrated feedback system</i>). 	Front Office / Marketing Analyst	3–5 days to launch surveys and data tools
	Define quality requirements for products and services and monitor compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement quality standards for all products and services (e.g., <i>sustainability criteria integration / service quality benchmarks</i>). • Conduct regular quality control checks (e.g., <i>routine inspections of rooms, food services, and public areas using standardized checklists; auditing supplier sustainability</i>). • Take corrective action to address any quality issues (e.g., <i>implement a tracking system documenting quality issues identified through sustainability indicators, specifying corrective actions and timelines</i>). 	Quality Manager / Front Office Supervisor	1 week to define standards; quarterly evaluations



Table 3.2 - Continued

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Quality and guest satisfaction	Keep a documented overview of products and services, detailing their sustainability relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create product and service descriptions that highlight sustainability features (e.g., <i>sustainability-focused marketing materials</i>). • Communicate the guest experience to potential customers (e.g., <i>testimonials featuring sustainability on social media</i>). • Develop a brand identity that reflects the organization's sustainability values (e.g., <i>align the brand's visual and messaging identity explicitly with sustainability indicators</i>). 	Sustainability Manager / Marketing Team	1–2 weeks for documentation and communications
	Measure guest satisfaction and manage complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a guest feedback system (e.g., <i>online surveys, comment cards</i>). • Respond promptly to all guest feedback. • Analyse guest feedback to identify areas for improvement (e.g., <i>feedback categorisation; benchmarking satisfaction level</i>). • Implement corrective actions based on guest feedback. 	Guest Relations / Reception Manager	2–3 days to set up tools; weekly response follow-up
	Ensure product/service information is accessible and reliable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain accurate and up-to-date information on all products and services. • Make product and service information easily accessible to guests (e.g., <i>accessible digital platforms; clearly displayed signage; concierge or reception materials</i>). • Ensure that all information is accurate and reliable (e.g., <i>fact-checking procedures; guest feedback validation</i>). 	Marketing Team / IT Support	1 week for content updates; review each season



Table 3.2 - Continued

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Quality and guest satisfaction	Select and qualify suppliers considering sustainability requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a supplier selection process that includes sustainability criteria (e.g., sustainability audits for suppliers; supplier sustainability scoring system). • Evaluate suppliers based on their environmental and social performance (e.g., regular sustainability reviews). • Prioritize suppliers that demonstrate strong sustainability practices. 	Procurement Manager / Sustainability Officer	1–2 weeks for evaluation; annual supplier audit
	Prefer and support suppliers that adopt sustainable practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with suppliers that are committed to sustainability (e.g., partner primarily with suppliers holding recognized sustainability certifications – Fair Trade, FSC, ISO 14001 – and regularly verify their commitment through measurable sustainability indicators). • Support supplier sustainability initiatives (e.g., collaborative sustainability projects; Training and development programs). • Encourage suppliers to adopt more sustainable practices (e.g., supplier sustainability guidelines; performance-based agreements). 	Purchasing Officer / CSR Coordinator	2–3 days for partnerships; periodic follow-up
	Identify and select products, services and supplies from local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source products and services from local suppliers whenever possible. • Promote the use of local products and services to guests (e.g., local product promotion in guest communications and marketing materials; on-site retail of local products). • Support local businesses and communities (e.g., collaborative community projects; supplier capacity-building). 	Supplier Coordinator / Procurement Officer / Operations Manager / Marketing Manager	1 week for sourcing; seasonal promotion cycles
	Ensure safe, fresh and local food offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement strict food safety procedures (e.g., food safety audits and staff training). • Source fresh and local ingredients whenever possible. • Offer a menu that features regional and seasonal cuisine. 	Chef / Food Safety Officer	3–5 days to revise menus; ongoing seasonal adaptation

**Table 3.3 Economic sustainability areas of intervention (section: *Health and safety of guests and workers*)**

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Health and safety of guests and workers	Identify risks and implement control measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct regular risk assessments (e.g., <i>environmental impact risk indicators; community impact analysis</i>). • Develop and implement risk management plans (e.g., <i>define indicators for risk reduction, such as measurable reductions in environmental hazards, improved emergency response times, or enhanced community preparedness</i>). • Monitor and review risk management procedures. 	Health & Safety Officer / Operations Manager	1–2 weeks for full assessment; updates as needed
	Use risk assessment outcomes to guide sustainability targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use risk assessment results to inform sustainability goals. • Prioritize risk mitigation efforts. 	Sustainability Coordinator / Executive Team	1 week to align and integrate indicators

Table 3.3- *Continued*

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Health and safety of guests and workers	Use a proactive approach for risk identification and assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a robust risk assessment methodology (e.g., use of standardized indicators: water usage, carbon footprint, local employment rates). • Classify risks based on likelihood and impact (e.g., use a clear risk matrix that categorizes risks according to likelihood/probability and impact/severity, specifically considering sustainability indicators such as environmental degradation, community disruption, or economic loss). • Implement controls to mitigate identified risks (e.g., establish clear indicators to measure the effectiveness of implemented controls, such as reductions in incidents of resource waste, improved compliance rates with sustainability standards, or strengthened resilience to environmental disruptions). • Monitor the effectiveness of risk management controls (e.g., conduct ongoing monitoring and review of risk control measures, assessing performance using clear sustainability indicators like reduction in environmental incidents, fewer disruptions in operations, or improved resource management efficiency). 	Risk Manager / Internal Auditor	2–3 weeks for framework setup; biannual review
	Support programmes that ensure the safety and security of tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement security measures to protect guests (e.g., install sustainable, energy-efficient security systems and monitor effectiveness using indicators such as reduce response times and decreased guest security complaints). • Provide information to guests on safety and security issues (e.g., install clear signages). • Partner with local law enforcement agencies. 	Security Manager / Guest Services	3–4 days for training and guest information setup

Table 3.3- *Continued*

Intervention Area	Specific Objective	Operational Activity	Implementing Actor(s)	Estimated time for implementation
Health and safety of guests and workers	Provide information on field activity hazards and prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide guests with information on potential hazards during activities. • Train staff on safety procedures. • Implement safety measures for all activities (e.g., <i>develop comprehensive safety protocols for all guest activities, clearly monitoring and reporting indicators such as reduced incident rates or increased guest satisfaction with activity safety</i>). 	Activity Coordinator / Outdoor Safety Guide	2–3 days for development; per-activity integration



5 CONCLUSIONS

The Sustainability Protocol presented in this deliverable constitutes a pivotal output of the MAST project and a strategic tool to guide SME accommodation providers in their transition toward sustainable business models. The protocol was developed in alignment with ISO 21401:2018 and informed by a thorough process of stakeholder engagement, needs assessment, and gap analysis (as detailed in previous WP2 deliverables). The protocol responds directly to the complex challenges that characterise the Mediterranean tourism sector.

The protocol is structured across three core pillars: environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Within these pillars, it outlines operational objectives and actionable practices for each area of intervention. These are further elaborated through detailed tables that provide SMEs with a practical roadmap for implementation, also defining responsible actors and timeframes. The content has been tailored to reflect the real constraints, capacities, and opportunities of small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly those operating in fragile coastal and insular regions where tourism is both an asset and a stressor.

Beyond its function as a guidance document, the protocol also lays the foundation for the development of the self-assessment tool, to be implemented in Work Package 3. This tool will enable SMEs to conduct structured sustainability evaluations, identify compliance gaps, and receive personalised feedback and improvement suggestions. Thus, it will complement the protocol by providing an interactive platform that supports continuous improvement and aligns with the guidelines set out in the protocol.

Whilst the protocol provides a robust foundation, its success will be contingent on several factors. Firstly, the adoption of the protocol by SMEs is contingent upon the implementation of user-friendly mechanisms, the provision of adequate training, and the perceived value of sustainability certification. Capacity-building efforts and tailored support will be crucial to ensure that the protocol does not remain a theoretical framework but translates into measurable behavioural change.

Secondly, the impending self-assessment tool must strike a balance between rigour and accessibility. The effectiveness of the self-assessment tool will depend on striking a balance between standardisation (to ensure comparability and benchmarking) and flexibility (to accommodate local contexts and diverse operational models). Furthermore, as it is expected to function as a decision-support system, the tool should be continuously updated with user feedback and evolving regulatory and market requirements.

Finally, although the protocol is based on a well-recognised international standard, it must remain adaptable to future revisions of ISO 21401.