BCCS Standard

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Balkan Carbon Credit Standard

Preamble

The Balkan Carbon Credit Registry (BCCR) was established in response to the need to build a regional, legally compliant, and transparently functioning system for registering, verifying, and managing carbon units generated through voluntary projects. The registry reflects the commitment of the countries in the region to meet international climate change and environmental protection goals set out in:

- The Environmental Protection Act (EPA);
- The Soil Act, the Clean Air Act, the Water Act, the Energy Efficiency Act, the Agricultural Land Protection Act, the Waste Management Act, the Protection from Harmful Effects of Chemical Substances and Mixtures Act (March 2023), as well as strategic documents such as the "National Action Program for Sustainable Land Management and Combating Desertification 2014-2020" and the National Program for the Protection, Sustainable Use, and Restoration of Soil Functions;
- Regulation (EU) 2018/841 on land use, land use change, and forestry (LULUCF); supplemented and revised by Regulation (EU) 2023/839
- The Climate Change Mitigation Act (CCMA, published in State Journal No. 22 of 2014);

The Balkan Carbon Credit Standard (BCCS) serves as a tool for voluntary participation by entities from Bulgaria and the region in market and non-market mechanisms for carbon emission offsetting, based on verifiable and auditable results from pr

based on verifiable and auditable results from projects to reduce or capture greenhouse gas emissions.

In order to achieve full compatibility with international practices and requirements for a high degree of environmental and legal reliability, BRVC AD has developed and maintains its own Balkan Carbon Credits Standard, applied within programs structured by project type, sector, and applied methodology.

The Standard includes:

- definitions and eligibility criteria for projects;
- requirements for verification, validation, and monitoring;
- risk management mechanisms, a reserve fund (buffer mechanism), and traceability;
- procedures for registering, transferring, and withdrawing credits from circulation;
- mechanisms for preventing double counting and fraud.

1. Purpose

The standard is a credit mechanism that aims to incentivize and reward only additional new CO2 removals, i.e., those that would not have occurred in the absence of mechanisms or projects to remove them. It covers various climate change mitigation projects that reduce or eliminate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through various practices, such as soil carbon sequestration, afforestation, reforestation, pasture improvement, and wetland restoration, RES.

The standard applies to all projects seeking certification through the Balkan Carbon Credit Registry (BCCR), regardless of the country of implementation. It ensures that each credit issued represents a real, measurable, additional, and verifiable climate benefit, in accordance with best practices.

The aim of the Standard is to promote sustainable practices across different programs with measurable results; to ensure the traceability of issued carbon credits through a buffer mechanism, transparency, and verification of the results and benefits of projects across different programs.

2. Guiding Principles

A carbon credit is a certificate for one ton of carbon dioxide (or equivalent greenhouse gas) saved or removed from the atmosphere. These credits can be traded on markets, with the main goal being to offset emissions from companies striving for carbon neutrality. All recognized methodologies, projects, and programs registered under this standard must comply with the following principles:

- Measurability – the reduction and/or removal of emissions must be measured using proven methods
- Additionality – carbon sequestration activities must exceed standard practices and legal requirements
- Sustainability – preserving these offsets for the future and focusing on long-term CO_2e storage and managing the risk of re-emission
- Transparency – all methodologies, documents, and transactions must be publicly available on the Registry platform
- Verification and validation: All projects are subject to third-party audit
- Environmental and social co-benefits – no harm to people or nature, contributing to biodiversity, equity, and the well-being of communities (local and indigenous populations)

The Standard requires a baseline to be established in all projects to determine the initial levels of GHG content against which subsequent calculation results can be compared. The baseline is the starting point for monitoring the project's progress and determining its effectiveness.

3. Governance and Legal Framework

The Standard manages and controls the activities of the Balkan Carbon Credit Registry, approves programs and methodologies and their implementation in various projects

All participants are required to accept and comply with the General Terms and Conditions, as well as to act in accordance with applicable Bulgarian and international legislation, including, but not limited to, the provisions of applicable laws, subordinate legislation, regulations, directives, and international treaties to which the Republic of Bulgaria is a party.

3.1 Anti-corruption, conflict of interest and ethical commitment

The Standard requires all individuals and legal entities with which it has contractual relations to strictly comply with all company guidelines and procedures related to anti-corruption practices, ethics, and transparency.

The implementation and adherence to the Code of conduct are mandatory for all employees, members of management and advisory bodies, clients, partners, contractors, and external suppliers.

BCCS follows a strict policy for the prevention of conflicts of interest, which applies to all participating parties. No employee, member of the management board, owner of a methodology, project owner, or other interested party is permitted to act as a project developer or to derive direct financial benefit from such participation.

The Standard, the Registry, and all their employees or representatives are not allowed to influence the sale price of carbon credits or to receive remuneration calculated as a percentage of such a sale.

All participants are required to comply with the Code of Conduct, which defines the expected professional and ethical standards for all activities related to the operation of the Registry and certified projects.

3.2 Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)

According to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (adopted in 2007), free, prior, and informed consent is a fundamental condition for any activity that affects the lands, territories and resources belonging to indigenous peoples (CRI, FPIC).

The Standard ensures that all practices and activities comply with the relevant legal regulations regarding land ownership and access to soil resources; the exercise of traditional activities on agriculture land and other ecological aspects[1].

3.3 Exclusivity

During the period in which the account holder or project owner has credits registered in the Balkan Carbon Credits Registry, they agree not to register those same credits in any other registry.

4. Eligible programs, methodologies and projects

The Standard reviews and approves projects across a range of climate change mitigation programs, including but not limited to:

- Agriculture Program
- Forests Program
- Wetlands and Peatlands Restoration Program
- Water Program
- Renewable Energy Sources (RES) Program

All projects, methodologies, and programs must comply fully with the requirements of the Balkan Carbon Credits Standard (BCCS).

a) Eligibility requirements

Methodologies and programs approved or developed under the BCCS must satisfy the following conditions:

- Scientific validity: Based upon recognized scientific principles and utilizing established measurement, reporting, and verification (MRV) approaches.
- Regional applicability: Relevant and suitable for the biophysical, economic, and legal realities of the region.
- Measurability and reliability: The methodology should include clear equations, parameters, and processes for determining baseline, additionality, leakage, and uncertainty.
- Additionality: The methodology demonstrates the project's climate benefits surpass the regulatory or business-as-usual baseline.
- Verifiability: All activities and results related to the implementation of the methodology must be objectively verifiable by a qualified and independent third party.

[1] There are no officially recognized indigenous peoples in Bulgaria. Recognized linguistic minorities are not subject to application to the agricultural sector.

- Climate benefits: Must deliver measurable, long-term and sustainable greenhouse gas reductions or removals.
- Minimal risk for the environment and society: The proposed activities should avoid negative impacts on ecosystems, biodiversity and affected local communities.
- Stakeholder engagement: Must provide mechanisms for informing, consulting, and incorporating input from affected parties.
- Technical Committee review: All methodologies, projects and programs undergo internal expert review by the BCCR Technical Committee prior to certification and implementation.
- Periodic review and actualization: Approved methodologies are subject to regular reassessment in light of new scientific data, regulatory changes or practical observations.

b) Approval Process for BCCS Certification

All programs, methodologies, and projects applying for certification under the Balkan Carbon Credits Standard (BCCS) must undergo a comprehensive approval process that includes both internal expert review and external public consultation. This process is conducted through evaluation by authorized personnel and overseen by the Technical Committee—an independent panel of contracted experts who provide specialized services under agreement.

c) Expert Review and Governance

The Technical Committee controls the expert evaluation process, ensuring that all participating experts comply with strict governance requirements. Before participating, experts must declare adherence to the Code of Conduct and Confidentiality Policy, confirm the absence of conflicts of interest, and sign a Confidentiality Agreement. All proposed protocols are subject to mandatory public consultation, during which stakeholders are invited to submit written feedback within the designated consultation period.

d) Approval Categories

The approval process encompasses three distinct categories: (A) Program approval, which is performed through public consultation; (B) Methodology approval, which follows both technical and public review procedures; and (C) Project approval, which incorporates both technical assessment and stakeholder input to ensure comprehensive evaluation.

e) Version Transition Provisions

To accommodate ongoing projects during standard updates, specific transition provisions apply. Projects undergoing validation may continue under the previous version of the Standard for a period of up to six months. Projects in the process of verification may complete their current crediting period according to the previous version, unless otherwise specified by the BCCS.

f) Review Process and Documentation

The Technical Committee reviews all submitted comments and provides responses, with a summary of consultation results published in the Registry. Typically, a minimum of three (3) independent experts are engaged for each methodology review and approval, combining findings from both technical expert evaluation and public consultation. The entire process is conducted in accordance with the Stakeholder

Engagement Policy, with detailed procedures publicly available in the methodology approval procedure documentation[2].

5. Project eligibility requirements

The principle of additionality is a mandatory requirement for all projects. Additionality proves that the emission reductions or CO_2 removals would not occur without the project; in other words, the project must deliver a climate benefit beyond the business-as-usual scenario. Common criteria for additionality include financial additionality (the project would not be economically viable without carbon credit revenue), regulatory additionality (the project is not required by law or regulation), and technological/practical additionality (the project uses innovations or practices that are not widely adopted).

To be eligible, projects must also:

- Establish legal rights for project activities and associated credit generation.
- Comply with all applicable land use and environmental laws.
- Demonstrate additionality and baseline status with clear evidence.
- Avoid double registration in other carbon credits registries.
- Ensure meaningful stakeholder engagement and obtain Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) when needed.
- Confirm there are no unresolved land disputes or outstanding legal sanctions.

5.1 Grouped Projects

Grouped projects under the Balkan Carbon Credits Standard (BCCS) are single registered projects that allow the addition of multiple similar project activity instances over time, within a predefined geographic boundary and common eligibility criteria.

Grouped projects shall meet at least the following requirements:

- **Geographic boundary and eligibility**

The Project Proponent defines a clear geographic area (e.g. polygon with coordinates) within which all instances are located. Each new instance must meet the same eligibility criteria, baseline conditions and additionality requirements as defined in the applicable BCCS Methodology.

- **Baseline, monitoring and verification**

A single baseline and Monitoring Plan may be applied at grouped-project level, in line with the Methodology. All instances are covered by one project description and are subject to validation and verification at grouped level, with the possibility of sampling as allowed by the Methodology.

- **Time window and size limits**

The Standard or the applicable Methodology may specify (i) a maximum period during which new instances can be added and/or (ii) maximum cumulative size or number of instances.

[2] Document Library section on the website.

- **Safeguards and records**

All instances must comply with BCCS environmental and social safeguards. The Project Proponent maintains an up-to-date log of all instances (location, size, start date, status).

Methodology-specific provisions (e.g. sector filters, formulas, sampling rules) for grouped projects are defined in the approved methodology or methodologies consistent with this Standard.

6. Methodology Eligibility and Approval

All mitigation projects under BCCS must apply an approved methodology, which provides detailed protocols for measuring, monitoring, and verifying outcomes, and quantifying greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions or removals. Methodologies offer specific technical guidance to ensure credibility, consistency and transparency, as set out in Section 1 of the BCCS governance framework.

Each methodology must clearly define:

- Definitions for baseline and additionality;
- Protocols for field data collection (soil, biomass, remote sensing, validation procedures);
- Stepwise quantification (equations, parameters, emission/removal factors, uncertainty);
- Procedures to address leakage, non-permanence and risk;
- Monitoring and reporting frequency;
- Buffer reserve contribution rules;
- Consideration of sustainable development benefits and trade-offs.

6.1 Methodology Approval and Evaluation

All mitigation projects under BCCS must apply an approved methodology, which provides detailed protocols for measuring, monitoring, and verifying outcomes and quantifying greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions or removals. Methodologies offer specific technical guidance to ensure credibility, consistency and transparency, as set out in Section 1 of the BCCS governance framework.

Each accepted methodology must clearly define:

- Baseline and additionality requirements.
- Field data collection protocols (soil, biomass, remote sensing, validation procedures).
- Stepwise quantification methods (equations, parameters, emission/removal factors, uncertainty procedures).
- Measures for addressing leakage, non-permanence, and risks.
- Frequency of monitoring and reporting.
- Buffer reserve rules.
- Consideration of sustainable development benefits and trade-offs.

All BCCS methodologies undergo a strict and transparent approval process and may be adapted from internationally recognized standards. They may be submitted externally by project developers, technical institutions or independent expert organizations. Methodologies may also be developed by the Standard itself.

Approval inclides:

- Full application and scientific justification are submitted.
- Administrative review verifies completeness and credibility.

- Categorization as minor update, material change, or critical revision.
- Expert assessment by at least three independent Technical Committee members.
- Minimum 30-day public consultation through the BCCR platform.
- Transparent response and revision to all received comments.
- Final approval by the BCCR Board and publication in the Public Registry before implementation.

Approved methodologies must:

- Demonstrate measurability, additionality, permanence, transparency and verifiability.
- Suit local and sectoral context.
- Include effective leakage, uncertainty, and reversal risk management.
- Provide robust MRV protocols.
- Support sustainable development and avoid social and environmental harm.
- Meet all BCCS requirements for process and documentation.

6.2 Quantification Principles and Conservatism

All methodologies must use consistent, transparent procedures for calculating GHG reductions and removals, subtracting implementation-related emissions and applying correct deductions for leakage and uncertainty.

Where uncertainty exists, methodologies must use conservative assumptions, values, and procedures to prevent overestimation of climate benefits. Preference should always be given to underestimation, strengthening the environmental integrity of issued credits and market confidence.

6.3 Updating and Transparency

Methodologies are subject to periodic review to incorporate advances in science, updates in regulatory or market frameworks, and lessons from implementation. The BCCR reserves the right to revise, suspend, or withdraw any methodology that:

- No longer meets scientific or legal standards;
- Has not been applied in registered projects for three consecutive years.

All certified methodologies are published on the BCCR website along with:

- Version number;
- Date of approval;
- Summary of changes.

Methodologies become applicable from the date of their formal approval and are subject to annual review, in accordance with the document update procedure (see Section 12).

7. Validation and verification

Every project applying for registration under the Balkan Carbon Credits Standard must undergo independent validation and periodic verification by BCCR-approved Validation and Verification Bodies (VVBs). These processes ensure the accuracy, transparency, and consistency of all emission reduction and removal claims.

The list of approved bodies (minimum of two) is publicly available. To ensure independence and objectivity, the participation of at least two experts is required for each verification, and the validation body must be changed after a certain number of consecutive verifications.

7.1 Validation

Validation is mandatory before a project can be registered in the Registry. It must be performed by an independent, third-party VVB accredited under ISO 14065, ISO 14064-3, ISO 17029, or other recognized international standards and officially approved by the BCCR.

The validation process includes:

- Assessment of the Project Design Document (PDD);
- Confirmation of the baseline, additionality, monitoring plan, and safeguards;
- An on-site visit by the VVB (mandatory for new projects);
- Review of supporting documentation and performance monitoring evidence.
- The Validation Report must include:
- The report's issuance date;
- The name, address, and country of registration of the VVB;
- The name and signature of the lead verifier;
- A summary of findings, including net GHG removals claimed by the Project Proponent.

If a project applying for registration under this Standard is undergoing validation at the time of submission to the Registry, it may continue validation according to the version of the Standard effective at the validation start date. Validation must be completed and the final Validation Report submitted for the project to be officially registered under the Standard. Projects under validation may operate under the previous version of the Standard for up to six months.

7.2 Verification

Verification is required before credit issuance and is carried out periodically, at least once per year or according to the methodology requirements. Verification confirms the accuracy of the monitoring results and the net GHG removals eligible for issuance.

The verification must:

- Review the monitoring report and supporting evidence;
- Include field visits, laboratory data, satellite imagery, and interviews (as applicable);
- Be conducted by the same or another accredited VVB approved by the Standard.

Verification reports are reviewed by the BCCS Secretariat, which may:

- Approve and proceed with credit issuance;
- Request clarifications or additional information;
- Reject submissions in cases of non-compliance or inconsistencies.

All projects must be validated prior to official registration and verified periodically to ensure ongoing compliance.

7.3 Requirements for VVBs

7.3.1 Qualification and Approval

All VVBs must be accredited under ISO 14065, ISO 14064-3, ISO 17029, or equivalent internationally recognized standards, and formally approved by the Standard. Each appointment must include at least two

qualified staff members. Physical site inspections are mandatory for all validations and for verifications of medium- and high-risk projects (at least once every five years). Remote audits may be approved only for low-risk cases.

7.3.2 Oversight and Supervision

The Standard reserves the right to conduct oversight of VVB activities at any stage. This includes document reviews, witness audits (physical or remote observation of VVB audits), and office inspections. Witness audits are applied selectively—during accreditation, renewal, high-risk cases, or upon irregularities. All oversight actions are documented, and corrective measures or sanctions may be imposed when necessary. These mechanisms are part of the overall system for control and assurance.[3]

7.3.3 Team Qualification, Rotation and Training

VVBs must engage personnel with proven technical expertise and training in the methodologies of the Standard. No team or VVB may validate or verify the same project for more than five consecutive years within a seven-year period. The Standard may request evidence of updated training and conduct periodic audits of VVB teams.

Each VVB assignment must include at least two qualified experts to ensure quality and independent evaluation.

7.3.4 Conflict of Interest Management

Before each assignment, the VVB must submit a Declaration of Independence confirming the absence of conflict of interest. Any entity that participated in developing or managing a project cannot serve as its VVB. Violations may result in sanctions or removal from the approved list.

7.3.5 Capacity Building

A dedicated training program and schedule for VVBs are provided in Annex X to ensure the technical, procedural and ethical competence of all validation and verification activities. Completion of this program is mandatory for all potential and accredited VVBs.

Safeguards

All validation and verification appointments must involve at least two qualified professionals to ensure peer review and independence. Rotation between validation and verification roles is required to maintain impartiality. These rules strengthen the integrity and transparency of the Balkan Carbon Credits Standard.

8. Monitoring, reporting and crediting

Projects must submit a Monitoring Report (MR) at defined intervals, that include the following:

- monitoring methodology and sampling schedule;
- field and lab data results;
- Quantification of net removals;

[3] *2022 Handbook of International Quality Management, Auditing, Review, Other Assurance, and Related Services Pronouncements*

- evidence of co-benefit achievements;
- Buffer allocation

Reports must be verified before credits can be issued. Credits are issued after the successful verification and calculation of net GHG benefits, with 5% being allocated to a central buffer reserve. Monitoring records are stored in the Registry.

Reports should include at least the following information:

• Description of the methodology and analysis used in monitoring the project;

• Data collected during the reporting period;

• Quantitative determination of net removal or reduction of emissions calculated using the applicable methodology;

• Description of the co-benefits of the project (e.g., for soil health, biodiversity, water resources, and socio-economic conditions);

• Risk assessment and management, in accordance with the program rules.

Monitoring reports must be accurate, complete, and verifiable and are subject to external verification by an approved independent auditor before carbon credits are issued. After successful verification, credits are issued with a certain percentage set aside as a buffer reserve. Monitoring records are kept in the Registry. If monitoring shows stable carbon accumulation at the end of the crediting period, the project participant's contribution to the buffer reserve may be released and traded under certain circumstances.

8.1. Buffer mechanism and project permanence

A buffer mechanism is a system by which a defined portion of issued carbon credits are set aside in a reserve account to insure against risks of reversal (unintentional return of sequestered carbon to the atmosphere), project underperformance, non-permanence, or unforeseen disturbances.

This mechanism is subject to regular review and must be implemented whenever a project is exposed to non-permanence risks or as otherwise prescribed by the Standard.

In the event of a confirmed reversal or loss event, the required number of credits shall be retired from the buffer reserve to fully compensate for the carbon loss.

Project types typically include:

- Land Use and Forestry (e.g., afforestation, reforestation, avoided deforestation)
- Agricultural soil management
- Renewable energy generation
- Methane capture and avoidance
- Blue carbon projects
- Other sectoral or cross-sectoral initiatives according to BCCS eligibility.

8.2 Uncertainty in Storage

This includes loss of sequestered carbon due to wildfires, changes in land use, drought or other events (internal or external factors).

Responsibility for the risk of reversal is distributed as follows:

The Standard (BCCS) sets out the overarching rules and requirements for identifying, assessing and addressing reversal risks.

Each methodology provides context-specific procedures to assess risk levels and mitigation strategies depending on project type (e.g. afforestation or soil carbon).

Project developers are responsible for conducting risk assessments, quantifying potential risks, implementing mitigation plans and maintaining transparent reporting of reversals.

The Balkan Carbon Credits Registry manages the accounting of issued credits and pooled buffer reserves, ensuring adjustments are made when reversals are verified.

Projects with higher-than-expected risks must take the following steps:

1. Reassess risk and quantify buffer contribution: project developers must update their risk assessment and adjust the buffer share accordingly.

2. Submit updated assessments to BCCS for review and approval.

3. Third-party validation: independent auditors verify the revised risk levels and buffer contribution.

4. BCCS review and approval: the BCCS evaluates the findings and formally approves them or requests revisions.

5. Update in registry: the Balkan Carbon Credits Registry updates the project's registry record to reflect any changes to the buffer.

6. Implement mitigation measures – developers may also be required to introduce further risk reduction actions.

BCCR will maintain a Buffer Pool of credits in accounts specific to each Project. In the event of a verified reversal, credits will be retired from this account to compensate for the loss.

Whenever credits are issued following verified GHG removals, a defined percentage will be allocated to the project's buffer fund. This percentage—referred to as the Buffer Contribution—is based on the reversal risk rating submitted in the Project Design Document (PDD) and may vary by project.

Credits held in the Buffer fund:

- **Cannot be transferred**, sold, or used to offset emissions during or after the crediting period.
- **Must remain reserved** for as long as there is a material risk of reversal from the project.
- **May be reclassified** in limited cases where the reversal risk has decreased over time. In such cases, extra buffer credits may be released for issuance or used to fulfill valid credit delivery obligations, following BCCR review and approval.

If a project developer's Buffer Pool account contains insufficient credits to fully compensate for a reversal, all newly verified credits from that developer—across any project—will be diverted to their Buffer Pool and automatically retired until the reversal is fully compensated.

In the event a project developer ceases operations, the Balkan Carbon Credits Registry will address buffer obligations and liabilities on a case-by-case basis.

8.3 Digitalization of credits

The Balkan Carbon Credits Registry prohibits the Account Holder from creating, directly or indirectly, by consenting to a person to create any new utility tokens related to credits, non-fungible tokens, cryptocurrencies, or similar crypto/digital assets, instruments, rights, or products that are embedded as underlying credits or rights to acquire underlying credits in any form without the express written consent of the Registry, which shall be provided at the sole and absolute discretion of the Registry. The Registry reserves all rights, among other things, to create digital representations of credits, rights to credits, or embed credits as a fundamental component in any composite or complex arrangement or undertaking. The Registry reserves all rights to create financial instruments or securities.

8.4 Sustainability requirements

Projects must commit to a minimum operational period of ten (10) years, after which a review will determine whether continuation is warranted. The risk assessment and corresponding buffer reserve contribution for each project shall occur as often as required, but at least once every five (5) years. Each project is required to conduct an initial risk assessment to determine the size and conditions of the buffer reserve for the entire project lifecycle.

The term 'sustainability' is defined as the capacity of a project to generate carbon credits that are reliable, long-term, and capable of delivering substantial climate benefits, maintaining value for buyers and stakeholders. For a project to be sustainable, it must meet the following critical criteria:

a) Environmental sustainability

• Permanence: Reduced risk of loss of achieved emission reductions (e.g., through fires, land use changes, climatic events, etc.).

• Leakage prevention: The project must not lead to an increase in emissions outside its boundaries.

• Additionality: The emission reductions would not have occurred without the project.

b) Economic sustainability

• Financial viability: The project must generate sufficient revenue from the sale of carbon credits and/or ancillary activities to cover its costs.

• Incentives for participants: Sustainable revenue-sharing mechanisms that motivate landowners, farmers, or communities.

c) Social sustainability

• Inclusion of local communities: Voluntary participation, informed consent, and real benefits for participants.

• Compliance with principles of social justice and human rights.

• Job creation, improved living conditions, and access to resources.

d) Institutional sustainability

- The project must be implemented in accordance with a recognized carbon standard

- All claims and outcomes must be supported by scientific evidence and quantifiable monitoring data.
- The project must have a documented minimum operational period

e) Market and demand resilience

• High-quality credits with traceability and transparency, sought after by buyers with high ESG goals.

• Flexibility to adapt to new regulations, market mechanisms (e.g., CBAM), and international initiatives (e.g., Integrity Council, EU Carbon Removal Certification).

9. Projects with Retrospective or Backdated Start Dates

The BCCS may allow projects with a retrospective or backdated start date provided that the project can demonstrate uninterrupted eligibility, continuous compliance with Standard requirements from the claimed start date, and clear, auditable evidence of GHG mitigation activities during that period. All retrospective crediting must be limited to activities occurring after the enactment of relevant national or international carbon credit policies, and must not conflict with other crediting schemes or result in double counting. The Technical Committee reserves the right to reject retrospective claims that cannot be fully substantiated.

10. Property Rights over Carbon Credits

Project developers must clearly distinguish the ownership rights over the final carbon credits and declare that the corresponding greenhouse gas reductions and removals have not been registered or claimed elsewhere. They assume responsibility for any violation, including the replacement or cancellation of disputed credits. The detailed conditions are set out in the General Terms and Conditions.

11. Safeguards, SD Tool and Social and Environmental Guarantees

All projects, methodologies, and programs applying for certification under the Standard must comply with a system of social and environmental safeguards ("Safeguards") that ensure no net harm ("No Net Harm") to human health, society, biodiversity, and the environment. Project proponents are required to submit a completed SD Tool assessment with clearly defined indicators for benefits and potential risks, as well as a monitoring plan describing the methods and evidence for tracking progress.

Each project and program must conduct a preliminary Social and Environmental Safeguard assessment, which identifies and mitigates potential adverse impacts, maximizes positive social and environmental effects and demonstrates compliance with international best practices including: the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, ILO Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and all applicable national and local laws for environmental protection, labor, health and safety.

The assessment must include, at minimum:

- Identification of risks and measures for elimination or minimization, supported by a continuously updated monitoring map and reporting of social, economic, and ecological benefits;
- Documentation of free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) from affected stakeholders and communities, when applicable;

- A public SD Tool assessment [4]describing baseline and target values, monitoring methodology, and progress evidence for each indicator.

Carbon credits may only be issued for farms or projects that:

- Do not use chemicals listed under the Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions;
- Avoid use of pesticides classified as 1A and 1B by WHO[5];
- Demonstrate measurable and positive contributions to biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- Align, wherever possible, with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Credits can only be issued for projects whose safeguard assessment and SD Tool documentation show how the project delivers benefits and addresses risks related to SDGs, protection of land rights, resources, local residents and communities, and the social inclusion of women, youth, and marginalized groups. Risks and trade-offs must be identified per the Sustainable Development Co-Benefits and Trade-Offs Guidelines, including the provision of a mitigation plan if there is a risk of carbon leakage.

Every final buyer requesting credit retirement must sign a Declaration of Environmental Commitment, confirming that credits will only be used to offset residual, hard-to-abate emissions, not resold or misused, and that the buyer assumes full legal responsibility for the accuracy of the information. Non-compliance may result in non-retirement of credits or removal of the account from the Registry.

12. Document update procedure

The Balkan Carbon Credit Standard has a formal and transparent update procedure for its documentation ensuring scientific integrity, consistency, and stakeholder trust. Updates may be triggered by new scientific data, stakeholder feedback, regulatory changes, the need for international alignment, or corrections of existing content.

The process includes:

1. Initiation – request submitted by stakeholders and reviewed
2. Assessment – categorized as minor, material, or critical.
3. Drafting and review – revised version internally reviewed.
4. Stakeholder consultation – 30-day public consultation for material/critical changes.
5. Approval and publication – final approval with summary of changes, effective date, and migration guidance.

Only one version of procedure or form can be active. Previous versions are archived and publicly accessible. All changes are documented and subject to audit. *A detailed procedure is described in the corresponding document under the "Documents" section.*

13. Complaints

A transparent and accessible procedure is in place for the submission, review and resolution of complaints. All complaints are processed strictly in accordance with the official BCCR complaints procedure, ensuring impartiality, confidentiality, and timely resolution for all parties involved.

[4] SD Tool available in Annex 2.

[5] Classes 1A ("extremely hazardous") and 1B ("highly hazardous") are defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) Recommended Classification of Pesticides by Hazard, based on acute toxicity to humans. For details, see:
World Health Organization (2020). *The WHO Recommended Classification of Pesticides by Hazard and Guidelines to Classification.* ISBN: 9789240005662.

14. Appendices

Appendix 01 – PDD

This appendix provides a universal template for a Project Design Document (PDD) applicable to any project applying for registration under the BCCR.

The document must include the following sections:

1. Basic Project Information – title, location, developer, participants, objectives, duration.
2. Methodology – which approved methodology is applied, rationale, and implementation approach.
3. Additionality – justification of why activities go beyond business-as-usual practices.
4. Baseline Scenario – expected emissions in the absence of the project.
5. Project Scenario – how emissions are reduced or removed by the project.
6. Monitoring and MRV Plan – procedures for data collection, analysis, and reporting.
7. Risk Assessment and Buffers – management of climate, project, and market risks.
8. Environmental and Social Impacts – co-benefits or risks.
9. Stakeholder Consultations.
10. Financial Analysis and Sustainability – assessment of economic viability.

Appendix 02 – Environmental and Social Impact Assessment Template

This appendix provides a framework for conducting an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA). The document should include:

- alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlighting project contributions to specific goals (e.g., SDG 2 "Zero Hunger," SDG 8 "Decent Work and Economic Growth," SDG 13 "Climate Action," SDG 15 "Life on Land");
- assessment of potential social, environmental, and economic risks and corresponding preventive measures;
- monitoring indicators – equal access, stakeholder satisfaction, participation and inclusion;
- record of stakeholder consultations conducted.

Each ESIA report should include:

- Indicator name (e.g., "Soil Organic Carbon Content")
- SDG target (e.g., "15.3.1"), use the SDG Mapper or similar tool (Global Compact Self-Assessment tool)
- IRIS+ [6]metric code (e.g., "OI4504")
- SDG alignment tool uses definitions consistent with IRIS+and use IRIS+ metrics for detailed measurement, monitoring, reporting
- Baseline / Target / Verified Value
- Verification source (lab, audit, FPIC, etc.)

Template SD Tool:

[6] https://iris.thegiin.org/document/iris-and-u.n.-sustainable-development-goals/

Category	Program Indicator	SDG Target (s)	IRIS+ Metric Code	Measurement Method	Baseline Value	Target Value	Verified Value	Verification Source / Evidence	Verification Frequency	Corrective / Preventive Actions
Environment	Soil Organic Carbon (t/ha), Biodiversity Index, Carbon Emissions	SDG 13.2, 15.1, 15.3	OI4504, PI6796, OI6697, PI9652	Lab analysis, GIS monitoring, C-balance modeling	29 t/ha SOC / 4 species	≥32 t/ha / 5 species	—	Lab certificate, monitoring report	Every 2–3 years	Update management & restoration plan
Social	New jobs created; Women/Minority participation	SDG 8.5, 5.5, 10.2	PI3687, PI8330, PI9316	Staff audit, surveys, public register	6 FTE / 33% women	≥8 FTE / ≥35% women	—	HR records, survey, contracts	Annual	Training and inclusion program
Economic	Increased income, market access, diversification	SDG 1.1, 2.3, 8.3	PI7464, PI2822, PI5691	Financial reports, surveys, risk assessment	€145/ha / 1 channel	≥€175/ha / +1 channel	—	Invoices, accounting reports, farmer survey	Annual / Biennial	Adjust production and marketing plan
Institutional	Public consultations, FPIC, stakeholder engagement	SDG 16.7, 17.17	OI1875, PI4586, PI8194	Meeting minutes, FPIC forms, stakeholder registry	1 per year	≥2 per year	—	Consultation reports, FPIC declaration	Ongoing	Review grievance register
Safeguards	ESIA, grievance procedures, no net harm	SDG 13.3, 15.5, 16.6	OI6912, PI4060, PI2842	SEIA report, grievance log, audits	Initial analysis	All grievances resolved; no harm	—	ESIA, grievance register, audit report	Annual	Prevention & remediation plan

Appendix 03 – Environmental commitment

This appendix serves as the formal document through which a carbon credit buyer confirms their environmental commitment by retiring credits from circulation. The declaration must include:

- a clear statement of intent to retire credits for environmental purposes;
- confirmation that the credits will not be used for other purposes, commercial transactions, or resale;
- a request for entry into the public BCCR Registry, specifying the company's environmental objective;
- signature and date by the final buyer.

The declaration is available on the website.

Appendix 04 VVB Training Program & Schedule

1. Training Program Structure

1.2. General Format

- Blended delivery: online modules, live webinars, and in-person workshops
- Total duration: 4 days (including assessments)

1.3. Core Modules

Module 1: Introduction to the Balkan Carbon Credits Standard (BCCS)

- Overview and principles (legal, environmental, market context)
- Standard criteria & project eligibility

Module 2: Project Cycle and Documentation

- Registration, validation, monitoring, credit issuance
- Documentation requirements and evidence standards

Module 3: Validation Requirements

- Additionality, baseline determination, methodologies
- Stakeholder consultation, FPIC, social/environmental safeguards

Module 4: Verification Process

- Monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV)
- Site visit protocols, sampling, data checks

Module 5: Risk Management

- Common risks, fraud prevention, conflict of interest
- Handling of non-conformities and corrective actions

Module 6: Legal, Ethical, and Reporting Obligations

- Code of conduct for VVBs
- Reporting formats, transparency, confidentiality

Module 7: IT Platform and Registry Tools

- Use of the BCCS Registry
- Uploading reports, managing project records

1.4. Assessment and Certification

- End-of-training assessment
- Participants who successfully complete the requirements receive a BCCS VVB Certificate and are listed on the "List of approved VVBs".

2. Sample Schedule

Day	Time	Topic/Module	Format
1	09:00-09:30	Welcome, Objectives, Overview	Online/In-person
	09:30-10:00	Module 1: BCCS Overview, Legal Principles	Presentation/QA
	10:00-10:30	Module 2: Project Cycle & Documentation	Presentation/Group
	11:00-11:30	Module 3: Validation process & Criteria	Workshop/Discussion
Lunch break	11:30-12:30	End of day 1	
2	09:00-09:30	Module 4: Verification Process	Interactive Session
	09:30-10:00	Module 5: Risk Management	Case Studies
	10:00-10:30	Module 6: Legal & Ethical Issues	Group Exercise
	11:00-11:30	Module 7: Registry Tools	Hands-On Demo
Lunch break	11:30-12:30	End of day 2	
3	09:00-10:00	Mock Audit Exercise	Role Play
	10:00-12:00	Evaluation, Certificates	Assessment
Lunch break	12:00-13:00		
	13:00-13:30	QA Session	Feedback

Note: Participation is mandatory for all BCCS-accredited VVBs and candidates. Completion and passing of the assessment is required for registry eligibility.