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# **PROTOCOL FOR ENHANCING THE TRANSITION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS BY SMES ACCOMMODATION**

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## Document Control Sheet

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## GLOSSARY

| <b>Term</b>                             | <b>Definition</b>   |
|---|---|
| <i>Adaptation</i>                       | Actions that reduce vulnerability to climate impacts such as heatwaves, floods or water scarcity.             |
| <i>Biodiversity</i>                     | Variety of plant and animal life in a given area.   |
| <i>Carbon footprint</i>                 | Total greenhouse gas emissions generated by an activity or facility   |
| <i>Climate risk assessment</i>          | Process to identify how climate-related events may affect operations.   |
| <i>Emergency response plan</i>          | Documented procedures to manage environmental or safety emergencies such as fires, floods or chemical spills. |
| <i>Environmental audit</i>              | Systematic review of environmental practices and impacts  |
| <i>Greywater</i>                        | Lightly used water that can be treated and reused, for example for irrigation.                                |
| <i>Greenhouse gas (GHG)</i>             | Gas that contributes to climate change, such as carbon dioxide.   |
| <i>Hazardous substances</i>             | Materials that may harm people or the environment if improperly handled.                                      |
| <i>Integrated Pest Management (IPM)</i> | Pest control approach that minimises chemical use.  |
| <i>Mitigation</i>                       | Actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.   |
| <i>Nature-based solutions</i>           | Use of natural processes to address environmental challenges.   |
| <i>Renewable Energy Credits (RECs)</i>  | Certificates representing electricity generated from renewable sources.                                       |
| <i>Resilience</i>                       | Ability to withstand and recover from environmental or climate-related disruptions.                           |
| <i>Risk assessment</i>                  | Process to identify, evaluate and manage risks.   |
| <i>Risk matrix</i>                      | Tool used to classify risks by likelihood and impact.   |
| <i>Safety Data Sheet (SDS)</i>          | Document providing information on safe handling of chemicals.   |
| <i>Stakeholders</i>                     | Individuals or groups affected by or influencing the organisation.  |



|  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Stakeholder expectations</i>            | Sustainability-related requests or requirements expressed by stakeholders.                            |
| <i>Wastewater</i>                          | Used water discharged from operations.  |
| <i>Wastewater treatment system</i>         | System used to treat wastewater before discharge or reuse.  |
| <i>Water harvesting</i>                    | Collection and storage of rainwater for later use.  |
| <i>Code of conduct</i>                     | Set of rules defining acceptable behaviour for staff or guests.                                       |
| <i>Cultural impact assessment</i>          | Process to identify potential effects of tourism activities on local culture.                         |
| <i>Free, prior and informed consent</i>    | Principle requiring consultation and consent of indigenous communities before actions affecting them. |
| <i>Anti-discrimination policy</i>          | Formal commitment to ensure equal treatment and prevent discrimination in the workplace.              |
| <i>Cost-benefit analysis</i>               | Comparison of expected costs and benefits to support decision-making.                                 |
| <i>Key Financial Performance Indicator</i> | Financial metrics used to measure economic performance and monitor financial sustainability.          |
| <i>Return on Investment (ROI)</i>          | Measure of financial return compared to the cost of an investment.                                    |
| <i>Benchmarking</i>                        | Comparison of performance with similar organisations or reference values.                             |



# 1 INTRODUCTION

The Sustainability Protocol is an operational tool designed to support small and medium-sized accommodation facilities across the Mediterranean area in adopting and strengthening sustainable management models, fostering the progressive enhancement of environmental, social and economic performance.

The protocol was developed based on the international standard ISO 21401:2018, which defines the requirements for the implementation of a sustainable management system in accommodation facilities. The standard integrates the three dimensions of sustainability – environmental, social and economic – with the aim of reducing the negative impacts of tourism, improving the well-being of workers and local communities and strengthening the economic soundness of businesses, while promoting transparency and stakeholder engagement.

In this perspective, the Sustainability Protocol aims to translate the principles of sustainability and the requirements of the ISO 21401:2018 standard into concrete actions, reflecting the specificities of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Mediterranean tourism sector. Rather than prescribing mandatory requirements, it offers a practical guide that accompanies facilities on a path of improvement that is realistic and consistent with the resources actually available.

Developed through a participatory and collaborative process, the Sustainability Protocol actively involved all project partners from different Mediterranean countries, as well as a wide range of relevant stakeholders, including accommodation establishments, industry professionals and local authorities. This approach enabled the integration of different perspectives, experiences and needs, ensuring that the protocol aligns with the operational requirements of SMEs and different territorial contexts.

The protocol was developed as part of Work Package 2 (WP2) activities, through a structured process that included: (i) mapping the needs, difficulties and main barriers encountered by SME accommodation facilities in adopting sustainable management systems; (ii) an in-depth analysis of the ISO 21401:2018 standard; (iii) a comparison between the critical issues encountered in implementing sustainable practices and the requirements of the standard; (iv) the definition of the Sustainability Protocol; (v) the improvement of the protocol based on feedback gathered during validation workshops involving different stakeholders, together with integrations arising from the publication of ISO 21401:2018/Amd 1:2024, “Amendment 1: Climate Action” (2024).

The document is structured in three primary sections, corresponding to the three dimensions of sustainability – environmental, social, and economic. Within each dimension, the areas of intervention are defined in line with the structure of ISO 21401:2018, with the environmental areas derived from Annex A, the social areas from Annex B, and the economic areas reflecting Annex C of the standard. For each



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area, specific objectives, examples of operational activities, responsible actors, and possible timing of implementation are presented and illustrated through reference tables.

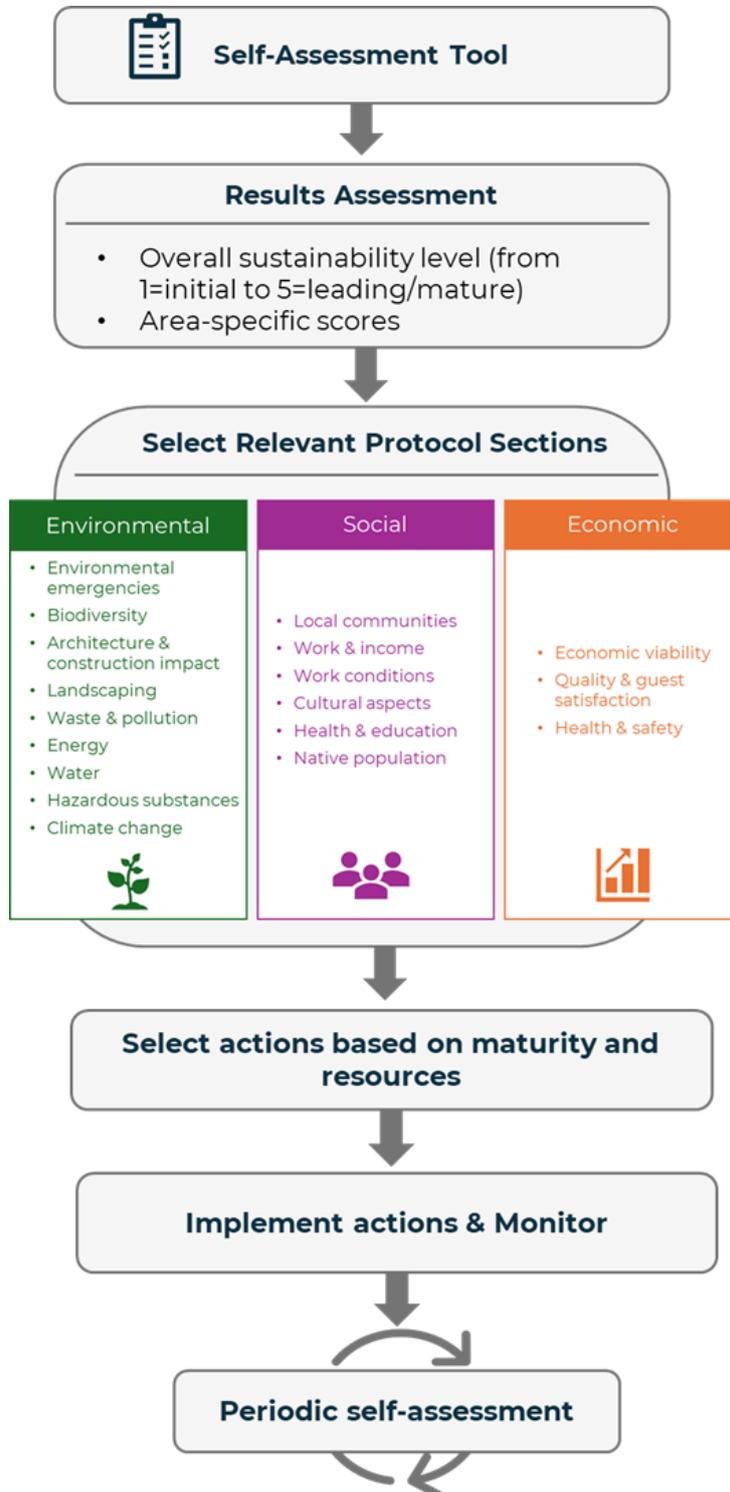
The actions identified represent a framework of possible interventions that small and medium-sized accommodation facilities may select and implement based on the results obtained through the sustainability self-assessment tool, also developed as part of the MAST project. Specifically, the self-assessment tool supports accommodation establishments in assessing their initial sustainability level, while the protocol provides operational support for planning and implementing the most appropriate improvement measures.

To support the joint use of these tools, a manual has also been developed to guide SME accommodation facilities in implementing the Sustainability Protocol and using the self-assessment tool. The following links provide access to both resources: [link](#) and <https://mast.testdomain.gr/>

Overall, the Sustainability Protocol provides SMEs in the hospitality sector with a structured, flexible and operationally oriented framework capable of supporting the transition to more sustainable, resilient and competitive management models in the long term, contributing to the development of more responsible and conscious tourism.



## 2 IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP OF THE SUSTAINABILITY PROTOCOL

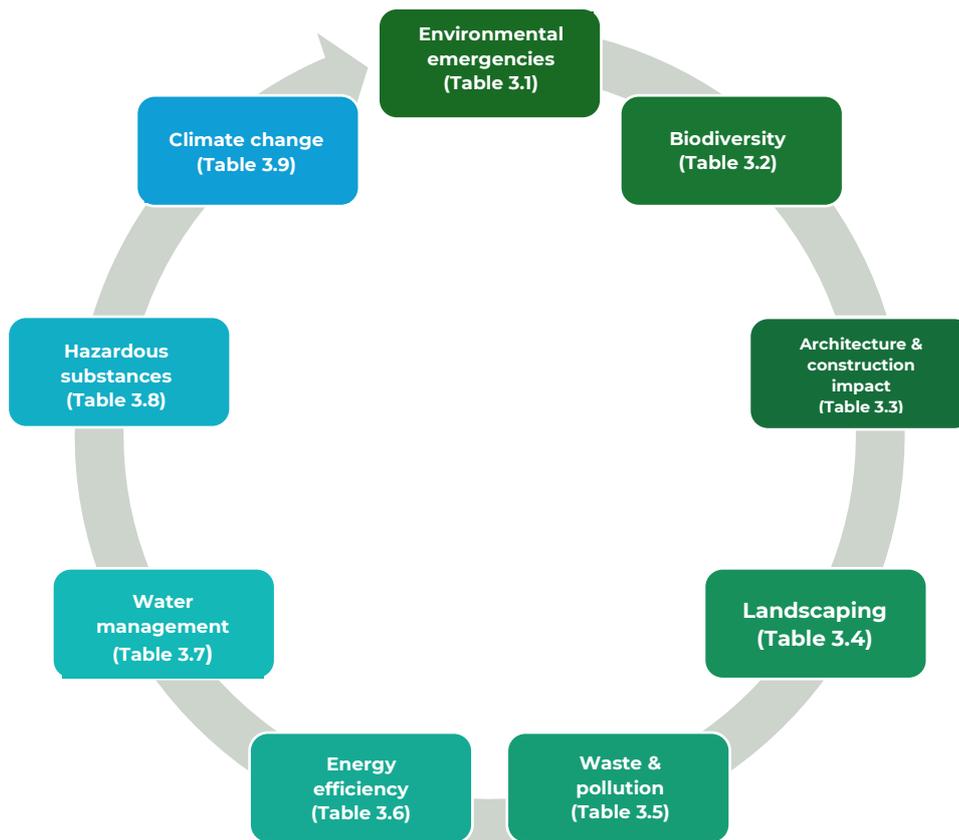


### 3 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AREAS OF INTERVENTION

The areas of intervention relating to environmental sustainability aim to reduce the environmental impact of SME accommodation facilities through the adoption of specific practices. In line with recent regulatory developments, the protocol also includes a dedicated focus on climate change, supporting the assessment of climate-related impacts, risks and stakeholder expectations.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the environmental areas of intervention. For each area, specific objectives, examples of operational activities, possible responsible actors and estimated implementation timelines have been identified, as indicated in the reference tables. The figure and tables are designed to support a targeted consultation of the protocol, in line with the results of the self-assessment tool.

**Figure 3.1. Environmental sustainability areas of intervention**



**Table 3.1 Environmental emergencies**

| Objectives<br>   | Examples of operational activity<br>   | Possible implementing role<br> | Estimated time for implementation<br> |
|---|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental risk identification and mitigation</li> <li>• Emergency preparedness and response</li> </ul> | Identification and monitoring of environmental risks (e.g. environmental audits, inspections and monitoring activities) | Environmental manager / Health & Safety Officer / Operational staff  | 2–3 weeks for initial set-up; periodic reviews (e.g. quarterly)  |
|   | Development and periodic update of emergency response procedures addressing environmental emergencies                   | Health & Safety Officer / Operations Manager   | 1–2 weeks for initial preparation and revision   |
|   | Organisation of emergency drills, simulations and staff training activities to ensure preparedness                      | Health & Safety Officer / Senior staff member  | 1–2 days per drill or training session   |
|   | Engagement in local initiatives and collaborations related to environmental risk prevention and awareness               | Management / Operational staff   | Ongoing or ad hoc  |

**Table 3.2 Biodiversity**

| Objectives<br>   | Examples of operational activity<br>   | Possible implementing role<br> | Estimated time for implementation<br> |
|---|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect natural areas and biodiversity</li> <li>• Promote biodiversity protection and awareness</li> </ul> | Creation and basic maintenance of natural or semi-natural areas on the property (e.g., native gardens, small green areas, limited habitat protection measures)        | Management / Maintenance staff   | 2-3 weeks for initial set-up; seasonal maintenance   |
|   | Support to local biodiversity and conservation initiatives (e.g., collaboration with local associations, volunteering activities, small sponsorships or partnerships) | Management / Staff   | Occasional or periodic   |
|   | Simple actions to support local wildlife and habitats (e.g., installation of bird or bat boxes, small-scale restoration actions where relevant)                       | Maintenance staff / Staff  | 1-2 days   |
|   | Guest information and awareness on local biodiversity (e.g., signage, short information materials, basic guided or self-guided activities)                            | Front desk / Staff   | 2-4 days to prepare materials; periodic updates  |

**Table 3.3 Architecture and construction impact**

| Objectives<br>  | Examples of operational activity<br>  | Possible implementing role<br> | Estimated time for implementation<br> |
|--|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harmonise buildings with the surrounding environment</li> </ul>   | Integration of sustainable design principles into new constructions or renovations (e.g., use of local professionals, natural ventilation and lighting solutions, preference for natural and low-impact materials) | Management / Designer / Local construction partner   | During planning and design phase   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimise construction-related environmental impacts</li> </ul>  | Measures to limit environmental disturbance during construction activities (e.g., site impact reduction, basic erosion control, reuse or recycling of construction waste where feasible)                           | Management / Site supervisor / Staff   | Initial planning (1 week); ongoing during construction   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restore and rehabilitate degraded areas</li> <li>• Use locally sourced and sustainable materials</li> </ul> | Restoration of vegetation and natural features in disturbed areas (e.g., replanting native species, simple revegetation actions, small habitat connections where relevant)   | Management / Maintenance staff / Local partners  | 2–4 weeks initial activities; seasonal follow-up   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preserve local identity and landscape</li> </ul>  | Selection of locally sourced and lower-impact building materials (e.g., local suppliers, recycled or reclaimed materials, avoidance of high-impact materials where possible)                                       | Management / Procurement / Staff   | 2–5 days for sourcing and selection  |
|  | Design choices aimed at preserving local identity and landscape integration (e.g., use of local architectural styles, reduced visual impact, landscaping solutions to integrate buildings into the surroundings)   | Management / Designer  | 1 week for design integration  |



**Table 3.4 Landscaping**

| Objectives<br>   | Examples of operational activity<br>  | Possible implementing role<br> | Estimated time for implementation<br> |
|---|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimise environmental impacts of landscaping</li> </ul> | Sustainable landscaping practices aimed at reducing environmental impacts (e.g. use of drought-tolerant plants, reduced use of pesticides and herbicides, basic rainwater or greywater use where feasible) | Management / Maintenance staff / Local landscaper  | 3-7 days for initial implementation; seasonal upkeep   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise guest awareness of landscape features</li> </ul>   | Information and awareness activities for guests on landscape features and local environment (e.g. signage, simple maps or brochures, occasional guided or self-guided nature activities)                   | Front desk / Staff / Local guide   | 2 days to prepare materials; periodic updates  |



**Table 3.5 Waste and pollution**

| <b>Objectives</b><br>           | <b>Examples of operational activity</b><br>  | <b>Possible implementing role</b><br> | <b>Estimated time for implementation</b><br> |
|--|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waste reduction, reuse and recycling</li> </ul>                         | <p>Waste reduction and recycling practices within daily operations (e.g. waste separation, reduction of single-use plastics, basic composting solutions where feasible)</p>                                       | <p>Management / Housekeeping / Maintenance staff</p>  | <p>1 week for initial set-up; ongoing periodic monitoring</p>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimise wastewater-related environmental and health impacts</li> </ul> | <p>Wastewater management and monitoring measures aimed at reducing environmental and health impacts (e.g. basic treatment solutions where required, regular checks, simple contingency procedures for spills)</p> | <p>Management / Maintenance staff / External support if needed</p>  | <p>5–10 days for initial set-up; periodic monitoring</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce noise and emissions</li> </ul>                                   | <p>Measures to limit noise and atmospheric emissions from facility operations (e.g. low-noise equipment, reduced outdoor lighting, basic control of emissions from kitchens and laundries)</p>                    | <p>Management / Maintenance staff</p>   | <p>2–4 days for assessment and adjustments; periodic review</p>   |

**Table 3.6 Energy efficiency**

| Objectives<br>  | Examples of operational activity<br>   | Possible implementing role<br> | Estimated time for implementation<br> |
|--|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce overall energy consumption</li> <li>• Monitor and track energy use</li> <li>• Set energy performance targets</li> <li>• Increase the use of renewable energy</li> <li>• Improve building energy efficiency</li> <li>• Reduce energy use in transport operations</li> <li>• Promote energy-saving behaviour among guests and staff</li> </ul> | Measures to reduce overall energy consumption and improve operational efficiency (e.g. energy-efficient lighting and appliances, basic automation or control systems, reduction of unnecessary energy use)                      | Management / Maintenance staff   | 1-2 weeks for initial measures; ongoing  |
|  | Monitoring and review of energy consumption to support informed decision-making (e.g. installation of basic meters, periodic analysis of consumption data)  | Management / Staff responsible for facilities  | 1-2 days for set-up; periodic review   |
|  | Definition and tracking of energy performance targets (e.g. simple reduction goals and progress checks over time)   | Management   | 2-3 days to define targets; periodic review  |
|  | Increase in the use of renewable energy and low-impact energy sources where feasible (e.g. on-site solar solutions, green energy supply options, renewable energy credits)  | Management / External provider if needed   | Project-based; depending on system and resources   |
|  | Building-related design or renovation measures to enhance energy efficiency (e.g. insulation improvements, efficient windows, design solutions improving natural light and ventilation)   | Management / Designer / Local construction partner   | Integrated into design or renovation phases  |
|  | Actions to reduce energy use related to transport and to promote energy-saving behaviour among guests and staff (e.g. optimisation of service vehicles, promotion of public transport and cycling, energy conservation signage) | Management / Staff   | Occasional or ongoing  |

**Table 3.7 Water management**

| Objectives<br>  | Examples of operational activity<br>   | Possible implementing role<br> | Estimated time for implementation<br> |
|--|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor and track water consumption</li> <li>• Set water efficiency targets</li> <li>• Reduce water use and improve availability</li> <li>• Prevent leaks through inspection and maintenance</li> <li>• Ensure water quality and safety</li> <li>• Promote circular water management</li> </ul> | Monitoring and analysis of water consumption to support efficiency improvements (e.g. installation of basic water meters, periodic review of consumption data, simple water audits) | Management / Maintenance staff   | 2–3 days for initial set-up; periodic monitoring   |
|  | Definition and tracking of water efficiency targets to reduce overall water use and improve availability (e.g. simple reduction goals, periodic progress reviews)                   | Management / Facility supervisor   | 1–2 days to define targets; periodic review  |
|  | Measures to reduce water use across operations and outdoor areas (e.g. low-flow fixtures, drought-tolerant landscaping, basic rainwater harvesting solutions where feasible)        | Maintenance staff / Grounds team   | 5–7 days for initial implementation; seasonal adjustments  |
|  | Inspection and maintenance of plumbing systems to prevent leaks and losses (e.g. routine checks and prompt repair of leaks)   | Maintenance staff  | Routine checks; reactive as needed   |
|  | Actions to ensure water quality and safety for guests and operations (e.g. periodic water quality testing, basic treatment or purification solutions where required)                | Maintenance staff / External service provider if needed  | 1–2 days for testing or adjustments; regular intervals   |
|  | Circular water management practices where applicable (e.g. reuse of greywater for irrigation, simple on-site treatment solutions)   | Maintenance staff / External support if needed   | Project-based; depending on system complexity  |



**Table 3.8 Hazardous substances**

| Objectives<br> | Examples of operational activity<br>  | Possible implementing role<br> | Estimated time for implementation<br> |
|---|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hazardous substances safe management</li> </ul>        | Identification, appropriate storage and reduction of hazardous substances (e.g. basic inventory, use of safety data sheets, preference for less harmful alternatives where possible) | Management / Housekeeping / Staff  | 1–2 days for initial organisation and awareness  |
|   | Proper handling and disposal of hazardous substances (e.g. separation of hazardous waste, use of authorised disposal services, basic staff instructions).                            | Management / Staff   | 1 day for set-up; periodic checks  |

**Table 3.9 Climate change**

| Objectives<br>  | Examples of operational activity<br>   | Possible implementing role<br> | Estimated time for implementation<br> |
|--|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess climate change relevance and risks</li> <li>• Address stakeholder expectations on climate issues</li> <li>• Reduce greenhouse gas emissions</li> <li>• Strengthen climate adaptation and resilience</li> <li>• Engage guests and staff on climate awareness</li> </ul> | Assessment of climate-related risks and impacts on facilities and operations (e.g. identification of exposure to extreme weather events, review of potential impacts on energy use, water availability and seasonality) | Management / Staff responsible for sustainability  | 2–3 weeks for initial assessment; periodic review  |
|  | Collection and consideration of stakeholder expectations related to climate issues (e.g. guest feedback, tour operator requests, local or regulatory climate-related requirements)                                      | Management / Front desk / Staff  | 1–2 weeks for initial collection; updates as needed  |
|  | Measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from operations and mobility (e.g. energy efficiency improvements, increased use of renewable energy, promotion of low-carbon transport options)                            | Management / Maintenance staff   | 3–6 weeks for initial measures; ongoing  |
|  | Actions to improve climate adaptation and resilience of buildings and services (e.g. preparedness for extreme weather events, basic building improvements, nature-based solutions where feasible)                       | Management / Maintenance staff / Local partners  | Project-based; depending on scope  |
|  | Information, training and awareness activities for guests and staff on climate-related topics (e.g. simple communication materials, staff guidance, climate-related awareness campaigns)                                | Front desk / Staff   | 2–4 days to prepare materials; periodic or seasonal  |
|  |   |  |  |

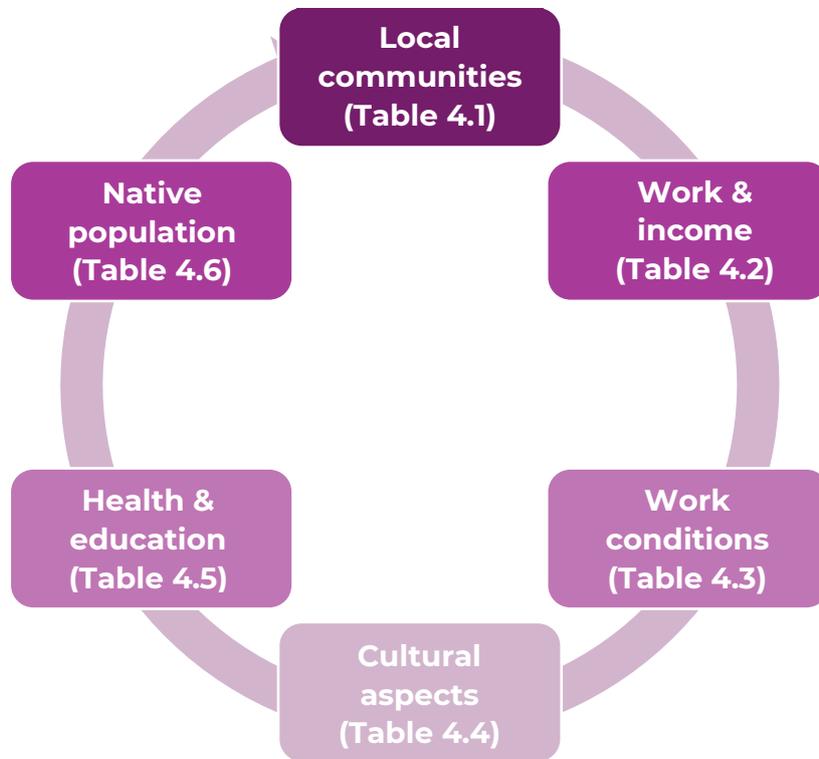


## 4 SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AREAS OF INTERVENTION

The social sustainability of the protocol addresses the relationship between accommodation facilities, workers, guests and local communities, supporting responsible practices that contribute to social well-being and inclusion.

These areas (Figure 4.1) are directly linked to the corresponding table, where objectives, practical examples, actors involved and estimated timelines are presented. This structure supports accommodation SMEs in strengthening their social sustainability performance.

**Figure 4.1 Social sustainability areas of intervention**





**Table 4.1 Local communities**

| <b>Objectives</b><br>  | <b>Examples of operational activity</b><br>  | <b>Possible implementing role</b><br> | <b>Estimated time for implementation</b><br> |
|---|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support local community development</li> <li>• Engage staff in community initiatives</li> </ul>          | <p>Engagement with local community initiatives and programmes (e.g. participation in local volunteering activities, support to schools, cultural or social projects, collaboration with local associations)</p> | <p>Management / Staff</p>   | <p>3–5 days to establish contacts; ongoing or periodic</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain dialogue with the local community</li> <li>• Address community feedback and concerns</li> </ul> | <p>Actions to encourage staff involvement in community and social initiatives (e.g. flexible time arrangements, internal recognition of participation, promotion of social responsibility values)</p>           | <p>Management / HR / Staff</p>  | <p>1–2 days to define approach; periodic review</p>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor and improve social actions</li> <li>• Participate in local programmes</li> </ul>                 | <p>Establishment of communication and feedback mechanisms with the local community (e.g. occasional meetings, basic feedback channels, timely response to concerns)</p>   | <p>Management / Front desk / Staff</p>  | <p>2–3 days to set up; ongoing</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevent negative social impacts</li> </ul>   | <p>Monitoring and review of social actions and prevention of negative social impacts (e.g. periodic review of initiatives, basic safeguards against exploitation and harmful practices)</p>                     | <p>Management</p>   | <p>Periodic or annual review</p>  |



**Table 4.2 Work and income**

| Objectives<br>   | Examples of operational activity<br>   | Possible implementing role<br> | Estimated time for implementation<br> |
|---|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote local employment and skills</li> <li>• Ensure fair remuneration and local involvement</li> <li>• Support local services and producers</li> </ul> | Promotion of local employment and skills development (e.g. prioritising local hiring where possible, collaboration with local training institutions, internships or basic vocational training opportunities)                  | Management / HR / Staff  | 2-3 weeks to establish contacts; periodic or ongoing   |
|   | Measures to ensure fair remuneration, inclusion and involvement of local people in the workplace (e.g. transparent wage practices, equal treatment policies, basic mechanisms for staff and local input)                      | Management / HR  | 3-5 days to define approach; periodic review   |
|   | Support to local services, crafts and producers through business activities and guest offerings (e.g. use of local suppliers and products, promotion of local crafts, simple cultural activities involving local communities) | Purchasing / Front desk / Staff  | Around 2 weeks for initial set-up; periodic updates  |

**Table 4.3 Work conditions**

| Objectives<br>   | Examples of operational activity<br>   | Possible implementing role<br> | Estimated time for implementation<br> |
|---|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure legal minimum wages</li> </ul>  | Measures to ensure compliance with legal minimum wage requirements and labour regulations (e.g. basic payroll checks, periodic review of wages in line with applicable laws)                            | Management / HR / Finance  | 1-2 days for initial checks; periodic or annual review   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide safe and adequate working conditions</li> </ul>  | Actions to provide safe, hygienic and adequate working conditions for employees (e.g. routine workplace checks, basic safety measures, maintenance of essential employee facilities)                    | Management / Facility staff / Staff  | 1-2 weeks for initial set-up; periodic checks  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure wage and benefit transparency</li> <li>• Prevent misuse of internships</li> <li>• Promote equal treatment and prevent child labour</li> </ul> | Transparent communication of wages, benefits and employment conditions (e.g. clear payslips, basic information materials, regular updates on employment terms)  | Management / HR  | 1-2 days to set up communication; periodic updates   |
|   | Safeguards to prevent misuse of internships and to promote equal treatment and child labour prevention (e.g. compliance with legal requirements, clear role descriptions, non-discriminatory practices) | Management   | Periodic or annual review  |



**Table 4.4 Cultural aspects**

| Objectives<br> | Examples of operational activity<br>  | Possible implementing role<br> | Estimated time for implementation<br> |
|---|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote and preserve local culture</li> </ul>          | <p>Promotion and support of local culture and traditions through guest experiences and information (e.g. collaboration with local cultural actors, simple cultural events or workshops, provision of basic information materials on local history, customs and traditions)</p> | <p>Management / Front desk / Staff</p>   | <p>1-2 weeks for initial planning; per activity or event</p>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevent negative cultural impacts</li> </ul>           | <p>Actions to minimise negative impacts of tourism on local culture and respect cultural sensitivities (e.g. basic cultural guidelines for guests, awareness activities on local customs, basic tools to monitor and address potential cultural impacts)</p>                   | <p>Management / Front desk / Staff</p>   | <p>3-5 days for set-up; periodic review</p>  |



**Table 4.5 Health and education**

| Objectives<br>             | Examples of operational activity<br>   | Possible implementing role<br> | Estimated time for implementation<br> |
|---|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support local health initiatives</li> </ul>                        | <p>Support to local community health initiatives (e.g. collaboration with local healthcare providers, participation in or support of local health campaigns, small fundraising or awareness activities)</p>   | <p>Management / HR / Staff</p>   | <p>Around 1 week to establish contacts; ongoing or periodic</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote employee and family well-being</li> </ul>                  | <p>Actions to promote health and well-being of employees and their families (e.g. access to basic health coverage where applicable, simple wellness activities, collaboration with local health services for check-ups or advice)</p>   | <p>Management / HR</p>   | <p>2-4 days to launch initiatives; periodic review</p>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support educational and environmental education actions</li> </ul> | <p>Training and educational activities for employees, guests and the local community, including environmental education (e.g. short internal training sessions, basic awareness materials for guests, collaboration with local schools or associations on educational initiatives, WhatsApp groups or online communities)</p> | <p>Management / HR / Staff</p>   | <p>1-2 weeks to prepare materials; periodic updates</p>  |



**Table 4.6 Native population**

| Objectives<br>                          | Examples of operational activity<br>  | Possible implementing role<br> | Estimated time for implementation<br> |
|--|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect the customs, rights and traditions of indigenous populations</li> </ul> | <p>Engagement with indigenous populations to recognise and safeguard their customs, rights and traditions (e.g. dialogue with community representatives on relevant tourism activities, transparent information sharing, application of free, prior and informed consent where applicable)</p> | <p>Management / Community liaison / External support if needed</p>   | <p>2–3 weeks to establish dialogue; periodic engagement</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage indigenous populations</li> </ul>  | <p>Involvement of indigenous populations in relevant policies, programmes and benefit-sharing arrangements (e.g. participation in discussions on tourism initiatives, inclusion in decision-making where appropriate, collaboration on community-based activities or agreements)</p>           | <p>Management / Owner / Staff</p>  | <p>Around 1 month for initial arrangements; ongoing collaboration</p>  |

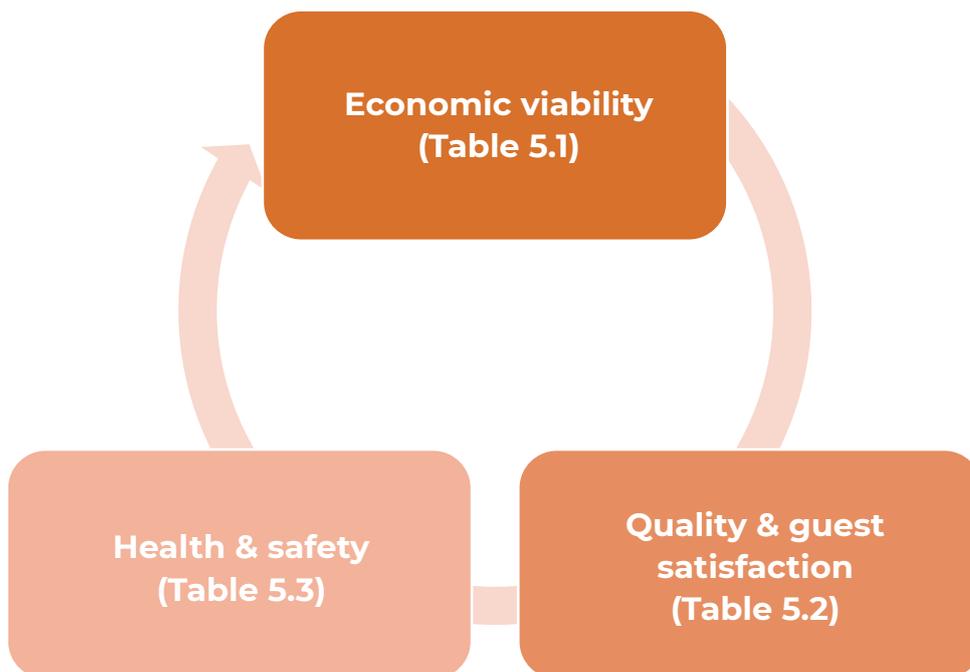


## 5 ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY AREAS OF INTERVENTION

The economic dimension of the Sustainability Protocol focuses on strengthening the long-term viability of accommodation facilities, supporting responsible management practices, quality of services and relationships with suppliers and local communities.

The areas of intervention relating to economic sustainability are presented in Figure 5.1. Similar to the environmental and social pillars, specific objectives, examples of initiatives, professional figures and implementation timeframes are identified to foster higher levels of economic sustainability maturity.

**Figure 5.1 Economic sustainability areas of intervention**



**Table 5.1 Economic viability**

| Objectives<br>   | Examples of operational activity<br>   | Possible implementing role<br> | Estimated time for implementation<br> |
|---|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan long-term economic sustainability</li> <li>• Maintain an updated business plan</li> <li>• Monitor economic performance</li> <li>• Engage the local community in new developments</li> </ul> | Economic planning to support long-term sustainability (e.g. definition of a sustainability-oriented business strategy, basic cost-benefit considerations for sustainability initiatives)  | Management   | 2–3 weeks for initial planning; periodic review  |
|   | Development and periodic update of a business plan including market positioning and financial risk considerations (e.g. basic market analysis, review of pricing strategies, integration of sustainability elements into marketing and risk management) | Management / Finance / Operations  | 2–4 weeks to draft or update; annual review  |
|   | Monitoring of economic performance and maintenance of financial records related to sustainability (e.g. tracking key financial performance indicators, basic accounting of sustainability investments, periodic financial reviews)                      | Management / Accounting  | 1 week for set-up; monthly or periodic reporting   |
|   | Consultation and assessment of potential economic and social impacts before implementing new accommodation or major projects (e.g. basic community consultations, basic impact assessments, identification of mitigation measures)                      | Management / Staff responsible for projects  | 2–3 weeks for initial assessments and engagement   |

**Table 5.2 Quality and guest satisfaction**

| Objectives<br>   | Examples of operational activity<br>   | Possible implementing role<br> | Estimated time for implementation<br> |
|---|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service alignment with local culture and guests</li> <li>• Understanding guest expectations</li> <li>• Quality standards and compliance</li> </ul> | Design and delivery of products and services aligned with local traditions, guest expectations and sustainability values (e.g. integration of local culture into services, use of local products, adaptation of services based on guest profiles) | Management / Front desk / Staff  | 1–2 weeks for design; ongoing updates  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability documentation of services</li> <li>• Guest satisfaction and complaint management</li> </ul>   | Collection, analysis and use of guest feedback to monitor satisfaction and improve quality (e.g. guest surveys, review of online feedback, complaint handling and corrective actions)   | Front desk / Staff   | 3–5 days to set up tools; ongoing  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliable and accessible service information</li> <li>• Sustainable supplier selection</li> <li>• Support to sustainable suppliers</li> </ul>       | Definition and monitoring of service quality standards and clear communication of products and services (e.g. basic internal quality checks, updated and accessible guest information, documentation of sustainability aspects)                   | Management / Staff   | 1 week for set-up; periodic review   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local sourcing of products and services</li> <li>• Safe, fresh and local food provision</li> </ul>   | Selection and collaboration with suppliers and food providers with attention to sustainability, locality and safety (e.g. preference for local and responsible suppliers, clear sourcing practices, provision of fresh and regional food)         | Purchasing / Kitchen staff / Management  | 1 week for sourcing; seasonal or periodic updates  |

**Table 5.3 Health and safety**

| Objectives<br>                                     | Examples of operational activity<br>   | Possible implementing role<br> | Estimated time for implementation<br> |
|---|---|--|--|
|   | Identification and assessment of health and safety risks related to guests, workers and activities (e.g. basic risk assessments, identification of main hazards, periodic review of risks)              | Management / Staff responsible for safety  | 1–2 weeks for initial assessment; updates as needed  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk identification and management</li> <li>• Risk-based sustainability actions</li> </ul> | Definition and implementation of simple risk management measures to reduce identified risks (e.g. basic preventive measures, prioritisation of actions, monitoring of incidents and corrective actions) | Management / Staff   | 1 week to define measures; ongoing   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactive risk assessment</li> <li>• Tourist safety and security</li> </ul>                | Integration of risk considerations into sustainability planning and operational decisions (e.g. use of risk assessment results to guide priorities and improvement actions)                             | Management   | Periodic or annual review  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity risk information and prevention</li> </ul>  | Measures to ensure guest safety and security during the stay (e.g. basic security measures, clear safety information, collaboration with local authorities where relevant)                              | Management / Front desk / Staff  | 3–4 days for set-up; ongoing   |
|   | Information and prevention measures related to activity-specific hazards (e.g. safety information for guests, staff training, basic safety procedures for activities)                                   | Management / Activity staff  | 2–3 days for preparation; per-activity application   |



## 6 CONCLUSIONS

The Sustainability Protocol 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. 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.

Whilst the protocol provides a robust foundation, its success will be contingent on several factors. 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.