GreenCert for VET: Development of criteria for the Certification of Green Education Centers in Europe

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Set of criteria for the Certification of Green Education Centers in Europe

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Contents

Introduction

The GreenCert Certification Criteria were developed through a collaborative process involving three Focus Groups held in Belgium, Austria, and Greece, with representatives from VET institutions, educators, and environmental stakeholders from various European countries, including Austria and Greece, as well as Italy, Georgia, Cyprus, Albania, and Romania. Through direct discussions and interactive feedback tools like *Mentimeter*, we gathered real-time insights into the clarity and relevance of each criterion and collected valuable suggestions for enhancement.

After analyzing the input from each Focus Group, we incorporated key improvements, such as clearer descriptions, expanded options for partnerships, enhanced flexibility in terminology, and new elements, including strategic planning goals and comprehensive success metrics. The revised criteria now more accurately reflect the practical needs, diverse perspectives, and expert insights shared by our participants, ensuring an effective, thorough, and adaptable certification process for Green Education Centers.

1. Data Collection Criteria

- **1.1** School name and address: Identify the institution applying for certification.
- **1.2** Type of organization: Specify the type of institution (e.g., university, vocational school, training center) to better categorize participants.
- **1.3** Primary and secondary contact persons: Designate both a main and an alternate contact to ensure continuity in communication.
- **1.4** Contact details: E-mail and telephone for both primary and alternate contacts; mark certain fields as optional to ensure GDPR compliance.
- **1.5** Website with project summary: Provide a link to the institution's webpage, ideally with a brief summary of the institution's green projects or initiatives for transparency.
- **1.6** Country: Indicate the geographic location of the institution.
- **1.7** International certification status (optional): Include a field to specify if the institution holds or is pursuing certifications like ISO or EMAS to support global recognition of GreenCert standards.

This criterion ensures transparency, communication continuity, and global alignment while supporting GDPR compliance.

2. Motivation Criteria

- **2.1** Green Label Mission Statement: Provide a clear mission or vision statement that reflects the institution's commitment to sustainability, ideally endorsed by management.
- **2.2** Aim of the project or program: Clearly describe the specific sustainability goals or aims of the project.
- **2.3** Brief description of project or activities: Offer a concise summary of the project, program, or activities to demonstrate alignment with the institution's sustainability mission.
- **2.4** Examples of past green projects: Optionally reference previous successful green projects to highlight the institution's experience in sustainability.
- **2.5** Alignment with international standards: Include a section for institutions to indicate alignment with international sustainability frameworks (e.g., UN SDGs, GreenComp).

Note: This section ensures that the institution's sustainability focus is clearly communicated, supported by management, and grounded in previous achievements and global standards.

3. Project Description Criteria

- **3.1** Project or program focus: Describe the primary focus of the project and how it relates to green skills.
- **3.2** Contribution to green skills training: Explain how the project enhances training in sustainability or green skills.
- **3.3** Teaching formats: Specify the educational methods used (e.g., lectures, workshops, hands-on activities) to implement the project.
- **3.4** Scalability and sustainability: Indicate if the project can be scaled, replicated, or continued in the future.
- **3.5** Participant demographics and inclusivity: State the minimum and maximum number of participants and, if relevant, gender representation to promote inclusivity in green skills training.
- **3.6** Facility and equipment needs: Describe any specific equipment or resources required to implement the project effectively.
- **3.7** Partnerships with local environmental organizations: Outline any collaborations with local environmental organizations to strengthen the project's impact.
- **3.8** Long-term environmental impact evaluation: Describe methods for assessing the long-term environmental benefits of the project, with options for specific sustainability metrics (e.g., reductions in waste or energy use).

- **3.9** Third-party audit or validation (optional): Include the option for an external audit or third-party evaluation of the project's green credentials for added credibility.

Note: This criterion supports long-term sustainability, scalability, community partnerships, and impact assessment, ensuring comprehensive and objective project evaluation.

4. Target Groups Criteria

- **4.1** Teachers:
  - ○ **4.1.1** Identify which teachers are involved, specifying subject areas and hours committed.
  - ○ **4.1.2** Describe any teacher training initiatives to help teachers incorporate green skills into their lessons.
- **4.2** Students: Describe the student population involved, including education levels, age groups, and classes.
- **4.3** Partners/Stakeholders:
  - ○ **4.3.1** Include local and international partners/stakeholders, such as regional stakeholders, environmental NGOs, government bodies, and certification providers, who support the institution's green initiatives.

Note: Expanding the target groups to include local and international partners/stakeholders broadens collaboration and supports the institution's green goals.

5. Team & Cooperation Criteria

- **5.1** Green skills coordinator: Designate a coordinator or focal point with expertise in sustainability frameworks (e.g., GreenComp, SDGs) and networking to lead green initiatives.
- **5.2** Deputy coordinator or alternate role: Assign a deputy coordinator to support continuity and succession planning.
- **5.3** Team expertise and organization: Describe the qualifications and experience of the team, including an organized structure for effective project management.
- **5.4** Regional partnerships: Identify regional partners within the institution's skills ecosystem and describe plans for collaboration expansion.
- **5.5** Networking and collaboration events: Detail any events organized to encourage collaboration, knowledge sharing, and technology transfer related to green skills.
- **5.6** Public relations (PR): Describe PR activities conducted to promote green skills and sustainability initiatives within and outside the institution.

Note: This criterion ensures that the institution has an informed and dedicated team, structured roles for continuity, and strong partnerships to foster effective cooperation.

6. Project Development & Strategic Goals Criteria

- **6.1** Strategic priorities (2023-2026): Outline strategic goals focused on green skills training, sustainability awareness, and creating partnerships with green businesses and tech companies.
- **6.2** Action plan: Describe a structured plan to achieve these strategic priorities, including specific timelines and activities.
- **6.3** Development goals based on funding levels:
  - **6.3.1** €25,000 grant: Outline specific goals and cost allocations for a €25,000 funding amount.
  - **6.3.2** €50,000 grant: Detail additional goals and cost allocations for a €50,000 funding amount.
- **6.4** Climate change and sustainability awareness: Make climate change awareness and sustainable practices central components of the strategic goals.

Note: This criterion prioritizes strategic partnerships, awareness, and planning while providing flexibility for institutions to set development goals based on varying funding levels.

7. Success & Impact Criteria

- **7.1** Success indicators by 2026: Define quantifiable success indicators, such as the number of green projects implemented, students trained, and partnerships established.
- **7.2** Measuring impact: Outline methods for evaluating impact, including:
  - **7.2.1** Quantitative measures: Document reductions in energy consumption, waste, and other objective metrics.
  - **7.2.2** Community and regional engagement: Track community visibility and engagement through polls, surveys, and partnerships.
  - **7.2.3** Recognition and awards: Consider organizing events or awards to recognize and celebrate achievements in green initiatives.
  - **7.2.4** Student engagement: Track student involvement in green projects as a measure of engagement and impact.

Note: This criterion emphasizes objective measures for success, community and regional engagement, and the recognition of green achievements to showcase the institution's impact.

Additional Notes:

- **International Certification:** Institutions may include any existing or pursued certifications, such as ISO or EMAS, to support global alignment.
- **Inclusivity:** Include demographic data, especially gender representation, to ensure equitable participation in green skills training.
- **Third-Party Verification:** Option for institutions to undergo third-party audits or external evaluations of their green credentials for enhanced objectivity and credibility.

This updated "GreenCert Certification Criteria – Combined" integrates detailed feedback from all three focus groups, emphasizing transparency, inclusivity, global standards alignment, and the measurement of both short-term and long-term impact. These criteria will support institutions in achieving comprehensive and credible GreenCert certification for sustainable practices.