



**Green Key**

## **Certification Process from October 2026**

### **Green Key certification process in five steps**

This page will guide you through the certification process, which consists of five parts:

1. Submit the application documents
2. On-site certification audit
3. Certification decision
4. Ongoing conformity during the certification period
5. Renewal of certification

## STEP 1: Submit the application documents

The certification process begins when an establishment expresses interest in **Green Key certification**.

### Application process

- The establishment contacts **Green Key Management** to express interest.
  - Establishments located in countries **with** a Green Key National Operator should contact their [Green Key National Operator](#), to join the programme.
  - Establishments located in countries **without** a Green Key National Operator should contact [Green Key International](#).
- Green Key Management reviews the **eligibility** of the establishment.
- Eligible establishments receive:
  - information about the **criteria and certification process**
  - details about the **required documentation**
  - access to the **online application form**

### Application requirements

The establishment must:

- Complete the **online application form**
- Submit the **required supporting documents**
- Sign and return the **certification agreement**
- Pay the **participation fee**

Green Key Management reviews the submitted materials to ensure that all required information has been provided and to confirm the [scope of certification](#).

**Note:** Some countries have **fixed application deadlines**, while others accept applications **throughout the year**. Please contact your **Green Key Management** for more information.

## STEP 2: On-site certification audit

Once the application has been reviewed, a **third-party auditor** is assigned to conduct an **on-site certification audit**.

### Scheduling the audit

The auditor contacts the establishment to:

- schedule the **audit date**
- ensure the **auditor fee to be paid**

Before the on-site audit, the auditor receives all application documents from Green Key Management.

### Audit process

The on-site certification audit typically includes:

1. **Opening meeting**
2. **Document verification** (may also be conducted in advance)
3. **Visual inspection of the establishment**
4. **Audit summary and closing discussion**

The audit usually takes **2–6 hours**, depending on the **size and number of employees** of the establishment.

After the audit, the auditor prepares an **audit report** describing the findings.

### STEP 3: Certification decision

An independent entity (**Certification Body**) reviews the audit report and determines whether the establishment fully conforms with the **required Green Key criteria**.

#### Possible outcomes

##### A - Full conformity

- The Certification Body proceeds to **certification decision**.

##### B - 1–5 non-conformities

- The establishment must submit **additional evidence** addressing the non-conformities.
- Documentation must be submitted **within two months**.
- The Certification Body reviews the additional evidence and proceeds to **certification decision**.

##### C- More than 5 non-conformities

- The establishment must submit additional evidence **and undergo a follow-up on-site audit**.
- Documentation must be submitted **within two months**.
- The follow-up audit is organised after Green Key confirms that compliance has been achieved.
- The establishment must cover **additional audit and travel costs**.
- The Certification Body reviews the additional information from the follow-up audit and proceeds to **certification decision**.

The **Certification Body** thereafter **makes the final certification decision**, and Green Key Management informs the establishment.

If certification is granted, **Green Key Management issues a certificate valid for two years**.

## STEP 4: Ongoing conformity during the certification period

During the certification period, the establishment must **continuously conform with Green Key requirements**.

If the establishment cannot maintain conformity, it must **inform Green Key immediately** so the certification can be **temporarily suspended**.

### Handling complaints

If complaints are received during the certification period:

- The establishment must respond to enquiries from the **Certification Body**.
- If the complaint is confirmed, the establishment must **correct the non-conformities**.
- Certification may remain **suspended until conformity is restored**.

### Surveillance activities

Between **8–14 months after certification**, the establishment must undergo **surveillance activities**.

This includes providing updated documentation demonstrating ongoing compliance with **selected Green Key criteria** identified by Green Key Management.

If surveillance activities reveal non-conformities:

- The establishment must correct the issues.
- Certification may remain **suspended until compliance is restored**.

Certified establishments must also **pay the annual Green Key levy** to maintain certification.

## STEP 5: Renewal of the certification

Approximately **6–8 months before the certificate expires**, the Green Key management contacts the establishment to encourage **renewal**.

To renew certification, establishments must again complete:

- **Step 1: Application**
- **Step 2: Audit**
- **Step 3: Certification decision**

For renewal, establishments must **demonstrate increased conformity with Green Key criteria**, as outlined on the criteria page.

You can also see the [Green Key certification timeline document](#) for an overview of the process.

### **Duration of the certification process**

The Green Key certification process typically takes **4–6 months**.

The exact timeline depends on factors such as:

- The establishment's **readiness to meet the criteria**
- Timely submission of **complete documentation**
- Payment of **participation fees**
- Processing time by **Green Key Management**
- **Auditor availability** for on-site audits
- Time required for the **Certification Body's decision**

## Duration of the certification process

The Green Key certification process typically takes **4–6 months**.

The exact timeline depends on factors such as:

- The establishment's **readiness to meet the criteria**
- Timely submission of **complete documentation**
- Payment of **participation fees**
- Processing time by **Green Key Management**
- **Auditor availability** for on-site audits
- Time required for the **Certification Body's decision**

## Transition period 2026-2028

With the introduction of the new manual, Green Key is changing the **certificate validity period from 12 months to 24 months** and adjusting the **audit frequency**.

During the transition period (1 October 2026 – 31 December 2027), the following cases apply:

### Case 1: New applicants

- Establishments must conform with the **new criteria**.
- An **on-site audit** is conducted by a third-party auditor.
- Certification is granted by the **Certification Body**.
- The certificate is **valid for two years**.

### Case 2: Re-certification with on-site audit required

- Establishments must conform with **new criteria** and **transition requirements** related to guideline criteria.
- An **on-site audit** is conducted by a third-party auditor.
- Certification is granted by the **Certification Body**.
- The certificate is **valid for two years**.

### Case 3: Re-certification with off-site audit required

- Establishments must demonstrate conformity with **selected criteria** through **surveillance activities** under the new system.
- A **desktop review** of compliance is conducted by Green Key.
- The Certification Body validates and confirms the certification.
- The certificate is **extended for one year**.

### Contact

- Establishments located in countries **with** a Green Key National Operator should contact their [Green Key National Operator](#), to join the programme.
- Establishments located in countries **without** a Green Key National Operator should contact [Green Key International](#).

### Duration of the certification process

The Green Key certification process typically takes **4–6 months**.

The exact timeline depends on factors such as:

- The establishment's **readiness to meet the criteria**
- Timely submission of **complete documentation**
- Payment of **participation fees**

- Processing time by **Green Key Management**
- **Auditor availability** for on-site audits
- Time required for the **Certification Body's decision**