

# SUSTAINABILITY IS A LIVING COMMITMENT



**VICTORIA KNAUER HANSEN** is an expert from the hotel industry and has been working in and for the industry worldwide for 20 years. In addition to her work as Sustainability Manager & Inclusion Leader at GreenSign, she is a well-known speaker on the topics of diversity and inclusion. She created the series 'AVA- Herz drauf', which is committed to people with disabilities. She also supports the DHA,- German Hotel Academy as a lecturer on the topics of accessibility and inclusion and hosts the podcast "GreenSign Talks" along with her colleague Darlene Schwabroch.

Sustainability is more than a label, more than a checkbox on a form, and more than the recognition a certificate brings. It is a living commitment to the world around us-a promise to future generations that their opportunities will not be compromised by our actions today. It is a mindset, a culture, and a way of being that permeates every aspect of our lives and every decision we make.

True sustainability means looking beyond the surface, further than what can be measured or easily showcased. It requires us to challenge the status quo, to reimagine how we interact with our planet and with each other. It is not about perfection but about progression. It is about understanding that every action, no matter how small, carries weight and creates ripples that influence the greater whole.

Sustainability challenges us to think holistically. It is about fostering harmony, balancing growth with preservation, and embracing the principle that less can often mean more.

A certificate can validate efforts and provide a framework, but it is only a starting point. The real essence of sustainability lies in the choices we make when no one is watching, in the quiet yet impactful decisions that align with our values and respect the resources of our world. It is a journey without a finish line-a constant, evolving process of learning, adapting, and improving.

GreenSign is issued by German GreenSign Institute that has been certifying hotels for their sustainability efforts since 2015. GreenSign Hotel certification recognized by the Global Sustainable Tourism

Council (GSTC) is the most prevalent sustainability certification for hotels in Germany. From the initial idea of a sustainability certificate to achieving 7th place among all certificates worldwide, founder Suzann Heinemann has driven the GreenSign Institute forward with her vision and commitment. The certification covers all three pillars of sustainability - ecological, social, and economic - within GreenSign's conformity assessment program.

We aim to find sensible solutions and alternatives with economic incentives and keep the company innovative and profitable in the long term with an environmental strategy. At the same time, we support entrepreneurs on their way to continuously improving their sustainability performance. We see our GreenSign Community as a network where we inspire each other, learn from one another, and provide mutual support. Sustainability is most rewarding when it is advanced collectively.

The recognition 'Sustainability Champion of the year 2024' not only reflects my personal efforts, but also those who have supported me along the way. My journey began a few years ago when I realized the impact of our work, particularly in the social pillar of sustainability. Since then, I have dedicated myself to promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities while guiding hotels on their sustainable journeys. As a mother and businesswoman, I strive to use my influence to create a more prosperous and sustainable future to my daughter and all of us. My motivation comes from the feedback I receive from the people closest to me and the firm belief that we can make a difference through our personality and humanity.