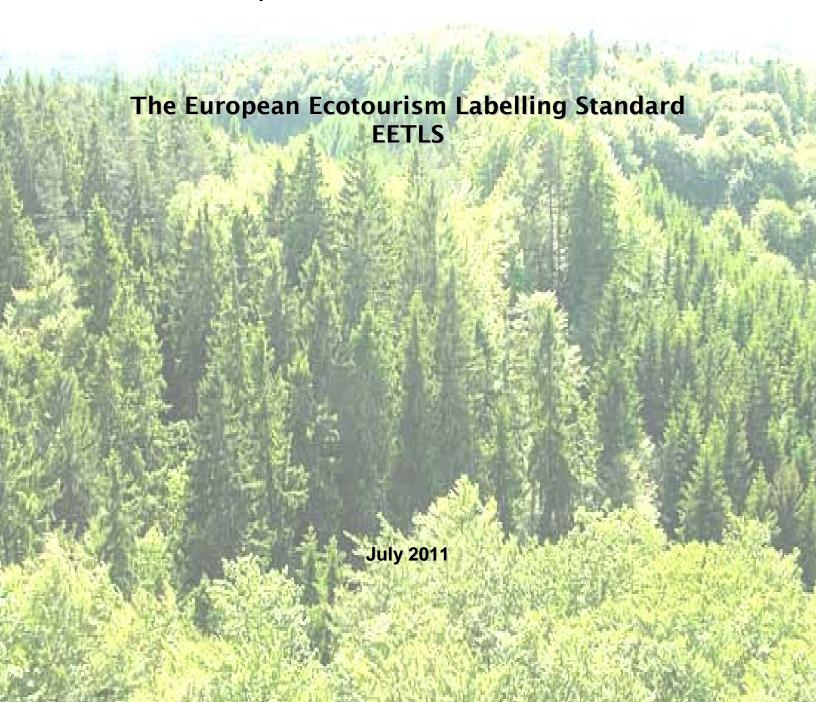**LLP Transversal Programme**
Key Activity 3 ICT - Networks

ECOLNET
European Ecotourism Knowledge Network

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The European Ecotourism Labelling Standard EETLS

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This volume has been based on the 1st version of the EETLS Blueprint produced by the ECO-DESTINET Network, which has been updated and revised following a consultation campaign with the major ecotourism and sustainable tourism labels in Europe.

For more information on the ECOLNET project and the European Ecotourism Network visit: www.ecotourism-network.eu

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Contents   **Page**

ABOUT THE ECOLNET PROJECT

The European Ecotourism Knowledge Network (ECOLNET) is a 3-year project 2010-2013) co-financed by the European Commission, Lifelong Learning Programme, Transversal Programmes, Key Activity 3 – ICT Networks.

ECOLNET aims to create an Ecotourism network to bring together a variety of stakeholders and develop innovative evaluation tools and learning products for sharing knowledge among the network and facilitating quality certification through the European Ecotourism Labelling Standard (EETLS). The EETLS was developed by a previous Leonardo da Vinci project (ECO-DESTINET) in compliance with the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria of GST Council.

Objectives

- Create a network based on a "community of interest", the European Ecotourism Network, bringing together the stakeholders of ecotourism and sustainable tourism, with a focus on quality standards.

- Create a integrated methodology for evaluating quality standards of ecotourism services that allows mutual learning between the main stakeholders, i.e, quality labelling agencies, expert evaluators who perform the quality assessment and tourism businesses.

- Introduce a set of practical, cost-effective online evaluation tools for assessing compliance with quality standards; and create online learning tools to train the main stakeholders to use them.

- Create career opportunities for tourism professionals and employment prospects for SME staff in the ecotourism and sustainable tourism field.

- Enrich the curricula of higher education and vocational training institutions in tourism departments with innovative content and learning tools.

The European Ecotourism Network – **EEN** has been set up as the main vehicle for achieving the objectives of the project and disseminating its products. Networking will be supported by a virtual community of interest, 9 national workshops in different European countries, and an international conference in 2013.

The European Ecotourism Network – EEN

The European Ecotourism Network aims to ensure that ecotourism offerings can be part of a genuine conservation and sustainability effort. Moreover,

EEN connects nature tourism and ecotourism stakeholders for good practice knowledge transfer and marketing purposes

EEN promotes the further development and implementation of a common European Ecotourism Labelling Standard (EETLS) to avoid green-washing and unsustainable operations

EEN disseminates, supports and sustains the ECOLNET learning and evaluation products for improving knowledge and quality of the European ecotourism offer, including e-learning and evaluation systems for agencies, companies and evaluators wishing to apply the EETLS.

The members of the European Ecotourism Network (EEN) are European organizations and bodies of the following categories:

- Certification and accreditation schemes

- Tourism enterprises active in the field of nature tourism and ecotourism

- Nature parks, protected areas managing authorities, NGOs, Local Action Groups and associations active in ecotourism

- Education and Training organizations, ranging from Universities and research institutes to vocations schools and training bodies

- Experts in ecotourism and quality evaluation

- Tourism destination management administrations and national, regional and local authorities that influence tourism development and policy makers

Introduction to the European Ecotourism Labelling Standard – EETLS

The growth of nature-based tourism has highlighted the need to protect pristine and delicate natural environments, and in some cases, local societies unfamiliar with western economic practices. On the other hand, the eco-tourism has become more demanding, seeking high quality of services and undisturbed contact with nature.

The introduction of codes of conduct, quality assurance, labelling and service standards certification have all tried to meet these needs, in one way or another. However, the multiplicity of such initiatives and their varying objectives, not often directly related to the concerns of Ecotourism, have pointed out to the necessity for a universal set of standards for Ecotourism services and tourist conduct. This has become vital due to the lack of compatibility between the existing labels and the large variation in quality standards of Ecotourism services on offer.

In general, it would be fair to admit that labels addressing specific geographical territories and employing localised criteria are beneficial, as in most cases they reflect local challenges and needs. However, it is equally vital that such criteria reflect some universal principles as well, whose value is proved through best practice at a global scale and can be thus easily recognised and accepted by both the casual nature visitor and the dedicated ecotourism. Therefore, a universal set of standards for Ecotourism would help existing Ecotourism labels, the tourism market and the Ecotourism clients to establish a more effective framework for mutual understanding, co-operation and quality assurance.

Indeed, such a "global" initiative trying to set minimum standards for sustainable tourism more generally, was launched in 2007, introduced by the Global Partnership for Sustainable Tourism Criteria (http://www.sustainabletourismcriteria.org), a coalition of 31 organisations, initiated by the Rainforest Alliance, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Foundation, and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC) are targeted at both tourism businesses and quality labelling initiatives, with the intention to provide a common framework and understanding of sustainable tourism practices. By encouraging wide adoption of these criteria, the Global Partnership aims to address more effectively a such issues as green-washing of tourism establishments, maximising social and economic benefits from tourism for local communities, establishing consumer confidence in green tourism products and encouraging sustainable tourism more generally.

As noted above, GSTC are designed for sustainable tourism in general. However, they can also provide a basic framework for developing Ecotourism criteria, because Ecotourism is a sustainable form of tourism. The International Ecotourism Society's (TIES) definition and principles[1] of

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[1] "Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people"
TIES also includes the following set of principles for Ecotourism :

- Minimize impact
- Build an environmental and cultural awareness and respect
- Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts
- Provide direct benefits for conservation
- Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people
- Raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate"

Ecotourism provide a useful tool for the interpretation of GSTC in the context of Ecotourism. Moreover, it should be noted that the ECO-DESTINET partnership was involved in the development of the GSTC (11/2007 – 09/2008) and participated in joint work with the Global Partnership for Sustainable Tourism Criteria for the development of indicators that operationalise GSTC (10/2008 – 08/2009) after GSTC were officially launched on 6th October 2008 at the Global Conservation Conference in Barcelona.

It has been a major challenge to successfully interpret and adapt GSTC to the needs of European Ecotourism, in order to produce the **European Ecotourism Labelling Standard** (EETLS). Such a Labelling Standard is intended to act as a harmonisation instrument among European quality labelling initiatives that approach Ecotourism as an integrated tourism product, or deal with individual Ecotourism services. The first version of the EETLS was produced through the ECO-DESTINET LdV project in 2009 following a lengthy consultation process. Further development of the EETLS is carried out by the ECOLNET project and the European Ecotourism Network.

It should be highlighted that the European Ecotourism Labelling Standard (EETLS) has been declared the first GSTC-recognized standard. This recognition was awarded by the GSTC Accreditation Panel in its meeting of 30 June 2011 in Barcelona. Furthermore, since 2012 the EETLS has been officially adopted by the Romanian Ministry of Tourism.

Development and revision of the EETLS

The scope of developing a standard for Ecotourism practice derives from the need to harmonise existing European ecotourism labelling systems and strengthen the position of labelled businesses in the tourism market. The harmonisation effort is based on an integrated concept of ecotourism, which brings together the different services offered to the tourist, i.e. accommodation, food, travel and nature-based outdoor activities. Although each of the service-components of Ecotourism may come under different quality labels, an "umbrella" labelling standard would assure the baseline quality of the tourism product and harmonise existing labels while recognising their specific experiences and background. Therefore a European Ecotourism Labelling Standard (EETLS) based on the European and global experience in the field, would assure comparable standards of service to Ecotourism clients across Europe (and potentially worldwide), at least in relation to a core group of baseline quality criteria.

Using GSTC and the TIES definition to determine Ecotourism standards has clear advantages, especially since they have been derived from extensive consultation and collective work; and they are expected to be adopted widely and used as a reference point for the tourism industry worldwide. EETLS shares all of GSTC as they are all highly applicable to Ecotourism. Currently EETLS is made up of 40 specific criteria divided into the four pillars of sustainable tourism, in line with GSTC:

A. Demonstrate effective sustainable management.

B. Maximise social and economic benefits to the local community and minimise negative impacts.

C. Maximise benefits to cultural heritage and minimise negative impacts.

D. Maximise benefits to the environment and minimise negative impacts.

EETLS shares also the same description of criteria with GSTC. This ensures high compatibility with GSTC; and a clear understanding of what sustainable tourism is. But there are several differences between a sustainable tourism system and an Ecotourism one, especially when focusing on European ecotourism.

Source: Oslo Statement on Ecotourism, Norway, 15th August 2007, http://www.box.net/shared/static/h3ccnmpbks.pdf

In order that EETLS reflects closely the nature of the Ecotourism industry, each criterion has been specified according to the specialised needs of the sector. The specification of each criterion takes into consideration the rationale of the criterion in terms of European Ecotourism; and highlights issues that should be addressed.

The specification of each criterion is then elaborated through a set of sub-criteria and a set of indicators. An important feature of EETLS is that the sub-criteria and the indicators reflect good practise from current European and worldwide Ecotourism businesses that operate under existing eco-labelling initiatives. Fifteen different certifications systems of sustainable tourism and Ecotourism from Europe and internationally were assessed and more than 1200 single criteria were investigated regarding their compliance with Ecotourism. Those criteria and indicators found to be compliant with Ecotourism were then included in EETLS. This ensures that EETLS complies with the wide spectrum of current initiatives and that the work for its development benefits from experience and knowledge gained previously. More measurable indicators, as those developed for the GSTC, can also be integrated to the EETLS.

Throughout the development of EETLS, the ECO-DESTINET and the ECOLNET partnership consulted experts and practitioners and held monthly meetings and discussions, leading to eight different versions of the EETLS draft. The EETLS was first presented at the Eco-Destinet workshop during the ReisePavillon exhibition in Munich in 2009, supported by the participation of the Swedish Ecotourism Label "Nature's Best", EUROPARC and PANPARKS.

In 2011-2012 through the ECOLNET project, the EETLS was again revised following a two phase consultation campaign that involved 12 European certificates. The EETLS was also assessed for its biodiversity criteria by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre of UNEP. Finally the EETLS environmental criteria were adjusted to be ready for compliance with the EU Ecolabel.

How to use this publication

In order to comply with the EETLS, an Ecotourism business should fulfil the criteria and implement recommended measures. It is understood that the implementation of the criteria is assessed by an appropriate certification authority (depending on whether it is a local, national or international Ecotourism label), although self-assessment is also possible as a first step. Each criterion is defined by the following:

Criterion Title:

The criterion title indicates the group category of the criterion, its reference number and a brief title as specified by GSTC.

Criterion Description:

The criterion description is adopted from GSTC and provides a clear and brief outline of the content and function of the criterion.

Criterion Rationale:

This is a further specification of the criterion developed by the ECO-DESTINET partners and provides the rationale of the criterion in the context of European Ecotourism.

Sub-Criteria:

The sub-criteria are developed by the ECO-DESTINET partners and reflect criteria used in widely accepted European and International Ecotourism and sustainable tourism labels and certification initiatives, adapted to European Ecotourism conditions.

Proposed indicators for certificates and Businesses:

Indicators are proposed tools for certificates and businesses to administrate, inform, control and monitor if the certificates and/or the businesses complies with the EETLS standards. It also provides some practical tips to the Standards and to the Business Units. They also propose assessment, verification and evaluation indicators ideas. They can also be used for communication with the enterprise's stake holders and for an internal (regarding own development) and external (regarding other businesses) comparison. However, it is important to mention that every certificates or business has their own individual case if the figures are reasonable according to the establishment's situation and its service.

Level of compliance – How can you do it? Some useful tips:

Although the level of compliance can be specified by the certification authority, this section gives a clear indication on the actions that are necessary to achieve compliance with the sub-criteria and the overall criterion. More measurable indicators that applies to the EETLS, can also be found at the GSTC website.

Examples:

A collection of good practice examples linked to the various criteria is briefly presented, via the online Library of best practice at www.ecotourism-network.eu

A – Group of Criteria

Demonstrate effective sustainable management

Introduction to the A Group of Criteria

The A group of criteria refer to effective sustainable management of an Ecotourism business.

The criteria apply to various aspects of the management system of an Ecotourism business, requiring the implementation of a long-term sustainability management plan and the business's compliance with all relevant national or local regulations and legislation. Special emphasis is given to employee training and proof is required regarding the periodic on-the-job training of staff. Due to the complex nature of Ecotourism operations, clear job descriptions are also required.

This group of criteria highlight the importance of visitor fulfilment and include specific measures that lead to corrective actions taken by the business to ensure the promised quality of service. Responsible marketing and accuracy of the promotional materials are given a specific mention.

The infrastructure of the business plays a central role in the effective management. The criteria make clear that the business and its activities should comply with local zoning and protected or heritage area requirements, respect the landscape and use sustainable construction practices for their facilities.

One of the core values of Ecotourism is to provide accurate, engaging and informative interpretation of the natural and cultural heritage. The A group includes a specific criterion for interpretation, ensuring that the business provides information about and interpretation of the natural surroundings, local culture and cultural heritage.

A.1. Management System

Criterion

The company has implemented a long-term sustainability management scheme that is suitable to its reality and scale, and that considers environmental, sociocultural, quality, health, and safety issues.

Rationale

A realistic business plan and a long term sustainability management scheme, which is communicated to both staff and clients, gives to the enterprise greater chances in implementing high quality Ecotourism measures.

Sub-criteria

A.1.1. The business has a sustainability management plan, which includes specific actions related to Ecotourism.
A.1.2. The business communicates the sustainability management plan to staff, local stakeholders and clients.
A.1.3. Sustainability monitoring is part of the daily activities of the business and a staff member is vested with responsibility to monitor performance.

Implementation indicators

A.1.1i. Present the sustainability management plan including an ecotourism development action plan
A.1.1ii. Explain how the sustainability management plan considers environmental, sociocultural, quality, health and safety issues
A.1.2. Submit evidence regarding the communication of the sustainability management plan to staff, local stakeholders and clients
A.1.3. Submit evidence that sustainability monitoring is part of the daily activities of the business and a sustainability manager is included in the staff

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Adapt the business plan to the sustainability policy and implementation scheme

2. Include in the Ecotourism development action plan:

• An assessment of the area's (or destination's, for Ecotourism packages) natural, historic and cultural heritage

• Description of the area's (or destination's, for Ecotourism packages) carrying capacity (environmental and social)

• Assessment of current and future tourism market potential

• Definition of target groups

• Current and future potential of operation and activities, including a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis (SWOT)

3. The sustainability management scheme can include:

• Environmental management measures

• Socio-cultural management measures

• A quality management plan

• A health and safety plan

• Communication methods involving staff, clients and local agents (staff seminars, open days for local stakeholders, informational leaflets for clients)

4. Some tasks of the sustainability manager could be:

• Regular monitoring and evaluation of environmental performance of the operation and activities

• Making proposals to central management of the business for corrective measures to improve the sustainability performance of the business

• Organising regular staff meetings to address environmental issues

• Organising training courses on environmental best practice examples (with reference to policies and practices under criteria group "D. Maximise benefits to the environment and minimise negative impacts").

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion A.1 here

A.2. Legal Compliance

Criterion

The company is in compliance with all relevant international or local legislation and regulations (including, among other things, health, safety, labour and environmental aspects).

Rationale

Ecotourism operations have to be an example of good practice, complying with all relevant legislation and regulations.

Sub-criteria

A.2.1.The business complies with all necessary legislation and regulations (health, safety, labour and environmental aspects).
A.2.2. The business has the necessary permits to operate as a tourism business.
A.2.3. The business is registered with the financial authorities.

Implementation indicators

A.2.1. Submit copies of all relevant certificates and fill in an affidavit form.
A.2.2. Submit copies to the permits showing that the business is legally operating in the tourism sector.
A.2.3. Submit evidence of registration with the tax office.

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion A.2 here

A.3. Employee Training

Criterion

All personnel receive periodic training regarding their role in the management of environmental, socio-cultural, health, and safety practices.

Rationale

An Ecotourism operator should aim for quality in services and this can only be achieved with well-informed and trained personnel. Ecotourism employers should seek to provide suitable training and should support lifelong learning for their employees.

Sub-criteria

A.3.1. All personnel receive periodic training regarding their contribution to the implementation of environmental, socio-cultural, health, and safety practices.

Implementation indicators

A.3.1i. Submit evidence of periodic training programmes as part of an annual training plan, and outline the topics included in the training

A.3.1ii. Allow staff to talk to the evaluator about their training

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Employ a specialist training agency to identify training needs of your staff and provide you with training packages for different tasks/job profiles, including curriculum, training schedule and learning methodology

2. Periodic training on environmental practices can include:

• Measures implemented from criteria group "D - Maximise benefits to the environment and minimise negative impacts"

• Relevant codes of conduct and how to communicate these to guests

3. Periodic training on socio-cultural practices can include:

• Measures implemented from criteria group B and C

• Relevant codes of conduct and how to communicate these to guests

4. Periodic training on health and safety practices can include:

• Training staff on the use of communication devices (e.g. radios/walkie-talkies, cell phones, satellite phones) and make sure that these are available and are used during outdoor activities

• A plan for emergency situations is properly communicated to all personnel, including actions in case of accidents, fire etc. (emergency numbers, access to ambulance, fire extinguisher, first aid training)

• First-aid training from accredited providers, for all personnel who guide tourists outdoors

 5. Periodic training on customer service can include:

• Staff training on optimising customer service according to customer needs

• Language skills

• Proper customer communications and behaviour

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion A.3 here

A.4. Customer Satisfaction

Criterion

Customer satisfaction is measured and corrective actions are taken where appropriate.

Rationale

Customer satisfaction is a top priority for a tourism business. To achieve this, measuring customer satisfaction and developing practices to meet the demands of clients is crucial.

Sub-criteria

A.4.1. The business has a system for periodic collection and analysis of informal and formal customer feedback (at least twice per year) and corrective measures are taken.

Implementation indicators

A.4.1.i Submit evidence that a customer feedback system is in place and indicate the corrective measures taken by business as result of the customer feedback

A.4.1ii. Present the feedback form and provide information of the number of completed forms over the past 12 months

A.4.1iii. List the suggestions and complaints received, with numbers; and describe the corrective measures taken.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Informal and formal methods to monitor feedback on customer satisfaction could include:

• Your staff observe the customers' behaviour and level of satisfaction

• Your staff encourage discussions with customers on their level of satisfaction

• Your staff encourage visitors to make use of visitor books or feedback forms

• Review published articles (in travel books, online forms, newspapers, etc.) regularly

• Respond immediately to customer letters or emails

• Collect questionnaires completed by a balanced sample of customers either during their stay or online at any time

• Undertake interviews with a small sample of customers or organise focus groups representative of the target market

• Exchange your customers feedback concerning tourism infrastructure with other stakeholders to learn about the overall opinion beyond your own business

2. In the complaints system, responsibilities and tasks must be clearly assigned. Your system must be structured in a way that:

• It is easily accessible to customers

• Your front-office employees have clear responsibilities for resolving complaints

• Serious complaints are referred to designated senior managers

• Regularly review the complaints system to identify necessary improvements

• Prepare a periodic report about customer complaints, suggestions and actions planned to prevent recurring problems

• Communicate your complaint management system with other businesses in the distribution chain and sub-contractors

3. Collect reviews and ask opinions regarding your business's performance from other tourism professionals and stakeholders. These could include:

• Local stakeholders

• NGOs

• Marketing professionals

• Local and regional authorities

• Industry associations

• Tourism industry consultants

4. Give your customers the opportunity to contact the administrative certification body through e.g.:

• Providing contact details on request (address, fax, telephone number, email address)

• Having a link to the administrative certification body in your website

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion A.4 [here](#)

A.5. Marketing Accuracy

Criterion

Promotional materials are accurate and complete and do not promise more than can be delivered by the business.

Rationale

Ecotourism should excel in quality of offered services. The Ecotourism business should be responsible and should not promise more than it can be delivered to the client.

Sub-criteria

A.5.1. Practical information relating to the ecotourism activities to be undertaken is readily available (proper clothing, equipment, special knowledge, factors that might degrade the tourism experience, potential dangers etc.) to clients.
A.5.2. Promotional materials and all marketing activities of the business should: a. reflect clearly the reality of the destination; b. be complete and accurate on the offered services/products; c. not promise more than can be delivered.

Implementation indicators

A.5.1. Submit evidence of the practical information provided to clients about the ecotourism activities they can engage
A.5.2i. Submit copies of the promotional materials and describe the marketing activities of the business. A.5.2ii. Submit evidence showing that the information provided about the offered services / products is accurate, complete and does not promise more that can be delivered.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Information on services/activities

• Provide accurate information on the product and the level of difficulty and potential risks

• Information can be provided online and in printed form

2. Promotional materials and marketing activities

• Give reference to sources of information or images used in marketing activities

• Include images of the product

• Add videos of the product/service

• Provide customer reviews

• Include reviews from third parties

3. Display logos awarded by certificates, labels and relevant authorities

• Include logos in all promotional materials

• Include logos in your website

• Display logos in a prominent place to your facility, clearly visible to clients.

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion A.5 here

A.6. Design and Construction of Buildings and Infrastructure

A.6.1. Local Zoning

Criterion

Buildings and other infrastructure comply with local zoning and protected or heritage area requirements.

Rationale

The facilities of the business comply with land use zoning and protected or heritage zoning requirements. The activities of the business should comply with criterion A8.

Sub-criteria

A.6.1.1. The business complies with land use planning and special protected area and heritage regulations.

Implementation indicators

A.6.1.1. Submit evidence that the building(s) have planning permission and comply with existing protected area and heritage regulations.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Comply with land use zoning

• Obtain all relevant documentation on permitted land uses from the competent authorities.

• Ensure to act according to land use regulations, if in doubt contact the competent authorities.

2. Comply with environmental protection zoning

• If you are operating within a protected area, obtain all relevant documentation on graded protection and find out the regulations and requirements in your area.

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion A.6.1 here

A.6.2. Design and Siting

Criterion

Respect the natural or cultural heritage surroundings in siting, design, impact assessment, and land rights and acquisition.

Rationale

The business facilities should set a good example in respecting the landscape, the natural and cultural heritage of the site and all existing land and access rights, including land acquisition.

Sub-criteria

A.6.2.1. The design and siting of buildings respect the natural surroundings.
A.6.2.2. The design and siting of buildings respect the cultural heritage surroundings.
A.6.2.3. Property has been acquired in a legal manner, complying where applicable with local indigenous community rights

Implementation indicators

A.6.2.1. Submit photos and/or video of the buildings showing clearly their architectural style as well as the surrounding area.
A.6.2.2. Submit photos and/or video of the buildings and any other available evidence to show how well they integrate in the cultural heritage surroundings.
A.6.2.3i. Submit copies of the title deeds of the property and any other document showing that it has been acquired in a legal manner.
A.6.2.3ii. Submit evidence that local community rights have been respected.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Respect natural and cultural heritage surroundings

• Ensure that the building and other infrastructure included in your investment are well adapted to the natural and cultural environment, by using, for example, local materials and local architectural styles.

2. Acquisition of land and access rights

• Ensure that before buying your thoroughly check the rights of communal or public land and avoid transactions for property that has no clear titles of ownership.

• Ensure that you gain rights of access from landowners whenever you need them for your activities. A good relationship with landowners will ensure that activities can continue to take place at that destination.

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion A.6.2 [here](#)

A.6.3. Sustainable Construction

Criterion

Use locally appropriate principles of sustainable construction.

Rationale

The construction of tourism facilities need to follow sustainable construction principles and set an example for the local community.

Sub-criteria

A.6.3. In the design and construction phase of buildings local materials and sustainable construction techniques have been used.

Implementation indicators

A.6.3. Submit photos and/or video and other evidence (e.g. architectural plans, purchase of materials) showing the use of local building materials and sustainable construction techniques.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Use local traditions in construction and traditional building techniques wherever possible

2. Appoint architects familiar with local architecture and sustainable construction practices

3. In new constructions or renovations, building materials (such as wood) that are eco-certified should be used as much as possible

4. Use natural materials where possible (e.g. plaster bound or low-emission particleboard) and environmentally friendly materials such as native timber (where tropical wood is irreplaceable, only FSC-certified)

5. Building materials are bought locally (as far as possible)

6. Prefer durable goods (such as paint, isolation material, floors, carpet, wallpaper, etc.) awarded with relevant eco-labels (e.g. using solvent-free finishing, coating

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Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion A.6.3 [here](#)

A.6.4. Disabled Access

Criterion

Provide access for persons with disabilities where appropriate.

Rationale

Ecotourism as a responsible form of tourism should offer the chance to persons with disabilities to experience nature and cultural heritage.

Sub-criteria

A.6.4. The business offers access to clients with disabilities and facilitates the use of its services by these clients, where appropriate

Implementation indicators

A.6.4. Submit photos and/or video showing the facilities and access points for people with disabilities, with descriptions

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. The business should at minimum offer clear access to:

• Toilets

• Parking

• General facilities, such as reception and dinning rooms

2. Enforce the national legislation and seek recommendations to provide more amenities than those included in the legislation

3. Activities that can be experienced by clients with special needs may include:

• Outdoor incentive games

• Easy trekking tours

• Easy walks in the surrounding nature with interpretation

• Visits to monuments/museums that provide access to people with special needs

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion A.6.4 here

A.7. Interpretation

Criterion

Information about and interpretation of the natural surroundings, local culture, and cultural heritage is provided to customers, as well as explaining appropriate behaviour while visiting natural areas, living cultures, and cultural heritage sites.

Rationale

Interpretation is one of the core values of Ecotourism that clearly differentiates it from other forms of tourism. The Ecotourism business should strive to provide engaging interpretation and support environmental education.

Sub-criteria

A.7.1. The business has developed an interpretation plan to accompany its activities.
A.7.2. The sources of information that are used in interpretation are credible.
A.7.3. Interpretation is delivered to clients by trained staff and professional guides.

Implementation indicators

A.7.1. Submit evidence that the business has developed interpretation material for all its activities and the places visited by its clients
A.7.2. Describe the sources of information used in interpretation and submit evidence of these sources
A.7.3. Submit a list of the people who are in charge of interpretation and describe their qualifications and training received, with evidence.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Develop an interpretation programme that answers the following key questions:

• Why and what to interpret?

• Who should be involved in the interpretative process?

• Who is the target group of interpretation?

• What is the content of interpretation?

• What are the objectives?

• How is the interpretation implemented?

• How is the interpretative strategy monitored and evaluated?

• How are interpretative products maintained?

2. Your information is accurate and relevant to the visitors. Interpretative materials is composed by reference to credible sources, e.g.:

• Books, scientific journals, research papers

• Professionals in the field of environmental management, nature protection, tourism, social science

• Natives with knowledge on local history, and cultural and natural heritage

3. Your information material should include:

• Environmental measures; the interpretation should communicate ways to care for the environment and cultural heritage

• The significance of conservation for the area

• Information on the natural and cultural value of the destination

4. Implement your interpretation strategy successfully:

• Ensure that the interpretation is well structured and well prepared by staff

• Enhance visitor's personal experience of nature, without heavily restricting them

• Staff that delivers interpretation receive training at regular intervals

• Keep a minimum number of visitors per guide (max. 20 visitors per guide)

• Lectures on subjects with scientific aspects are held only by specialists

• Adopt various interpretative activities, e.g. games, treasure hunts, quizzes, puppet shows, role-playing, etc.

• Submit pre-tour materials, e.g. briefing leaflets, brochures, reference lists

• Incorporate at least one item of personal and one item of non-personal interpretation in your products

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion A.7 here

A.8. Compliance of activities with special regulations in protected areas

Criterion

Ecotourism activities comply with regulations that allow or forbid certain types of recreational activities in protected areas.

Rationale

Ecotourism means low impact and respect to nature and cultural heritage. Outdoor activities performed by tour-operators or promoted by accommodation units or visitor centers have to be an example of good practice in respecting and protecting nature and cultural heritage.

Sub-criteria

A.8.1. The business knows and respects the protected area regulations that concern recreation activities.

Implementation indicators

A.8.1. Present copies of the protected area regulations or management plan; and describe how you apply in practice these regulations

How can you do it? Some useful tips

• If you are operating within a designated natural or cultural heritage area, obtain all relevant documentation on specific requirements from competent authorities.

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion A.8 here

A.9. Raise visitors' sensitivity of the host destination

Criterion

Information provided to customers or disseminated as part of the marketing effort should raise public sensitivity of the host destination's natural, cultural, social and political conditions.

Rationale

A core value of Ecotourism is raising awareness of the special conditions in tourism destinations, regarding both their natural assets and the local communities, and encouraging exchange of experience between tourists and local inhabitants.

Sub-criteria

A.9.1. Information provided to customers or disseminated as part of the marketing effort should raise sensitivity of the host destination's natural, cultural, social and political conditions.

Implementation indicators

A.9.1. Show the information provided to customers directly or through the publicity/marketing material of the company presenting the host destination

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How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Submit clients with booklets, CDs or other information material about the history, ecological profile, current population characteristics etc of the host destination

2. Encourage guests to discuss issues affecting the destination with local people

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Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion A.9 [here](#)

B – Group of Criteria
Maximise social and economic benefits to local communities and
minimise negative impacts

Introduction to the B Group of Criteria

The B group of criteria relate to a core principle of Ecotourism, that is maximising the social and economic benefits to the local communities and minimising the negative impacts. In practice this has been a real challenge for many tourism destinations in Europe. The EETLS proposes certain criteria that aim to maximise local community benefits deriving from Ecotourism operations and from the influx of ecotourists in the destination. For example, the Ecotourism business is asked to support initiatives for social and infrastructure development so that both the local community benefit from a better standard of living and the visitors enjoy a more comfortable stay. The win-win situation of this criterion is evident; but what is perhaps not so evident is that through the support of such initiatives the business becomes more active within the community, playing the role of rural "animator", which is crucial if the business wishes to achieve the Ecotourism targets and abide by its goals.

Regarding the local economy, the business could take some further initiatives to support economic diversification and employment development. Such actions could include the employment of local people in management positions, providing good job opportunities to young qualified persons and offering them a chance to remain in their areas. Rural areas in Europe suffer from the loss of young qualified workers and Ecotourism should offer incentives to local youngsters to remain with their communities.

Apart from directly supporting local employment, the business should also offer the opportunity to local entrepreneurs to sell products that are based on the area's nature, history and culture.

The criteria of this group also highlight another need - that of on-the-job training and personal development. The means to achieve this is through lifelong learning and giving incentives to employees to seek further training.

An Ecotourism business should be a responsible employer and contractor, therefore apart from staff training, the business is asked to adopt an equitable hiring policy and respect international and national legal protection of employees. A specific mention is also made on incentives for employees based on their job performance, acquisition of further qualifications etc.

B.1. Community Development

Criterion

B.1. The business actively supports community development initiatives promoting social and economic issues and vital infrastructure, including, among others, education, health, and sanitation.

Rationale

European Ecotourism should support initiatives that encourage participation in community decision-making, promote activities for the well-being of the community and strive for sustainable development. It should also set the example and lead actions that promote community development.

Sub-criteria

B.1.1. The business supports initiatives and takes up action for local community development.
B.1.2. The business supports education activities in local communities focusing on nature and local culture appreciation.
B.1.3. The business promotes the destination and the local community through its marketing tools (web page, brochure, Ecotourism guide).

Implementation indicators

B.1.1 Submit evidence of actions that promote local community development e.g. regarding employment, health, social welfare, infrastructure etc.
B.1.2. Submit evidence of education activities supported by the business locally over the past 12 months - e.g. training programmes, lectures, proof of events in local schools or NGOs, photos etc.
B.1.3. Provide links to the website of the business, brochure and other publicity material promoting the destination

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. You can support local community involvement in tourism development by:

• Establish your facilities as the hosting place for local meetings on sustainable tourism development

• Provide information to customers on sustainable tourism development and related initiatives in the area by display of brochures and other informative material

2. The business can contribute to, or take part in some kind of local development work. These can include:

• Educational projects

• Small infrastructure projects

• Mountain rescue

• Volunteer fire brigades

• Maintenance of rural roads, road signs for tourists, reforestation, clearing woods etc.

3. You can support educational activities by

• Hosting educational activities, seminars or workshops in your facilities for school groups

• Take local groups (such as schools groups) on educational tours

4. Together with the community and other stakeholders discuss needed improvements in the community and take action. The business can also be actively involved by:

• Providing access to work experience and

• Provide internships and accept volunteers

5. Promote the destination through:

• Web page

• Brochure

• Tour programmes

• Tourist guides

• Mass media (radio, tv, etc)

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion B.1 [here](#)

B.2. Local Employment

Criterion

B.2. Local residents are employed during both the construction and the operation phases of the business, including management positions; training is offered as necessary.

Rationale

Rural areas in Europe suffer from depopulation and internal migration to urban areas. Ecotourism can offer a viable alternative to qualified local people to remain with their communities.

Sub-criteria

B.2.1. Local residents are employed in the business
B.2.2. The business provides incentives for recognition of job performance and personal development to staff.
B.2.3. If large parts of the tourism product are subcontracted, subcontractors registered within the administrative area of the destination get preference.

Implementation indicators

B.2.1. Submit list of staff, including origin and years in the region, position, seasonal or full-year status (B7 also)
B.2.2i. Describe the incentives offered to staff and state how many of your employees have benefited from the incentives over the past 12 months B.2.2ii. Make reference to   employee training and how it contributes to personal development of your staff
B.2.3. Submit a list of major subcontractors with addresses and explain preference

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Provide incentives for your staff to seek personal development and improve job performance e.g. through education and training:

• Get in contact with local/regional education and training providers and provide information material of training/education opportunities to your staff

• Provide incentives (paid leaves, raise of salary, flexible working hours) for the staff members that take up further training and education related to their job or for personal development

2. Give local people priority for positions that require local knowledge:

• Advertise the job first within the region

• Get in contact with local/regional job centres

• Get in contact with local/regional vocational schools and training institutions to seek candidates among their graduates

3. Give local subcontractors priority for providing goods or services to the business

• Advertise the subcontract first within the region

• Try to make a long-term agreement with local companies to provide goods and services at competitive prices

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion B.2 here

B.3. Fair-Trade

Criterion

B.3 Local services and goods are purchased and offered by the business, following fair trade principles

Rationale

Europe is rich in agricultural products and local cuisine is a strong element of the cultural heritage. Ecotourism should promote the consumption of locally produced goods and organic products (D.1.1). When a product is not locally or EU produced, fair-trade goods should be sought. The direct economic benefit of the community from purchased goods or services is a main goal of Ecotourism.

Sub-criteria

B.3.1. The business by priority supports local service providers and local producers.
B.3.2. The business by priority uses local food products.
B.2.3. The business uses seasonal fruits and vegetables.
B.2.4. When a product is not locally or EU produced, fair-trade goods are preferred.

Implementation indicators

B.3.1. Provide information to explain decisions for supplier selection
B.3.2. Present menu and identify the origin of ingredients
B.2.3. Present menu and identify the seasonality of ingredients
B.3.4. Present menu and identify the fair trade goods that are included in the ingredients

---

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Support local service providers and local producers by selecting their products/services over other products/services produced outside of the region.

2. The main ingredients of at least two dishes should be produced by organic farming methods.

3. At least two locally sourced food products should be offered in each meal, including breakfast.

4. When local products are sold to tourists those must be sold at fair prices. The fair pricing strategy must be communicated to the guests and visitor.

5. When a product is not produced locally or within the country, fair-trade goods should be sought: for example, coffee and tea should be fair trade products.

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion B.3 here

B.4. Local Entrepreneurs

Criterion

B.4. The company encourages local small entrepreneurs to develop and sell sustainable products that are based on the area's nature, history, and culture (including food and drink, crafts, performance arts, agricultural products, etc.)

Rationale

Ecotourism development needs synergy with local economies and can support the diversification of rural economies. European Ecotourism should provide benefits to a range of local producers and entrepreneurs who offer responsible products and services. Ecotourism providers should promote this interaction by cooperating with local entrepreneurs and service providers.

Sub-criteria

B.4.1. The business directly sells local products that are based on the area's nature, history, and culture.
B.4.2. The business cooperates with and promotes local producers and service providers who offer sustainable products

Implementation indicators

B.4.1. List and submit evidence of local products sold through the business (e.g. pricelist, photos)
B.4.2. Present website, brochure, other publicity materials promoting local producers

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. When a local branding or certification initiative for local products or services is developed, this must be promoted in your business as well

2. Encourage cooperation amongst local providers with the aim of developing new tourism- and tourism-related products

3. Promote local entrepreneurs through different marketing tools like:
• Your website
• Brochures and leaflets
• Word of mouth, etc

4. Promote local products by selling in your premises a selection of these, e.g.:
• Food products (jam, honey, cheese, wine etc.)
• Handicrafts (pottery, woodcrafts, fabrics etc.)
• Cosmetics (soap, wellness products etc.)
• Items of art or music (paintings, small sculpture, photographs, local music CDs, videos etc.)
• Ornaments and clothing from local materials (wool, typical gemstones etc.)

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion B.4 here

B.5. Indigenous Communities
Criterion

B.5 A code of conduct for activities in local/indigenous communities has been developed, with the consent of and in collaboration with the community.

Rationale

Respecting and preserving the traditions and rights of local/indigenous populations is an important aspect in terms of today's globalisation. Codes of conduct for tourism activities that are developed together with local communities, respecting the principle of prior informed consent and the right of communities to say "no" to tourism activities is key to the long term viability and sustainability of the communities and their environment.

Sub-criteria

B.5.1. The business has developed a code of conduct for tourism activities in collaboration with local communities
B.5.2. The code of conduct respects the rights and traditions of the local community.
B.5.3. The business develops tourism products or tourism facilities that are not intrusive to community life and takes into consideration community values and attitudes

Implementation indicators

B.5.1. Provide information on the process of developing the code of conduct and input from the community
B.5.2. Submit a copy of the code of conduct and describe how it is used.
B.5.3. Submit evidence of such activities, show leaflets, photos, articles in local newspapers etc.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Develop codes of conduct (what a visitor should do and what should not). This may include:

• Clothing which is culturally acceptable

• Sensitive topics that should be avoided

• Language and expressions that should not be used

• Places to avoid/ not to enter

• Permission to take photographs

2. Take measures to avoid problems:

• Advise tourists about potential dangers or places that tourists are not appreciated

• If tourists are present in a local traditional activity, inform them about the customs, their origin and content and whether they should behave in a particular way

• Explain to the local community that tourists might not always be able to understand the local way of life and local customs

3. Set in place a monitoring system for the impacts of tourism activities on the local community

4. Organise discussion groups with the local community and discuss the sustainable development of tourism in the area

5. Ask community advice when developing a tourism product. Don't forget that the knowledge of locals concerning their area is highly valuable

6. Seek the advice of experts to assess the physical and social carrying capacity of the destination and provide solutions to minimise impacts

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion B.5 here

B.6. Exploitation

Criterion

B.6 The business has implemented a policy against commercial, sexual or any other form of exploitation and harassment, particularly of children, adolescents, women and minorities.

Rationale

All forms of exploitation and harassment of children, adolescents, women and minorities is covered by E.U laws and national legislation. The operator should enforce relevant policies and be vigilant in reporting illegal activities.

Sub-criteria

B.6.1. The business implements a policy against all forms of exploitation and harassment, particularly of children, adolescents, women and minorities.
B.6.2. The business has signed the international code of conduct for the protection of children from sexual exploitation in travel and tourism: www.thecode.org
B.6.3. The business respects the rights of children (according to the UN Convention on Rights of Children, Art. 32)
B.6.4. The business has a policy against purchase of goods produced with child labour.

Implementation indicators

B.6.1. Include a statement that the business adopts such a policy and provide examples of how it is implemented
B.6.2. Submit evidence that the business has signed the code
B.6.3. Include a statement that the business respects the UN Convention on Rights of Children, Art. 32
B.6.4. Include a statement that the business adopts such a policy

> ***How can you do it? Some useful tips***
>
> 1. Be strict in all forms of exploitation and harassment towards vulnerable groups and introduce it as a business policy
>
> 2. Sign the international code of conduct for the protection of children from sexual exploitation in travel and tourism at www.thecode.org
>
> • Even if sexual exploitation of children is not an issue in their area, a sustainable business should support initiatives that raise awareness on the negative effects of the tourism industry.
>
> 3. Introduce in the purchasing policy (D.1.1) that your business abstains from products produced with child labour and inform your suppliers.

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion B.6 here

B.7. Equitable Hiring

Criterion

B.7. The company is equitable in hiring women, minorities and other vulnerable groups in all positions, including management.

Rationale

Equal opportunities in employment are covered by legislation in all E.U countries. The operator should enforce relevant policies and be vigilant in reporting illegal activities.

Sub-criteria

B.7.1. The business provides equal opportunities for employment to women, minorities and other vulnerable groups in staff positions.
B.7.2. The business is equitable in hiring women, minorities and other vulnerable groups in management positions.

Implementation indicators

B.7.1. Submit evidence of non-discrimination hiring policy, present list of staff
B.7.2. Submit the staff list (B.2.1 list used) with additional information on gender, disabilities and ethnic or cultural origin of staff

---

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. No discrimination based on ethnic background, race, religion or sex should occur in staff employment. In your staff recruitment policy and your employee protection policy make sure you have these topics completely covered.

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion B.7 here

B.8. Employee Protection

Criterion

B.8. The national legal protection of employees is respected, and employees are paid a fair wage.

Rationale

An Ecotourism operator should be a responsible employer. Employees should have full legal rights regarding social insurance and terms of employment and at least the minimum salary should be respected according to national legislation. If employees are accommodated in the operator's facilities, living conditions should be fair.

Sub-criteria

B.8.1. Employees are fully covered by social insurance and terms of employment based upon national legislation.
B.8.2. Employees are paid a fair wage.
B.8.3. Seasonal staff has comparable employment and insurance protection to permanent staff, respecting national legislation.
B.8.4. Employees accommodated in the business facilities are ensured good living conditions.

Implementation indicators

B.8.1. Present the insurance certificates of staff.
B.8.2. Present the annual list of staff payment, indicating the statutory minimum wage.
B.8.3. Present the insurance certificates and the annual list of seasonal staff payment.
B.8.4. Present plans and photos of the buildings or part of buildings housing staff and their amenities.

> ***How can you do it? Some useful tips***
>
> The business should consider whether their employee protection policy includes:
>
> • Trade union membership, collective negotiation agreements and representation of members by trade unions
>
> • Written employment contracts for all employees
>
> • Schemes for pregnancy, maternity and parental leave
>
> • Pension schemes
>
> • Staff changeover does not exceed the national average
>
> • training/education and/or access to higher employment levels
>
> • An effective complaints procedure
>
> • The possibility to present important labour issues to the management

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion B.8 here

B.9. Basic Services

Criterion

B.9. The activities of the business do not jeopardise the provision of basic services, such as food, water, energy, healthcare or sanitation to neighbouring communities.

Rationale

Tourism is a resource-intensive activity. The operator should set or follow policies ensuring that tourism inflow doesn't surpass the carrying capacity of the host community and destination, including beachfront and waterfront access. The operator should take all needed measures to ensure that tourism activity is sustainable.

Sub-criteria

B.9.1. The business and its activities do not negatively affect the provision of basic services to local communities, including water, energy, healthcare or sanitation, by overconsumption in relation to community needs.

Implementation indicators

B.9.1i. Present proof of water and energy consumption (e.g. bills) and identify the water and energy sources used.

B.9.1ii. Report the frequency of using local healthcare facilities by your guests.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

The business should consider cooperating with other stakeholders and businesses of the area and local authorities to conduct a carrying capacity research in relation to the basic services provided in the area. This way all businesses will have a clear indication of the impacts of tourism on the services and can take up corrective measures to ensure that the needs of local communities are respected.

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion B.9 here

C – Group of Criteria

Maximise benefits to cultural heritage and minimise negative impacts

Introduction to the C Group of Criteria

The C group of criteria refers to the cultural heritage that is present at a certain destination, aiming to maximise the positive impacts of Ecotourism on cultural heritage and minimise the negative ones. This is highly important for Ecotourism, because cultural and natural heritage are the main ingredients of the Ecotourism product. Cultural heritage may refer to material and non-material aspects, such as vernacular architecture; monuments and archaeological sites; historical buildings and places; handicrafts that are characteristic of the area; typical dress; special types of dishes and foods more generally; songs and music; customs and celebrations; myths and legends, etc.

C.1. Cultural Code of Conduct

Criterion

C.1. The company applies a code of conduct (based on established guidelines or devised on purpose) for visits to culturally or historically sensitive sites, in order to minimise visitor impact and maximise enjoyment.

Rationale

Europe is rich in cultural, historical and archaeological sites. Most sites are managed by competent authorities and strict regulations exist regarding visitors' behaviour. The operator should enforce relevant policies and be vigilant in reporting illegal activities.

Sub-criteria

C.1.1. The business devises or adopts an established code of conduct for culturally sensitive areas in order to minimise visitor impact and maximise positive tourist experience.
C.2.2. The business uses professional/licensed guides for tours in archaeological/historical sites.

Implementation indicators

C.1.1. Presentation of the code of conduct applied by the business
C.2.2. Statement from business operator. If applicable list of guides used in archaeological / historical sites.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Employ a guide or group leader who is well informed about all aspects of local cultural heritage, including formal (i.e. registered monuments and archaeological or historical sites) and vernacular (i.e architecture, handicrafts, foods, traditional celebrations etc).

2. Discuss with your clients in advance their special cultural interests, to direct them to suitable sites and activities.

3. The guide or group leader communicates a code of behaviour to the visitors and informs them on the consequences of illegal or antisocial actions.

4. The guide or group leader monitors tourists for improper behaviour or illegal actions, during site visits.

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion C.1 here

C.2. Historical Artefacts

Criterion

C.2. Original historical and archaeological artefacts are not sold, traded, or displayed, except as permitted by law.

Rationale

Safeguarding Europe's cultural heritage is of outmost importance. Tourism in the past has been a channel of illegal trading of archaeological artefacts found in unreported excavations. Selling or trading archaeological items is illegal in Europe and strict policies are in force. The operator should enforce relevant policies and be vigilant in reporting illegal activities, particularly when operating outside the E.U.

Sub-criteria

C.2.1. Original historical and archaeological artefacts are not sold, traded or displayed, except as permitted by law.

Implementation indicators

C.2.1. Declaration by business owner

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Historical and archaeological artefacts are not allowed to be displayed in the business's premises, unless their origin is certified and they are legally obtained.

2. When clients are taken for a visit in an archaeological site, the guide or group leader monitors carefully the group, paying special attention to those who show unusual behaviour (such as staying behind or walking away from the group); and the guide or the group leader also explains to clients the legislation regarding archaeological artefacts and historical items on display and points out the importance of respecting the cultural heritage of the place.

3. the business declines any offers to buy historical and archaeological artefacts from third parties, unless their origin is certified and legal, and in case that this is not proved, the business informs the authorities

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion C.2 here

C.3. Protection of Sites

Criterion

C.3. The business contributes to the protection and preservation of local historical and archaeological sites and other culturally and spiritually important properties and does not impede access to them by local residents.

Rationale

Sites important for the local community that are also tourism attractions should be treated carefully by the Ecotourism business. Access to local people should not be impeded by the activities of the business, but on the contrary encouraged.

Sub-criteria

C.3.1. The business takes measures to protect and preserve important local cultural heritage sites contributing either financially or in kind.
C.3.2. The business ensures that under no circumstances access to important cultural sites is impeded to local people due to tourism activities.

Implementation indicators

C.3.1. Describe how the business contributes to the protection of local cultural heritage.
C.3.2. Report any complaints, formal or informal by the local community (connected with B.9).

How can you do it? Some useful tips

You may:

1. "Adopt" a cultural heritage site: you can actively contribute to the protection of the sites, either by donations or by providing volunteer work for their management.

2. Encourage your clients to donate money for the protection of sites to the site authority.

3. Cooperate with the competent site authority to find out what you can do more for the protection and sustainable management of the site.

4. In your sustainability policy and sustainable management scheme, consider the impacts of your activities to the sites and co-operate with the competent site authority to minimise them.

5. Co-operate with local cultural groups and organise joint tours to important sites and activities that inform local people on the value of these sites.

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion C.3 here

C.4. Incorporation of Culture

Criterion

C.4. The business incorporates elements of local art, architecture or cultural heritage in its operations, design, decoration, food, or shops; while respecting the intellectual property rights of local communities.

Rationale

Utilising aspects of local culture wherever possible increases ties with the neighbouring communities and promotes the destination's unique character; it also provides an incentive to preserve unique skills that may otherwise vanish. The Ecotourism business should enhance this by incorporating local traditional elements in its facilities and activities, aiming to promote local culture. In many European countries and regions such elements are required by law (e.g traditional architectural design of new buildings). On the other hand, mimicking of local customs or organisation of quasi-traditional cultural activities and events clearly oriented to the uninformed tourist, has in many instances created conflict between tourism businesses and local communities. Good communication between the local community and the Ecotourism business is the key factor for ensuring the respectful exploitation of local culture for tourism purposes and avoiding possible wrong interpretations, conflicts and undesirable commoditisation.

Sub-criteria

C.4.1. The business incorporates elements of local art, architecture, or cultural heritage in its operations, design, decoration, food, or shops.
C.4.2. The business respects the intellectual property rights of local communities.
C.4.3. The business respects and promotes the authenticity of local customs.

Implementation indicators

C.4.1. Present proof of integration of local culture in products and facilities and specifically in food, decoration, design.
C.4.2. Declaration by the business owner.
C.4.3. Submit evidence that the cultural events organised in the premises of the business respect the authenticity of local culture (show photos, video).

> **How can you do it? Some useful tips**
>
> 1. Elements of local culture can be incorporated by:
>
> • Using local architectural styles in the design of the facilities
>
> • Using elements of local decoration such as artworks from local artists, local handicrafts, furniture and decorations of local style, crockery and pottery from local craftsmen, fabrics woven locally, articles of daily use that are common in the locality
>
> • Incorporating local heritage, such as local customs, traditions, food and beverages, music, literature, performances, festivals, celebrations, religious festivities etc. in the activities planned by the business
>
> • Promoting activities that encourage a genuine cultural experience
>
> • Encouraging cultural exchange between local people and tourists by organising joined activities
>
> 2. Promotion of local dishes and traditional cooking recipes can be achieved:
>
> Visitor/ Info Centre
>
> By providing brochures and information material, or by directly selling local products
>
> Tours and Outdoor Activities
>
> By using seasonal fruits and vegetables for lunch packages and the preparation of other meals; and by promoting local dishes and traditional cooking techniques, by including local traditional restaurants in the Ecotourism package
>
> Accommodation units and Restaurants
>
> For the preparation of breakfast, lunch and dinner local dishes must be part of the menu.

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion C.4 here

D – Group of Criteria

Maximise benefits to the environment and minimise negative impacts

Introduction to the D Group of Criteria

The D group of criteria refers to maximisation of benefits and minimisation of negative impacts of tourism activities to the environment.

Ecotourism operates in natural areas and thus the well-being of the natural environment is very important. Tourism businesses can contribute to nature protection and wise use of natural resources by implementing a purchasing policy favouring environmentally friendly products e.g. for building materials, capital goods, food, consumables. Increased efficiency in the consumption of energy and water and investment in renewable energies may also bring economic advantages to the tourism operator and make the business more competitive in the market.

An implemented waste management plan monitors the reduction and appropriate treatment of wastewater, solid waste, harmful substances like cleaning materials and pesticides and other pollutants in order to preserve fauna, flora, soil, air and water in the destination.

To protect wildlife, the interaction between tourists and the wildlife site should be conducted in a responsible and regulated manner. Captive wildlife is only allowed within Wildlife Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries that comply with relevant legislation. Protected wildlife is treated with respect and products or decorative elements that are made by raw materials deriving from protected wildlife species are not allowed. In landscaping outdoor spaces of tourist facilities, native species are used that are appropriate for the local climate and biodiversity.

D.1. Goods and resources consumption

D.1.1. Purchasing Policy

Criterion

D.1.1. Purchasing policy favours environmentally friendly, local, seasonal, organic or recycled products for capital goods, food, building materials and other consumables.

Rationale

The purchasing policy is one of the most important policies in the operation of an Ecotourism business and is part of the sustainability management scheme. Through the purchasing policy the business should make a clear statement in favouring products that are environmentally friendly, local, seasonal, organic, recycled and reused.

Sub-criteria

D.1.1.1. The business has a purchasing policy that gives priority to local products/services.
D.1.1.2. The business has a purchasing policy that gives priority to environmentally friendly products/services and natural products.
D.1.1.3. The business has a purchasing policy that gives priority to reusable and recycled products.
D.1.1.4. The business has a purchasing policy that gives priority to energy efficiency and low emission goods.

Implementation indicators

D.1.1.1. Submit evidence that at least 80% of the goods purchased (food, farm- organic products, souvenirs, building materials, capital goods, consumables and other goods) are primarily produced/provided locally and/or are typical local products.
D.1.1.2. Submit evidence that certified products from the region are preferred or/and consist on fair trade – organic products.
D.1.1.3i Submit evidence that only reusable or recyclable containers are displayed (for example glasses). D.1.1.3ii. Submit evidence that disposable items are not used (utensils and containers) except under special circumstances and no often than once/person/stay. D.1.1.3iii. Submit evidence that one of the purchase selection criteria of products is based on the volume and material of packaging.
D.1.1.4i. Submit evidence that all newly purchased equipment are class A energy ("energy efficient"). D.1.1.4ii. Submit evidence that all transport, purchased or hired/leased, is of a standard that seeks to minimise environmental impact.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

Compliance with EU Ecolabel fulfils the requirements of this criterion.

Alternatively:

1. Office equipment and general supplies:

• Office equipment (such as printers, PCs, fax machines etc.) must be of the best available environmentally friendly technology

• All copy paper, brochures, posters, leaflets etc. must be "environmentally friendly" and printed double sided when possible. More information on "environmentally friendly" paper can be obtained from TSOF - The Sustainable Office Forum (http://www.tsof.org.uk/)

2. Outdoor equipment and transportation:

• Equipment (such as torches, coolers for food etc.) must be of the best available environmentally friendly technology

• Clothes and equipment of employees must be free from substances like petroleum and toxic chemicals. The latter threaten the environment and often are contained in conventional outdoor gear. Outdoor clothing manufacturers that create organic and responsible clothing from a variety of natural resources are preferred. Some of these renewable resources include: soy, bamboo, coconut and corn. Most of these new organic hiking clothes are regarded as good as their synthetic counterparts

• Eco-labelled linen are used where possible

• If wellness programmes are included, all used cosmetics, personal care products and aromatic oils must be eco-certified

• When purchasing new means of motorised vehicles (cars, boats, bikes) make sure that they meet the best available environmentally friendly technology

• Air transport companies with an environmental policy, which invest in fuel-saving engines with less emissions and noise, should be preferred

3. Kitchen equipment:

• Kitchen equipment must be of the best available environmentally friendly technology and materials (e.g. coolers, cooking stoves, microwaves etc.)

• Kitchen utensils must be reusable (e.g. cutlery, plates, cups, pots and pans)

4. For local products refer to B.3

5. For reusable, returnable and recycled products refer to D.1.2.

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion D.1.1 here

D.1.2. Consumable Goods

Criterion

D.1.2. The purchase and use of disposable and consumable goods is measured and the business actively seeks ways to reduce them.

Rationale

Measuring the purchase of disposable (non-reusable) and consumable goods is a cost-saving initiative essential in the reduction of waste production and conservation of natural resources. An overall thinking of the life cycle of the product from its conception to its end of life should be in place starting from the purchase phase till the sharing with the customer. Promoting the minimisation of the use of disposable and consumable goods by the business's clients constitutes good practice with overspill benefits to society and scarce resources.

Sub-criteria

D.1.2.1. The business measures the purchase of disposable and consumable goods and actively seeks ways to reduce them
D.1.2.2. The business monitors the proportion of recycling achieved of all disposable and consumables. (see EU regulation)
D.1.2.3. The business promotes the minimisation of the use of disposable goods among its clients.

Implementation indicators

D.1.2.1. Submit evidence that continuous measurement, control and verification of waste disposal is implemented
D.1.2.2i. Show with appropriate documentation what is the proportion of recycling material achieved within the overall waste disposal volume of the business.
D.1.2.2ii. Submit evidence (photos) that proper recycling containers are placed (glass, paper/cardboard, organic waste plastics, chemicals etc) in the premises of the business.
D.1.2.3. Present evidence of leaflets, posters and other means of informing guests how to minimise the use of disposable goods.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

Compliance with EU Ecolabel fulfils the requirements of this criterion.

Alternatively:

• Products packaged in returnable packaging should be preferred

• Printer cartridges must be refillable and recycled after their life cycle

• Refillable dispensers are used wherever possible

• Substitute single dose packaging with some other solution

• Purchase food in waste-free packaging and agree with suppliers to return packaging material

• Avoid to offer drinks/food in cans

• Purchase of goods in plastic packaging that conform with EN 13432 (European standard of compostability of bioplastics products).

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion D.1.2 here

D.1.3. Energy Consumption

Criterion

D.1.3. Energy consumption is measured, sources are indicated, and measures are adopted to minimise overall consumption, while encouraging the use of renewable energy.

Rationale

Energy use is one of the most damaging activities on the planet with adverse environmental impacts, such as degrading air, water, soil quality, human and ecological health. Energy efficiency and reduction on the use through sustainable technologies are key strategies to reduce these negative impacts. The greatest environmental and financial benefits related to business operations are achieved by frequently monitoring the utilities bills, training staff, appropriate customer communication preventive maintenance of mechanical equipment and by providing incentives to staff to implement energy efficiency programmes. By applying energy efficient practices to operations and investing in renewable energy technologies (e.g., solar, wind, micro-hydro, and bio-mass) the business can help conserve natural resources, promote energy independence, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The principal emissions from tourism businesses are from transportation (especially by air), heating, cooling, electricity use, and methane emissions from sewage and organic wastes. Except for air transport, most of these emissions can be directly reduced by actions from the business. Those emissions that are not reduced can be offset using properly regulated projects. Proper emission management practices will help reduce global warming, promote energy independence from foreign non-renewable sources, and may substantially reduce operational costs.

Sub-criteria

D.1.3.1. The business implements a sustainable energy management plan, indicating energy supply sources, including alternative sources and the percentage of energy produced by alternative sources [reference EU Ecolabel 1]
D.1.3.2. The business measures and monitors overall energy consumption regularly, allowing the calculation of the average consumption per guest.
D.1.3.3. The business uses energy-efficient equipment and applies frequent maintenance to all machinery and equipment.
D.1.3.4. The business uses bio-climatic principles in the construction of the buildings and other infrastructure or takes corrective measures to improve the energy efficiency of its buildings and infrastructure
D.1.3.5. The business provides information and options on environment-friendly means of transport to staff and clients. (ref EU Ecolabel 22.)

Implementation indicators

D.1.3.1i. Show the sustainable energy management plan of the business.   D.1.3.1ii Submit evidence of the investment made by the business for improvement of energy efficiency and use of renewable sources of energy
D.1.3.2i. Submit evidence of the measurements and state the annual consumption per guest   D.1.3.2ii. Present documents showing the annual fuel consumption, annual electricity consumption (kWh), monitoring frequency, changes (increasing, decreasing, stable

consumption)

D.1.3.3i. Submit evidence by showing extracts of the maintenance log and/or invoices for equipment servicing
D.1.3.3ii. submit evidence that the business is charting the energy used (including the sources and related emissions) on a regular basis (e.g. monthly)

D.1.3.4i. Provide information on the bioclimatic characteristics of the building, including photos, architect's plans and certificates
D.1.3.4ii. Provide information on investment made by the business in the past 5 years to improve the energy efficiency of the building, including photos (e.g. double glazing, roof insulation etc.)

D.1.3.5. Submit evidence that, when possible, walking or biking is used by staff and visitors.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Compliance with EU Ecolabel fulfils the requirements of this criterion.

Alternatively:

• Conduct an energy survey by an energy engineer or other expert

• Even better, apply EMAS (Environmental Management and Audit System)

• Minimise the use of non-renewable energy sources (fossil fuels, coal, natural gas, crude oil, uranium) and maximise the use of renewable energy sources (hydropower, wind power, solar power, energy from biomass, geothermal)

• Use efficient insulation (e.g. insulation of exterior walls, insulation of the roof / attic floor or greening of suitable flat and pitched roofs, heat insulation glazing, unheated wind catches at main entrances, seals in windows and doors)

• Electricity and heating of facilities can be provided by a combined heat and power unit

• Energy-saving lighting systems are installed (e.g. energy saving light bulbs)

• Purchase energy efficient electrical equipment and replace energy demanding equipment

• Air-conditioning should automatically switch off when windows are open

• A heat recovery system for refrigeration systems, ventilators, swimming pools or sanitary wastewater are installed

• During outdoor activities conserve energy where possible (e.g. walking, biking and other non-motorised travel methods are preferred, vehicles are turned off whenever possible etc.

 2. Inform staff and guests:

• Provide information to guests on the measures that the business is taking for energy efficiency and how visitors can contribute to them

• Implement a code of conduct on energy consumption. This code must be provided to all staff and be widely supported (e.g. switch off lights, don't use the equipment "standby" mode but switch them off, air-condition units should be used as less as possible etc.)

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion D.1.3 here

D.1.4. Water Consumption

Criterion

D.1.4. Water consumption is measured, sources are indicated, and measures are adopted to minimise overall consumption. Water sourcing is sustainable and does not adversely affect environmental flows.

Rationale

Water is precious and an increasingly scarce resource especially in many European countries and regions, which face moderate or severe water shortages. All-year round or seasonal water shortages are expected to increase with climate change. Overall water consumption should be reduced to the minimum possible level for adequate operation. Reducing water consumption has also financial and environmental benefits for tourism businesses. Using water efficient equipment and a regular maintenance plan of plumbing installations great reductions can be achieved. When possible, the business should invest in infrastructure and equipment to utilise rainwater for non-sanitary and non-drinking purposes (ref. EU Ecolabel 50).

Sub-criteria

D.1.4.1. The business implements a sustainable water management plan, indicating water supply sources, including sustainable sources (such as rainwater)
D.1.4.2. The business regularly measures and monitors water consumption.
D.1.4.3. The business uses water efficient equipment and implements an effective maintenance scheme.

Implementation indicators

D.1.4.1i. Present the sustainable water management plan of the business D.1.4.ii. Describe the measures that have been adopted to decrease overall consumption of water
D.1.4.2i. Present documents showing that the water consumption is regularly monitored D.1.4.2ii. Show samples of staff notices and client reminders to regularly save water
D.1.4.3. Present protocol to detect and to solve failures in the functioning of equipment regarding their water saving efficiency D.1.4.3. Present the maintenance log of equipment (e.g. taps, washing machines, dishwashers) for the past 12 months

> ***How can you do it? Some useful tips***
>
> 1. Compliance with EU Ecolabel fulfils the requirements of this criterion.
>
> Alternatively:
>
> • Use water saving devices wherever possible (e.g. water-efficient dual-flush toilets with no more than 6 litres per flush, water efficient taps which do not exceed more than 8 litres per minute, hot-cold and sensor mixer tap, water efficient dishwashing machines)
>
> • Inspect pipes and joints regularly for leaks
>
> • Use gray water for toilet flush
>
> • Introduce an environmentally friendly laundry service
>
> • Water flowers and gardens after sunset to avoid evaporation
>
> • Install timers in watering systems to control the water use better
>
> • Reduce the amount of groundwater used, e.g. by reusing treated waste water, collecting rainwater etc.
>
> • Apply EMAS (Environmental Management and Audit System) for water consumption
>
> 2. Inform staff and guests:
>
> • Inform guests about the implemented water conservation strategy and how they can contribute to it
>
> • Implement a code of conduct on water consumption and its reduction that is followed by staff and guests (e.g. avoid flushing the toilet unnecessarily, do not let water run unnecessarily, etc.)

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion D.1.4 here

D.2. Waste disposal

D.2.1. Wastewater

Criterion

D.2.1. Wastewater, including gray water, is effectively treated and is only reused or released safely with no adverse effects to the local population and environment.

Rationale

Wastewater management reduces aquatic pollution, protects aquatic ecosystems, and reduces risks to human health. Reusing wastewater increases the availability of potable water for human consumption (see criterion D.1.4) as well as reduces a business' sewage and clean-up fees. In order to avoid the disposal of substances that might prevent wastewater treatment, the business should inform guests and staff accordingly. (ref. EU Ecolabel 15.)

Sub-criteria

D.2.1.1. The business implements a sustainable plan for the reduction and the effective treatment and reuse of wastewater, including gray water.
D.2.1.2. The business is connected with the local wastewater and sewage treatment plant (where available) or has its own wastewater and sewage treatment installation.
D.2.1.3. The business informs guests and staff on the disposal of substances that might prevent wastewater treatment.

Implementation indicators

D.2.1.1i Present the plan and explain how it is implemented.
D.2.1.1ii Submit evidence that the business treats all waste water discharges in accordance with national regulatory standards / legislation.
D.2.2.iii Provide information about reusing wastewater when feasible.
D.2.1.2. Submit evidence of either option (e.g. photos, bills, reports).
D.2.1.3. Present notices, posters, leaflets etc which the business uses to inform guests and staff.

> **How can you do it? Some useful tips**
>
> Compliance with EU Ecolabel fulfils the requirements of this criterion.
>
> Alternatively:
>
> • Waster water treatment:
>
> If no connection is possible to the local sewage treatment plant, the business is advised to have its own treatment system (installation of biological clarification plant with subsequent sedimentation pond or adequate irrigation system). Sewage sludge and residue must always be disposed off at local or regional sewage plant
>
> • Minimise impacts of waste water disposal:
>
> - Fat separators are installed (e.g. all waste water generated in the kitchen must be filtered through fat separators)
>
> - Oil separators are installed in all areas where vehicle maintenance is being carried out (e.g. repairs, car wash etc.)
>
> - Wastewater generated during long day tours should be treated properly at the destination or collected and taken back to the facility where proper treatment is ensured

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion D.2.1 here

D.2.2. Solid Waste Disposal

Criterion

D.2.2 Solid waste is measured, mechanisms are in place to reduce waste and where reduction is not feasible to reuse or recycle it. Any residual waste disposal has no adverse effect on the local population and the environment.

Rationale

Minimising the amount of solid waste that goes to landfills and incinerators helps reduce negative environmental impacts. Additionally, minimising waste reduces the need for virgin materials and limits the amount of greenhouse gases that are released throughout a product's life cycle (i.e. extraction, manufacturing, distribution, use and disposal). A lifecycle approach to waste management begins with the purchasing practices (D.1.1 and D.1.2) and includes coordination with local authorities on appropriate disposal methods.

Sub-criteria

D.2.2.1. The business implements a solid waste management plan aiming to minimise waste and adopt the most efficient method of disposal available, making sure that there is no adverse effect on the local population and the environment.
D.2.2.2. The business measures and monitors the volume of waste produced.
D.2.2.3. Organic waste is composted according to local regulations.
D.2.2.4. A recycling system is in place, used by staff and guests.

Implementation indicators

D.2.2.1i. Present the solid waste management plan and explain how it is implemented without adverse effects to the local population and the environment. D.2.2.1ii. Submit evidence that the business complies with the national legislation concerning waste disposal. D.2.2.1iii. Submit evidence that both staff and customers are encouraged to take part in programmes for collecting, recycling and minimisation of waste (present leaflets, notices, posters, photos).
D.2.2.2i. Submit evidence that the total waste generated (in tons) by type and disposal method is documented; and all garbage is collected, sorted, monitored and disposal according to the waste management plan D.2.2.2ii. Note the percentage of total waste that is reused and/or recycled (in connection with D.1.2.2)
D.2.2.3. Submit evidence that organic waste is composed on the site of the business or it is sent to composting fields (photos)
D.2.2.4i. Submit evidence that recycling of glass, paper/cardboard, plastics, ink, organic waste, batteries, other is performed. Provide details of the collection methods of recyclable items. D.2.2.4ii. Provide information on whether the business offers a possibility for guests to separate waste. E.g.: have guest rooms separate waste containers with a clear indication / explanation for recycling?

How can you do it? Some useful tips

Compliance with EU Ecolabel fulfils the requirements of this criterion.

Alternatively:

1. Monitoring waste:

• Collect and monitor data on consumption of chemicals and the volume of waste produced:

• Compost lt or kg/ week

• Plastic lt or kg/ week

• Paper & cardboard lt or kg/ week

• Glass lt or kg/ week

• Non- recyclable waste lt or kg/ week

 2. Recycle- Reuse:

When designing a recycling programme, the following list of commonly recycled materials should be considered:

• Aluminium cans, Antifreeze, Appliances, Batteries, Building materials, Cardboard, Furniture, Magazines, Motor oil, Newspapers, Office supplies, Paint, Glass jars, Plastic bottles, Plastic buckets, Radios, Scrap metal, Steel containers, Telephone books, Carpet, Cell phones, Cooking grease, Computers, Fluorescent bulbs, Food waste

 3. Conduct a waste audit of each operational area

• Practice eco-purchasing (bulk packaging, no one-way packaging)

• Design a materials flow plan (what can be reused)

• Inform other tourism businesses about your recycling initiative

• Establish an accounting system that reflects monthly waste management costs

• Set goals and objectives based on a realistic time frame

• Ask guests to separate their waste properly. Information on waste separation must be provided to guests in all facilities

• Apply EMAS (Environmental Management and Audit System) for waste management

 4. Other measures:

• Illegal landfills should be reported to the authorities

• Promotional gifts to clients must be replaced by eco-friendly items, such as biodegradable pens and pencils; notebooks from recycled paper etc.

• Boats must not dispose their waste and empty their waste water/sewage tanks in the lake or sea water but have to dispose it properly at a sewage treatment plant

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion D.2.2 here

D.2.3. Harmful Substances

Criterion

D.2.3 The use of harmful substances such as pesticides, paints, disinfectants and cleaning materials is minimised; substituted by innocuous products when available; and all chemicals' storage and use is properly managed.

Rationale

Chemicals and other non-organic materials slip into the environment during application and storage via evaporation, run-off, spills, leaks and over application. Such practice lead to air, soil and water pollution, adversely affecting the local environment, harming flora and fauna, contaminating water supplies for local communities and causing serious health problems. The misuse and improper handling of potentially toxic substances creates additional threats to the environment and human health. Many "natural" substitutes exist which are not only less harmful for the environment and human health, but are often cheaper. Technology has also developed various alternatives. Where no alternatives are possible, the proper storage, handling and use of chemicals can reduce potential impacts.

Sub-criteria

D.2.3.1. The business implements a sustainable plan for reducing the use of chemicals and harmful substances.
D.2.3.2. The business measures and monitors the consumption of chemicals and harmful substances.
D.2.3.3. The use of all chemicals is properly managed and disposal methods are monitored.

Implementation indicators

D.2.3.1i. Submit documentation of the plan and explain how it is used
D.2.3.1ii. Submit evidence of the levels of use and release of solvents (dry cleaning solvents, thinners) and hydrocarbon (essence, diesel)
D.2.3.2i. Submit evidence that monitoring is performed on an ongoing basis
D.2.3.2ii. Provide information whether the business has a refrigerant replacement plan, describe what that plan is and show documentation proving that all new equipment are being purchased in accordance with the plan in terms of the refrigerant used.
D.2.3.3i. Submit evidence that green areas are managed without the use of pesticides and according to organic farming principles.
D.2.3.3ii. Submit evidence about cleaning products, whether they are biodegradable (such as vinegar, citric acid, curd soap), environmentally certified or eco-certified.
D.2.3.3iii. Submit evidence that separate collection and appropriate handling of oils, fats and hazardous waste is implemented by the business.

> ### *How can you do it? Some useful tips*
>
> Compliance with EU Ecolabel fulfils the requirements of this criterion.
>
> Alternatively:
>
> • Use cleaning products that are either natural or eco-certified. Cleaning products should be awarded a regional or national ISO Type I eco-label.
>
> • Chemical cleaning is replaced by precise sustainable mechanical procedures as far as possible (e.g. floors can be kept clean through periodic manual scrubbing and sweeping, clogging of pipes, use of micro fibre clothes).
>
> • Chemicals that cause damage to health and/or the environment are used to a minimum and only if absolutely necessary.
>
> • The use of plant protecting agents and pest repellents with chemical/synthetic additives and a biocide effect should be prohibited except in cases of severe infestation.
>
> • Minimise the use of chemicals through pump mechanisms (vaporisers) in chemical bottles, automatic dosage systems etc. that use the minimum amount of disinfectant for the expected hygienic results.
>
> • Do not use de-icing salt that harms soil, water, vegetation and wildlife.
>
> • Spring and surface water should not be contaminated with chemicals (e.g. those contained in sun lotions, body lotions, washing gels, dishwashing liquids). These products must be replaced with eco-friendly ones, such as biodegradable sunscreens and eco-friendly insect repellents.

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion D.2.3 here

D.2.4. Other Pollutants

Criterion

D.2.4. The business implements measures to reduce pollution from noise, light, runoff, erosion, ozone-depleting compounds and air, water and soil contaminants.

Rationale

Environmental pollution can derive from several sources and have long-term, damaging effects on local ecosystems and human populations. The business should regularly perform site audits to identify sources of potential pollution while educating and empowering staff to identify pollution during their daily activities. Particular attention should be paid to special local conditions, such as damage to coral reefs from sediments, eutrophication of rivers and lakes from runoff, melting of permafrost and light pollution of marine nesting sites, among others.

Sub-criteria

D.2.4.1. The business implements a sustainable plan for the reduction of air, noise, light and soil pollution.
D.2.4.2. The business minimise non-natural noise and implements the requirements of a "Natural Quiet" policy.
D.2.4.3. The business minimise the use of artificial lighting and implements the requirements of a "Dark Skies" policy.

Implementation indicators

D.2.4.1. Present the plan and explain how it is implemented
D.2.4.2i. Provide information on the usual noise level from all activities on the site (including telephones, public address system, transports, concerts, music, equipment and machinery) and how it compares to the background noise in the area.
D.2.4.2ii. Provide information about service and maintenance facilities and whether they are located away from the quiet areas or are provided with sound insulation.
D.2.4.3. Provide information on the use of Illuminated signage and external lights; explain how flashlights and torches are used in activities involving night watching; and state whether natural light provides all necessary illumination to buildings in daytime.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Noise reduction:

• Insulate any generators used

• If air condition is used choose silent units

• For the reduction of traffic noise use motorised vehicles only when necessary

• Usual noise level from all activities on the site should not significantly exceed the background noise (60 dBA) in the area

2. Light Pollution:

• Use artificial lighting only for indispensable guidance and security installations

• Natural light provides all necessary illumination to all living areas of buildings during daylight hours

• External lighting is limited to only those that are necessary for orientation, security, and safety

Pathways, corridors and external areas are illuminated by lights with movement sensors

• Compact fluorescent bulbs are used wherever possible

• Illuminated signage is only used for emergency exits

• External lighting does not point above the horizon

• Customers are provided with portable lights to avoid fixed external lighting

3. Soil and Air pollution:

• Measure erosion in the trekking paths and take the necessary action (use alternative paths, soil supports, walkways etc)

• Do not construct large areas where the ground surface is impermeable to water (concreted areas, roads, car parks, general construction)

• Protect soil quality by applying protective layers in those places where contamination could occur

• Ensure that the release of solvents and hydrocarbon in the air is minimal.

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion D.2.4 here

D.3. Wildlife and biodiversity

D.3.1. Wildlife Species

Criterion

D.3.1. Wildlife species are not harvested, consumed, displayed, sold or traded, except as part of a regulated activity that ensures that their utilisation is sustainable and in compliance with local and international regulations.

Rationale

In Europe there are strict regulations regarding use of wildlife species as products, either sold as consumer goods or food. European ecotourism should apply all existing policies, strive for stricter measures and be vigilant in reporting illegal activities. Consumption of endangered species is forbidden.

Sub-criteria

D.3.1.1. The business implements a strict policy regarding the protection of wildlife species.
D.3.1.2. The business abstains from any use of rare, endangered or protected wildlife species and reports illegal activities.

Implementation indicators

D.3.1.1. Present the policy and how it is implemented
D.3.1.2. Include a statement of abstention and submit evidence of reporting illegal activities if applicable

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How can you do it? Some useful tips

• Refer to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species that is widely recognised as the most comprehensive, objective global approach for evaluating the conservation status of plant and animal species, and for identifying rare, endangered and protected wildlife. Respect the national redlist

• Protect the wildlife's integrity from domestic animals

• Consult with local or national environmental NGOs on relevant guidelines.

• Comply with EU Ecolabel.

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion D.3.1 here

D.3.2. Wildlife in Captivity

Criterion

D.3.2 No captive wildlife is held, except for properly regulated activities, in compliance with local or international regulations. Living specimens of protected and wildlife species are only kept by those authorised and suitably equipped to house and care for them.

Rationale

This criterion applies only to Wildlife Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries. These can be part of an Ecotourism experience if they operate according to national, European and international regulations. All other Ecotourism establishments are prohibited to keep captive wildlife.

Sub-criteria

D.3.2.1. The Wildlife Park or Wildlife Sanctuary operates according to national, European and International standards and legislation and keeps native species.
D.3.2.2. Living specimens of protected wildlife species are only kept by those authorized and suitably equipped to house and care for them.

Implementation indicators

D.3.2.1. Submit documents showing the regulations of the Park, including reference to compliance with national, European and international standards
D.3.2.2. Submit evidence of the protection offered to wildlife and habitats, including the care, respect of the dignity and welfare of animals

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion D.3.2 here

D.3.3. Landscaping

Criterion

D.3.3 The business uses native species for landscaping and restoration, and takes measures to avoid the introduction of invasive alien species.

Rationale

Native flora is adapted to local conditions (drought, temperatures, etc) and local pests, reducing the need for irrigation (reducing water use D.1.4) and chemicals (criterion D.2.4). The character of the natural environment can be preserved by utilising sustainable landscaping techniques that incorporate local flora. Non-local species should not be used and if used, they should be screened to avoid introducing potentially invasive plants and animals, which have negative impacts on biodiversity and local ecosystems tems.

Sub-criterion

D.3.3.1. The business uses native species for landscaping and landscape restoration.
D.3.3.2. The business takes measures to avoid the introduction of invasive alien species.

Implementation indicators

D.3.3.1i. Submit visual proof of the plants used for landscaping (photos, video) and a list of the plants, with an indication of their origin. D.3.3.1ii. Provide information whether the development and use of the site has involved clearing of the native vegetation and fauna. D.3.3.1iii. Submit evidence (photos, video) of the landscaping of the site and the degree to which it reflects the character of the surrounding natural environment.
D.3.3.2. List the alien species that are present in the open space used by the business and state what action is planned, if any, for replacing them with indigenous plants.

> ***How can you do it? Some useful tips***
>
> • Avoid planting mono-cultures in large areas (this increases the spreading of diseases)
>
> • Plant herb gardens
>
> • Construct dry-stone walls (habitats for several species etc.)
>
> • Bordering woods must not put buildings and facilities into risk (forest fires, falling trees).

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion D.3.3 here

D.3.4. Biodiversity Conservation

Criterion

D.3.4. The business contributes to the support of biodiversity conservation, including supporting natural protected areas and areas of high biodiversity and high conservation value.

Rationale

Ecotourism activities and the quality of the Ecotourism experience depend heavily on the state of the natural environment. An Ecotourism business is also by definition an important direct and indirect benefactor of biodiversity conservation. Contribution can range from active participation in projects to financial contributions.

Sub-criteria

D.3.4.1. The business directly contributes and/or supports biodiversity conservation either financially or in-kind.
D.3.4.2. Biodiversity conservation activities are communicated to staff, clients and the local community.

Implementation indicators

D.3.4.1. Submit evidence of either financial or in kind contribution.
D.3.4.2. Submit evidence that conservation of biodiversity is communicated via notices, leaflets, posters, publication of articles etc addressing different audiences - and define these audiences.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Active participation in biodiversity conservation. Consult also local/national environmental NGOs and international initiatives such as CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity).

• Offer voluntary work to nature conservation projects (in co-operation and in agreement with nature conservation authorities and landowners) e.g.:

Surveys on species to collect data on biodiversity

• Native tree planting by tourists to mitigate CO_2 emissions, or for reforestation

• Hay-cutting, bush clearing etc.

• Winter feeding of wildlife (only supervised by local guides/ experts)

• Organise days to clean up litter (at beaches, in forests, in mountains etc.)

• Create artificial wildlife areas/ habitats (ponds, dry stone walls, vegetation corridors etc.)

• Install bird nests

• Take measures to protect marine areas (incl. protection of dune areas) from e.g. soil erosion, flood hazards etc.

 2. Support of biodiversity conservation

• Provide information on conservation efforts to visitors:

• Provide information on local nature research projects and conservation activities for visitors who want to give economic or practical support to nature conservation initiatives at the destination

• Nature conservation organisations are offered space to promote their activities in the tour operator's marketing materials, on web sites, in brochures, mailings etc.

• Public information events

• Donate money to conservation projects

• Work together with other (tourism) businesses, local authorities and communities to form groups and sponsor conservation initiatives

• Implement a visitor payback schemes to maintain local conservation projects

3. Establish cooperation with schools, educational institutes and universities and work with local and regional partners to support environmental education:

• Organise or participate in environmental education outdoor programmes and provide sponsorship

• Implement team-building days, e.g. volunteering on a local conservation project.

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion D.3.4 here

D.3.5. Interactions with Wildlife

Criterion

D.3.5. Interactions with wildlife, taking into account cumulative impacts, must not produce adverse effects on the viability and behaviours of populations in the wild; any disturbance of natural ecosystems is minimized, rehabilitated, and there is a compensatory contribution to conservation management.

Rationale

The main aim of Ecotourism is the appreciation, protection and conservation of nature and wildlife. The Ecotourism business must ensure that any outdoor activity complies with the best available practices. In respect to the diverse cultures of Europe, European Ecotourism should allow close interaction of guests with wildlife only in cases of regulated activities and traditional activities that offer a genuine local cultural experience (e.g reindeer herding). Regarding commercial hunting and all other activities that result to loss of wildlife, the ecotourism provider should have a strict policy against its promotion and operation.

Sub-criteria

D.3.5.1. The business implements a strict policy that does not promote commercial hunting and any other activity that results to loss of wildlife.
D.3.5.2. The business respects codes of conduct for interaction with wildlife, and strictly enforces them.
D.3.5.3. The business contributes a percentage of its annual budget to restore or rehabilitate natural ecosystems and contribute to conservation management.

Implementation indicators

D.3.5.1i. Submit evidence that the business complies with local/national legislation and respects the views of the local community on the subject. D.3.5.1ii. Submit evidence that the guests are informed about what behaviour is unsustainable and should be avoided, including unregulated hunting, shooting and fishing.
D.3.5.2i. Show a document which includes a written code of conduct for interaction with wildlife D.3.5.2ii. Submit evidence that the activities of the business do not include regular and deliberate intrusions that may cause significant disturbance to wildlife behaviour in their natural habitat D.3.5.2iii. Statement by the business that direct interaction with wild animals is only undertaken by staff with appropriate training and experience and it is conducted in such a way as not to cause any stress or disturbance to the animals. D.3.5.2iv. Submit evidence that the business informs the responsible nature conservation authorities about organised tours or other ecotourism activities to make sure that sensitive habitats will not be disturbed.
D.3.5.3. Present evidence that an amount is paid regularly for nature conservation purposes and provide details (to whom, for what purpose, how often etc).

> ### *How can you do it? Some useful tips*
>
> 1. Codes of conduct for activities that take place in nature:
>
> Before any interaction between guests and wildlife occurs, the guests must be informed on relevant codes of conduct, e.g.:
>
> • Noise must be kept at a minimum
>
> • Trails or paths must be followed
>
> • Rapid or sudden movements are being avoided
>
> • No wildlife is being touched, disturbed intentionally or harmed
>
> • When including any sort of wildlife interaction the operator must ensure that the wildlife habitats such as nesting and breeding sites are not intruded
>
> • A safe and appropriate distance is being kept from wildlife. Guests must be moved away before any signs of disturbance by animals.
>
> Incidents regarding wildlife disturbance should be reported to the local police or wildlife officer
>
> 2. Feeding is performed under strict control by trained staff, according to the relevant authority and landowner:
>
> • Inform guests on the impact of unmonitored wildlife feeding
>
> • Before wildlife feeding occurs the relevant official authority must be asked for approval
>
> • Further official authority guidelines on feeding of wildlife must be followed at all times (e.g. which animals to feed, in what season it is allowed to feed specific wildlife, how often it is allowed to feed wildlife, etc.)

Best practice examples

You can visit the EEN Library of Best Practice and read the case studies that fulfil Criterion D.3.5 here

The EETLS has benefited from principles and concepts included in the following initiatives:

- Austrian Ecolabel for Tourism
- ECEAT Quality Label
- ECOCAMPING
- ECOCLUB.com
- EUROPARC
- EcoRomania
- Eco Certification Programme – Australia
- EU Flower
- Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria
- Green Globe 21
- Green Key
- Green Tourism Business Scheme
- Nature's Best
- Pan Parks
- Travelife
- VIABONO
- VISIT

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