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# Output 4.1 Manual and guide for the use of the sustainability protocol and self-assessment tool

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## CENFIM

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## Table of Contents

1 Instructions for Using the MAST Sustainability Protocol to Design and Implement ISO 21401:2018.....	4
1.1 Understand the purpose and scope of the protocol.....	4
1.2 Perform an initial sustainability diagnosis.....	5
1.3 Select relevant areas of intervention.....	5
1.4 Define Operational Objectives and Actions.....	5
1.5 Integrate Sustainability into Daily Management.....	6
1.6 Monitor, Record, and Review Performance.....	6
1.7 Use the Protocol as a Preparation Tool for Certification.....	6
1.8 Ensure Continuous Improvement and Adaptation.....	7
2 Instructions for using the MAST online self-assessment tool.....	8
2.1 Tool access.....	8
2.2 Data insertion.....	8
2.3 Results presentation, interpretation and use.....	9



## Document Control Sheet

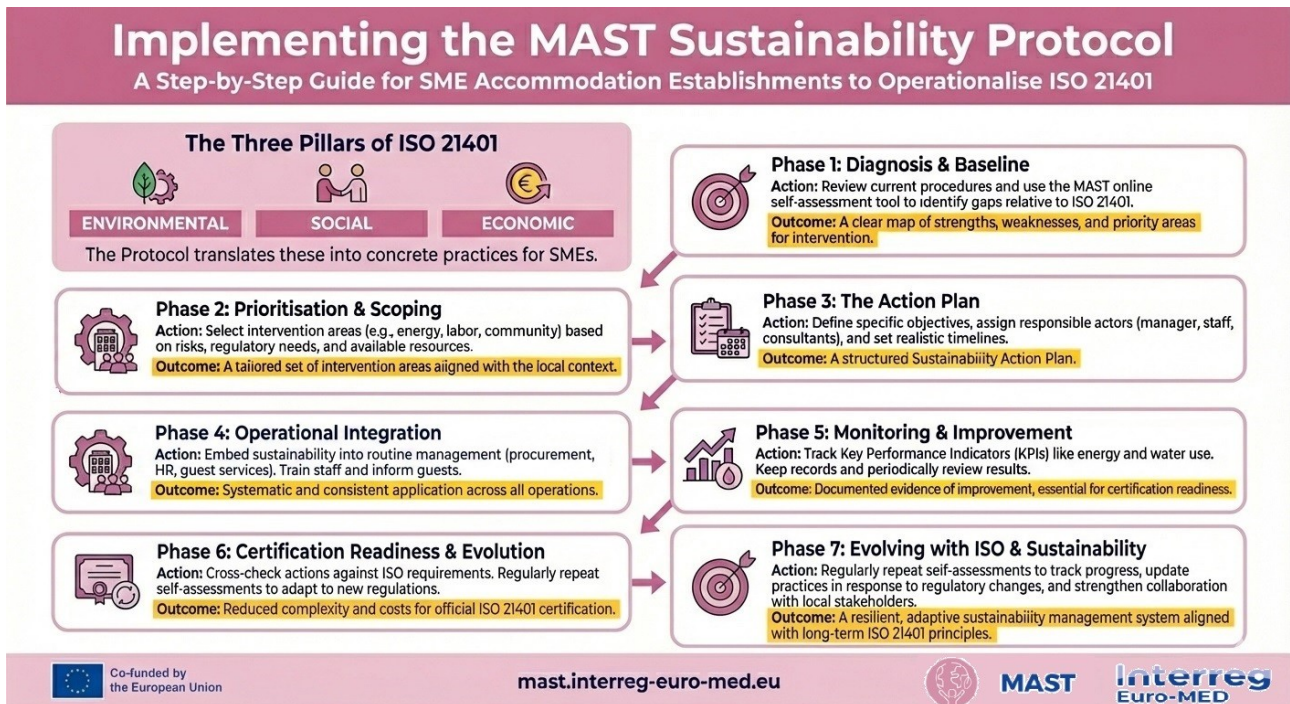
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# 1 Instructions for Using the MAST Sustainability Protocol to Design and Implement ISO 21401:2018



This document aims to provide **clear, structured instructions** explaining **how to use the MAST Sustainability Protocol to design and implement ISO 21401** in SME accommodation establishments. The instructions are written for **SMEs, consultants, and public or sectoral support bodies** and are directly grounded in the content and logic of the Sustainability Protocol developed under WP2 of the **MAST project**.

When applied correctly, the MAST Sustainability Protocol functions as a **step-by-step operational bridge** between the theoretical requirements of ISO 21401 and the concrete realities of SME accommodation management. Its structure and flexible approach enables SMEs to progress incrementally toward full compliance while generating measurable environmental, social, and economic benefits.

## 1.1 Understand the purpose and scope of the protocol

The MAST protocol serves as a **practical implementation 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**. It translates these standard's environmental, social, and economic requirements into **concrete, actionable practices**, adapted to the realities of SMEs. The type of intervention will depend on their current level of sustainability, which will be assessed **through the self-assessment tool** developed by the project.

Before starting implementation, users should:

- Familiarise themselves with the three sustainability pillars of ISO 21401 (environmental, social, economic).
- Recognise that the protocol supports **progressive implementation** and **continuous improvement**, not one-off compliance.



- Understand that the protocol complements (but does not replace) the formal ISO certification process.
- Use the MAST online self-assessment tool to gain a clear understanding of your company's maturity level against the ISO 21401 criteria and requirements.

## 1.2 Perform an initial sustainability diagnosis

The first step in applying the protocol is to establish the **baseline sustainability performance** of the accommodation facility.

Suggested actions:

- Review current practices against the three protocol pillars.
- Identify existing procedures, policies, and operational measures already in place.
- Use the MAST online self-assessment tool (developed in MAST WP3), to structure the diagnosis and identify gaps relative to ISO 21401 requirements.

Expected outcome:

- A clear understanding of strengths, weaknesses, and priority areas for action.
- Identification of areas requiring immediate intervention versus medium- or long-term improvements.

## 1.3 Select relevant areas of intervention

The protocol, on the top of the three sustainability pillars, which are Environmental, Social and Economic Sustainability, is structured into **specific areas of intervention** under each of them (e.g. energy efficiency, water management, labour conditions, community engagement, economic viability).

Suggested actions:

- **For each pillar**, you should select the intervention areas that are most relevant to the size, location, and operational profile of the establishment.
- **Prioritise actions** based on:
  - Regulatory obligations
  - Environmental and social risks
  - Potential cost savings and business benefits
  - Available resources and capacities

Expected outcome:

The **key outcome** of this process will be a tailored set of intervention areas aligned with ISO 21401 requirements and local context.

## 1.4 Define Operational Objectives and Actions

For each selected intervention area, the protocol provides:

- Specific objectives
- Concrete operational activities



- Responsible actors
- Indicative implementation timelines

Suggested actions:

- Translate the protocol's proposed activities into **internal procedures** adapted to the establishment.
- Assign **clear responsibilities** (e.g. manager, maintenance staff, HR, external consultants).
- Define **realistic timelines** consistent with SME operational constraints.

Expected outcome:

The **key outcome** of this process will be a structured **Sustainability Action Plan** aligned with ISO 21401 requirements.

## 1.5 Integrate Sustainability into Daily Management

To comply with ISO 21401, sustainability must be embedded into **routine management** rather than treated as an isolated activity.

Suggested actions:

- **Integrate protocol actions** into existing management systems (maintenance, procurement, HR, guest services).
- Develop or update **internal documentation** (procedures, checklists, records).
- **Train staff** on sustainability objectives, roles, and practices.
- **Inform guests** about sustainability measures and encourage responsible behaviour.

Expected outcome:

The **key outcome** will be a systematic and consistent application of sustainability practices across operations.

## 1.6 Monitor, Record, and Review Performance

ISO 21401 requires **evidence-based management and continuous improvement**.

Suggested actions:

- **Monitor** key performance indicators (KPIs) linked to protocol actions (e.g. energy use, water consumption, waste generation, staff training).
- **Keep records** of actions implemented, results achieved, and corrective measures.
- Periodically **review performance** against objectives and update actions as needed.

Expected outcome:

A **documented evidence** of implementation and improvement, essential for certification readiness.

## 1.7 Use the Protocol as a Preparation Tool for Certification



The protocol is designed to **support certification readiness**, even when formal certification is not the immediate goal.

Suggested actions:

- **Cross-check** implemented actions against ISO 21401 requirements.
- **Identify remaining gaps** requiring formalisation or documentation.
- **Engage external consultants** or certification bodies if moving toward official certification.

Expected outcome:

The key outcomes of these actions will be **reduced complexity, costs, and risks** associated with ISO 21401 certification process.

## 1.8 Ensure Continuous Improvement and Adaptation

Sustainability and ISO standards evolve over time.

Suggested actions:

- **Regularly repeat** self-assessments to track progress.
- **Update practices** in response to regulatory changes, market expectations, and ISO revisions.
- **Strengthen collaboration** with local stakeholders, suppliers, and communities.

Expected outcome:

These actions will support the deployment of a resilient, adaptive sustainability management system aligned with long-term ISO 21401 principles.



## 2 Instructions for using the MAST online self-assessment tool

The MAST online self-assessment tool can support SMEs accommodation in verifying their sustainability current level and identifying the efforts to comply with the ISO 21401:2018 sustainable management system.

Although it is not exhaustive, the tool facilitates companies' initial analysis of their current level of maturity against the requirements of these standards. The tool is also intended to support consultants working towards this certification who want to use a ready-to-adopt tool to quickly assess a company's status. This will enable them to provide helpful and constructive feedback.

### Using the MAST Self-Assessment Tool

Instructions for Access, Data Insertion, and Interpreting Results

1. Tool Access & Data Insertion	2. Results Presentation, Interpretation & Use
<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b>Phase 1: Registration &amp; Login</b>  <b>Action:</b> Access the tool via the provided link and register by entering personal and organisational details  <b>Outcome:</b> Gain access to the tool using individual credentials</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b>Phase 2: Company Profile &amp; Awareness</b>  <b>Action:</b> Provide basic company information and indicate the level of awareness of the ISO 21401 standard  <b>Outcome:</b> Anonymised data collection is initiated</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Phase 3: Comprehensive Assessment</b>  <b>Action:</b> Navigate through sections and answer all questions, involving staff with relevant expertise for accurate results  <b>Outcome:</b> A complete assessment of the establishment's current sustainability maturity level</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b>Phase 4: Calculation &amp; Global Score</b>  <b>Action:</b> Once all sections are completed, click the "Calculate Score" button  <b>Outcome:</b> A global Sustainability Level score (scale 1-5) with a corresponding result (Initial to Leading/Mature)</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p><b>Phase 5: Area Results &amp; Analysis</b>  <b>Action:</b> Review the numerical values and graphical representations for each of the assessed dimensions  <b>Outcome:</b> Identification of priority areas for actions to improve performance in line with ISO 21401</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Phase 6: Reporting &amp; Monitoring</b>  <b>Action:</b> Download the single PDF report to document the results and repeat the assessment periodically  <b>Outcome:</b> A clear snapshot of sustainability level and the ability to monitor progress over time</p> </div>

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[mast.interreg-euro-med.eu](https://mast.interreg-euro-med.eu)

### 2.1 Tool access

As a first step, access the tool via the following link:

<https://mast.testdomain.gr/login> Access to the tool is granted upon registration. Please enter your personal and organisational details to create an account. Once registered, you will be able to log in using your individual credentials.

### 2.2 Data insertion

#### Part 1 - Company profile

*This section requires the provision of a limited set of basic company information, as well as an indication of your level of awareness of the ISO 21401 standard.*

*All data collected through the tool are anonymised.*

The subsequent sections contain questions related to different and specific areas of intervention. You can navigate between sections using the upper navigation bar, by selecting the different parts identified by a letter and their corresponding title.



To obtain a complete and comprehensive assessment of your establishment's current sustainability maturity level, all questions should be answered. Many questions require you to select the level of progress achieved by your establishment.

Please note that some questions may require input from different employees or managers within the establishment. It is strongly recommended to involve staff members with the relevant expertise in order to ensure accurate and high-quality results.

### **Part A – Administration**

This section addresses managerial aspects, including existing sustainability certifications and reporting practices.

### **Part B – Customer Engagement**

This section includes questions related to the level of engagement between the establishment and its guests.

### **Part C – Quality of Supplies and Services**

This section focuses on the level of monitoring and control applied to the quality of both supplies and services provided.

### **Part D – Economic Viability**

This section addresses marketing, financial management, and economic performance aspects.

### **Part E – Environmental Sustainability – Energy**

This section focuses on the analysis of energy consumption and savings, as well as the presence of energy-saving systems and measures.

### **Part F – Social Sustainability / Local Community**

This section presents questions related to collaboration with, and commitment to, local businesses and the surrounding community.

### **Part G – Health and Education**

This section includes questions related to health management and training programmes organised and implemented by the establishment.

### **Part H – Cultural Sustainability / Cultural Heritage**

These questions aim to assess the level of promotion of local culture, products, and initiatives by the establishment.

Once all sections have been completed, click the **“Calculate Score”** button.

## **2.3 Results presentation, interpretation and use**

The tool will provide a global calculation of your **Sustainability Level**, expressed on a scale from 1 to 5, together with the corresponding score range and overall result:

Initial: No structured sustainability practices or awareness in place (0-30).

Emerging: Some practices exist, but are ad hoc or partially developed (31-60).



Established: A system is in place, not fully implemented across all operations (61-90).

Consistent: Implemented regularly and consistently (91-120).

Leading / Mature: Fully developed system with continuous improvement (121-160+).

In addition to the overall score, the tool provides **Area Results** for each of the assessed dimensions, presented through numerical values and graphical representations. These results support the identification of areas where the establishment should prioritise actions to improve its sustainability performance in line with ISO 21401 requirements.

All results can be downloaded in a single PDF report, allowing you to document and archive a clear snapshot of the establishment's sustainability level at a specific point in time.

The self-assessment exercise may be repeated periodically to update the evaluation of the sustainability maturity level. Comparing reports over time enables the monitoring of progress and performance throughout the establishment's sustainable transition.