



A NETWORK DEVELOPING
A EUROPEAN QUALITY LABEL
FOR ECOTOURISM DESTINATIONS



Education and Culture
Lifelong learning programme
LEONARDO DA VINCI

THE EUROPEAN ECOTOURISM LABELLING STANDARD – EETLS

Developed by the ECO-DESTINET Network

2009





The European Ecotourism Labelling Standard – EETLS

Developed by the ECO-DESTINET Network, 2009

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Introduction

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-tourist 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 ecotourist. 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 principles¹ of 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.

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”

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

It has been a major challenge for the ECO-DESTINET partnership 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. Another challenge is to seek acceptance of the EETLS as widely as possible; and create a strong network for its dissemination and implementation in Europe.

Development 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.

In order that EETLS reflects closely the nature of the Ecotourism industry, the ECO-DESTINET partnership has specified each criterion 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. Then using the following list of services, an indication is given on how the criterion is applicable to:

- Visitor Centres
- Tour packages
- Accommodation facilities
- Outdoor Activities
- Restaurants.

The specification of each criterion is then elaborated through a set of sub-criteria and a set of measures and 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 partnership consulted experts and practitioners and held monthly meetings and discussions, leading to four different versions of the EETLS draft. As already mentioned, the ECO-DESTINET partnership also co-operated closely with the GSTC partnership. 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. Through the workshop discussions and the feedback received by the workshop participants, several refinements were made to the criteria and indicators. The ECO-DESTINET seminar on "Certification of Quality in Ecotourism" at Trentino, Italy, on June 2009 was another opportunity to receive valuable feedback from Ecotourism experts and practitioners across Europe. Following this seminar, the EETLS was further refined and structured in its present form. The future forms of EETLS will be harmonised with the revisions of GSTC.

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.

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 related to the various criteria is briefly presented.

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 fulfillment 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 system that is suitable to its reality and scale, and that considers environmental, sociocultural, quality, health, and safety issues.

Rationale

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

Sub-criteria

1. The business has developed a business plan, including an Ecotourism development action plan.
2. The business has developed a long-term sustainability policy and implements a sustainability management scheme that is communicated to staff, local stakeholders and clients.
3. A sustainability manager is appointed to support the sustainability scheme and monitor the business's performance.

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")

A.2. Legal Compliance

Criterion

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

Rationale

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

Sub-criteria

1. The business complies with all necessary legislations and regulations and holds permits to operate as a tourism business.
2. Local regulations and recommendations for protected areas and nature conservation are respected.
3. The business is registered with the financial authorities.
4. The business has a public liability insurance scheme.
5. Infrastructure and activities have been established on the basis of an “environmental impact assessment”.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

Why is an environmental impact assessment necessary?

- The environmental impact assessment makes a record of the potential impact of a product, operation or building on the natural environment and the landscape, the built heritage, the local communities and the productive activities of the destination. The help of an expert is required for this task
- The environmental impact assessment helps you to ensure that environmental consequences are identified and assessed before the development of your new product, operation or building
- To assess the social consequences upon local communities, it is recommended to Inform the local communities and take their opinion about your plans into account



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.

Sub-criteria

1. All personnel receive periodic training on environmental practices.
2. All personnel receive periodic training on socio-cultural practices.
3. All personnel receive periodic training on health and safety practices.
4. All personnel working in customer service receives periodic training on service quality.

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 behavior

Examples

Discovery Initiatives, UK, outbound Ecotourism operator

- All employees that take tourists outdoors are professional guides that have received specialised training. Most guides have first-aid diplomas. Guides are also trained on social and environmental codes of conduct that they communicate to the clients.

A.4. Customer Satisfaction

Criterion

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

Rationale

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

Sub-criteria

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.
2. The business has developed and is properly implementing a customer complaint system.

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

5. Introduce a customer loyalty programme that may include
- Clientele Database
 - Regular newsletters
 - Mailings of special offers
 - Discount for loyal customers



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 deliver to the client.

Sub-criteria

1. Practical information about the products/services is available (proper clothing, equipment, special knowledge, factors that might degrade the tourism experience, potential dangers etc.).
2. Promotional materials and all marketing activities of the business should reflect clearly the reality of the destination and the offered services/products.

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

Examples

Discovery Initiatives, UK, outbound Ecotourism operator

- Discovery Initiatives has three key holiday types: Footprint Holidays, Insight Holidays, Discover Holidays. Each one is well explained in their brochures and website. Detailed description of products allows visitors to choose exactly the kind of holidays they want to experience.

Cottage Lodge, UK, Ecotourism accommodation

- The company gives information about the area regarding roads, cycling paths, walking tracks and horse riding. They divide activities into three categories: physical activities, days out, leisure and pleasure. "Physical activities" category offers solutions for cycling, walking and horse riding. "Days out" gives information surrounding areas visitors can reach by train or by car to have a brief trip. "Leisure and pleasure" gives some hints on simple and relaxing activities.

Fattorie del Panda, Italy, Network of holiday farms

- The network categorises the farms based on one of their characteristics and services such as:
 - Organic farms
 - Holiday farms that staff speaks foreign languages
 - Farms which are officially accredited as "didactic farms" or "regional environmental education centers"
 - "Hiking centers" which are farms that can provide trekking programmes for singles and groups.



A.6. Design and Construction of Buildings and Infrastructure

A.6.1 Local Zoning

Criterion

Comply with local zoning and protected or heritage area requirements.

Rationale

The facilities of the Ecotourism business comply with land use zoning and protected or heritage zoning requirements. The activities of the business should comply with EETLS 1.

Sub-criteria

1. The business complies with the built area zoning regarding building regulations.
2. The business complies with land use zoning.
3. The business complies with environmental protection zoning.
4. The business complies with designated areas' requirements.

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
3. Comply with designated areas' requirements
 - If you are operating within a designated natural or cultural heritage area, obtain all relevant documentation on specific requirements from competent authorities

Examples

Lapplandsafari, Sweden, Traditional Sami cultural camp

- For the business owners it was important to find a location for the cultural camp that would fit into the landscape and with appropriate amenities – a spring, fishing grounds and hunting grounds – exactly as Sami were living one century ago. The perfect place was found in a nature reserve. At the beginning they thought it would be a difficult location because of all the strict regulations about construction work and commercial business in protected areas. Finally though they experienced no problems thanks to all the excellent information that had obtained during the planning stage. Furthermore the local and park authorities considered the project favourable to the nature reserve and supported it in many ways.

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 Ecotourism 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.

Sub-criteria

1. Respect natural and cultural heritage surroundings.
2. Land rights and the acquisition of land are dealt with according to the legal framework of the country, and access to the land complies with local planning schemes and regulations.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Respect natural and cultural heritage surroundings (connected with criterion B.3 and C.4)
 - 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 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

Examples

Milia Mountain Retreat, Crete, Greece

- Milia used to be a deserted medieval settlement. The families of some of the houses decided in 1982 to set up a business and buy the rest of the houses that were in ruins, and renovate the whole settlement. The settlement was restored using old materials and furniture that were found within the settlement or in neighbouring villages. For the restoration traditional techniques were also used. In total 13 houses were restored.

A.6.3 Sustainable Construction

Criterion

Use locally appropriate principles of sustainable construction.

Rationale

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

Sub-criteria

The business applies principles of bio-climatic construction, bio-energy production methods, energy and water saving etc.

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. Consider bio-climatic architecture
4. Communicate your plans to the community and showcase the benefits of a sustainable buildings that use energy wisely and respect the character of the area

Examples

AlmaVerde Village & Spa, Portugal

- In response to local climatic conditions, AlmaVerde has developed an innovative, award-winning building system, selecting materials for their thermal and insulating properties, as well as their beauty and durability. Inner walls are of sun-dried solid clay, a traditional material that regulates both temperature and humidity. An external insulation system eliminates cracks and the need for regular repainting. A Coolhouse cooling system brings in air through underground tubes as a low-energy alternative to air-conditioning. The benefits are manifest: consistent internal temperatures and humidity levels, low maintenance and energy costs. The business has also kept all existing trees and planted new trees and shrubs and invested in high-quality landscape design using a combination of local drought-tolerant species.

A.6.4 Special Needs Access

Criterion

Provide access for persons with special needs.

Rationale

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

Sub-criteria

1. The business offers access to its facilities to clients with special needs and complies with regional/national legislation.
2. At least one activity of the business can be experienced by clients with special needs.

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 dining 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

Examples

Cottage Lodge, UK, Ecotourism accommodation

- For clients with sight problems the company is re-designing its web page; the cottage has wheelchair friendly rooms with slip resistant flooring, and zip and link beds. However, the company is not able to provide accommodation for those who need oxygen machine. For other kinds of needs, such as domestic animals, the cottage allows dogs to go free on condition that they do not disturb other guests and do not cause damage to facilities.

O'Reilly's Rainforest Guesthouse, Australia

- The menu of the restaurant includes gluten-free dishes and vegetarian foods; the tree top walkway is wheel chair accessible.

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

1. The business has developed an interpretation programme for its activities.
2. Sources of information that are used in interpretation are credible.
3. Interpretation is delivered by trained staff and professional guides.

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.
 - Provide 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

- Personal interpretation means the oral direct delivery of interpretation from staff to visitors
- Non-personal interpretation uses print-, audio- or visual-media as the primary mechanism for its delivery

Examples

Fattorie del Panda, Italy, Network of holiday farms

- The network categorises the farms based on one of their characteristics. One of the farm categories is the “Nature laboratories”. “Nature laboratories” are farms with the capacity to provide services and materials for environmental education and for “discovering” the local nature. These services are available for individuals, groups and school classes. It has to be mentioned however that not all of these farms are accepted by public institutions as centers for environmental education.

Lapplandsafari, Sweden, Traditional Sami cultural camp

- There is a strong interpretation element in all the activities of the camp. There are interpretative walks and storytelling nights, visits to museums with local guides and guests are encouraged to meet with locals and discuss about the area’s history. The culture of the Sami people is dominant, as the camp has been developed in the traditional way using traditional techniques that are explained to visitors.



EETLS – Group of Criteria Further specifying European Ecotourism

Introduction to the EETLS additional Criteria

The EETLS group of criteria highlight specific Ecotourism principles that need special attention by an Ecotourism business. The two EETLS additional criteria ensure that:

- Activities of the business comply with zoning of sensitive areas.
- Ecotourism raises visitors' sensitivity of the host destination.

Ecotourism activities should have a low impact and respect nature and heritage. This can be achieved mainly by respecting regulations regarding recreational activities in protected areas.

Raising visitors' sensitivity of the characteristics of the host destination is essential for a responsible form of tourism like Ecotourism. Through the criteria, the business is asked to take action in encouraging guests to responsibly interact with the local community, exchange experiences and learn more about the issues affecting the destination and the local population.



EETLS 1. 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 of nature and 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

1. The business knows and respects the protected area regulations.
2. The business operates within the limits of relevant restrictions of activity.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Provide information to the clients and the local community on protected area regulations, regarding allowed activities, and the benefits of respecting these
2. Your staff should be well informed on protected area requirements
3. When planning your activities get the consensus of the Park Authority or any other competent Authority operating in the protected area



EETLS 2. Raise visitors' sensitivity of the host destination

Criterion

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.

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.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Provide 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



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

The company actively supports initiatives for social and infrastructure community development 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 and conserve the natural and cultural heritage of the destination.

Sub-criteria

1. The business supports initiatives and takes up actions that foster active participation of local communities in planning and decision making concerning tourism development and conservation of nature.
2. The business supports initiatives that safeguard the community from natural hazards (fires, floods, earthquakes etc.).
3. The business supports educational activities among local communities on nature and local culture appreciation with an emphasis on the younger generation.
4. The business supports initiatives that target infrastructure, health, sanitation and social inclusion.
5. The business promotes the destination and the local community through its marketing tools (web page, brochure, Ecotourism guide).

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. Get actively involved in initiatives against natural hazards such as:
 - Fires
 - Floods
 - Earthquakes
 - Display information and organise seminars for guests and visitors on measures protecting from the consequences of hazards
3. Visitor/ info centres, accommodation units and restaurants:
 - Host educational activities, seminars or workshops in their facilities for school groups
- 3.1 Tours and Outdoor Activities:
 - 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)

6. 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.

Examples

Dadia Forest Reserve Visitors' Centre, Greece

- In Dadia, Greece, the creation of a feeding place for the rare vulture species and the creation of basic tourism infrastructure was an incentive that had a multiplier effect, attracting public investment and generating rural development with Ecotourism as a centrepiece.
- WWF organises the Annual Bird's Day where locals and tourists celebrate the unique range of birds present in the area as a common heritage. The event is successful in raising environmental awareness and adding value to the local fauna.
- "Young women trained as eco-guides, and as they gained experience and knowledge of the area's biological wealth, they organised programmes for visiting schoolchildren from all over Greece" (Valaoras *et al.* 2002). Women established cooperatives and produced traditional products. This commendable initiative benefits local women both in terms of a supplementary income and personal satisfaction. The income generated by the activities of the cooperative represents an important addition to family income as without leaving home or changing their traditional family roles as caregivers, the women of Evros found a pleasant occupation to combine work and housekeeping tasks. Within this project the Centre realised infrastructures for further valorisation of the area's resources (i.e. vulture feeding table, bird observatory and information centre).

Írottkő / Geschriebenstein Nature Park, Hungary

- The local communities were involved in the development of the park and the development of tourist activities within the park. A regional information centre was developed that served the information needs of both local people and tourists. Tour guides and language courses were organised for people who wanted to be employed in tourism. The Kőszeg-Vashegy Wine Route was also developed to make the region's wine culture and its wines more widely known. In 2000 a communal waste disposal site was built, part financed by the EU Phare CBC; a thermal swimming pool, a drinking fountain and three educational paths were established; a campsite, a sports and recreation park, a cyclists rest and first aid centre were created, and tourist publications were issued.

B.2. Local Employment

Criterion

Local residents are employed, including management positions. Training is offered as necessary.

Rationale

Rural areas in Europe suffer from depopulation and internal migration to urban areas. European Ecotourism can offer a viable alternative to qualified local people to remain with their communities. Ecotourism employers should seek to provide suitable training and support lifelong learning for their employees.

Sub-criteria

1. The business provides incentives for further training of staff and recognition of job performance and personal development in the form of paid leaves, promotion, raise of salary etc.
2. Seasonal staff are provided with basic training by the employer and encouraged to seek further training.
3. The business seeks the cooperation of local vocational schools, training institution and universities for staff training.
4. Local residents are given priority for positions that require local knowledge and familiarity with local culture and landscape (guides, drivers, chefs).
5. Local residents are employed by the Ecotourism business, including management positions.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. Provide incentives for your staff to seek personal development through education and training:
 - Get in contact with local/regional education and training providers and provide information material of training opportunities to your staff
 - Ask a training provider to assess the learning needs of your staff (see also A.3)
 - 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 centers
 - Get in contact with local/regional vocational schools and training institutions to seek candidates among their graduates

Examples

Dadia Forest Reserve Visitors' Centre, Greece

- “Since the appointment of a permanent employee to manage Ecotourism promotion in the Dadia-Soufli Forest Reserve, over 60 international and national meetings, fairs, exhibitions, and conferences have been held in Dadia, with its vibrant local community and exceptional natural heritage” (Valaoras *et al.* 2002). The conservation of Dadia and associated commercial Ecotourism activities have stimulated employment and provided young people with job opportunities.

The Jósvalfö Village Walk in the Aggtelek National Park, Sweden

- While developing the project concept, a number of problems were identified which required addressing in order to successfully implement it. These included: passive attitude of local people, funding, little publicity for the new activity, an aging population, and the loss of values and knowledge. In order to take the project forward, the developers sought direct discussions with the local community and applied for funding. To help solve the ageing population problem they provided jobs for youngsters, so that they could stay with their community.



B.3 Fair-Trade

Criterion

Local and fair-trade services and goods are purchased by the business, where available.

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 produced or within the country, 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

1. The business supports local service providers and local product producers.
2. The business prefers organic and local food products in the preparation of meals and breakfast.
3. The business uses seasonal fruits and vegetables.
4. The business strives for fair pricing of local produced products offered to tourists.
5. In the construction phase of a facility, local materials and local labour is used (A.6.3 and D.1.1).
6. In cases where large parts of the tourism product are purchased / hired through a subcontractor, the subcontractor is registered and taxed within the administrative area of the destination.
7. When a product is not locally or nationally produced, fair-trade goods are sought.

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. (see also D.1.1)
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

Examples

Larsbo Gard Ecotourism Farm, Sweden

- “They source fruit and vegetables from their own garden as well as from other local farms. They provide fresh fish from lakes and streams in the local area and will source game meat from local hunters” (Scottish Enterprise, Final Report 2004).
- To maintain high quality standards Larsbo Gard relies heavily on local produce to provide good, fresh, regional flavours and recipes to their guests” (Scottish Enterprise, Final Report 2004).
- The farm offers a guided trip in the forest to collect seasonal fruit or mushrooms, then to cook these following a traditional recipe as instructed by the owner.
- Larsbo Gard is accredited with several labels including the Danish Green Key accommodation label and the Swedish Quality label Nature’s Best.

Fattorie del Panda, Italy, Network of holiday farms

- The menu includes local dishes and local products (at least three in each meal), and the guest is informed about the history and the tradition of the product. The guest also receives information about how to buy the product or ingredients (most are sold in-house).

Vildmark i Varmland, Sweden, Lografting

- The long distances they travel on the rafting trips mean that the principle of local buying must be applied at a larger geographical scale. Therefore the business has chosen to buy everything they need as close as possible to their route, in order to support the local trade and industry, while at the same time they have created a local network that supports them in the longer term. Everyone gains by creating opportunities for the people in the area. The business buys products and services locally e.g. from a local distributor of timber and from a local bus company. It isn't always cheaper to buy locally but it gives other benefits, not only for the company. After they put some pressure on a local supermarket, the supermarket started to buy bread from a bakery in a nearby village, Torsby, instead of a big one in southern Sweden, so now they are able to sell freshly made bread every day. The business tries to influence other contractors in similar ways, for instance, it is now possible to buy elk meat from the district and people get more ecologically and locally produced vegetables. Most importantly the owners have noticed that their way of thinking is spreading within the community.

B.4. Local Entrepreneurs

Criterion

The company offers the means for 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 and can support the diversification of rural economies. European Ecotourism should benefit 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

1. The business promotes and supports local quality agreements, or certification initiatives for local products and services.
2. The business supports farmers and women cooperatives or other types of cooperatives.
3. The business promotes local producers and service providers through its own marketing tools or those of cooperating tour operators (web page, brochure, tour programme guide).
4. The business directly sells local products or services in its facilities.
5. The business seeks sub-contractors that are in line with Ecotourism principles and meet at least a minimum number of the listed EETLS.

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. Promote cultural events by displaying leaflets or posters in your facilities; lead or help in the organisation of community events
3. Encourage cooperation amongst local providers with the aim of developing new tourism- and tourism-related products
4. Promote local entrepreneurs through different marketing tools like:
 - Your website
 - Brochures and leaflets
 - Word of mouth, etc
5. 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.)

Examples

Lapplandsafari, Sweden, Traditional Sami cultural camp

- The cultural camp has inspired other enterprises to do similar things and today many people call them for hints or help in different ways. The owners feel satisfied being able to become a source of inspiration and see that many people have adopted their sustainable way of thinking and are developing even better products. At the village near the camp, it is obvious that everyone is now striving for sustainable tourism. Three other enterprises started to operate in the village, which were later certified by the Nature's Best ecotourism label.

Tzoumerka Non-Profit Quality Association, Greece

- The Association was encouraged by the LEADER initiative and was voluntarily set up by local tourism entrepreneurs, running successfully for the last 10 years. The Association has put into force a voluntary Local Agreement of Quality Control and a Quality Label to secure the qualitative upgrading of the tourism products and services offered by its members. The hotel and restaurant premises that have joined the label give preference to traditional foods, furniture and handicrafts, and they have now started collective negotiations with tour operators and jointly take part in big tourism fairs. They have also created a joint booking system in the internet and a web page that includes information about the area and all available tourism businesses and facilities.



B.5. Indigenous Communities

Criterion

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

Rationale

Respecting and preserving the traditions of local 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 community and its environment. The Ecotourism business should develop a plan to maintain regular and open communication with community officials to create a cooperation agreement that also includes tourist interaction with the local people.

Sub-criteria

1. The business has developed codes of conduct for tourist activities and behaviour of tourists and monitors tourist activity and behaviour.
2. The development of the business and their infrastructure should respect the needs of the community and the social and physical carrying capacity of the destination.
3. The business seeks community advice on the development of tourism products or the development of tourism facilities.
4. The business ensures and safeguards the right for free and open access to public areas (beaches, forests 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

Examples

Discovery Initiatives, UK, outbound Ecotourism operator

- As the company offers adventure holidays, safety is a priority. Some activities also interact with indigenous communities therefore a strict code of conduct is given to tourists. The codes of conduct and tourist behaviour are constantly monitored and assessed.

Lapplandsafari, Sweden, Traditional Sami cultural camp

- During the development of the cultural camp the owners found it important to communicate the plans with as many as possible, i.e. guests, experts, the museums in the province and other contractors in the area, but above all with the older locals that were anxious to share their knowledge, as they seemed to care a lot about the details. Once the mountain camp was finished, the owners invited the whole village to present them the results, so that the entire community would feel that they were participating in the project. The whole village came, including the holiday cottage owners, and they were all very impressed. Nowadays everybody in the village has only good things to say about the business and this experience has also spread to other areas through the holiday cottage owners.



B.6. Exploitation

Criterion

The company has implemented a policy against commercial exploitation, particularly of children and adolescents, including sexual exploitation.

Rationale

Commercial exploitation of vulnerable groups (including immigrants) and sexual exploitation is covered by EU laws and national legislation. The operator should enforce relevant policies and be vigilant in reporting illegal activities.

Sub-criteria

1. The business has an ethical policy regarding commercial exploitation.
2. If appropriate, the business cooperates with local administration on awareness raising campaigns for the local population and incoming tourists regarding commercial and sexual exploitation.
3. The business introduces clauses in contracts with suppliers and subcontractors to state common repudiation of commercial exploitation.
4. The business is vigilant in reporting illegal activities.



B.7. Equitable Hiring

Criterion

The company is equitable in hiring women and local minorities, including in management positions, while restraining child labour.

Rationale

Equal opportunity policies in employment are set in most European countries, while child labour is prohibited. The operator should enforce relevant policies and be vigilant in reporting illegal activities.

Sub-criteria

1. The business provides equal opportunities for employment to women, vulnerable groups, disabled and ethnic minorities including staff in management positions.
2. The business has a strict policy against purchase of goods produced with child labour.

Examples

Desa, Humanitarian NGO, Croatia

- Desa is a humanitarian NGO founded to meet the needs of women victims of war, either displaced from Croatia during the war or refugees from Bosnia. Desa provided activities to these women to help them feel useful and regain their self-esteem. Workshops were held for sewing, weaving and producing traditional costumes and traditional decoration of homes. These products were sold to tourists and the women earned some income. Desa is now giving priority to educational programmes aimed at enabling women to take part in tourism-related activities, using their homes, the produce of their land, their animals and their rich natural environment.



B.8 Employee Protection

Criterion

The international or national legal protection of employees is respected, and employees are paid a living wage.

Rationale

An Ecotourism operator should be a responsible employer. Employees should have full legal benefits and the minimum salary should be defined according to the national legislation. If employees are accommodated in the operator's facilities, living conditions should be fair.

Sub-criteria

1. Job promotion and incentives are based on the employee's qualification and on his/her job performance.
2. The business has an employee reporting system for notifying the management of workplace misconduct.
3. Employees accommodated in the operator's facilities are ensured good living conditions.
4. Seasonal staff has the same social benefits as regular staff.
5. The business must set up an employee protection policy based on national standards and the international labour standards of the International Labour Organisation.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

Your employee protection policy should include:

- 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
- No discrimination based on ethnic background, race, religion or sex should occur in staff employment, training/education and/or access to higher employment levels
- An effective complaints procedure and possibility to claim compensation for all employees
- The possibility to present important labour issues to the management

Examples

FCm Travel Solutions, R. Ireland, travel agency

- FCm was awarded in 2009 as a Best Workplaces from the Great Place to Work® Institute. Some of the qualities of FCm include the good working atmosphere, the respect towards the employees and among each other, the low turnover of staff and the promotions policy. In particular FCm prefers to recruit internally for management positions because in this way they promote employees that know the business. As a result all senior managers have progressed from junior positions.

B.9. Basic Services

Criterion

The activities of the company do not jeopardise the provision of basic services, such as water, energy, 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. The operator should take all needed measures to ensure that tourism activity is sustainable.

Sub-criteria

1. The business co-operates with other tour providers in minimising the consumption of water and other resources. (D.1.4).
2. The business informs tourists about local problems with resources (water, energy, health) if any, and guidelines are provided. (D.1.3, D.1.4).
3. The business and its activities do not negatively affect the provision of basic resources / services to the community, including health, security and personal safety.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

- Cooperate with other businesses of the area and local authorities to conduct a carrying capacity research for the destination. This way all businesses will have a clear indication of the impacts of tourism on the destination and can take up corrective measures

Examples

Millia Mountain Retreat, Crete, Greece,

- The owners avoid to encourage infrastructure developments in the location of the retreat in order to safeguard the surrounding area from spawning tourism development (roads, power lines, water pipes).
- Autonomous in water, power, sewage. The water comes from a spring in the retreat and there is a system for its minimal use.
- Use of local and homegrown products.
- Promotion of local cuisine and local cultural heritage.
- Guest houses reconstructed using old materials and local techniques.
- Word of mouth marketing that has led to international recognition.

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 refer 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. Code of Behavior

Criterion

The company follows established guidelines or a code of behaviour 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. Also, clients must be informed of other important cultural characteristics of a destination, further to monuments and registered heritage sites, such as local architecture, handicrafts, local customs and celebrations, special foods etc, so that an overall picture of the cultural significance of the area and its people is created for the tourist.

Sub-criteria

1. The business has developed a code of behaviour specific for culturally sensitive areas in order to minimise visitor impact and maximise positive tourist experience.
2. The business uses professional/licensed guides for tours in archaeological/historical sites.
3. The business informs tourists on site-specific restrictions or guidelines, and monitors their behaviour.
4. The business provides information on all aspects of local culture that are significant, formal and vernacular, so that a "global" picture of the local cultural heritage is created.

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

Example

- During the Euracademy summer school in Crete, in August 2007, participants were taken on study trips that included important archaeological sites (Festos, Knossos), mediaeval churches, folk art museums, traditional villages, cooperatives producing local foods and offering traditional meals, workshops of local artisans. This proved to be a very attractive and educative mix of activities, that resembled closely the Ecotourism model (visit the website www.euracademy.org).

C.2. Historical Artifacts

Criterion

Historical and archaeological artefacts are not sold, traded, or displayed, except as permitted by law.

Rationale

Safeguarding Europe's cultural heritage is of the 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.

Sub-criteria

1. Historical and archaeological artefacts are not sold, traded or displayed, except as permitted by law.
2. The business is vigilant in reporting illegal activities.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

1. The guide or the group leader 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
2. 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)



C.3. Protection of Sites

Criterion

The business contributes to the protection of local historical, archaeological, culturally, and spiritually important properties and sites, 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

1. The business actively contributes to the protection of local historical, archaeological, cultural and spiritually important properties and sites.
2. The business ensures that under no circumstances, access to the sites is impeded to local people because of tourism activities.
3. The business encourages local inhabitants to visit the sites.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

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. You may 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. You may 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

Example

- In many European destinations, businesses and individuals have “adopted” cultural sites, contributing to their maintenance on a long-term basis. An example is provided by the scheme of the Council for Scottish Archaeology “Adopt a Monument” which provides volunteer groups with practical advice and training to allow them to play a leading role in taking care of local sites. Under the Adopt a Monument scheme, locals and volunteering visitors have been able to actively participate in the conservation of the site at Sandwick Bay, where late prehistoric structures are facing destruction at the hands of the sea.

C.4. Incorporation of Culture

Criterion

The business uses 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 the 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

1. The business incorporates elements of local culture in its facilities and activities (see also A.6.3).
2. The business promotes local dishes and traditional cooking recipes.
3. The business respects the intellectual property rights of local communities.

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 Center

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

Examples

Lapplandsafari, Sweden, Traditional Sami cultural camp

- According to the owners, their success relies on the incorporation of the social and natural history of the area in their activities. For them it is very important that everything is authentic to be trustworthy. They also have a policy to work only in small groups, partly because they don't want to wear the area down too much. But it is mostly because they want to be good hosts who are looking forward to every single meeting with the guests and still are taking great pleasure in storytelling.

Cottage Lodge, UK, Ecotourism accommodation

- The cottage has 12 restored 17th century rooms, which have the original furniture, displaying the local culture and history. The forester's Master Bedroom and Knightwood are the original bedrooms restored. The Verderer's Rest was added when the stables were renovated and used as bedrooms at the turn of the century. The Mills, Rhinefield, Bolderwood and Exbury were added in 1940. The remaining rooms were recently added but retain the overall character.



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.1.1. Purchasing Policy

Criterion

Purchasing policy favours environmentally friendly products for building materials, capital goods, food and 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 policy. Through the purchasing policy the business should make a clear statement in favouring environmentally friendly products and natural products throughout.

Sub-criteria

1. The business has a purchasing policy that gives priority to local products/services.
2. The business has a purchasing policy that gives priority to environmental friendly products/services and natural products.
3. The business has a purchasing policy that gives priority to reusable, returnable and recycled products.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

In the construction phase (see also A6.3):

- In new constructions or renovations, building materials (such as wood) that are eco-certified should be used as much as possible
- 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)
- Building materials are bought locally (as far as possible)
- Prefer durable goods (such as paint, isolation material, floors, carpet, wallpaper, etc.) awarded with relevant eco-labels (e.g. using solvent-free finishing, coating and adhesive materials, waiver of composite materials such as copper roof slides or aluminium glued Styrofoam plates)

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 TSOFF - The Sustainable Office Forum (<http://www.tsof.org.uk/>)

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

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)

For local products refer to B.3

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



D.1.2 Consumable Goods

Criterion

The purchase of disposable and consumable goods is measured, and the business actively seeks ways to reduce their use.

Rationale

Measuring the purchase of disposable goods and consumable products is a cost-saving measure and is also essential in reducing waste and conserving natural resources. Reusable, returnable and recycled products should be used as much as possible.

Sub-criteria

1. The business measures the purchase of disposable goods as a percentage of the total volume of consumable products.
2. The business measures the proportion of recycling achieved of all consumables.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

- 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
- Purchase food in waste-free packaging and agree with suppliers to return packaging material
- Avoid to offer drinks/food in cans
- Make sure that smaller portions of food are available for clients that eat less



D.1.3. Energy Consumption

Criterion

Energy consumption should be measured, sources indicated, and measures to decrease overall consumption should be adopted, 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 through sustainable technology and effective waste management is a key strategy to reduce these negative impacts. The greatest environmental and financial benefits related to business operations are achieved by frequently monitoring utility bills, effectively training and providing incentives for staff to implement energy efficiency programmes, and routine preventive maintenance of mechanical equipment. By applying energy efficient practices to the 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.

Sub-criteria

1. The business implements, as part of its sustainability policy an energy efficiency programme, which is managed by the sustainability manager. It is recommended that the energy efficiency programme is designed with the help of an expert.
2. The business collects and monitors data on overall energy consumption (kWh), energy used for heating (kWh) and consumption by tourist overnight.
3. The business strives to minimise the use of non-renewable energy sources.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

- 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.

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.)

D.1.4. Water Consumption

Criterion

Water consumption should be measured, sources indicated, and measures to decrease overall consumption should be adopted.

Rationale

Water is precious and an increasingly scarce resource especially in many South European countries and regions, which face moderate or severe water shortages. 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.

Sub-criteria

1. The business implements, as part of its sustainability policy, a programme for the reduction of water consumption, which is managed by the sustainability manager.
2. The business collects and monitor data on water consumption.
3. The business ensures that its water consumption is sustainable and does not significantly impact the water availability to local communities and ecosystems.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

- 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

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.)

Examples

Cottage Lodge, UK, Ecotourism accommodation

- Sheets are changed every three days in order to reduce washing. Towels are changed if put in the bath or shower floor. Laundry is washed with environmentally friendly products in an energy efficient machine. In addition, the business saves energy during the warmer months, by line drying the laundry.

Fattorie del Panda, Italy, Network of holiday farms

- Drinking water is offered in a carafe or in glass bottles.
- Each water tap and each shower is equipped with a restrictor. Guests are encouraged to save water. A reminder is located close to the water taps.

D.2.1. Greenhouse Gas

Criterion

Greenhouse gas emissions from all sources controlled by the business are measured, and procedures are implemented to reduce and offset them as a way to achieve climate neutrality.

Rationale

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

1. The business implements, as part of its sustainability policy, a greenhouse gas reduction programme, which is managed by the sustainability manager.
2. The business uses a system to measure and monitor greenhouse gas emissions.
3. The business uses carbon offset practices to indirectly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
4. The business provides incentives, makes use and promotes soft mobility alternatives to its staff, clients and communicates this to the local community.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

- Encourage guests to use other means than airplane when travelling to and from the destination or when they do, propose a carbon offset programme
- Provide your drivers with training on safe and fuel efficient driving
- Motorised vehicles are used only when necessary
- Vehicles are appropriately equipped to the terrain (e.g. have the right types of tires, carry a well-balanced load)
- Vehicles are regularly maintained to avoid excessive emissions.
- Engines are tuned regularly (according to manufacturer's specifications), to keep engines running clean and on good performance

Soft mobility:

- Encourage all staff to use public transportation, bicycles or practice car-sharing for commuting.
- Encourage visitors to use public transportation to reach the business (e.g. provide information on public transportation on website and on leaflets at the visitors' centre). Also instruct staff to encourage visitors to use public transportation for their return journey
- Motivate guests to use public transport or other less polluting means of transport (bicycles, walking trails) during their stay, during their trip and also at home
- Shuttle service: if the business is difficult to be reached by public transportation, a shuttle service can bring the tourists to the business facilities from the nearest train and/or bus station(s)
- The business should offer bicycles to clients and staff, either for free or for hire or co-operate with bicycle rental services

Examples

Alpine Pearls Initiative, Austria, Network of tour operators

- The Alpine Pearls network has created a soft mobility concept that contributes to minimising tourist impact on environment. The SAMO project or Sustainable Mobility-Car-free Tourism provides an eco-friendly holiday. For the duration of the holiday, tourists leave their car keys to the tourism association and become one of the SAMO visitors, receiving a personal SAMO pass for free, and then travel by rail or coach. There are also many modern means available, for example the Electro-Scooter, Fun-Rider or other alternative means of transportation. This is a smart way to monitor and decrease pollution of the area and it is proposed to tourists as a unique attraction. However, it is not possible to avoid CO2 emissions completely. Because of this, Alpine Pearls has entered into an alliance with ClimatePartner. This company lets you invest in high-quality climate protection projects in order to balance your personal carbon footprint. The Pearls tourism associations take on these additional costs to protect the environment.



D.2.2. Wastewater

Criterion

Wastewater, including gray water, is treated effectively and reused where possible.

Rationale

Wastewater management reduces aquatic pollution, protects aquatic ecosystems, and reduces risks to human health. Reusing waste water 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.

Sub-criteria

1. The business implements, as part of its sustainability policy, a wastewater programme, which is managed by the sustainability manager.
2. The business is connected with the local wastewater and sewage plant or has its own wastewater and sewage installation.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

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

D.2.3. Waste Management Plan

Criterion

A management plan on solid waste is implemented, with quantitative goals to minimise waste that is not reusable or recyclable.

Rationale

Reducing waste, reusing durable articles and packaging materials and recycling what is not reusable are all critical factors in sustainable tourism operations. 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) through coordination with local authorities on appropriate disposal.

Sub-criteria

1. The business implements, as part of its sustainability policy, a waste reduction programme, which is managed by the sustainability manager.
2. The business collects and monitor data on the volume of waste produced.
3. Organic waste is composted according to local authority guidelines.
4. A recycling system is in place that is implemented by staff and guests.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

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

Recycle- Reuse:

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

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

- 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

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

Examples

Fattorie del Panda, Italy, Network of holiday farms

- Where the municipality runs a recycling scheme, the farm is obliged to take part in it. Organic waste has to be composted in the farm (in compost bins or compost heaps). Disposable tableware is not allowed.



D.2.4. Harmful Substances

Criterion

The use of harmful substances such as pesticides, paints, disinfectants, and cleaning materials is minimised; substituted, when available, by innocuous products; and all chemical 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

1. The business implements, as part of its sustainability policy, a programme for the reduction of use of chemical and harmful substances, which is managed by the sustainability manager.
2. The business collects and monitors data on consumption of chemicals and harmful substances.
3. Green areas are managed without the use of pesticides or according to organic farming principles.
4. Cleaning products must be either natural products (such as vinegar, citric acid, curd soap) or eco-certified.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

Minimising the use of chemicals:

- 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

D.2.5. Other Pollutants

Criterion

The business implements practices to reduce pollution from noise, light, runoff, erosion, ozone-depleting compounds, and air 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

1. The business implements as part of its sustainability policy, a programme for the reduction of air, noise, light, and soil pollution, which is managed by the sustainability manager.
2. Minimise non-natural noise and implement the requirements of a “Natural Quiet” policy.
3. Minimise the use of artificial lighting and implemented the requirements of a “Dark Skies” policy.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

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

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

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

D.3.1. Wildlife Species

Criterion

Wildlife species are only harvested from the wild, consumed, displayed, sold, or internationally traded, as part of a regulated activity that ensures that their utilisation is sustainable.

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.

Sub-criteria

1. The business implements, as part of its sustainability policy, a strict policy regarding wildlife species.
2. The business abstains from any use of rare, endangered or protected wildlife species and reports illegal activities.

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
- Protect the wildlife's integrity from domestic animals



D.3.2. Wildlife in Captivity

Criterion

No captive wildlife is held, except for properly regulated activities, and living specimens of protected 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

The Wildlife Park or Wildlife Sanctuary operates according to national, European and International standards and legislation and keeps native species.



D.3.3. Landscaping

Criterion

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.

Sub-criterion

The business uses native species for landscaping and landscape restoration.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

- Avoid planting mono-cultures in large areas (this increases the spreading of diseases)
- Plant herb gardens (to present to clients local herbs)
- Construct dry-stone walls (habitats for lizards etc.)
- Bordering woods must not put buildings and facilities into risk (forest fires, falling trees)



D.3.4. Biodiversity Conservation

Criterion

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

1. The business directly contributes and/or support nature conservation either financially or in-kind.
2. Conservation activities are communicated to staff, clients and the local community.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

Active participation in biodiversity conservation:

- 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: are there animals and/or plants in the destination area that fall under the provisions of the CITIES - Convention on Trade in Endangered Species?
 - Native tree planting by tourists to mitigate CO2 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
 - Measures to protect marine areas (incl. protection of dune areas) from e.g. soil erosion, flood hazards etc.

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
- 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

Examples

Dadia Forest Reserve Visitor's Centre, Greece

- Thanks to the establishment of the Dadia Forest protected area, a large number of endangered species populations have recovered. At the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa, Dadia is on one of the two main bird migration routes in Europe and has a unique mosaic of habitats. It has the most diverse range of predatory birds—including 36 of the 38 European species of diurnal birds, of which 20 nest there permanently. It is renowned as one of two remaining European feeding and breeding grounds (the other is in Spain) for rare raptors such as the black and griffin vultures. The forest provides the necessary tranquillity for the vultures' long reproduction period. Within the protected area there are 219 species of birds, 40 species of reptiles and amphibians and 48 species of mammals.

Larsbo Gard Ecotourism Farm, Sweden

- The haymaking procedure practiced at Larsbo farm is traditional. Actually, they use traditional haymaking with a scythe ensuring the existence of several plant species that are destroyed when using modern agriculture techniques. Therefore through this traditional activity they contribute to biodiversity conservation taking care of endangered plant species. Further conservation is a concrete part of their everyday life activity.

Discovery Initiatives, UK, outbound Ecotourism operator

- The company designs holiday programmes to use Ecotourism as economic leverage for local communities, to support them in protecting their environment and culture. For example if a client chooses an “Insight Holidays” in Namibia, the client will give an economic contribution to wildlife conservation initiatives run by local people. The company promotes tours that help support conservation projects and funds are transferred to the projects on a per participant or lump sum basis.



D.3.5. Interactions with Wildlife

Criterion

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

Rationale

The main goal of Ecotourism is the appreciation and protection 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 hunting and all other activities that result to loss of wildlife, the ecotourism provider should comply with the local/national legislation and the directives of the national Ecotourism Association (if there is one) and respect the views of the local community on the subject.

Sub-criteria

1. The business implements, as part of its sustainability policy, a strict programme regarding hunting, angling and any other activity that results to loss of wildlife. The policy complies with local/national legislation and is approved by the national Ecotourism Association (if there is one) and respects the views of the local community on the subject.
2. The business respects codes of conduct for every activity that interacts with wildlife, and strictly enforces them.

How can you do it? Some useful tips

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 at the first sign of disturbance, preferably before
- Incidents regarding wildlife disturbance should be reported to the local police or wildlife officer
- Feeding is performed under strict control by trained staff, according to the relevant authority and landowner:
 - Educate 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.)

The EETLS 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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