



GEO Certified®

GEO Certified® Report Estonian Golf & Country Club

Prepared by independent verifier Sanni Pisto

Certified by GEO Foundation: 2025
Recertification due: 2028

GEO Certified®

 **GEO
Foundation**
Sustainability in and through golf

“Estonian Golf and Country Club has always had a tradition of making sustainable choices and investments. The mindset has always been to reuse and recycle materials produced at the golf course. Over recent years, maintenance methods have been greatly modernized. Concrete examples are installations of solar panels and use of solar powered robotic mowers. In addition, course staff pay attention to water saving systems and the surrounding nature. They also organize charitable events - which is indeed heartwarming. This course is on a path to become a zero emission Golf Club.”

Sanni Pisto

(GEO accredited independent verifier)



Introduction

GEO Foundation is pleased to confirm that Estonian Golf & Country Club has successfully achieved GEO Certified® status for its outstanding work to foster nature, conserve resources and support the community.

GEO Certified® is the most respected certification for golf, based on a credibly and transparently developed modern sustainability Standard of best practice.

Estonian Golf & Country Club has:

1. Met the required certification criteria for sustainable golf operations
2. Successfully completed the official third-party verification process
3. Successfully passed the final evaluation by GEO Certification Ltd. (autonomous subsidiary of GEO Foundation)

GEO agreed with the conclusions of the official verification report, that, having achieved all mandatory criteria; and with specific Continual Improvement Points (CIP) set for the future and Critical CIP's (CCIPs) to be reviewed at recertification, Estonian Golf & Country Club should be awarded GEO Certified® status.

For the certification period stated above, Estonian Golf & Country Club can therefore claim a position as a leader in advancing sustainability in golf – making important contributions in protecting nature, conserving resources and strengthening communities.

The GEO Certified® Report that follows comments on the actions undertaken against the criteria, as observed by the independent verifier during the assurance process.

Certification is nearly always the result of a dedicated team effort resulting in many practical and valuable social and environmental results around the golf course, maintenance facility and clubhouse. These dedication and leadership qualities are an important part of ensuring the resilience of the golf facility and the golf industry into the future and also as part of society's wider effort to pull together for people and planet.

We congratulate all involved.

Jonathan Smith
Founder and Executive Director, GEO Foundation
GEO Certification Ltd. Board Member

Kelli Jerome
Executive Director, GEO Foundation

Carole Kerrey
Director, Certification and Credibility,
GEO Certification Ltd.



Verification and Certification

Verification

The official third-party audit was carried out by an independent verifier, accredited by GEO to undertake verifications of golf facilities applying for certification.

Verification involves reviewing practices and data, using the International Voluntary Standard for Sustainable Golf Operations as the guide to ensure comprehensive and consistent evaluation of performance. A detailed verification report is submitted for evaluation by GEO Certification Ltd, a subsidiary of GEO Foundation.

Certification

GEO Certification Ltd, an autonomous subsidiary of GEO Foundation [both not-for-profit entities], undertook a full review of all content submitted through the OnCourse® online platform and the report submitted by the verifier, ensuring:

- Comprehensiveness – activities undertaken touched on all elements of the Standard
- Consistency – that the verification approach was balanced, well weighted and with consistent depth of evaluation across each theme
- Accuracy - matching the verification report with evidence submitted by the golf facility to ensure statements and claims were accurate

GEO Foundation is an international not-for-profit founded to advocate, support and reward sustainability in and through golf. Over more than ten years, the group has worked collaboratively with dozens of golf industry associations and government and non-government organisations around the world, to help golf become a sustainability leader, striving for a net positive social and environmental impact. In addition to managing and assuring GEO Certified®, GEO Foundation also provides a suite of credible, practical programmes for golf facility management, new golf developments and golf tournaments called OnCourse®, often delivered in partnership with national golf bodies. Find out more at www.sustainable.golf

Credibility

GEO Certified® is part of the ISEAL Alliance, a group of the world's foremost credible certification systems including Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, Forest Stewardship Council, Marine Stewardship Council and many others. GEO Foundation earned and retains full membership of the ISEAL Alliance global association following a rigorous evaluation against the ISEAL Codes of Credibility in Sustainability Standards and Certification. The ISEAL Codes cover standard-setting, assurance, and monitoring and evaluation. Find out more at www.isealliance.org



Verifier's Report

The Sustainability Agenda for golf covers the following themes and action areas:

THEMES	ACTION AREAS
Nature	• Habitats & Biodiversity • Turfgrass management • Pollution prevention
Resources	• Water • Energy • Materials
Community	• Partnerships & Outreach • Golfing & Employment • Advocacy & Communications

Included below are the observations made by the Independent Verifier against each item in the Standard.

NATURE			
N1 Habitats and Biodiversity			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
N1.1 Understand the site and surroundings	N1.1.1 Sound understanding of the nature and landscape value of the site	General knowledge of the wildlife and habitats on the site	Typical species on the course are rabbits, vipers, deer and moose. Customers are advised not to disturb the vipers and no accidents have taken place. There are a lot of birds that are typical to Nordic sea sides. Drone flights over the course have been done for aerial imagery. CIP: Please ensure that aerial imagery of the golf course is generated following the developments.
	N1.1.2 Knowledge of legal designations for protected areas, habitats and species	Identify rare, protected or endangered species found on the golf course; Understand legal responsibilities for landscape protection and special area designations, if applicable	Ostrich is quite typical on the course. They are allowed to stay on the course, and are voluntarily reserved The riverbank is protected in the water withdrawal permit. It can't be modified.
	N1.1.3 Sound understanding and respect for cultural heritage	Protect any archaeological, historical or cultural designations on the site, if applicable	There are ancient graves. No ground maintenance on the area of graves should take place.
N1.2 Opportunities to naturalise the golf course	N1.2.1 Measures taken to identify and minimise the required area of managed turfgrass	Monitor patterns of play to identify underutilised areas of turfgrass	Estonian law prohibits the use of GPS on players. Wear patterns are followed. There are some passways for the golf carts. Only the first tees are paved. There is clear signage that is made of recycled wood. No plastic is used.

			CIP: Please look for further places to increase the size of unmaintained turf areas.
N1.3 Actively create and manage habitats for wildlife	N1.3.1 Projects to create and manage habitats in the best way for wildlife and golf	Prioritise native species of varying size and structure when planting Prioritise native trees and shrubs when planting Prioritise native aquatic species of varying size and structure when planting Establish mowing buffer zones next to water bodies and wetlands	Native species are prioritized when planting. No exotic species are used. Typical trees are: Oak trees Birches Maple Hazelnut One pond has waterlily, which is imported by a local town dweller. There are fish in ponds that eat algae to maintain the water quality. Buffer zones are in place and the ponds are far from the fairways. Buffer zones are 10 m.
N1.4 Conserve key species	N1.4.1 Practical conservation measures for priority species	Follow local best practice to protect or attract endangered, protected or rare species found on site	See N1.1.2 above.
N2 Turfgrass			
N2.1 Maintain optimum turfgrass and soil health	N2.1.1 Appropriate turfgrass varieties adapted to climatic and other geomorphological factors	Select appropriate grass species for the climate	Turfgrasses prioritized are selected according to the STERF guide. They are appropriate to the climate of Nordic countries. It is important they are winter resistant. Poa annua is typical species that is not wanted. Methods to decrease it's growth are for example cutting at the right time and keeping the soil rather dry. Roughs are native grass.
	N2.1.2 Practices to maintain good soil structure and condition	No specific international requirement, however, identify course management and agronomic activities and look for continual improvements	The course has massively increased manual work. Sand and compost is mixed and added to the turf. Organic matter testing once a year, to see the nutrients. Soil is tested always at the same spots. Bio stimulants are used based on testing.

	N2.1.3 Careful and responsible fertiliser application throughout the year to avoid over-fertilisation	Test and monitor soil pH; Follow legal requirements when timing fertiliser applications Ensure staff are fully qualified to use fertilisers Ensure staff use appropriate protective equipment Regularly calibrate and test applicators	Agronom makes the plan for the whole year, but it is not always punctually followed. Sometimes things don't go according to the plan. For example, usually less N is used than is in the original plan. The less the better. Staff are educated according to the norms set by Estonian law. Licenses have to be renewed on a regular basis. Protective equipment is used. Calibration is done according to the guideline given the sprayer company.
N2.2 Prioritise mechanical maintenance	N2.2.1 Non-chemical pest, disease and weed management	Sharpen mowing blades; Remove surface moisture; Change hole locations frequently	Surface moisture is removed. There is a sharpening workshop at the maintenance hall. Blades are kept sharp. Manual weeding is increasing. Cutting has decreased, and rolling has increased to decrease the harm done to turf structures. Hole locations are moved once a week in spring and autumn, and twice a week in summer.
N2.3 Use chemicals responsibly	N2.3.1 Application of chemicals only when necessary to prevent or cure defined / identified turf health issues	Identify and track pest and disease hotspots, including sensitive areas Scout the course daily for early signs and symptoms Accurately diagnose to determine the cause of weeds, pests and diseases	No preventive spraying. If disease is not seen, there is no need. Weak spots are monitored. Some level of disease is accepted. It is important to identify certain types of disease and use the right pesticide. Help is asked from the pesticide providers and issues are discussed with other golf course teams.
	N2.3.2 Application of chemicals with full safety precautions	Use legally registered and approved products; Prefer products for the specific weed, pest or disease; Follow legal requirements; Ensure staff are fully qualified to use pesticides;	Only legally registered products are used. Follow legal requirements. Staff are educated and use the equipment as they should. Calibration when needed. Leftover products are rare. Outdated products are still used on the fairways.

		Ensure staff use appropriate protective equipment; Regularly calibrate and test applicators; Dilute and dispose of leftover product on untreated areas of amenity turfgrass	Dangerous chemicals are taken to a company that takes care of these products.
N3 Pollution Prevention			
N3.1 Prevent pollution across the entire site	N3.1.1 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from golf course operations	Document procedures for emergency spill responses ; Retain no-spray/no-spread buffer areas next to water bodies and wetlands; Retain no-spray/no-spread buffer zones in and around ecologically sensitive areas	There is an emergency plan and info plate in case of emergency. Buffer zones are in place next to ponds and the river.
	N3.1.2 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from clubhouse operations	Formal wastewater discharge agreement, if applicable	Wastewater is collected in a closed tank which is emptied by a licensed waste water company every three weeks.
	N3.1.3 Practical measures to ensure pollution risks are minimised from maintenance facility operations	Wash machinery over an impermeable, leak-free surface; Mix and load pesticides and fertilisers over an impermeable, leak-free surface; Triple rinse pesticide containers and applicators	Wash bay is on an impermeable concrete surface (see photos). Mixing and loading is done on the washing bay. Applicators are thoroughly washed. Containers are washed and collected afterwards.
N3.2 Safely manage hazardous substances	N3.2.1 Legal compliance in the storage, handling, application and safe disposal of all hazardous substances	List of hazardous substances, made available to authorised staff; Product and material data safety sheets; Well ventilated concrete or metal building; Impermeable, leak-free flooring; Sufficient storage capacity;	There is a list of hazardous substances. Product safety data sheets are there. Buildings are ventilated automatically and can be adjusted manually. Extra ventilation where needed, e.g. on the sharpening workshop. Impermeable flooring in liquid chemical storage.

		Spill containment kits; Secondary containment e.g., bunds or drip trays; Emergency wash area, as per local requirements (body shower and / or eye wash station); Hazardous substances safely collected by a registered company or body ; Follow any additional legal requirements	Oil leakages are controlled by granular matter or mats. Eyes washing station. Showers for staff. Hazardous substances are collected by a licensed contractor.
	N3.2.2 Legal compliance in the storage and handling of fuels and gases	Tank secured to a horizontal, flat, non-combustible surface; Secondary containment of fuel in the event of spills e.g. bunds and drip trays; Inspection of storage tank(s) at least quarterly, if required; Fire extinguisher in the immediate area	Secondary containment for fuels. Inspection is done by staff on a regular basis. Fire department inspects equipment every month.
N3.3 Responsibly manage waste / storm water	N3.3.1 Appropriate wastewater usage, treatment and discharge	Impermeable, leak-free surface; Treatment as per local requirements (oil, grease and / or clipping separation); Formal discharge agreement, if applicable	Wells have sand separation. Wells from the maintenance hall are connected to the wastewater tank. Rainwater is not collected specifically. It is led away from the buildings.

RESOURCES			
R1 Water			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
R1.1 Minimise water demand	R1.1.1 Measures to reduce the need to consume water	Select appropriate grass species for the climate e.g., drought and disease tolerance;	Grass species are selected to demand less irrigation.

		Target irrigation to essential playing surfaces; Prioritise native, drought tolerant species for landscaping and planting	Moisture meter and soil scout has been used for 2-3 years in combination with visual inspection. Water use has decreased 30% since the use of the moisture meter started. Irrigation is done mainly during the night. It is computer monitored. Rainbird software is used.
R1.2 Maximise water efficiency	R1.2.1 Practical measures to use water more efficiently on the golf course	Schedule irrigation based on informed assessment of soil moisture and weather forecasts; Evaluate new irrigation technologies e.g., central control, precision sprinklers etc.; Provide staff training on efficient irrigation practices; Adjust sprinklers to playing surfaces only	Weather forecasts are followed. Cameras are used to follow the weather online and the irrigation system can be turned off by the staff from home, too. Water use data collected. Water from river with clear abstraction limit. Authorities informed every 3 months about usage. Volumes tend to be low.
	R1.2.2 Practical measures to use water more efficiently in buildings	Monitor and record water consumption (bills, flow meter etc.); Encourage water conservation practices amongst players and staff	There are water readers. The municipal water system is used. Double systems are used in many toilets that allow lower use of water. Showers turn off automatically.
R1.3 Source water responsibly	R1.3.1 Measures towards alternative, lower quality sources of water	Water abstraction permit, if required; Report water consumption to environment agency, if required	River is used for the irrigation which is surface water. There is a permit for 130 000 cubic meters / year, which is more than enough. Use of the water has to be reported to the municipality.
R2 Energy			
R2.1 Reduce energy demand	R2.1.1 Measures to reduce the amount of energy	Naturalise non-playing areas to reduce mowing and other energy intensive inputs	Solar panels are on the roof of range building and the maintenance hall. Most of the electricity produced is used. Some is also sold.

	consumed in golf course maintenance		Robotic mower that uses solar panels. Grass clippings are recycled. This and other organic materials produced at the course is used in maintenance which reduces transportation. Unused areas are not maintained. Roughs are maintained only a little, and non-maintained areas are increasing.
R2.2 Maximise energy efficiency	R2.2.1 Measures to use energy and fuels more efficiently in buildings	Monitor and record energy consumption (bills, meters etc.)	Motion detectors used in the clubhouse. Centerpoints and toilets on the course also have motion sensors. Monitoring of energy use is followed by meters. Energy use of appliances and buildings monitored separately.
R2.3 Source energy responsibly	R2.3.1 Measures to source alternative, renewable forms of energy	Understand the energy mix of your electricity supplier; Explore possible greener energy providers	Solar panels. Green energy selected when this needs to be purchased. For example in during competitions, only green energy is used i.e., zero emission competitions.
R3 Materials			
R3.1 Reduce materials demand	R3.1.1 Products and materials selection based on necessity, including opportunities for recycled, reused and locally sourced alternatives	No specific international requirement, however, identify activities to reduce the demand for materials and look for continual improvements	Recycled wood is used on the course structures. No plastic is used at all. Many structures are made onsite.
R3.2 Purchase responsibly	R3.2.1 Commit to sustainable purchasing practices	Favour responsible, lower impact products	Recycled materials are preferred. In the maintenance hall paper towels are made of recycled materials. Primary use of local companies such as carpenters. Preference for ecolabelled products if purchases need to be made.
R3.3 Reuse and recycle	R3.3.1 Waste stream separation for maximum recycling and re-use opportunity	Put in place a recycling separation system, according to local rules and availability;	Waste separation, for example: -Plastic pipes -bottles -paper

		Clear, simple and visible bin signage; Monitor and record weight of waste for each stream e.g. invoices, bills etc.	-Cardboard -Biowaste -Compost (leafs, clippings etc) -Wood Bins are labelled.
R3.4 Demonstrate legal compliance	R3.4.1 Compliance with all local and regional waste management regulations	Authorized waste collector for general, hazardous, industrial and green waste, if required	Authorized contractors only.

COMMUNITY			
<u>C1 Health & Wellbeing</u>			
Objectives	Requirements	Mandatory Practices	Verifier Notes
C1.1 Improve health and wellbeing	C1.1.1 Benefits to human physical and mental health from golf and facility activities	Plans in place to respond to incidents and emergencies	As per 3.1.1 above.
C1.2 Be open and inclusive	C1.2.1 Inclusivity and diversity in membership and visitor policies	Membership policies free from discrimination across age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and ethnic background	Competitions for women and the elderly. Leagues for women and older people. Women and elderly are also presented on the boards. Specialized trainer for the young population.
C1.3 Employ fairly, safely and provide career opportunities	C1.3.1 Ethical and legal employment, working conditions and professional development	Adopt an equal opportunity recruitment and hiring policy; Follow all relevant legislation and best practice for hiring and employment;	Education is important when hiring people. Local young people are hired for summer jobs. They can also work shorter hours. Every year they have had working camp for teens. They work one week in different places in Estonia.

		Follow all relevant legislation and best practice for worker safety	New employees work with more experienced staff in the beginning. They are introduced with the safety procedures of the course and the equipment they use.
C2 Outreach & Inclusion			
C2.1 Diversify access and provide multifunctionality	C2.1.1 Social and recreational activities at the facility	No specific international requirement, however, identify multifunctional activities and look for continual improvements	In the wintertime the course can be used for cross-country skiing. The ski tracks are made by the staff, since it is important to know where the tracks go. This is very much appreciated by the local community. They participate in local fairs. Competitions take place. Cycling competitions. There is open air art gallery, where artists can present their sculptures. Open door days.
C2.2 Provide for volunteering and charity	C2.2.1 Opportunities available for volunteering and support of charities and good causes	No specific international requirement, however, identify activities to support volunteering and charity and look for continual improvements	There is an event once a year which purpose is to fundraise for the fight against cancer. All the raised funds go to a foundation that fights against cancer.
C2.3 Establish active community partnerships	C2.3.1 Positive and constructive engagement with neighbours, the local community and other groups	No specific international requirement, however, identify partnerships and community activities and look for continual improvements	Cancer organization mentioned above Duck Golf They invite local schools to visit. During their excursions, students can learn golf.
C3 Communications & Advocacy			
C3.1 Engage staff and golfers	C3.1.1 Communications activities that raise awareness and understanding amongst members and visitors	Involve staff and committees in sustainability efforts; Involve golfers in sustainability efforts;	They communicate environmental issues in a newsletter. They also explain how members can get involved (e.g. save water, take your trash with you and separate it...) During the wintertime, they get together 2 times a week and discuss projects and budgets and make plans.

		Post sustainability information in the clubhouse and / or on the golf course	Environmental issues are discussed in a course management group.
C3.2 Celebrate and promote sustainability	C3.2.1 Activities that raise awareness and engage people in the wider community	Share at least 3 Highlights on sustainable.golf	Use of robot mowers has increased a lot, 80 - 90 000 sqm / year. Robot mowers on the range as well, which makes it easier. Every single golf ball does not need to be removed before mowing. Solar panels are installed on the clubhouse and the number of fully electric machines has increased notably. Area of the maintained turf decreases constantly. Moisture meter has improved the condition of the course. Divers collect the golf balls from the wells. Electric cars can be charged on the course.
C3.3 Follow a journey of continuous improvement	C3.3.1 Measures to help track, review and improve sustainability and climate action	Put measures in place to ensure that OnCourse can be updated annually	They have done drone flights to e.g., locate hot spots if temperature is increasing. Drone flight also used to track the changes on the course. Meetings two times a year. Discussion of accomplishments and what still has to be done.

Golf and Sustainability

Among all sports, golf has a particularly close relationship with the environment and communities, golf facilities can bring many benefits to people and nature - from the protection of greenspace and conservation of biodiversity; healthy recreation for all ages; local supply chains; and jobs, tourism and other forms of economic value.

Adopting a more sustainable approach is also good for golf. It's about presenting a high-quality golf course and providing a memorable experience in natural surroundings. It's about being as efficient as possible. And it's about supporting the community in a range of ways that bring increased recognition, respect and contact.

At a broader level, it's important that golf credibly demonstrates its commitment, and its social and environmental value – strengthening the sport's image and reputation for the long term.

Golf facilities that participate in OnCourse®, an international sustainability initiative assured by the non-profit GEO Foundation, are taking a comprehensive approach and striving to be leaders in the community.

Find out more at www.sustainable.golf