

Green Key Criteria and Explanatory Notes

1 October 2026 – 31 December 2031

Scope



This appendix explains the rules on the certification boundary, including which services and facilities are included or excluded. The scope applies to all establishment categories eligible for Green Key certification and should be read alongside the document defining the Green Key establishment categories and corresponding applicable criteria set (to be accessed [here](#)).

For the purpose of scope determination, services and facilities are classified as either internally managed or externally managed, based on the level of management responsibility and operational control exercised by the applicant establishment. A Glossary clarifying the terminology and concepts used in the Green Key criteria is available [here](#).

Services and facilities are considered internally managed when they are operated by the same legal entity as the applicant establishment, or when they are operated by a third party under a contractual arrangement in which the establishment retains operational and managerial control, including decision-making authority over policies, procedures, and sustainability practices.

Services and facilities are considered externally managed when they are owned and operated by a separate legal entity and the applicant establishment does not retain authority over day-to-day operations, staffing, policies, or sustainability-related practices. Externally managed services fall outside the scope of the applicant establishment's Green Key certification, unless explicitly stated otherwise in the criteria catalogue or this scope document.

Activities and services included in the certification scope

If internally managed, the following services of the applicant establishment fall within the scope of the Green Key certification: F&B facilities; accommodation facilities; conference facilities such as auditoriums, lecture halls and/or meeting/conference rooms; exhibition spaces (if applicable, for example for museums/attractions).

If internally managed, for the following services and facilities within the applicant establishment, Green Key does not certify the activity itself. Instead, the establishment must fulfil the applicable criteria defined in the Green Key criteria catalogue: spa/sauna/wellness area; shops (souvenir, kiosks, hairdresser, tourist information, visitor/interpretation centres, etc.); baby/kids club; meetings & events; laundry shop/laundromat; gym facilities; night clubs/concert halls; indoor and outdoor premises with animals; vehicles (e.g. airport Shuttles); indoor and outdoor sports facilities (e.g. bowling); botanical garden/vegetable garden; greenhouse; indoor and outdoor swimming pool.

If any of these services or facilities are externally managed, the management of these activities must be encouraged to align with Green Key sustainability standards. However, if any externally managed F&B service forms a core part of the establishments' offer, it is subject to the applicable criteria defined in the Green Key criteria catalogue. For example, if breakfast is a core part of the accommodation offer, or lunch is a core part of the conference offer, the restaurant, where these services are offered, is subject to the applicable restaurant criteria (marked with R) in the criteria catalogue.

If an establishment offers activities covered by another Green Key category, for all internally managed ones, all additional criteria of the other category apply as part of the same certification. Internally managed services or facilities are those that are managed by the same entity as the applicant establishment; or operated under a contract, where the management of the applicant establishment retains control of the service (e.g. outsourced restaurant under contractual control). For externally managed services, a separate certification is required. Externally managed services are those that are owned and / or operated by an entirely separate entity, with no contractual or managerial oversight by the establishment.

Note: The above list is not exhaustive. Additional services and activities may be considered as a result of the pre-screening by Green Key.

Activities and services excluded from the certification scope

The following activities/facilities fall outside the scope of Green Key certification:

- Indoor wine, alcohol and food production facilities (including wine fields, vineyards and other plant-based agricultural production areas): Large-scale agricultural production, including vineyards, is considered outside the core competencies of Green Key auditors. These areas often require expert knowledge of sustainable agriculture and land management practices, which are typically covered by agricultural or organic certifications. For this reason, Green Key does not extend its certification to production fields. Small-scale production is defined as that which serves only the internal needs of the establishment (e.g. an herb garden used by the hotel bar). However, as soon as any part of the production is sold externally, it is considered large-scale and thus falls outside the scope of Green Key certification.
- Beach/Marina facilities: Marina operations often fall under separate management and operational models and are most commonly addressed by specialised certification programmes such as the Blue Flag. Green Key considers them outside the current scope, with the recommendation that a distinct certification (e.g. Blue Flag) is more appropriate.
- Golf courses: Golf courses represent high-impact recreational areas with complex environmental considerations, including water use, biodiversity and land management. Green Key does not include golf courses in its scope due to the lack of specialised expertise in this field and the availability of other certification programmes more suited to evaluating sustainable golf course operations.
- Ski lifts / ski slopes: Due to the significant environmental impact associated with ski lifts and slopes, including land use change, energy consumption and biodiversity impact, Green Key does not certify such facilities/activities.
- Forests: Forest areas fall outside the technical expertise of Green Key auditors and are already covered by specialised sustainability and forestry certifications (e.g. FSC, PEFC). The certification of forest areas requires knowledge in forest ecology, conservation and land management, which are not part of Green Key's core competencies.
- Hiking trails and other external activities located outside the establishment's premises: Green Key certification is designed to assess and certify activities and services located within the physical boundaries of the applicant establishment. External trails and off-site activities fall outside this remit as they often involve land or services not directly managed by the establishment, limiting the ability to monitor and verify conformity with Green Key criteria.
- Staff accommodation does not form part of the regular guest hospitality offer and therefore does not fall within the certification scope of the Green Key criteria. Unless the accommodation is also rented or offered to guests, it is excluded from the Green Key assessment. However, any services, facilities, or provisions made available to staff during duty hours elsewhere on the property are included in the scope of the Green Key assessment.

Should an excluded service or facility represent above 50% of the establishment's operations, then the establishment is not eligible for Green Key.