



Sustainability programme of Swiss Tourism.

Guidelines.

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1 SUSTAINABILITY IN SWISS TOURISM

1.1 Reasons for establishing a sustainability programme for Swiss tourism

Sustainability will become even more important for the economy and in terms of demand in the future. In addition, Switzerland is called upon to actively contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Confederation's sustainability strategy and to implement them nationally.

Sustainability is also highly relevant for the future development and positioning of Switzerland as a tourism destination.

The coherent and credible strategic positioning and implementation in the area of sustainability is a good match for Switzerland as a tourist destination and offers lots of potential for differentiation. There are already numerous tourism providers in Switzerland that are committed to sustainable development. However, it is difficult for guests to determine the sustainability of the different offers available.

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

1.2 Sustainability in Swiss tourism

The term sustainability is widely used and sometimes interpreted differently. In the context of tourism, sustainability refers to tourism development that,

- in addition to economic performance (strengthening of the regional economy, long-term investment planning, etc.),
- also considers ecological responsibility (energy efficiency and use of renewable energy, minimising adverse impacts on natural resources such as nature and landscape, air, water, soil, etc.)
- and social solidarity (equal treatment, health, quality of life, education, participation, etc.)
- as well as the right to shape or maintain the options for action of future generations (grandchild compatibility)

If quality means fulfilling customer expectations, sustainability means acting in a way that is compatible with our grandchildren. In addition to the expectations of guests, sustainability must also consider the demands of other stakeholders, whereby the natural environment must also be understood as a stakeholder. If sustainability is merely used as a marketing term and cannot be experienced by the guest and is not communicated transparently, then the commitment is not perceived as attractive and trustworthy. Sustainable management of the individual stakeholders in a tourism region forms the basis for sustainable experiences. However, only specific offers make such a commitment visible, to put value on sustainability aspects and thus increase one's own appeal as a tourism provider and tourism destination.

1.3 Classification of the sustainability efforts of Swiss tourism

There are both international and national framework documents and reference works that describe the goals of sustainable (tourism) development. In particular, the most relevant ones include the following:

Sustainable Development Goals: At the international level, efforts for sustainable development are guided by the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are to be achieved globally and by all UN member states by 2030. Switzerland, too, is tasked to implement the goals at a national level.

While tourism is explicitly mentioned in some SDGs, it can influence the implementation of most goals directly or indirectly. The various sustainability topics of the sustainability check of the Swisustainable programme (cf. chapter 4.2) can be allocated to the individual goals.

GSTC Criteria: The criteria of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) aim to create a common understanding of sustainable tourism. They serve as a global baseline standard for sustainability in the travel and tourism sectors and are used for education, policy-making, measurement and evaluation, and as a basis for certification. The orientation on the GSTC criteria is relevant in the Swisustainable programme for the recognition of sustainability credentials.

Sustainable Development Strategy of the Confederation: The 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy shows how the Federal Council intends to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development over the next ten years. In the strategy, the Federal Council anchors sustainable development as an important requirement for all federal policy areas. The 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals provide the reference framework for the strategy.

Federal Tourism Strategy: With its tourism policy, the Federal Council aims to contribute to an internationally competitive tourism industry and to an attractive and efficient tourism destination in Switzerland. Sustainability and subsidiarity are mentioned as the key guiding principles. Accordingly, the implementation of the Confederation's tourism policy "principally considers the guidelines and objectives of the Federal Council's current Sustainable Development Strategy".

Switzerland Tourism Strategy: In its 2021-2023 strategy, Switzerland Tourism defined "Sustainable tourism" as one of the focal points and derived its [sustainability strategy](#) from it. One of the goals is for Switzerland to be credibly perceived as a sustainability leader. The Swisustainable programme is intended to make a concrete contribution to implementing this strategy by making sustainability efforts visible and supporting tourism service providers in their commitment.

2 SWISSTAINABLE — THE SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMME OF SWISS TOURISM

2.1 Goals and contents

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

- Gathering, bundling and communicating the sustainability activities and offers of tourism service providers
- Supporting the commitment of the service providers towards comprehensive sustainable development of Swiss tourism
- Positioning Switzerland in the international travel market as a sustainable destination

The sustainability commitment forms the basis of the sustainability programme. It contains statements on the values and responsibilities of the business/organisation. By signing the commitment, the professional associations and all participating businesses commit to contributing to the sustainable development of Swiss tourism in all dimensions of sustainability (cf. chapter 4.1).

The sustainability programme aims to make the industry's commitment visible and to support tourism service providers in their efforts towards a comprehensive sustainable development of Swiss tourism. Therefore existing certifications, initiatives, and programmes are integrated and recognised, provided they meet certain standards. The programme is not a new certification.

The focus of the sustainability programme is on tourism service providers/organisations. This includes tourism and tourism-related businesses as well as destination management organisations (DMOs) and tourism organisations (TOs). The term business is used in each case for simplification in the following. The sustainability programme is applicable to different business categories and thus considers the breadth of tourism.

To make the programme accessible to as many businesses as possible with different starting points, there are three different participation options with different access levels and requirements (cf. chapter 3).

2.2 Requirements and benefits

The sustainability programme is principally open to all tourism businesses of all tourism sectors in Switzerland. Both businesses that are just starting out on the path towards more sustainable development, as well as businesses that already have comprehensive sustainability certification may participate.

The only requirement for participation is:

- the business or organisation wants to contribute to a more sustainable Swiss tourism, confirms this by signing the commitment to sustainability and commits to introduce specific sustainability measures.

The benefits of participating in the sustainability programme are manifold:

- Reviewing and further developing the business in terms of sustainability
- Becoming more competitive in terms of the growing target market of sustainability-savvy tourists
- Positioning as a responsible business
- Being promoted as a responsible business by Switzerland Tourism and other tourism umbrella organisations
- Increasing the appeal as an employer on the labour market
- Contributing to the sustainable development of Switzerland

Switzerland Tourism offers the following incentives for participating in the programme:

- Using the Swisstainable brand with corresponding level addition (I: — committed, II: — engaged, III: leading) to position the business
- Effective marketing of Swisstainable through ST — Spillover effects for participating businesses
- Listing at MySwitzerland.com with corresponding mentioning as a Swisstainable business.
- Swisstainable (Level III / Level II) as a prerequisite for specific sustainable marketing measures (e.g., special supplements, campaigns).
- Swisstainable (Level III / Level II) as one of the decision criteria in the RFP (Request for Proposal) for ST Events
- Support from the Swisstainable office for questions about the sustainability programme

Further information on the communications concept, the integration of the programme into the overall campaign as well as the specific services for businesses at the various levels can be found [here](#) (in German and French only).

2.3 Overview

Considering the different starting points and depending on the already existing commitments, there are three different levels of the sustainability programme, which are differentiated by different requirements.

The basis for all three levels is the signing of the commitment and the associated creation of the organisational prerequisites in the form of the designation of a person or team responsible for sustainability issues. Level I and II also require a sustainability check, the analysis of which leads to specific measures. Those who can already provide proof of recognised sustainability credentials can apply for Level II or Level III respectively.

Illustration 1: The three levels of the sustainability programme

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

Sustainability credentials are recognised certifications, labels, initiatives, or programmes that demonstrate a specific commitment in at least one sustainability area or a combination of two such credentials (according to the lists of recognised credentials “Level II Individual Credential” and “Level II Combination”, cf. chapter 4.4).

3 THE THREE LEVELS OF THE SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMME

3.1 Level I — committed

Level I of the sustainability programme is aimed at businesses that cannot (yet) provide certifications or other sustainability credentials, but want to commit to sustainable business management and are therefore “committed” to consistently develop their business towards sustainability. The specific requirements are:



- Signing the commitment to sustainability
- Designating a person or team responsible for sustainability (Sustainability Officer)
- Performing a sustainability analysis (self-declaration) using the sustainability check
- Defining at least three specific measures that will be implemented within the next 24 months

3.2 Level II — engaged

Level II of the sustainability programme is aimed at businesses that want to commit to sustainable business management and have already developed their business further towards sustainability. Level II can be achieved by businesses that have already won one or more recognised sustainability credentials — hence “engaged”. In addition to Level I, Level II already has individual, proven focal points in terms of content. Credential that demonstrates a specific commitment in at least one sustainability area or a combination of two such credentials (according to the lists of recognised credentials “Level II Individual Credential” and “Level II Combination”) will be considered). The specific requirements are:



- Signing the commitment to sustainability
- Designating a person or team responsible for sustainability (Sustainability Officer)
- Performing a sustainability analysis (self-declaration) using the sustainability check
- Submission of external credential or a combination of at least two credentials of concretely implemented sustainability aspects (according to the list of recognised credentials, cf. chapter 4.4)
- Defining at least three specific measures addressing different sustainability aspects that will be implemented within the next 24 months

3.3 Level III — leading

Level III of the sustainability programme is aimed at businesses that want to commit to sustainable business management and wish to further develop their business continuously and coherently towards sustainability — hence “leading”. Level III can be achieved by businesses that have already won one recognised sustainability certificate.



Consideration is given to comprehensive certifications that cover all dimensions of sustainability and are regularly audited by third parties. The specific requirements are:

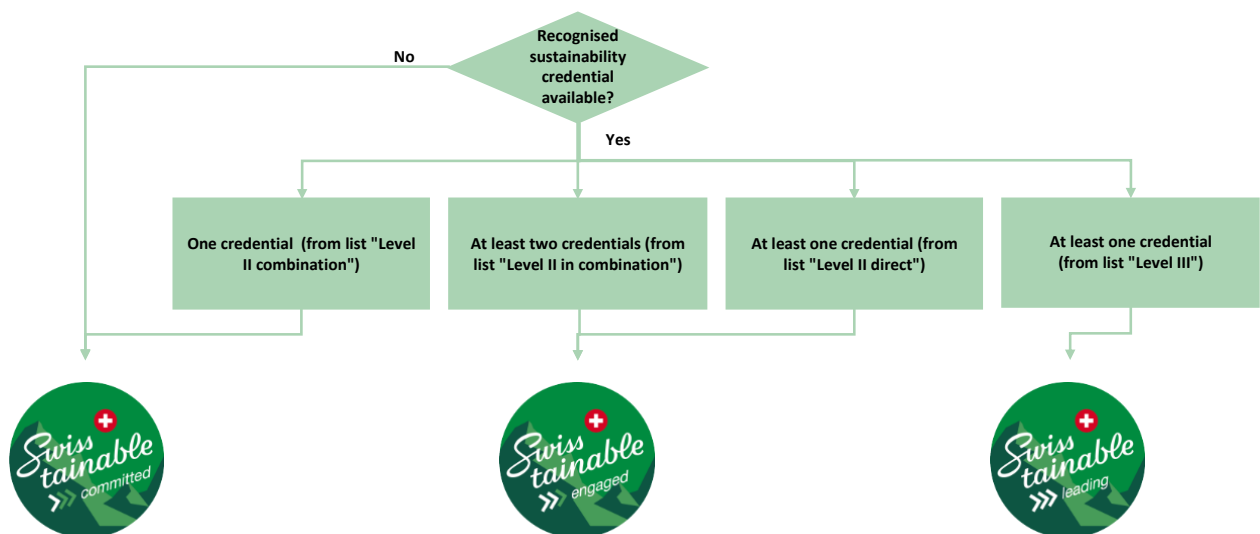
- Signing the commitment to sustainability
- Designating a person or team responsible for sustainability (Sustainability Officer)
- Documenting a recognised sustainability credential for Level III acc. to the list of recognised credentials, cf. chapter 4.4)
- Optional: Performing a sustainability analysis (self-declaration) using the sustainability check

3.4 Which level is right for my business?

Which level is the most suitable for a business depends primarily on whether there is already recognised sustainability credential. The lists of recognised sustainability credentials can be found here ([Level II](#), [Level III](#)). Businesses that already have one or more of the listed credentials can apply for level II or III. All others start with Level I.

First check the lists of recognised credentials to see whether you already have one or more of the recognised certificates.

Illustration 2: Which level is right for my business?



The manual provides an overview of recognised certifications, initiatives, and programmes. Provided you are already in the process or decide to work on a new credential, the level can be changed at any time if the relevant credential is available.

4 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Commitment

The commitment forms the basis of the sustainability programme. It contains statements on the values and responsibilities of the business. It also describes the 12 sustainability aspects to be assessed in the sustainability check with the help of two partial aspects each.

The commitment is signed by the managing director and the sustainability officer and uploaded to the ST data network as part of the registration process. All the employees are informed. The business can also use the commitment in its external communications.

Preamble

- We are aware of our business/organisation's responsibilities with regard to sustainable development, and are doing our utmost to ensure that our grandchildren will still be able to visit and experience Switzerland's fascinating beauty and diversity – for us, sustainable means "grandchild-compatible".
- In this way, we are playing our role in implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) adopted by the UN and the Federal Council's 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy, and helping position Switzerland as a sustainable travel destination.
- We take environmental, social and economic aspects into account in all our decisions and control these through careful management.

Environment

1. *Nature and scenery:* We are aware of the key contribution of high-quality scenery and architecture to attractive tourism and take full advantage of these opportunities when developing and marketing offers. We respect sensitive natural habitats and protected areas, promote biodiversity, concentrate tourism projects in less sensitive areas and play our part in sustainable spatial planning.
2. *Water, air and earth:* We constantly improve resource efficiency, particularly in the use of natural resources such as water, air and earth.
3. *Energy and climate:* We optimise energy consumption through conscious procurement and investment decisions, promote renewable energy sources and reduce climate-damaging emissions.
4. *Mobility:* We support attractive multimodal, environmentally friendly mobility offerings designed to benefit visitors and reduce the burden on the environment.
5. *Waste:* We minimise waste through avoidance, reduction, recycling and separate disposal.

Society

6. *People and culture:* We help strengthen regional identity and regional cycles. We involve the local population in our projects, promote regional cultures and enable visitors to engage with local people.
7. *Specific visitor requirements:* We cater to specific visitor requirements, taking key aspects such as family-friendliness, accessibility and food intolerances into account, and improve our offerings on an ongoing basis.

8. *Working conditions and equal opportunities:* We offer fair working conditions, optimise employees' levels of employment, encourage employee participation and training, pay attention to equal opportunities and work-life balance, and help promote social and intercultural integration.
9. *Visitor information and hospitality:* We allow our visitors to experience sustainability, keep them informed about our efforts in this regard, encourage them to behave considerately and surprise them with our courteous hospitality.

Economy

10. *Marketing:* Our marketing takes the environmental impact of the journey to Switzerland into account. We are strengthening our short-haul markets and targeting a balanced mix of visitors.
11. *Jobs and cooperations:* We are actively committed to further developing tourism as a key livelihood. We offer attractive jobs, adhere to Collective Labour Agreements, act in a cooperative manner and maintain fair partnerships.
12. *Innovation and profitability:* We encourage sustainable innovation, generate sufficient profit- ability and take economic viability as well as environmental and social compatibility into account in our investments.

We identify with the commitment of Swiss tourism to sustainability, take sustainability aspects into account in all our decisions and comply with the following requirements:

- We explicitly embed our sustainability efforts in our corporate/business strategy, communicate them both internally and externally, develop them into concrete measures and implement them in a targeted manner.
- We comply with legal requirements in all areas.
- We have a sustainability officer and/or a sustainability team to ensure that our sustainability measures are implemented.
- We adhere to any specific requirements of umbrella organisations.

4.2 Sustainability check

The sustainability check is a tool to systematically evaluate one's own sustainable activities. It considers the sustainability dimensions of the environment, society and economy, captures the statements from the commitment and specifies them with two sustainability aspects each.

It can be downloaded [here](#) as a working document. The evaluation within the framework of the registration process must also be submitted on the ST data network.

The sustainability check is intended to serve as an instrument for internal analysis. Proof to assess the degree of compliance is not required. No minimum value must be reached and the assessment is not published. The self-assessment should merely help the business identify its strengths and weaknesses and serve as a basis for deriving measures.

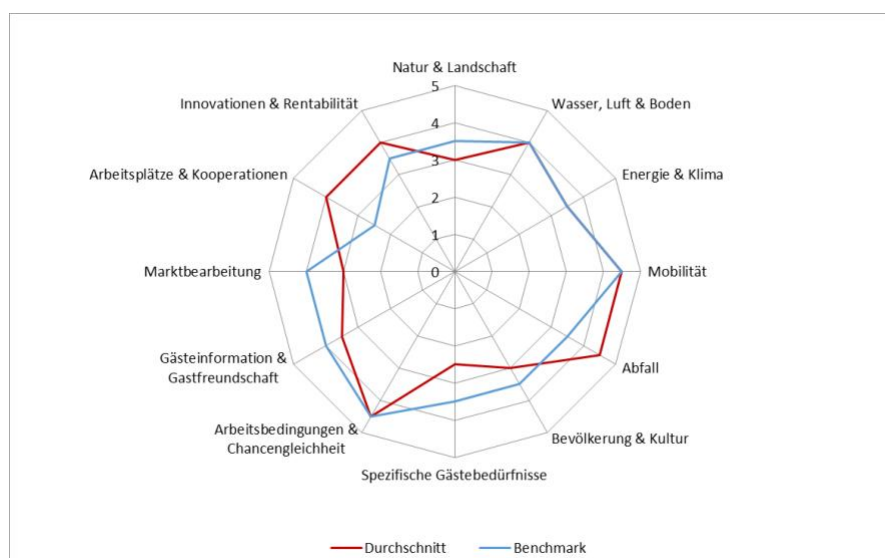
The sustainability check is ideally developed together with employees or in a working group with representatives from different departments/areas.

The statements made as part of the sustainability check are to be assessed in terms of the degree of fulfilment on a scale of 1 (“does not apply”) to 5 (“fully applies”). In addition, there is a “not relevant/not assessable” column, as not all statements affect all service provider categories to the same extent.

For this purpose, there is the possibility to note down comments and ideas for improvement measures in the last column. The assessments of the sustainability aspects are visualised in a spider diagram. The spider diagram evaluation can also be used to discuss any measures to be planned.

The assessments made must be transferred accordingly as part of the registration process in the ST data network. If there is a sufficiently large number of participating businesses in the corresponding service provider category, enabling a comparison, the spider diagram is supplemented in the ST data network with a benchmark. However, it should be noted that the benchmark is also only an average of the self-assessments.

Illustration 3: Spider diagram for the sustainability check (example)



4.3 Planning of measures

A requirement for Level I and Level II is to define at least three measures on different aspects of sustainability that will be implemented in the next 24 months and to record them in the sheet [Overview of measures](#). No measures are required for Level III businesses because they already develop improvement measures as part of the certification process.

The sustainability check can serve as inspiration and basis for defining measures. In this context, the measures are to be aimed in particular at eliminating weak points. However, they can also focus on partial aspects that help to raise the profile of the business.

The individual steps of the measures should be planned in detail with responsibilities and deadlines. There is a template available for this purpose. The completed action sheet must also be uploaded to the ST data network within the framework of the registration process.

4.4 List of recognised credentials

4.4.1 Recognised credentials — Level II as individual credential

In addition to the commitment, sustainability check and measures, the recognised credential (according to the List of recognised credentials — Level II as individual credential) leads directly to Level II. Businesses that can show one of the listed credentials can submit the corresponding credential (certificate, etc.) in addition to the other documents and can thereby directly obtain Level II.

A manual with short descriptions of the credentials and links to the corresponding organisations can be found [here](#).

4.4.2 Recognised credentials — Level II in combination

Level II can also be achieved with a combination of at least two credentials which cover only partial aspects of sustainability. Certifications, self-declarations and participation in initiatives, and programmes are recognised, although generally not pure memberships and registrations.

A manual with short descriptions of the credentials and links to the corresponding organisations can be found [here](#).

4.4.3 Recognised credentials — Level III

Level III can be achieved by providing credential of sustainability certification according to the List of recognised credentials — Level III.

A manual with short descriptions of the credentials and links to the corresponding organisations can be found [here](#).

4.4.4 Recognition of new credentials

The list of recognised credentials is constantly being reviewed and updated as required. The Swisustainable office decides on the recognition of new credentials.

Organisations (e.g., foundations) and businesses (e.g., hotel groups) with their own sustainability credential that does not yet appear on the list of recognised credentials may submit an application for their programme to be recognised and included on the list. Please contact the office to submit an application.

4.5 Additional support

In addition to this guide, the following further information is available at www.stnet.ch/swisstainable/toolbox to help you:

- [Manual on sustainability credentials](#): This document presents the criteria for the recognition of sustainability credentials and provides an overview with a short description of each of the recognised sustainability credentials.
- [Glossary](#): This document explains the most important terms of the sustainability programme.
- [Q&A](#): This document provides answers to the most frequently asked questions about the sustainability programme.
- As well as all other required documents, including in English and Italian.

Swisstainable office:

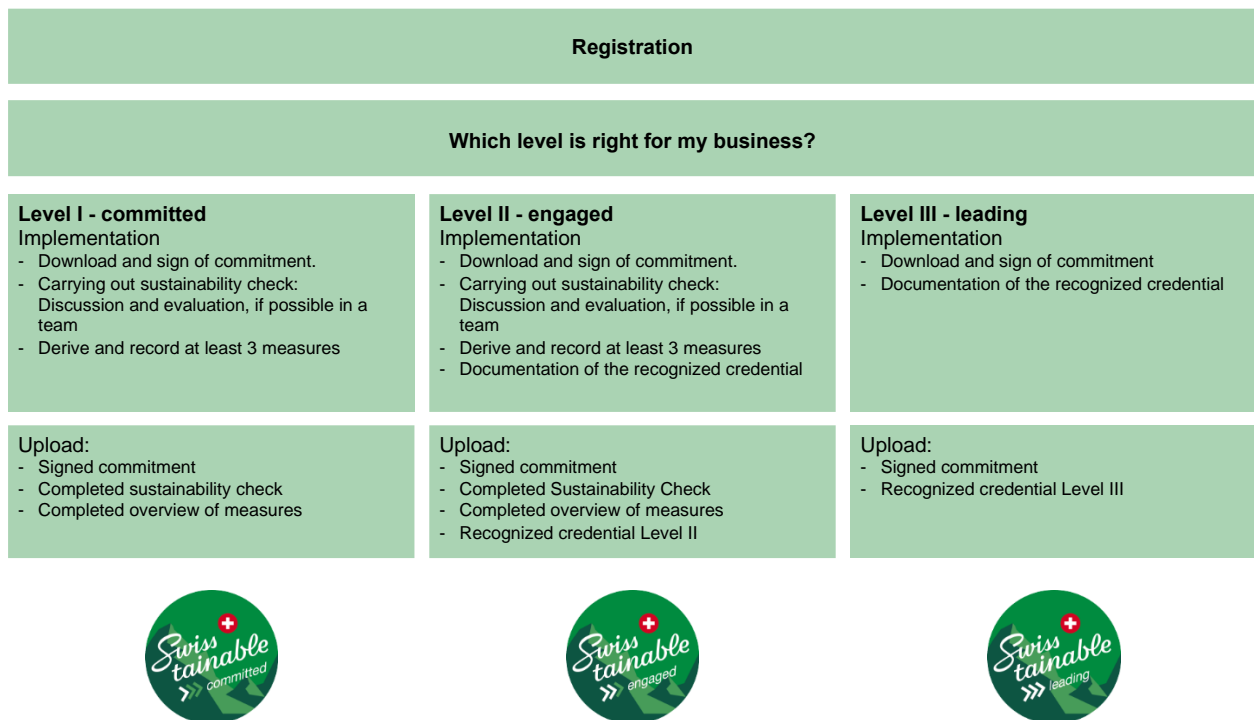
If you have any questions about the sustainability programme, please contact the office at swisstainable@switzerland.com.

5 STEPS FOR PARTICIPATION

All businesses wishing to participate in the sustainability programme register using the [registration form](#) at STnet. The business will then receive the link to the ST data network by email, where the registration and the upload of all required documents is to be completed.

Depending on the existing sustainability commitment, which can be proven by means of recognised credentials, the business can strive for Level I, II or III. For guidance and to decide on which level is the right one, please refer to the lists of recognised credentials, as described in chapter 3.4.

Illustration 4: Overview of steps per level



The illustration provides an overview of the implementation steps and the required proof. The specific steps for implementation for each level are described below.

5.1 Process: Level I — committed

The process for participating in Level I of the sustainability programme can be divided into the following steps:

1. Preparation

Find out more about [Swisstainable](#) and decide which level is right for your business.

Assign a person or team (the Sustainability Officer) to ensure the implementation of the business's sustainability requirements (if not already in place). Plan when, where and how you want to approach the development of the sustainability check. Inform employees about the commitment and the planned steps.

2. Registration

Register [here](#). You will then receive your access link to the ST data network as well as all required documents and tools by e-mail in a timely manner.

3. Signing the commitment

The commitment is signed by the CEO/Director/Managing Director and the Sustainability Officer.

4. Carrying out a sustainability check

If possible, perform the sustainability check as a team (management, sustainability team, etc.). Assessing the individual partial aspects as a team often already introduces ideas and measures as to how sustainability could be improved in the corresponding area. Make note of these ideas right next to the assessment. The form can be downloaded [here](#) as an Excel spreadsheet.

Guidance for self-assessment by means of a sustainability check can be found in chapter 4.2.

5. Developing measures

Based on the self-assessment by means of a Sustainability check, at least three measures on different sustainability aspects must be planned and implemented in the next 24 months.

The measures should primarily eliminate weak points from the sustainability check or to raise the profile of the business. The template for the action sheet can be downloaded [here](#) to capture the measures.

6. Submitting the information

Participating businesses submit the following information via the link sent by e-mail to the ST data network:

Documents and information	Submission
Signed commitment	upload
Sustainability check	complete online
Completed action sheet with at least three measures	upload

7. Decision of the inspection authority

After review, the Swisstainable office awards the Swisstainable confirmation certificate as well as the Swisstainable signet which is valid for a period of 4 years.

8. Review and renewal

The participating businesses implement the planned measures. After two years, they will be asked to review the implementation of the submitted sustainability measures, to carry out the sustainability check again and to develop at least three new measures.

Change to another level is possible at any time after providing the corresponding sustainability credential.

5.2 Process: Level II — engaged

The process for participating in Level II of the sustainability programme can be divided into the following steps:

1. Preparation

Find out more about Swisstable and decide which level is right for your business.

Assign a person or team (the Sustainability Officer) to ensure the implementation of the business's sustainability requirements (if not already in place). Plan when, where and how you want to approach the development of the sustainability check. Inform employees about the commitment and the planned steps.

2. Registration

Register [here](#). You will then receive your access link to the ST data network as well as all required documents and tools by e-mail in a timely manner.

3. Signing the commitment

The commitment is signed by the CEO/Director/Managing Director and the Sustainability Officer.

4. Carrying out a sustainability check

If possible, perform the sustainability check as a team (management, sustainability team, etc.). Assessing the individual partial aspects as a team often already introduces ideas and measures as to how sustainability could be improved in the corresponding area. Make note of these ideas right next to the assessment. The form can be downloaded [here](#) as an Excel spreadsheet. Guidance for self-assessment by means of a sustainability check can be found in chapter 4.2.

5. Developing measures

Based on the self-assessment by means of a Sustainability check, at least three measures on different sustainability aspects must be planned and implemented in the next 24 months.

The measures should primarily eliminate weak points from the sustainability check or to raise the profile of the business. The template for the action sheet can be downloaded [here](#) to capture the measures.

6. Preparation of the sustainability credential

Official documents such as deeds, certificates, contracts, or others are considered as proof. It must be clear which type of credential it is and how long it is valid. The participating business prepares the corresponding proof for upload to the ST data network.

7. Submitting the information

Participating businesses submit the following information via the link sent by e-mail to the ST data network:

Documents and information	Submission
Signed commitment	upload
Sustainability check	complete online
Completed action sheet with at least three measures	upload
Proof of sustainability according to the list of recognised credentials	upload

8. Decision of the inspection authority

After review, the Swisstainable office awards the Swisstainable confirmation certificate as well as the Swisstainable signet which is valid for a period of 4 years.

9. Review and renewal

The participating businesses implement the planned measures. After two years, they will be asked to review the implementation of the submitted sustainability measures, to carry out the sustainability check again and to develop at least three new measures.

Change to another level is possible at any time after providing the corresponding sustainability credential.

5.3 Process: Level III — leading

The process for participating in Level III of the sustainability programme can be divided into the following steps:

1. Preparation

Find out more about Swisstainable and decide which level is right for your business.

Assign a person or team (the Sustainability Officer) to ensure the implementation of the business's sustainability requirements (if not already in place). Inform employees about the commitment and the sustainability programme.

2. Registration

Register [here](#). You will then receive your access link to the ST data network as well as all required documents and tools by e-mail in a timely manner.

3. Signing the commitment

The commitment is signed by the CEO/Director/Managing Director and the Sustainability Officer.

4. Sustainability checks and measures

The sustainability check with the partial aspects is recommended, but not obligatory for Level III. Find out more about the [sustainability check](#) in chapter 4.2.

5. Preparation of the sustainability credential

The certification confirmation (certificate) is valid as proof. It must be clear which type of credential it is and how long it is valid. The participating business prepares the corresponding proof for upload to the ST data network.

6. Submitting the documents

The participating businesses submit the following documents:

Documents	Submission
Signed commitment	upload
Proof of sustainability according to the list of recognised credentials	upload

7. Decision of the inspection authority

After review, the Swisstainable office awards the Swisstainable confirmation certificate as well as the Swisstainable signet which is valid corresponding to the validity of the certificate.

8. Review and renewal

The participating businesses implement the measures as defined as part of their certification. After expiry of the certification, businesses are required to provide new proof of certification.

Change to another level is possible at any time after providing the corresponding sustainability credential. Regardless of the period of validity of the credential at the time of the award, a new proof must only be submitted at the time of renewal.

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