REPORT ON EUROPEAN SUSTAINABILITY SCHEMES
and their Role in Promoting Sustainability and Competitiveness in European Tourism

An internal report produced for the European Travel Commission by Jlag

Brussels, June 2019
ETC Market Intelligence Report

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European Sustainability Schemes and their Role in Promoting Sustainability and Competitiveness in European Tourism

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Tourism remains one of the fastest-growing sectors in the European economy significantly contributing to job creation, GDP and social development. According to the UNWTO, in the last decade tourist arrivals in Europe have increased 4% a year on average, with this number projected to represent 744 million by 2030. As tourist arrivals grow so do the impacts on a destination’s natural and built environments and on the wellbeing and culture of residents. Sustainability matters have received increased attention in the last few years, leading to the emergence of numerous sustainability programmes, certifications and awards aimed at encouraging destinations to address existing gaps in terms of sustainable development and acknowledge the efforts of those that are addressing these gaps.

In recognition of the increasing importance of sustainability within European tourism development at national level, the ETC is keen to act as a bridge for future users in helping its members develop a better understanding of the potential of sustainability schemes as a vehicle to increase a destination’s attractiveness and influence travellers’ destination choice.

This report provides an overview of the current situation regarding the use of sustainability certifications, awards and programmes within Europe. It details the principle schemes available, provides an analysis of the level of engagement across Europe and showcases some inspiring examples of the approach taken by three National Tourism Organisations to integrate sustainability into destination management. It also offers recommendations on the factors that need to be bought into play to implement sustainable tourism and capitalise on the existence of successful sustainability schemes more effectively. In this respect it should be seen as the start of a process of further engagement in the area of sustainability in tourism and a call to action to drive positive change.

Eduardo Santander
Executive Director
European Travel Commission (ETC)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research and report were compiled by Jlag Europe who operate from offices in Brussels and London. The research was carried out by Silvia Barbone, Director of Jlag and Fest, Head of EU Projects and Partnerships at Fedeturismo Confindustria and Rachel McCaffery, Senior Sustainability Advisor at G Adventures, Director at Travel Without Plastic & Chair of Chagos Conservation Trust on commission to the European Travel Commission (ETC). This report was carried out under the supervision of Jennifer Iduh (ETC Executive Unit).

Thanks are due to the fourteen Tourist Boards who provided inputs and knowledge through the survey and the case studies, showing their commitment to sustainable tourism.

We wish to thank: Direction Du Tourism et des Congrès (Monaco), Enterprise Estonia (Estonia), Fáilte Ireland (Ireland), German National Tourist Board (Germany), Luxembourg for Tourism (Luxembourg), NBTC Holland Marketing (Holland), Polish Tourism Organisation (Poland), Slovenian Tourist Board (Slovenia), Spanish Secretariat of Tourism (Spain), The Greek National Tourism Organisation (GNTO) (Greece), Turismo de Portugal (Portugal), Visit Denmark (Denmark), Visit Finland (Finland), Visit Flanders (Belgium).
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- European National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) all have some awareness of sustainability schemes. However, at present, few are capitalising on the opportunities that these schemes present to systematically improve sustainability in destinations, enhance the tourism offering and integrate this into the promotional mix.

- Of the 16 destinations involved in this study research, all are presently promoting some type of sustainability scheme. However, engagement levels vary considerably, with some destinations using existing schemes as a basis to establish their own, while others do little more than disseminate information.

- There are a large number of sustainability schemes relevant to destinations across Europe. All the schemes address environmental sustainability and most also include elements of social and cultural sustainability. The schemes generally fall into three categories: Criteria (or indicators) which act as a guide on the key issues to address, Certificates - which recognise those taking action to improve sustainability, and Awards - which reward outstanding performance in sustainable tourism.

- Most sustainability schemes promoted by NTOs are transnational. The most commonly used schemes are Green Key (promoted by eight countries) and Blue Flag (promoted by three countries).

- Despite the fairly large number of sustainability schemes relevant to destinations across Europe most destinations involved in the study report involvement with only one or two.

- The relatively low level of engagement with sustainability schemes may reflect a lack of knowledge and awareness amongst NTOs of the schemes and resources available to them, as well a lack of clear roles and responsibilities when it comes to sustainable tourism.

- Three destinations have developed their own sustainability scheme – Luxembourg (Eco label Luxembourg), Finland (Sustainable Finland) and Slovenia (Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism)

- Two thirds of NTOs involved in this study, see sustainability as important and relevant to the promotion of their destination. Of the remaining third that don’t (five destinations in total), in only one is this due to a lack of government interest in sustainability. All others are either addressing sustainability, without the intention to promote it, or are aware that they have a lot of work to do before being able to include it in the promotional mix.

- Only one destination involved in the study, (Slovenia) has taken a systematic approach to the implementation of sustainability schemes and is therefore able to monitor the impact this has had on visitor numbers and satisfaction.

- There is considerable collective benefit to the sharing of knowledge, learnings and experience on sustainability. Not only will improved sustainability of tourism enhance Europe’s reputation and attractiveness as a destination, but it will lead to improved visitor experiences across the board and a better quality of life for European residents, many of whom are impacted by tourism.
PART 1: Introduction, Policy Background, Methodology

1.1 Introduction

Tourism remains one of the fastest-growing sectors in the European economy, contributing to job creation, GDP and social development. In the last decade tourist arrivals in Europe have increased 4% per year on average with this number projected by the UNWTO Tourism Towards 2030 report, to represent 744 million travellers by 2030. As tourist arrivals grow so does the environmental and social impact on destinations. Sustainable tourism has received increasing attention in recent years and has resulted in the emergence of a range of sustainability certifications, awards and programmes (collectively referred to in this report as sustainability schemes).

The European Travel Commission (ETC) commissioned this report to provide a better understanding of the potential of sustainability schemes as a vehicle to increase a destination’s attractiveness and influence decision making.

The report is intended to advance knowledge and support ETC members in strategic planning regarding sustainability. Based on primary and secondary research and with a focus on the learnings gathered from a number of case study destinations, the report will help members of ETC to:

- Raise the priority of sustainable tourism on the national agenda
- Identify sustainability schemes that will support the systematic implementation of sustainable tourism in destinations
- Assess the effectiveness of sustainability schemes as a tool to manage and grow tourism in a destination
- Understand that the market for sustainable tourism is no longer a niche
- Evaluate the challenges and benefits of pursuing and promoting sustainable tourism in a destination

1.2 Policy background and rationale

Though quality of environments, people and culture are integral to the success of tourism in almost every European country, relatively few destinations have integrated sustainability (of which the maintenance of these elements is key), into their management strategy in a systematic way, given it priority on the policy agenda or built it into their promotional mix.

There are many international sustainability schemes developed specifically for tourism in existence. The majority are aimed at tourism businesses or service providers, with a smaller, but still very significant, number aimed at destinations. The extent to which NTOs engage with sustainability schemes is inconsistent across Europe. Thus, there are likely to be opportunities and tools to support sustainable tourism, that ETC members can learn from.

There are three principal reasons which underpin the importance for the tourism sector to ensure the creation of sustainable policies and practices and develop management models which maximise socio-economic benefits, support local communities and cultures, and protect the natural environment.
1. The rapid growth of tourism

Rapidly growing tourism can generate a range of negative impacts (such as over-tourism, climate change, loss of authenticity, marginalisation of communities etc.). As one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world, tourism increasingly recognised as a key contributor to job creation, economic growth, and poverty alleviation. Nevertheless, the growing number of travellers and new business models created (e.g. around the sharing economy) have resulted in pressures in terms of natural resource management, impact on local communities and cultural assets. As stated in the Travel Foundation Report *Destinations at Risk: The Invisible Burden of Tourism* (2019), there is an invisible burden that is threatening global cultural and environmental assets of enormous renown and value. “The degradation of world class parks, historic city centers and world heritage monuments has vast economic implications for countries seeking to maximize the economic benefits of tourism”.

2. The UN Agenda for Sustainable Development

The 2030 United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development and the associated Sustainable Development Goals, (a framework comprising 17 goals and 169 targets, focussed on People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships) are an ambitious call for action.

Countries around the world are integrating sustainability in their tourism policies but the evidence on the results of their implementation remains limited, research carried out for the first “Baseline Report on the Integration of Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns into Tourism Policies” has found.2

Europe, which according to UNWTO data3 is the world’s number one tourist destination (with 51% market share), must play a significant role in delivering sustainable solutions that contribute towards these goals.

3. The new European tourism agenda

“Sustainability, including resource efficiency, circular economy, seasonality and the management and distribution of increasing tourism flows” is one of the three European priorities, as recently affirmed in the Council conclusions on ‘Competitiveness of the tourism sector as a driver for sustainable growth, jobs and social cohesion in the EU for the next

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2 UNWTO Baseline Report on the Integration of Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns into Tourism Policies, June 2019
3 “Europe, the world’s largest tourism region, reported solid growth (+4%), led by destinations in Southern and Mediterranean Europe and Central and Eastern Europe (both +5%)”, UNWTO World Tourism Barometer study, first quarter of 2019
decade⁴. Member States are encouraged to promote policies and practices in favour of competitive, sustainable, accessible and inclusive tourism, to contribute to reaching the EU climate goals and targets (set out in the 2016 UN Climate Change agreement Paris), and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Within this context, it is apparent that all players involved in the tourism value chain at any level, are increasingly being called on to take action to bring sustainability from theory to practise. Sustainable choices, approaches and methods need to be disseminated at local, regional, national and European level, embedded in the operational management of the tourism industry and supported by knowledge, vision and robust decision-making processes.

Sustainable tourism schemes (whether linked to indicators and criteria, certifications or awards) proliferate within Europe, but are rarely supported by a systematic approach to implementation driven by public authorities. The opportunity for generating major impact at multiple levels and facilitating knowledge share through exchange of practice, is therefore not being effectively capitalised on.

### 1.3 Methodology

Trends in behaviour and approach adopted on sustainability, by National Tourism Organisations were assessed through an online survey issued to representatives of tourism organisations across Europe. A survey questionnaire to assess the level of NTO engagement with sustainability schemes, was sent to all ETC members, and to the tourist boards of Sweden and United Kingdom, in April 2019. Responses from 14 NTOs were received⁵. The survey gathered data on the adoption of European and international sustainability schemes by NTOs as well as the existence and prevalence of national sustainability schemes. It also contained questions related to the impact of sustainability schemes, awards and certifications on tourism demand and visitor satisfaction. For each of the sustainability schemes a ‘Scheme Information Card’ has been produced, to create a portfolio of the main sustainability certifications, awards, indicators and criteria available in Europe. The portfolio is the first systematic attempt to provide an overview of the sustainability schemes relevant to European tourism destinations. As this study is relatively small, the list of Scheme Information Cards is not exhaustive, with principally the most important and successful schemes included.

Additionally, three case study destinations were selected, based on the responses from the initial online survey. The destinations chosen were Slovenia, Portugal and Ireland. All are at different stages in the sustainability implementation and promotion journey and together they form a representative sample of destinations across Northern, Southern and Eastern Europe, encompassing a range of tourism types. A template of key questions exploring strategy, approach and implementation was drawn up and circulated to the relevant destinations. The case studies provide a useful overview of the opportunities, challenges and key steps involved in developing and promoting sustainability in a destination, at national level.

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⁵ Direction Du Tourisme et des Congrès (Monaco), Enterprise Estonia, Estonia, Fáilte Ireland, German National Tourist Board, Luxembourg for Tourism, NBTC Holland Marketing, Polish Tourism Organisation, Slovenian Tourist Board, Spanish Secretariat of Tourism, The Greek National Tourism Organisation (GNTO), Turismo de Portugal, Visit Denmark, Visit Finland, Visit Flanders
PART 2: Sustainable Tourism Certification Synopsis

2.1 An overview of the current state of sustainability schemes across Europe.

Sustainable tourism is defined by the UNWTO as follows: "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities"\(^6\). This definition has been adapted for tourism purposes from the definition of sustainable development outlined in the Bruntland Report, also known as ‘Our Common Future’ in 1987, which reads: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"\(^7\).

The tourism industry is highly dependent on the natural and human capital in the locations in which the tourism ‘product’ is consumed. Maintenance of this capital, (which comes in the form of stunning landscapes, dynamic urban environments, historical sites and even the friendly welcome from local residents), is essential to ensure the enduring quality and competitiveness of a tourism destination is maintained and that tourists continue to visit. This philosophy is readily understood by National Tourism Organisations. What is less recognised is that the maintenance of this natural and human capital to ensure that both are not irreparably damaged in the pursuit of profit, is the basis of sustainable tourism.

The terms ‘sustainability’ and ‘sustainable tourism’ have become buzzwords in tourism development, with many working in the tourism industry feeling that because they don’t possess in-depth knowledge on the subject, they can’t engage with it all. In fact, although there are some elements which can benefit from the input of external experts (with more knowledge or experience on particular details), there is much that NTOs will be doing already under the heading of sustainability, without realising it. Thus, the term ‘sustainable tourism’ should not be feared!

Destinations and the people that live in them need to be looked after if they are to continue to thrive. A strategy for ensuring this happens is essential and the use of sustainability schemes can be helpful in ensuring the process is systematic, robust and meets international standards.

2.1.1 What are sustainability schemes?

Sustainability schemes cover a wide range of initiatives that seek to recognise, reward and/or facilitate actions taken to improve sustainability in the tourism sector. There are a huge number of sustainability schemes operational across Europe, with a high number targeted at the private sector. As the output from this report is intended to be of benefit to the members of ETC, this research is specifically targeted towards those sustainability schemes relevant to tourist destinations at national level. Information cards on the most popular and widespread sustainability schemes for tourism destinations are provided in section 2.2.

All schemes have a list of measures or criteria that enable assessment against a set of performance indicators. These indicators cover environmental performance, (such as efficient use of energy and water resources, waste disposal, wildlife and habitat conservation and air quality) and often also cover social and cultural performance (e.g. community relations, local involvement in decision making, equalities, accessibility, heritage preservation). Other elements such as destination management and climate change management may also be present. Economic elements (such as a visitor numbers, visitor revenue, employment generation etc.) may also be included, but as these are mainstays of tourism management and are generally collected by NTOs and others, their inclusion in sustainability schemes is not seen as essential. (This data obviously forms an important piece of the overall picture of tourism in the destination however).

Some sustainability schemes (such as that operated by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council) are simply a list of sustainable tourism criteria for destinations to use as a guide in helping improve sustainability. Others such as Green Destinations or TourCert issue a certificate to destinations when the required criteria have been met. Other schemes are more award based and within this area there are two types of award: The Blue Flag or Green Globe awards for example, are very similar to the certificate model, in that any suitable destination can apply and will typically work over a year or two to achieve the desired standard, according to a set of criteria. Destinations do not compete against each other and all destinations that meet the criteria will earn an award. Other award-based schemes, such as the World Travel and Tourism Council ‘Tourism for Tomorrow’ awards are effectively an annual competition, within which a small number of awards are given out to applicants achieving a particularly high standard of sustainability. Another scheme that does not fit with any of the models above a, (but is included here, as it is a free tool provided by the European Commission and is specifically designed for destinations), is the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS), which is based also on GSTC criteria but it includes a system for implementation. This is not an award, or a certificate, but a ‘system’ consisting of seven steps, to bring local stakeholders together, to monitor the sustainability of a destination in order to be able to manage it effectively.

2.1.2 Sustainability schemes aimed at the private sector

Some schemes, for example Green Key and TourCert are aimed at both tourism businesses and tourism destinations. Others, such as the Travelife for Accommodations, Travelife for Tour Operators and Green Globe, together with many national schemes (such the UK’s Green Tourism Business Scheme and Considerate Hoteliers) are designed specifically for the private sector. These schemes have had a lot of traction across Europe, aided by the support of National hotel and tourism associations and travel industry associations (such as ABTA in the UK and ANVR in The Netherlands), who view these schemes as an effective way for members to improve the sustainability of their supply chains. Unlike many of the schemes designed only for destinations, (particularly those established through public funding) those aimed at the private sector typically have sales teams behind them and have been effective in capitalising on the desire for individual businesses to differentiate through sustainability. Europe’s largest tour operator (Tui) have also made it a requirement that the accommodation businesses they deal with, engage with a sustainability scheme recognised by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC). Schemes aimed at the private sector can be an effective way of improving sustainability in destinations, but it is important to ensure that those championed by an NTO are of suitable quality.
2.1.3 How to assess the quality of sustainability schemes

Sustainability schemes should ideally include environmental, social and relevant cultural criteria. A scheme that only covers environmental criteria is not necessarily poor quality, but it must be recognised that it covers only one dimension of sustainability and the other dimensions should be addressed in some alternative way. Most sustainability schemes, even those with a predominantly environmental slant, will usually include some questions on social sustainability, as it is generally acknowledged that people and communities in tourism destinations have an important role to play. Their involvement in decision making and their levels of satisfaction with the tourism industry affect whether or not it is an inviting place for tourists to visit.

To get an idea of the quality of a particular sustainability scheme, there are a few simple elements to look for. The scheme should have been developed by, or with input from, relevant experts. Ideally it should also be transparent; thus how it is run, together with a list of criteria should ideally be made available for public scrutiny. To be robust, the extent to which participants meet the criteria should be assessed by someone from the sustainability scheme, or an independent third party, (as opposed to applicants undertaking an unverified self-assessment process).

For a more thorough assessment of the quality of a sustainability scheme under consideration, the following aspects should be examined:

1. Is the scheme recognised or accredited by an umbrella body?
2. Are all sustainability dimensions covered?
3. Is the scheme robust?
4. Are the benefits made clear?
5. Is the scheme well maintained and monitored?
6. Are the application and evaluations procedures rigorous?
7. Is the scheme independent?
8. Does it provide examples of best practices?

---

8 One way to select if a sustainability scheme is robust is through checking whether it is ‘recognised’ or accredited by accreditation bodies. For example, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) (https://www.gstcouncil.org/), is an umbrella organisation acting as the international accreditation body for sustainable tourism certification. GSTC certifies hotels/accommodations, tour operators, and destinations. GSTC does not directly certify any products or services; but it accredits those that do. Please for more information refer to the GSTC scheme card in Part 2.
2.1.4 Consumer understanding and market trends

“Consumer brands that haven’t embraced sustainability are at risk on many fronts,” says Carol Gstalder, Senior Vice President, Reputation & Public Relations Solutions, Nielsen. Sustainability is one of the top purchasing drivers according to the Nielsen’s Global Corporate Sustainability Report (2015). Consumers are trying to be responsible citizens of the world and they expect the same from corporations. So, when it comes to purchasing, they are doing their homework and checking before buying, by looking at web sites for information and paying attention to public opinion on specific brands in the news or on social media.

This new consumer trend is reflected in the tourism sector through the growth in popularity of more natural and authentic experiences and accommodation, the success of specialist sustainability and nature-based travel agents such as responsibletravel.com and SNP Nature Travel and growing public awareness of global environmental concerns. Among the three key trends that are impacting and influencing destination management, according to Fiona Jeffery, chair of the World Travel and Tourism Council Tourism for Tomorrow awards, “the slowly growing awareness by the consumer of the negative impact tourism can have on a destination, and as a consequence voting with its feet”, is the first. “This will force destinations to consider carefully their tourism management policies and (...) move from a purely tourism marketing focus to longer term tourism management strategies”.

Sustainability issues are now firmly in the minds of holidaymakers, according to the ABTA Travel Trends Report 2019. The research shows that consumers are increasingly conscious of the positive influence they can have through their holiday booking choices. Responsible tourism is becoming an integral part of business decision making and planning, with many companies announcing plans to make holidays more sustainable in the long term. Examples include TUI (who insist all accommodation business they work with sign up to a sustainability scheme), Intrepid Travel (a B-Corp business who report under the United National Global Compact), Booking.com (give away almost one million euro per year to support causes related to sustainable tourism) and G Adventures, (who through their partnership with the Planeterra Foundation, establish community development projects worldwide, which are then built into their tours as visitor attractions). Environmental initiatives have also galvanised the industry, with Thomas Cook looking to remove 70 million pieces of single-use plastic within the next 12 months and Eurostar targeting a 50% reduction in plastics by 2020.

“Travel companies have an important role to play in the eyes of travellers: 71% think that travel companies should offer consumers more sustainable travel choices. On the other hand, almost half (46%) of global travellers acknowledge that they find it harder to make sustainable choices when on holiday, than in everyday life. Almost a third (31%) of global travellers admit their vacation is a special time during which they do not want to think about sustainability”. This last point puts, if anything, even more pressure on destinations and travel companies, as it puts the onus on them to take responsibility for the sustainability of tourism.

In terms of the market, according to The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) sustainable tourism growth is one of the four ‘megatrends’ predicted to emerge in tourism, (together with evolving visitor demand,
enabling technologies and travel mobility)\textsuperscript{12}. The 2019 Sustainable Travel Report\textsuperscript{13} from \textit{Booking.com} advises that over half of global travellers (55\%) are more determined to make sustainable travel choices than they were a year ago, though the barriers in putting this into practice include: a lack of knowledge and a lack of available and/or appealing options. Responsible and sustainable tourism are now becoming an increasingly significant consideration when booking a holiday. According to Forbes (2019) “Ecotourism is driving business decisions in a big way” and “represents one of the top trends in tourism”.

Within this positive context, it is important to recognise two important issues: 1) the knowledge gap and 2) how to measure consumers sustainable/responsible attitudes.

Many stakeholders, including NTOs, can be confused by the meaning of the term sustainable tourism, as well as consumers also often struggle with it. According to the UK based, Travel Foundation, ‘When asked if they want a sustainable holiday people are fairly neutral. However, if they are asked if they want a holiday with a clean environment and friendly welcoming people, the answer is overwhelmingly positive’. There is indeed a knowledge gap. The use of certification schemes supported by communication, marketing, management and branding strategies as well as training activities could help in filling the gap.

“Messages with a clear focus on personal benefits and social and personal norms could impact holiday-makers’ preferences towards opting for sustainability actions”, Xavier Font\textsuperscript{14}.

The second issue is that the extent to which consumers are concerned about the sustainability of the destinations they travel to and the accommodation and other services they use while there, is difficult to measure. Certification schemes can be a vehicle also to know more the profile of responsible travellers as well as a vehicle to influence a more sustainable and consumption attitude.

\textbf{2.2. Sustainable Schemes Information Cards}

These Information Cards aims to provide an overview of the most important and successful sustainability schemes relevant to destinations, in operation within Europe\textsuperscript{15}. The aim is to equip NTOs with the knowledge and tools to better select relevant schemes to be able to champion sustainability in their destinations. The cards provide an overview of each schemes, together with the sustainability criteria covered, the key benefits and information about the application process.

For each of the following scheme an informative card has been structured.

Four schemes: Eden, European Smart Tourism Capital, European Green Capital and European Green Leaf Awards, and ETIS are owned by the European Commission, the other schemes are owned by private organizations, European and

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{12} OECD, Tourism Trends and Policies 2018.
\item \textsuperscript{13} \url{https://globalnews.booking.com/bookingcom-reveals-key-findings-from-its-2019-sustainable-travel-report/}
\item \textsuperscript{15} This is a first research mapping the sustainable schemes for destinations. Being a small scale projects a selection has been done based on two criteria: scalability of the scheme and the application of the scheme from the countries addressed from the survey.
\end{footnotes}
Most of them are not for profit organizations. Most of the schemes cover the green as well as the socio-cultural sustainable dimensions.

1. European Destinations of Excellence EDEN
2. European Smart Tourism Capital
3. Green Destinations
4. European Green Capital and European Green Leaf Awards
5. Green Key
6. Blue Flag
7. The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas
8. WTTC Tourism for Tomorrow Awards
9. European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS)
10. Global Sustainable Tourism Council destination criteria
11. Tourcert
12. One Planet Living
13. Earthcheck

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability Information Scheme Card: European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scheme Information Card Structure</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainability Scheme</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Scheme</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

awareness-raising campaigns, organising the award ceremony and coordinating a comprehensive communication campaign.

The principle of EDEN is simple: every other year a theme is chosen by the European Commission in close cooperation with national tourism authorities. Eligible destinations have to show that an economically viable tourism offer has been developed based on that year’s EDEN theme. Per each participating country one destination is selected as a winner, alongside 4 runners-up.

Each theme serves to showcase Europe’s diversity, including its natural resources, historical heritage, traditional celebrations and local gastronomy. The topics are always related to sustainable tourism development, whether from a cultural, economic, environmental or local involvement point of view.

The destinations have the chance to show off what makes them unique and show tourists that an unforgettable experience awaits them. The winning destinations are the emerging, non-traditional destinations that best reflect the chosen theme of the year and that offer a unique tourism experience, in line with sustainable models.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rationale and scope</th>
<th>The EDEN initiative helps to spread the sustainable practices used in the awarded destinations across the EU. Through the selection and promotion of destinations, EDEN effectively achieves the objective of drawing attention to the values, diversity and common features of European tourist destinations. It enhances the visibility of emerging, non-traditional European destinations, creates a platform for sharing good practices across Europe and promotes networking between awarded destinations.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Targets</td>
<td>The recipients of the award are emerging, little-known destinations located in the 28 EU countries and COSME programme countries (i.e. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation and ownership</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages available</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td><a href="mailto:GROW-EDEN@ec.europa.eu">GROW-EDEN@ec.europa.eu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact Assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of European destinations operating in</td>
<td>All European Member States and Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainability Dimensions included</strong></td>
<td>All sustainability dimensions are covered. The key feature of the selected destinations is their commitment to social, cultural and environmental sustainability of tourism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality (including level of transparency, level of assessment and frequency of standard review and revision)</strong></td>
<td>The selection process is national and European.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Benefits** | Marketing, Communication, and Networking opportunities are the key benefits for EDEN destinations. Winners and runners-up of the EDEN European Destinations of Excellence awards will be:  
1. promoted through a dedicated website: EDEN – European Destinations of Excellence  
2. invited to the award ceremony  
3. invited to join the EDEN Network. The network is a platform for exchanging good practice in sustainable tourism on a European level and for promoting contact between award-winning destinations. The network aims to encourage other destinations to adopt sustainable tourism development models.  
Website of the EDEN Network Association |
| **Events** | Award Ceremony and annual EDEN Network meetings |
| **How to apply** | Eligible destinations have to show that an economically viable tourism offer has been developed based on that year’s EDEN theme. The 2019 theme is Health and well-being tourism.  
Per each participating country one destination is selected as a winner, alongside up to 4 runners-up.  
The destinations have the chance to show off what makes them unique and show tourists that an unforgettable experience awaits them. The winning destinations are the |
emerging, non-traditional destinations that best reflect the chosen theme of the year and that offer a unique tourism experience, in line with sustainable models.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to apply and when</th>
<th>Every two years through the country authority in charge of EDEN.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>The European Commission co-finances the selection procedures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sustainability Information Scheme Card: European Capital of Smart Tourism**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability Scheme</th>
<th>European Capital of Smart Tourism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Scheme</strong></td>
<td>Award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The European Capital of Smart Tourism initiative recognises outstanding achievements by European cities as tourism destinations in four categories: sustainability, accessibility, digitalisation as well as cultural heritage and creativity. This EU initiative aims to promote smart tourism in the EU, network and strengthen destinations, and facilitate the exchange of best practices. For the purpose of this initiative, a smart tourism destination is defined as a destination facilitating access to tourism and hospitality products, services, spaces and experiences through ICT-based (Information and communications technology) tools. Furthermore, a smart destination is a healthy social and cultural environment, which can be found through a focus on the city’s social and human capital. It also implements innovative, intelligent solutions and fosters the development of entrepreneurial businesses and their interconnectedness. For cities to become a European Capital of Smart Tourism they have to show exemplary and innovative solutions in sustainable and accessible tourism development are, as well as how they are capitalising on cultural heritage in the tourism offer. All that, paired with innovative digital tools and creativity to enhance the visitor’s experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary</strong></td>
<td>Tourism is the EU’s third largest socio-economic activity, representing around 10% of the EU’s GDP. The sector plays a crucial role in generating growth and jobs, but still holds untapped potential – especially in the area of smart tourism. By awarding exemplary practices of smart tourism exploiting this untapped potential, the European Union wants to encourage innovative and inclusive solutions in sustainable and accessible tourism, promote digitally smart tourism and strengthen the role of heritage and cultural and creative industries as tourism assets. The European Capital of Smart Tourism is an EU initiative, based on a proposal from the European Parliament, which secured its funding for 2018 – 2019 through a Preparatory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Action. It is implemented by the European Commission. The initiative seeks to strengthen tourism-generated innovative development in EU cities and their surroundings, increase their attractiveness as well as strengthen economic growth and job creation. It also aims to establish a framework for the exchange of best practices between cities participating in the contest, create opportunities for cooperation and new partnerships.

This initiative is managed by the European Commission, Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs and results from a preparatory action proposed by the European Parliament.

Cities may apply in any official language of the European Union. However, bear in mind that applications in English will speed up and facilitate the evaluation process.

https://smarttourismcapital.eu

The European Capital of Smart Tourism competition is open to EU Member States.

All aspects of sustainability are considered for inclusion. Sustainability is one of the award category together with Accessibility, Digitalisation and Creativity & Cultural heritage. The sustainable dimensions are in all the 4 categories, and cities are requested to demonstrate their winning practises in all of them. This approach makes this award strong from a sustainable perspective.

In particular, regarding the sustainability category cities are invited to to show their outstanding practices in, among others:

- how they work to preserve and enhance the natural environment and resources while maintaining economic and socio-cultural development in a balanced way
- how they manage natural resources (including innovative environmentally-friendly measures) as a tourism destination
- if they are implementing resource efficiency measures and actions aimed at combating or adapting to climate change.
- If they are you putting in place measures aimed at reducing tourism seasonality
- If they are working on involving the local community
In order to compete for the 2020 European Capital of Smart Tourism title, cities are asked to demonstrate their innovative tourism practices in four areas: accessibility, sustainability, digitalisation, cultural heritage & creativity. Applications will first be evaluated by a panel of independent experts. In the second step, up to 10 shortlisted cities will be asked to present their city’s candidature in front of the European Jury. The European Jury will select two winners, European Capitals of Smart Tourism 2020, which will be announced in October 2019 at an Award Ceremony.

The assessment process is clear and transparent. The cities need to describe concrete examples of measures implemented under all four categories described above. How well a city is performing in these four categories will be assessed on the basis of the following four assessment criteria:

1. How innovative and smart are the implemented measures?
2. How sustainable are the implemented measures over time?
3. How inclusive are the implemented measures for different social groups?
4. The degree to which the measures contributed to raising the city’s profile as a tourism destination. How effective are these measures? What are the measurable impacts of the implemented programmes?

Benefits

Winners of the title of European Capital of Smart Tourism 2020 will receive expert communication and branding support in promoting their destination in the media and online, a sculpture for their city centre, a promotional video on their destination and smart tourism offer, and many other promotional actions from the EU that are designed to raise the profile of the city and boost visitor numbers.

Events

Award Ceremony. The Award Ceremony for the European Capital of Smart Tourism 2020 competition will take place in Helsinki, on 9 October 2019. At the ceremony, the two European Capitals of Smart Tourism 2020 will be announced and four cities will be recognised with European Smart Tourism Awards 2020.
### Awards

Two main winners: two cities will be selected to hold the title of the 2020 European Capitals of Smart Tourism.

In addition, four cities will receive European Smart Tourism Awards in individual categories: Accessibility, Digitalisation, Sustainability, Creativity & Cultural heritage.

### How to apply

The eligibility criteria for applying to win the title of “European Capital of Smart Tourism 2020” are as follows:

1. The European Capital of Smart Tourism competition is open to EU Member States. It is to be noted that a city can enjoy the benefits of the award only if it will be part of the EU during the whole period in which it would carry the title of the winner.
2. All cities from EU countries, which have more than 100.000 inhabitants, can apply for the title.
3. In countries where there is no city with more than 100.000 inhabitants, the largest city is eligible to apply.
4. The signatory of the application should be the Mayor or the highest-ranking city representative, authorised by national law to legally represent the city.
5. The EUROSTAT database for the last available year is a reference for checking the number of inhabitants for cities:

The European Commission may perform specific checks when assessing the eligibility criteria.

### How to apply and when

You can apply in four easy steps via our electronic submission system, which you can access by clicking ‘Apply now’ on the contest page at [www.SmartTourismCapital.eu](http://www.SmartTourismCapital.eu)

The deadline for applications was 10 May 2019. Cities can no longer apply to 2020 European Capital of Smart Tourism competition.

### Planning and Budget

There are no fees. Cities should set up a team to prepare the application.

### Contact

European Capital of Smart Tourism Secretariat:

- [email](mailto:info@SmartTourismCapital.eu)
- +49 30 700 186 315
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme Structure</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainability Scheme</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Scheme</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Awards and Certification</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Green Destinations developed a complete, affordable and easy-to-use Assessment, Awards & Certification program that meets the needs of both small and larger destinations. It is operated through an online Assessment & Reporting platform based upon the GSTC-Recognized Green Destinations Standard and the GD Database with data from 2000 destinations.

Green Destinations offer two options: GSTC- Accredited Certification and two Awards.

1. **The GSTC-Accredited Certification** as a Sustainable destination is given to destinations that show their policy and management are in line with all mandatory criteria of the Green Destinations Standard.

2. **Benchmark Awards** recognizing the quality of policy and management as well as the visible results thereof. In this case, 4 different levels (Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum) indicate the degree of compliance with the Green Destinations Standard. It is possible to choose:

   - **Green Destinations Awards**: participation is possible for any destination: cities, towns, small regions, islands, or protected areas.
   - **QualityCoast Awards**: similar but especially for destinations focusing on their beach, seaside or waterfront character. There is specific attention to beach and waterfront management and bathing water quality.

An affiliate program is the Sustainable Top100 competition, each year open for nominations made based on 15-30 core criteria of the GD Standard. An international consortium of sustainable tourism organisations evaluates nominations. GD/QC Awarded and GD Certified destinations automatically qualify for selection to the Top100.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Rationale and scope</strong></th>
<th>The Green Destinations program offers tailor-made solutions to local communities (municipalities), counties, provinces, regions and protected areas (National Parks, UNESCO Geoparks) that are seeking international recognition for responsible tourism; for the way they manage their heritage, their environment and climate, and the quality of their tourism offering.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Targets</strong></td>
<td>The program is open for all destinations and protected areas. Cities and private estates (such as ecolodges, game reserves and conservancies) can also participate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisation and ownership</strong></td>
<td>Owned by Green Destinations, the Coastal &amp; Marine Union and the European Centre for Eco and Agro Tourism (ECEAT) but managed by Green Destinations, who are based in The Netherlands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Languages available</strong></td>
<td>English, Spanish, Dutch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact Assessment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of European destinations operating in</td>
<td>31 including 3 Dutch Caribbean territories; 68 including our affiliate Slovenia Green destinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality (including: level of transparency, level of assessment and frequency of standard review and revision)</td>
<td>Those owning and managing the scheme are experts in sustainable tourism, the dovetailing with other sustainability schemes such as GSTC helps ensure that globally recognised standards are met. The criteria are wide ranging and cover most aspects of sustainability. Access to the scheme is relatively easily and new entrants are benchmarked and steered towards the sustainability actions needed to achieve certification. The scheme has a high level of transparency, with detailed information on criteria and assessment readily available online. QualityCoast, Slovenia Green and Ecotourism Australia all utilise the Green Destinations criteria.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Initial assessment prior to certification is via completion of an online form, evidenced, where relevant, with documentation. This is followed up with a verification audit via a third party within 24 months of certification. The scheme criteria are reviewed every five years, through a multi stakeholder process.

### Advantages and disadvantages

Benefits include:

- the online GD Assessment & Reporting platform offers the tools to develop a comprehensive sustainability dossier; putting in place a monitoring and reporting system of relevant sustainability and quality aspects;
- an independent assessment of strengths and weaknesses by specialized experts, based upon a GSTC- Recognized Standard,
- independent recommendations to improve the destination management approach, including innovative solutions;
- the option to create a green travel guide and map to present the destination and its responsible travel products to the travel market;
- enrolment in the Sustainable Destinations Top 100 Awards program;
- Members become part of a global network of destinations and professionals working on making tourism more sustainable

### Events

- Global Green Destination Days conference; Regional Award Ceremony ([Blue Flag and Quality Coast Event](https://www.bookdifferent.com/en/conscious-travel-destinations/)) and [Sustainable Tourism Training days](https://www.bookdifferent.com/en/conscious-travel-destinations/)

### Awards

- Annual Top 100 Awards held at ITB Berlin
- Top100 Certificates handed out during Global Green Destinations Days

### How to apply

**Eligibility**

Local communities, municipalities, counties, provinces, regions or small countries and protected areas (e.g. National Parks, UNESCO Geoparks) are eligible. A sub-program for private destinations (eco-lodges, conservancies etc) is in development.

**How to apply and when**

Destinations participating in Green Destinations’ Awards program pay an annual fee which depends on the size of the destination. The fee will increase once you will start participating in the Certification program.

Contact the Secretariat: certification@greendestinations.org

Sustainability Information Scheme Card: European Green Capital Award (EGCA) and European Green Leaf Award

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainability Scheme</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Scheme</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

The European Green Capital Award (EGCA), is awarded annually, to a European city with over 100,000 inhabitants that has shown itself to be a leader in environmental, social and economic sustainability. Winning capitals receive a financial reward of several hundred thousand Euro to kick-start their year as European Green Capital.

The European Green Leaf Award (EGLA) is open to towns and cities with between 20,000 and up to 100,000 inhabitants, to recognise and promote their efforts towards better environmental management and outcomes. Winners receive a smaller reward to support activities throughout European Green Leaf year.

The European Green Capital and European Green Leaf Awards are underpinned by European Policy on sustainable urban planning and design. The Awards support the goals set out in the Urban Agenda for the EU-Pact of Amsterdam, signed in 2016, and 7th Environment Action Programme adopted in 2013.

**Rationale and scope**

The European Green Capital Award is the result of an initiative taken by 15 European cities and the Association of Estonian cities on in Tallinn, Estonia in 2006. A joint Memorandum of Understanding was issued to establish the award and recognise European cities that are leading the way in environmentally friendly urban living. This award is seen as increasingly relevant as two out of three Europeans now live in towns and cities.

The objectives of the European Green Capital Award are to:
a) Reward cities that have a consistent record of achieving high environmental standards;
b) Encourage cities to commit to ongoing and ambitious goals for further environmental improvement and sustainable development;
c) Provide a role model to inspire other cities and promote best practices and experience in all other European cities.

Due to the interest from cities and building on the success of the European Green Capital Award, the need to create a competition for cities of a smaller size was identified by the European Commission in 2014.

The objectives of the European Green Leaf Award are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>To recognise cities that demonstrate a good environmental record and commitment to generating green growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>To encourage cities to actively develop citizens’ environmental awareness and involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c)</td>
<td>To identify cities able to act as ‘green ambassadors’ to encourage other cities to progress towards better sustainability outcomes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Targets
Capital cities and large population centres taking action to improve environmental sustainability

## Organisation and ownership
European Commission - Directorate-General for Environment

## Languages available
English

## Website
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/

## Impact Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of European destinations operating in</th>
<th>The scheme operates in EU Member States, EU Candidate Countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability Dimensions included</td>
<td>The awards address a range of sustainability issues, but have a strong focus on the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality (including: level of transparency, level of assessment and frequency</td>
<td>The selection of a city awarded with the title of European Green Capital is assessed on the basis of performance against 12 environmental indicators:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Climate Change: Mitigation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The scheme undertakes a two-tier evaluation process; A panel of internationally acknowledged Experts (made up of specialists on each indicator) assesses the information supplied by each city. This includes qualitative evaluations and a peer review of each application based on the 12 indicators above. The Expert Panel determines the shortlist of cities that enter into the final stage of the competition.

The finalist cities are then invited to present their action plans and communication strategies to the Jury (which is made up of EU and national and local government representatives). Following these presentations, the Jury deliberates and selects the winner of the European Green Capital Award.

The selection of a city awarded with the title of European Green Leaf is assessed on the basis of six topic areas:

- Climate Change and Energy Performance
- Sustainable Urban Mobility
- Nature, Biodiversity and Sustainable Land Use
- Air Quality and Noise
- Waste and Circular Economy
- Water

The application form also includes a ‘City Introduction and Context section’, where applicants are asked to briefly present their city, indicating the main challenges it faces and how they deal with them.
The award follows the same two-tier evaluation process, i.e. going through both an Experts panel and a Jury. The Jury assesses the shortlisted cities based on the following criteria:

1) The city’s overall commitment, strategy and enthusiasm, as conveyed by the presentation

2) The city’s efforts to communicate to citizens and the citizens’ engagement in environmental activities

3) The city’s potential to act as a ‘green ambassador’, promoting good practice and spreading the EGLA concept further

Benefits are similar for both schemes and, according to the scheme organisers include:

- Potential increase in tourism
- Positive international media coverage worth millions of euro
- Increase in international profile, networking and new alliances
- The potential for new jobs
- Greater emphasis on environmental projects through sponsorship and grants
- Pride among citizens
- Momentum to continue improving environmental sustainability
- Access to the European Green Capital and Green Leaf Networks of previous winners and shortlisted applicants, to share ideas and experiences.

Events

| Awards | The schemes are awards in their own right |

Awards ceremony held annually

How to apply

Eligibility

The European Green Capital Award award is open to cities of over 100,000 inhabitants and the European Green Leaf Award is open to towns and cities of between 20,000 - 99,999 inhabitants.

A “city” is understood to be an urban area and an administrative unit governed by a city council or another form of democratically elected body. All applicants must be from EU Member States, EU Candidate Countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland.

How to apply and when

Applications for the 2022 European Green Capital and the 2021 European Green Leaf award winning cities are now open. All eligible European towns and cities may apply for the relevant award by registering their interest online and then submitting an application form.
Registration is obligation free and does not require cities to submit an application at a later date; thus allowing potential applicants to explore the application process and determine whether they would like to make a formal entry.

The deadline to submit applications for both the 2022 European Green Capital and 2021 European Green Leaf competitions is 14 October 2019.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Costs</th>
<th>There are no application costs, but staff resources are required to complete the application process and drive the necessary sustainability initiatives. Thus, planning, management and communication costs should all be considered.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>The Secretariat is currently run by RPS Group Plc who are based in Ireland. For more information on the application process visit the relevant website or email <a href="mailto:info@europeangreencapital.eu">info@europeangreencapital.eu</a> for the EGCA 2022 competition, or <a href="mailto:info@europeangreenleaf.eu">info@europeangreenleaf.eu</a> for the EGLA 2021 competition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sustainability Information Scheme Card: Green Key**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme Structure</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainability Scheme</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Scheme</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

This research is focused on mapping sustainability schemes relevant for destinations. However, the Green Key scheme has been included because it addresses attractions (which can be destinations in their own right).

The Green Key award recognises environmental responsibility and sustainable operations within the tourism industry. Green Key is an international eco-label for tourism providers. It represents a commitment by businesses that their tourism establishments adhere to the sustainability criteria stipulated by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). A Green Key award indicates to customers that by choosing a particular business, they are helping to make a difference.

The scheme originated in Denmark in 1994, where it was originally aimed at hotels. In 1998, France joined the Green Key programme and began awarding campsites. In 2003, Green Key became an environmental education programme of FEE. Since then it has
grown rapidly and has been adopted by countries in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia and the Caribbean.

The Green Key criteria consist of a number of internationally recognised criteria. In countries with national Green Key operators, it is possible to add or strengthen the criteria to adapt to national legislation, infrastructure, climate and culture.

Green Key criteria have now been developed for the following categories:

- **hotels and hostels**
- **campsites and holiday parks**
- **small accommodations**
- **conference centres**
- **attractions**
- **restaurants**

The Green Key criteria contribute SDGs in regard to achieving sustainable economic growth, sustainable consumption and production and the sustainable use of resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rationale and scope</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green Key officially aim to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increase the use of sustainable methods of operation and technology in the establishments they work with, thereby reducing the overall use of resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Raise awareness and create behavioural changes in guests, staff and suppliers of individual tourism establishments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Raise awareness of sustainability issues to create behavioural change in the hospitality and tourism industry overall.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation and ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green Key is managed by the Foundation for Environmental Education which is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation based in Denmark.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Languages available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://www.greenkey.global">https://www.greenkey.global</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of European destinations operating in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Green Key scheme is operational in 56 countries, with more than 2,600 sites awarded worldwide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainability Dimensions included</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Quality (including: level of transparency, level of assessment and frequency of standard review and revision)** | The assessment process is transparent. Regular on-site audits are conducted by trained Green Key auditors and third-party verification is undertaken. Both the Green Key criteria and the award process are available on the website. The high environmental standards expected of these establishments are maintained through rigorous documentation and frequent audits. Where countries have a Green Key National Operator, a Green Key National Jury is set up and will normally be composed of representatives from:  
- Ministry of Environment  
  Ministry of Health  
  Ministry of Tourism  
- Tourism Association  
  Association of local authorities  
- Association of hotels/campsites  
- Education experts  
  Environmental experts  
The applicant sites in countries without National Operators are decided upon by the Green Key International Steering Committee. Green Key has been recognised by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and the Green Key criteria have been awarded ‘Recognised’ status by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. In addition, Green Key is working in collaboration with the University of Surrey to ensure academic rigour. |
| **Benefits** | Businesses opting to join Green Key, learn to operate in a more sustainable and efficient way. Green Key provides advice on how to monitor and reduce the consumption of resources and helps organisations motivate their staff and encourage their guests to act more responsibly.  
Holding a Green Key award also increases visibility for recipients and promotes them through the website and social media. Once awarded, the establishment will be |
| **Events** | displayed on the Green Key map, and will be included in the portfolio of several Online Travel Agencies (such as bookdifferent.com and Book Greener). Every year, Green Key International runs a best practice competition among its awarded sites to find the Sustainability Champion of the year. Each Best Practice Competition focuses on a particular topic related to sustainability in tourism. An international jury composed of members of the International Steering Committee as well as external tourism experts decide on the winners. |
| **Awards** | Green Key is an award for hotels, hostels, small accommodations, campsites, holiday parks, conference centres, restaurants and attractions worldwide |
| **How to apply** | Tourism providers can assess whether they would qualify for the scheme using an online self-assessment form. If providers are located in a country with a Green Key National Operator, slightly different Green Key criteria may apply. |
| **How to apply and when** | The Green Key application process consists of three parts  
1. Submission of the application documents  
2. An on-site audit  
3. Final decision by independent entity (third-party verification)  
An establishment wishing to apply for the Green Key award can acquire information about application procedures from the National Operator or from Green Key International (in countries without a National Operator)  
The applicant establishment sends in a Green Key application and supplementary documents that are evaluated before an onsite audit is conducted to the applicant site.  
The decision regarding the Green Key award is normally taken by a Green Key National Jury either once or twice a year (if there are specific application deadlines) or on a continuous basis (in countries without specific application deadlines). |
| **Planning and Budget** | Costs vary by country and depend on the input of the Green Key National Operator ([http://www.greenkey.global/national-offices/](http://www.greenkey.global/national-offices/)) |
| **Contact** | Finn Bolding Thomsen, International Green Key Director  
[finn@fee.global](mailto:finn@fee.global)  
Isabel Lissner, International Green Key Coordinator  
isabel@fee.global |
# Sustainability Information Scheme Card: Blue Flag

## Scheme Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability Scheme</th>
<th>Blue Flag</th>
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## Type of Scheme

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Type of Scheme</th>
<th>Award</th>
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</table>

The Blue Flag programme is operated under the auspices of the Foundation for Environmental Education and is headquartered in Copenhagen, Denmark. In order to qualify for this award, a series of stringent environmental, educational, safety-related and access-related criteria must be met and maintained.

The Blue Flag Programme started in Europe in 1987 with the purpose of encouraging beaches to comply with the EU Bathing Water Directive. The Programme criteria have since developed to address a wide range of environmental and safety issues. The number of participating countries and of candidates receiving the award has increased yearly.

The Blue Flag includes 5 categories:

- **Criteria for beaches**
- **Criteria for marinas**
- **Criteria for Sustainable Boating Tourism Operators**
- **Boat owner’s code of conduct**
- **Sail Training International Code of Conduct**

## Rationale and scope

Central to the ideals of the Blue Flag programme is the aim of connecting the public with their surroundings and encouraging them to learn more about their environment. As such, environmental education activities must be offered and promoted in addition to a permanent display of information relevant to the site in terms of biodiversity, ecosystems and environmental phenomena.

## Targets

Beaches, marinas, and sustainable boating tourism operators.

## Organisation and ownership

The Foundation for Environmental Education and is headquartered in Copenhagen, Denmark.

## Languages available

English

## Website

[https://www.blueflag.global](https://www.blueflag.global)

## Contact

[https://www.blueflag.global/our-people](https://www.blueflag.global/our-people)

## Impact Assessment
| **No of European destinations operating in** | Global |
| **Sustainability Dimensions included** | Environmental |
| **Quality (including: level of transparency, level of assessment and frequency of standard review and revision)** | Blue Flag criteria are developed in partnership with experts, to ensure they are sound. Additionally, FEE reviews the existing criteria and develop new ones to ensure that Blue Flag stays a symbol of excellence, and to encourage site owners to always do better. All Blue Flags are awarded for one season only. By renewing awards each season, the programme ensures that beaches/marinas/boats are constantly living up to the criteria. Continuous Compliance with the criteria during the season The local authority is obliged to ensure compliance with the criteria whenever flying the Blue Flag. During the season, the National Environmental Protection Agency monitors the bathing water quality data. The National Organisation performs audits of all its sites at least once per season. Furthermore, Blue Flag International sends international auditors to conduct announced or unannounced audits at the Blue Flag sites. Visitors and guests at Blue Flag beaches, marinas or boats are also good observers of compliance with the Blue Flag criteria at the sites, and their considered. In all cases of non-compliance with imperative criteria, the Blue Flag will be immediately withdrawn for the whole season. The programme is designed to raise environmental awareness and increase good environmental practices among tourists, local populations and beach and marina management and staff. The programme criteria are also designed to work with the national, regional and local legislation of each country, thereby assuring that the legislation is being followed. It can also be used to set a benchmark higher than what already exists. |
| **Benefits** | |
| **Events** | Award Ceremony |
| **Awards** | Not applicable |
| **How to apply** | |
| **Eligibility** | To be eligible for the Blue Flag a beach/marina/SBTO has to fulfill all imperative requirements. In addition, the fulfilment of a maximum number of guideline criteria for beaches and marinas is taken into account. |
### How to apply and when

For beaches, the municipality can apply for the Blue Flag. For marinas, the marina owner can apply. For sustainable boating tour operators, it is the company who applies for its boats.

The responsible local authority files the application form (with enclosed documentation) and sends it to the National Operator. The National Jury evaluates applications for compliance with the Blue Flag criteria and gives an approval or rejection on the national level. In special cases the National Jury can recommend a dispensation. Approved applications and dispensation cases are forwarded from the National Jury to the International Jury. The International Jury carries out an evaluation and certifies which beaches, marinas and SBTOs to award the Blue Flag for the season.

### Costs

A fee applies.

---

### Sustainability Scheme Information Card: The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas

#### Scheme Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability Scheme</th>
<th>The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Scheme</strong></td>
<td><strong>Award</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas</strong> is a practical management tool that enables Protected Areas to develop tourism sustainably. The process is divided into 3 parts:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Becoming a Sustainable Destination – Charter Part I</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainable Partners in Charter Areas – Charter Part II</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainable Tour Operators in Charter Areas – Charter Part III</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Summary

The Charter requires that all Protected Areas have 5 components in place:

1. A permanent **Sustainable Tourism (Charter) Forum**, or equivalent arrangement, should be established between the protected area authority, local municipalities, conservation and community organisations and representatives of local tourism businesses.
2. Planning. A **Strategy** and **Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism** should be prepared
3. Evaluation. All protected areas seeking award of the Charter must engage in and facilitate the **Evaluation Process**.
4. **Monitoring and Review.** Monitoring actions and impacts of sustainable tourism should be built into the process from the beginning, leading to review and adaptation.

5. **Partnership and Communication.** Protected Areas that have been awarded the Charter join the family of protected areas as partners in the Charter Network. They are required to publicise and make visible their award.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rationale and scope</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, is a management tool, to ensure a viable and healthy future for people and for nature within Protected Areas in Europe. Through awarding the European Charter, EUROPARC seeks to safeguard cultural and natural assets by encouraging quality sustainable tourism,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The program is open for all protected areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation and ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owned and managed by the EUROPARC Federation. EUROPARC is the umbrella organisation of Europe’s Protected Areas. It unites national and regional parks, nature and biosphere reserves, marine and landscape Protected Areas, together with a large number of Natura 2000 sites, with the shared aim of protecting Europe’s unique variety of wildlife, habitats and landscapes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Languages available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English (Italian, French and Spanish available under request)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://www.europarc.org">https://www.europarc.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:sustainabletourism@europarc.org">sustainabletourism@europarc.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No of European destinations operating in</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is a European award thus is operating in all European countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Sustainability Dimensions included |
| All sustainable tourism dimensions are included (environmental, socio-cultural and economic) |

| Quality (including: level of transparency, level of assessment and frequency of standard review and revision) |
| The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas is awarded by the EUROPARC Federation through an independent verification process. The award recognises not just a commitment to sustainable tourism but also the implementation of practical sustainable actions by public and private partners. The Charter is normally awarded for a period of five years. |

| Benefits |
| The Charter provides a model of governance that delivers Protected Areas as sustainable tourism destinations. It has provided a framework and an incentive to protected area authorities to generate more sustainable tourism in protected areas. It |
has also encouraged cooperation between tourism businesses and other stakeholders to agree on future plans and implement actions.

The three main benefits of the Charter are:

1. the measurable economic, social and environmental benefits of well-managed sustainable tourism
2. the strengthened relations with local tourism stakeholders and the wider tourism industry
3. the provision of access and membership to an extensive and dynamic European network. Protected Areas that have been awarded the Charter join the family of protected areas as partners in the Charter Network.

Additionally, the process of pursuing and achieving the award enables all involved to receive expert advice, maintain motivation and incentive, and obtain international recognition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The EUROPARC annual Conference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Annual Charter Award Ceremony at the European Parliament in Brussels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUROPARC also operates the Stars Award, for Charter partners <a href="https://www.europarc.org/sustainable-tourism/star-awards-2019/">https://www.europarc.org/sustainable-tourism/star-awards-2019/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every two years, the EUROPARC network of Sustainable Destinations applying the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas methodology comes together to exchange experience and best practice at the Charter Network Meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The European Day of Parks is a commemorative day for Protected Areas across Europe that was launched in 1999 by the EUROPARC Federation to celebrate Protected Areas throughout Europe. It celebrates the creation of the 1st National Parks in Europe – a set of nine parks created in Sweden in 1909.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas is an award itself.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Protected areas are eligible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A protected area needs to be a full member of EUROPARC to apply for the Charter. A protected area that does not have its own legal entity can however also apply to the Charter if it is represented by its higher authority at the Federation (i.e. the higher authority needs to be a full member to the Federation for a protected area to receive the Charter).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eligibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Protected areas are eligible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A protected area needs to be a full member of EUROPARC to apply for the Charter. A protected area that does not have its own legal entity can however also apply to the Charter if it is represented by its higher authority at the Federation (i.e. the higher authority needs to be a full member to the Federation for a protected area to receive the Charter).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to apply and when

Applications can be submitted at any time. Download the Charter Registration form and the technical guidelines here [https://www.europarc.org/sustainable-tourism/become-a-sustainable-destination/](https://www.europarc.org/sustainable-tourism/become-a-sustainable-destination/)

Costs

- First Candidature registration EUR 500
- Full application and award EUR 5,000
- Costs of travel, accommodation, and board for the visiting verifier EUR 700

### Sustainability Information Scheme Card: World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) Tourism for Tomorrow Awards

**Scheme Structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability Scheme</th>
<th>World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) Tourism for Tomorrow Awards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Scheme</td>
<td>Award</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The WTTC Tourism for Tomorrow Awards focus on five categories which have been carefully selected to illustrate the ways in which travel and tourism can contribute significant economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits for local people and places. It has a broad remit, with entries accepted from tourism service providers, destinations, resorts, individual hotels and niche enterprises, as well as global businesses such as airlines and major hotel chains.

The 5 categories are:

**Social Impact Award** - for any travel and tourism organisation working to improve the people and places within its sphere of influence. Social Impact is demonstrated by the actions organisations take that go significantly beyond the financial imperative of their business needs.

**Destination Stewardship Award** - for any organisation that helps a place thrive and bring forward its unique identity, for the benefit of residents and tourists.

**Climate Action Award** - for any travel and tourism organisation undertaking significant and measurable work to reduce the scale and impacts of climate change. This award seeks to recognise innovative actions through either behaviour change of guests and employees, policy changes or the introduction of technology.

**Investing in People Award** - for any travel and tourism organisation demonstrating leadership in becoming an exciting, attractive and equitable employer in the sector. The award can be for organisations that have worked exceptionally to enhance the capacity
of individuals and groups of people who would normally be excluded from employment or who find it difficult to enter the travel and tourism sector, to aid the recruitment and retention of under-represented groups, to develop skills for those already employed to advance in the sector and to offer fair employment practices.

**Changemakers Award** - for a travel and tourism organisation which has made real, positive and impactful change in a specific area of focus defined by WTTC. This focus will change each year. In 2019 the focus will be on fighting the illegal wildlife trade through sustainable tourism, in line with WTTC’s own focus on this issue.

The awards are given out in a ceremony held at the WTTC Summit each spring.

## Rationale and scope

The awards are aimed at recognising best practice in sustainable tourism within the travel and tourism industry globally, based on the principles of environmentally friendly operations, support for the protection of cultural and natural heritage and direct benefits to the social and economic well-being of local people in destinations around the world.

## Organisation and ownership

The Awards are owned and managed by WTTC in collaboration with The University of Surrey, UK

## Website

[https://www.wttc.org/tourism-for-tomorrow-awards/](https://www.wttc.org/tourism-for-tomorrow-awards/)

## Impact Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of European destinations operating in</th>
<th>The awards are open to global businesses and destinations of any size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability Dimensions included</td>
<td>The scheme encompasses all aspects of sustainability (environment (including climate change), economic and socio-cultural) and also emphasises quality of employment (through the Investors in People award).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality (including: level of transparency, level of assessment and frequency of standard review and revision)</td>
<td>Rules and Guidelines are made available online, as are tips for applying. Judging is robust and is undertaken by a wide and diverse panel of sustainable tourism experts. Applications are reviewed by a committee of sustainable tourism experts, who decide the finalists for each category. The Finalists are then visited on site by experts who verify the claims made provided in the application. A panel of leading sustainable tourism figures also conduct a final review to decide on the category winners, although limited information on the rationale for allocation of individual awards is made public.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Benefits

Extremely prestigious, with a well attended award ceremony and a leading travel industry organisation behind it that ensures a great deal of publicity for winners. Award
nominees are all flown to the Summit for the ceremony and will also benefit from considerable pre and post summit publicity both within their country of operation and internationally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Award ceremony held at the WTTC Global Summit each year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awards</td>
<td>There are 5 categories of award: Social Impact, Destination Stewardship, Climate Action, Investing in People and Changemakers. All awards are linked to the relevant Sustainable Development Goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eligibility</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How to apply and when</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning and Budget</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contact</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sustainability Scheme Information Card: European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainability Scheme</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Scheme</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

ETIS is an indicator-based sustainability scheme suitable for all tourist destinations. It encourages destination stakeholders to pool data and adopt a more intelligent approach to tourism planning.

It is a primarily management tool, supporting destinations who want to take a sustainable approach to destination management. However, it is also a monitoring system and is designed to facilitate the collection and sharing of data from a range of stakeholders, allowing destinations to assess and monitor their performance from one year to another.

ETIS contains 43 core indicators to measure the impacts of tourism in a destination, as well as a set of additional supplementary indicators. The basic principle of ETIS is that destination responsibility, ownership, and decision-making is shared. Implementation
requires the engagement of a group of local stakeholders who come together and share information to inform effective destination management. The ETIS indicators can be used as needed and the system can be used in its entirety or can be integrated into existing destination monitoring systems.

An important element of the system is its flexibility. Destinations can choose the indicators most relevant to them, to adopt and monitor according to the needs and interests of local stakeholders and the specific sustainability issues that the destination faces. This adaptability makes the system suitable for any destination that can form an effective multi-stakeholder group.

An ETIS toolkit to support implementation, is available online free of charge. It provides full explanations on each indicator (core and supplementary) and guidelines on how to use them. It also shows how ETIS complements existing tools and methodologies at International and European level. Additional supporting electronic tools include: instructions for creating a destination profile, data sheets, a glossary, sample surveys and a template invitation letter for potential stakeholders. The Destination Dataset is an Excel document which can be used for collating the data gathered during ETIS implementation.

ETIS is a management, information and monitoring tool specifically intended for tourism destinations. It is designed as a locally owned and led process for collecting and analysing data with the overall objective to assess the impact of tourism on a destination. The specific objective of ETIS is to contribute to the sustainable management of destinations. It aims at helping destinations and the stakeholders within, to measure the impact tourism is having on a range of different metrics (from air quality to resident satisfaction) enabling them monitor their performance and progress over time, to develop the type of tourism industry that best suits them.

The scheme is open to all destinations that can form a multi-stakeholder group made up of representatives from across different sectors, but all having a shared interest in tourism. It also supports use by coordinated macroregional and/or transnational approaches to tourism management.
**Impact Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of European destinations operating in</th>
<th>The scheme is available for use by destinations in all European countries and can also be adopted by destinations outside the EU. ETIS has been implemented successfully in two pilot phases since 2013, by over 100 destinations (including non-EU destinations).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Sustainability Dimensions included     | The 43 core indicators cover the fundamental aspects of sustainability monitoring and provide the basis for effective destination management. They are divided into four thematic areas:  
  - Destination management  
  - Social and cultural impact  
  - Economic value  
  - Environmental impact.  
  ETIS also provides additional supplementary indicators which add to the basic information provided and allow destinations to tailor the system to their own particular needs or tourism type e.g. mountain, city, rural, coastal, island or urban destinations. |
| Quality (including: level of transparency, level of assessment and frequency of standard review and revision) | ETIS was created by a consortia led by The University of Surrey and was based on the indicators developed over many years by the EU’s Tourism Sustainability Group. The system was tested in 14 destinations across Europe as part of the original pilot, before being launched in Brussels in early 2013. It has since been developed and validated by a panel of sustainable tourism professionals appointed as an informal experts group by the European Commission in late 2013. This group of experts undertook assessment of the further ETIS pilot phases in 2014 and beyond, and later oversaw the revision of the ETIS Toolkit and Indicators. ETIS has now been rolled out in over 100 destinations. |
| Benefits                               | Participating destinations have been able to show that sustainable management of tourism is financially and logistically feasible and can have a positive impact on competitiveness.  
Destinations that use ETIS can improve the economic sustainability of tourism, while helping to preserve the environment, landscapes and local communities that the industry benefits from.  
**The key benefits for destinations are:**  
  - Improved information for decision-making  
  - Effective risk management  
  - Prioritisation of projects for action  
  - Performance benchmarking |
• Improved community buy-in and support for tourism stakeholders
• Enhanced visitor experience
• Increased bottom-line/cost savings
• Increased value per visitor

Events
The ETIS joint conference on ‘Managing and promoting sustainable and accessible tourism destinations’ was organised by the European Commission and held in Brussels on 28 January 2016.

An informal and voluntary network of the Etis destinations has been set up by the University of Cagliari with the support of ‘NescStour.

In June 2018 the ETIS Network Meeting took place in Cagliari to discuss about the 2018-2020 priorities and actions. For more information: etisnetwork@liste.unica.it.

Awards
The ETIS and Accessible Tourism Joint Awards 2016. As recognition of the efforts made by the destinations which participated in and completed the ETIS pilot phases, the European Commission organised the ETIS and Accessible Tourism Awards 2016.

The awards ceremony took place on 22 April 2016 in Brussels. The jury handed out 1 to 3-star rankings to 10 destinations for sustainability, accessibility, and social impact awards in three categories: overall winners, responsible destination management, and sustainable economic development.

How to apply
Destinations within the ETIS definition of a ‘destination’ are all eligible. This definition is as follows:
• A geographic area that is currently or potentially attractive to visitors/tourists;
• A place or area which is recognised and can easily be defined as a visitor destination and has a range of facilities and products in place for tourism purposes;
• A place or area which is promoted as a destination;
• A place or area where it is possible to measure the supply of and demand for tourism services, i.e. the visitor economy;
• A place or area where the visitor management process usually includes a range of public and private-sector stakeholders together with the host community.

ETIS is not suitable for large national or regional areas that do not directly manage tourism resources.

How to apply and when
The ETIS indicators, toolkit and other supporting electronic documents are available free of charge from the European Commission website:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/sustainable/indicators_en">https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/sustainable/indicators_en</a>. Destinations can start the implementation of ETIS at any time. There are no direct costs to implement the toolkit. The European Commission have made ETIS available for use free of charge. Destinations only need to consider costs related to staff time, training, communication and events. A local destination co-ordinator needs to take responsibility for driving ETIS implementation and managing a group of stakeholders. To ensure effective implementation it is recommended that this individual has some project management and destination management experience and suitability senior influence on policy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Sustainability Information Scheme Card: Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)

## Scheme Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability Scheme</th>
<th>Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Scheme</strong></td>
<td>Criteria/Indicators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                       | The GSTC Criteria aim to serve as the global baseline standards for sustainability in travel and tourism. The Criteria are used for education and awareness-raising, policy-making for businesses and government agencies and other organization types, measurement and evaluation, and as a basis for certification. They can be considered a first step for organizations wishing to apply for a full certification, in particular for Green Destinations or Earthcheck, two certification schemes based on GSTC and accredited by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC).  

The GSTC Destination Criteria are focused on Sustainable Destinations, relating to sustainable management of tourism Destinations. They are structured in four pillars:  

1. Sustainable management  
2. Socioeconomic impacts  
3. Cultural impacts  
4. Environmental impacts (including consumption of resources, reducing pollution, and conserving biodiversity and landscapes)  

The Criteria are promoted as the minimum, not the maximum, which businesses, governments, and destinations should achieve to approach social, environmental, cultural, and economic sustainability. Since tourism destinations each have their own culture, environment, customs, and laws, the Criteria are designed to be adapted to local conditions and supplemented by additional criteria for the specific location and activity.  

**Two sets of GSTC Criteria:**  

1. **GSTC Industry Criteria (for hotels and tour operators)**  
   
   This set of Criteria relates to the sustainable management of private sector travel industry, focusing currently on Hotels and Tour Operators.  

2. **GSTC Destination Criteria**  

   This set of Criteria relates to sustainable management of tourism Destinations.  

   For the purpose of the report we focus on the criteria for destinations.
The GSTC Criteria for Destinations were conceived as the beginning of a process to make sustainability the standard practice in all forms of tourism. They were developed based on already recognized criteria and approaches including, for example, the UNWTO destination level indicators, GSTC Criteria for Hotels and Tour Operators, and nearly 40 other widely accepted principles and guidelines, certification criteria and indicators. They reflect certification standards, indicators, criteria, and best practices from different cultural and geo-political contexts around the world in tourism and other sectors where applicable. Potential indicators were screened for relevance and practicality, as well as their applicability to a broad range of destination types. They were field-tested around the world via the early adopters’ scheme but also via destination assessments that a destination could asked from GSTC to execute. For details on how the criteria were developed click here.

The GSTC Destination Criteria are now under revision. For more information.

By the end of 2019, the revised GSTC criteria set for Destinations will be available.

<p>| Rationale and scope | The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Criteria was created in an effort to reach a common understanding of sustainable destinations. GSTC Destination Criteria together with the GSTC for the private sector Industry aim to represent the minimum requirements necessary for any travel and tourism businesses and destinations to reach in order to protect and sustain the world’s natural and cultural resources while ensuring tourism meets its potential as a tool for conservation and poverty alleviation. The GSTC Criteria provide globally-applicable guiding principles. They serve as the basis of GSTC activities. |
| Targets | All Destinations (hotel and tour operators are addressed as well through different criteria) |
| Organisation and ownership | The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) is managing the GSTC Criteria. Certifications are released by external Certification Bodies that are GSTC Accredited. To know more <a href="https://www.gstcouncil.org/certification/become-certified-destination/">https://www.gstcouncil.org/certification/become-certified-destination/</a> |
| Languages available | Any formal use of the Criteria must be verified in English and based on the English originals. Criteria Translations are available. Click here to view and download translations of the GSTC Criteria in other languages <a href="https://www.gstcouncil.org/gstc-criteria/criteria-translations/">https://www.gstcouncil.org/gstc-criteria/criteria-translations/</a> |
| Website | <a href="https://www.gstcouncil.org">https://www.gstcouncil.org</a> |
| Contact | <a href="mailto:info@gstcouncil.org">info@gstcouncil.org</a> |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Assessment</th>
<th>Global Coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No of European destinations operating in</strong></td>
<td><strong>Global Coverage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainability Dimensions included</strong></td>
<td>GSTC are structured in four pillars:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Sustainable management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Socioeconomic impacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Cultural impacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Environmental impacts (including consumption of resources, reducing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pollution, and conserving biodiversity and landscapes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality (including: level of transparency, level of assessment and frequency of standard review and revision)</strong></td>
<td>Certification is given by third parties (Certification Bodies) certified by GSTC /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="https://www.gstcouncil.org/certification/gstc-accredited-certification-bodies/">https://www.gstcouncil.org/certification/gstc-accredited-certification-bodies/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benefits</strong></td>
<td>The GSTC Criteria serve as the global baseline standards for sustainability in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>travel and tourism. The Criteria are used for education and awareness-raising,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>policy-making for businesses and government agencies and other organization types,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>measurement and evaluation, and as a basis for certification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They are the result of a worldwide effort to develop a common language about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sustainability in tourism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some of the expected uses of the criteria for destinations by tourism management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>organizations include the following:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Serve as basic guidelines for destinations which wish to become more sustainable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Help consumers identify sound sustainable tourism destinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Serve as a common denominator for information media to recognize destinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and inform the public regarding their sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Help certification and other voluntary destination level programs ensure that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>their standards meet a broadly-accepted baseline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Offer governmental, non-governmental, and private sector programs a starting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>point for developing sustainable tourism requirements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Sustainability Certification Information Scheme Card: TourCert

#### Scheme Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability Scheme</th>
<th>TourCert</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Scheme</td>
<td>Award / Certification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Summary

TourCert is a consultancy and certification system, operating internationally.

Destination certification is managed by destination management organisations (DMO), who are required to work closely with TourCert to undertake the following steps:

1. **DMOs lead the certification process and involve businesses to collaborate as partners.** Supported by a TourCert expert, the partnership must then develop a mission statement that will serve as a starting point for the sustainability process.

#### Events

- **GSTC Global Sustainable Tourism Conference** / [https://www.gstcouncil.org/gstc2019/](https://www.gstcouncil.org/gstc2019/)

#### Awards

None

#### How to apply

**Eligibility**

Destinations under geographical, governance and other criteria.

**How to apply and when**

If you opt to use the GSTC as free tool you can apply then anytime. Download the criteria for [free from the website](https://www.gstcouncil.org/for-destinations/destination-assessment/). If you are looking for a scheme based on GSTC you can refer to the Green Destinations and the EarthCheck Information cards.

**Costs**

The GSTC Criteria are available from the GSTC website free of charge for their non-commercial use.

To participate to the GSTC Sustainable Tourism Training Program (STTP) which gives an in-depth knowledge of the GSTC Criteria a participation fee applies. For more information see here: [https://www.gstcouncil.org/sustainable-tourism-training/](https://www.gstcouncil.org/sustainable-tourism-training/).
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>TourCert experts work with the partnership to assess the current sustainability of the destination, using an online system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>TourCert then use this to identify potential positioning opportunities and develop a suitable approach for implementing sustainability measures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Performance is translated into measurable indicators to enable applicants to analyse the sustainability of products and services in detail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Continuous improvement is at the core of the TourCert system and as such, each destination must set out clear objectives and a strategy to ensure long term improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>TourCert arrange auditing of certification applicants to check the necessary criteria are fulfilled. The final decision on certification is made by the TourCert Certification Council. Following successful certification, the DMO receives the TourCert label and participating service providers are labelled as partner companies of a sustainable destination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targets</td>
<td>TourCert has the not-for-profit objective of promoting sustainable business operations in tourism through credible training, auditing and certification. Experts from tourism, universities, environment and development organisations and politics come together to share knowledge and improve tourism sustainability, while the criteria for certification and the TourCert label are in the hands of an independent certification council. The scheme describes itself as is the official distinction for sustainability and corporate responsibility in tourism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation and ownership</td>
<td>Destinations and businesses (such as tour operators, hotels and service providers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages available</td>
<td>German, English, Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="https://www.tourcert.org/en/">https://www.tourcert.org/en/</a> e-mail: <a href="mailto:info@tourcert.org">info@tourcert.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headquarter: Blumenstraße 19, 70182 Stuttgart, Germany</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification Manager: Petra Knopp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:petra.knopp@tourcert.org">petra.knopp@tourcert.org</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+49 711 24839713</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainability Dimensions included</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All sustainable tourism dimensions are included (environmental, socio-cultural and economic)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Guaranteed quality (including: level of transparency, level of assessment and frequency of standard review and revision) |
| Working independently and unpaid, the [Certification Council](#) members decide on the framework and the TourCert certifications to be awarded. |
| All TourCert criteria are based on the international quality and environmental management standards set out by ISO and EMAS as well as the ISO guidelines for corporate responsibility (ISO 26000) and the scheme has also achieved 'recognised' certification status from the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC). The specific set of criteria for destinations is published transparently on the TourCert website. The Centre for Sustainable Tourism at the University of Applied Sciences, Eberswalde researched the transparency, and credibility of various sustainability schemes and ranked TourCert highly. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>According to TourCert the three main benefits of the award are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The measurable economic, social and environmental benefits from well-managed sustainable tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Strengthened relations between local tourism stakeholders and the wider tourism industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Access to and membership of an international network. Destinations that have been awarded/certified join the TourCert Community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The process of pursuing and achieving the award enables all involved to receive expert advice, maintain motivation and obtain international recognition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The annual TourCert Forum is a conference for all members to exchange experiences and best practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TourCert have a stand at ITB each year. They hold a ceremony for newly awarded members and networking events are held for the TourCert community and other organisations involved.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The TourCert certification is itself an award</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eligibility</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How to apply and when</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Costs</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Sustainability Scheme Information Card: One Planet Living**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme Structure</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainability Scheme</strong></td>
<td>One Planet Living initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Scheme</strong></td>
<td>Sustainability framework with a Review and Recognition Initiative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One Planet Living is a vision, framework and initiative aimed at creating a world where all can lead a happy and healthy life, within a fair share of the earth’s resources.

Bioregional's One Planet Living framework consists of ten simple principles that make it easy for an organisation to plan, deliver and communicate its commitment to sustainability.

The framework comprises:

- Ten simple principles that cover all aspects of social, environmental and economic sustainability
- Detailed tools and resources to enable organisations to develop One Planet Action Plans including:
  - Goals and guidance documents, which provide advice and ideas on the goals, actions, targets and indicators
  - The One Planet Living manual
  - A training programme
  - Resources and templates
  - An online platform to develop One Planet Action Plans: [www.oneplanet.com](http://www.oneplanet.com)

Anyone can use the One Planet Living framework to develop a One Planet Action Plan (which is effectively a sustainability strategy) – from businesses and new-build developments to schools and community groups. The framework has been used by resorts, hotels, conservation areas and destinations in a partnership between municipalities and private businesses involved in tourism.

Organisations wanting to join the One Planet Living initiative are required to follow Bioregional’s process:

The steps in joining the One Planet Living initiative are:

1. Develop a One Planet Action Plan
2. Publish the Action Plan
3. Monitor and report on progress annually

Bioregional recommends that organisations reinforce their commitment to transparency and shared learning by undergoing a ‘peer-review’, this is when
| Rationale and scope | The One Planet Living initiative provides Goals and Guidance rather than prescriptive standards, out of the belief that the project team are best placed to identify the most appropriate solutions for their project. Additionally, this approach helps internalise sustainability within the organisation driving wider change.

One Planet Living requires the monitoring and reporting on real-life performance, (rather than modelled or designed performance). Additionally, the scope of the assessment should include the complete impact of the project rather than being restricted to specific elements. |
| Targets | The One Planet Living initiative is open to all organisations and projects. |
| Organisation and ownership | One Planet Living was developed by the UK based NGO Bioregional with support from WWF. Bioregional now manages the One Planet Living initiative. |
| Languages available | English |
| Website | [https://www.bioregional.com/one-planet-living](https://www.bioregional.com/one-planet-living)  
[www.oneplanet.com](http://www.oneplanet.com) |
| Contact | Info@bioregional.com |
| Impact Assessment | |
| No of European destinations operating in | Approximately 10. |
| Sustainability Dimensions included | All sustainability dimensions are covered in the ten One Planet Living principles:

- Health and happiness
- Equity and local economy
- Culture and community |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality (including: level of transparency, level of assessment and frequency of standard review and revision)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Transparency is fundamental to the One Planet Living initiative; projects are required to publish their One Planet Action Plans and the independent assessment of the peer-reviewer.  
  
The quality of the Action Plan is assessed in three key areas:  
  1. The level of ambition – outcomes and targets  
  2. The quality of the actions proposed to deliver the desired outcomes  
  3. The capacity of the team to deliver the Action Plan.  
  
There are a number of criteria for each component of the assessment.  
Projects are expected to report annually on progress. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The One Planet Living framework has been used on over USD $30BN of real estate internationally and is proven to deliver high-quality sustainable outcomes.  
  
By integrating sustainability into the DNA and business plan of a project the sustainability features are not ‘bolt on’, This means that sustainability cannot be cost-engineered out at a later stage. Additionally, by taking this approach sustainability is not an additional expense but is simply part of the outcome – this ensures that it has a positive impact on the financial viability of the project. Benefits cover all dimensions of sustainability:  
  - Reduced environmental impact in terms of carbon emissions and resource use  
  - Enhanced ecological impacts through habitat creation and protection  
  - Increased well-being for residents or visitors, though improved air quality, greater sense of community and connection to nature  
  - More robust local economy |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bioregional runs training in One Planet Living throughout the year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bioregional recognises projects that have developed an exceptional, world-leading response to the challenge of achieving One Planet Living as ‘Global Leaders in One Planet Living’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to apply and when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sustainability Scheme Information Card: EarthCheck Destination Certification**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainability Scheme</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Scheme</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The EarthCheck Destination Standard establishes a framework for environmental, cultural, social, and economic (ECSE) performance for communities wishing to achieve EarthCheck Destination Certification. The EarthCheck program is built on Agenda 21 principles, it provides a set of guidelines which are intended to bring key stakeholders together to achieve a common set of sustainability outcomes.

The principal objective of the EarthCheck Destination Standard is to facilitate responsible and sustainable ECSE outcomes for Destinations.

The Standard should be used to underpin a clear vision for a Destination, as well as focussing on sound policy and action plans to help achieve the vision.

The Destination Standard is designed to empower local communities to take ownership of sustainability goals, built on local initiatives.

The Standard requires a Destination Authority to provide leadership, using an integrated and inclusive approach to support these sustainable outcomes. A Destination Authority is recognised as the catalyst to achieving community wide participation in achieving these outcomes through facilitation and communication.

The EarthCheck process for Destinations consists of two distinct phases:

**Phase 1: Benchmarking**

Benchmarking is the first phase of the Certification process. This phase requires successful completion of the first 3 steps of the EarthCheck Destination Standard:

- Step 1: Destination Authority - Establish a Destination Authority
- Step 2: Policy - Develop a Sustainability Policy
## Step 3: Benchmarking

Undergo a Benchmarking Assessment of ECSE sustainability performance using EarthCheck Sector Benchmarking Indicators for Destinations

### Phase 2: Certification

Phase 2, Certification involves completion of the final 3 steps of the EarthCheck Destination Standard:

- **Step 4: Compliance** - Comply with all requirements and intent of all prevailing laws.
- **Step 5: Planning for Continual Improvement** - Develop a Sustainability Action Plan and a Risk Management Plan.
- **Step 6: Consultation, Communications, & Reporting.**

Following completion of all 6 Steps the Destination must demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the Destination Standard through an Onsite Certification Audit undertaken by an approved EarthCheck Auditor.

Following completion of an Onsite Certification Audit, Destinations receive an Onsite Certification Audit Report. The Onsite Certification Audit Report is a qualitative evaluation of the Destination’s performance against the criteria of the Destination Standard highlighting areas of best practice and non-conformance.

Destinations that successfully meet the requirements of the Standard are awarded Certification and use of the ‘Silver Certified’ logo to promote their achievement.

### Rationale and scope

Based on the fundamental belief that ‘what gets measured, gets managed’ the core of EarthCheck’s Sustainable Destinations Program is measurement. Only when a destination fully understands its footprint can it make informed decisions to take action. The EarthCheck program helps destinations measure and monitor their environmental and social impact, and prepare and track that performance against their own targets and the performance of other communities.

### Targets

Destinations

The scheme is owned and managed by Earth Check, a certification body accredited by the GSTC.

### Organisation and ownership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Languages available</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="http://www.earthcheck.org">www.earthcheck.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@earthcheck.org">info@earthcheck.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Impact Assessment
It is currently used in more than 70 countries across the globe. Current EarthCheck Destinations are located in Mexico, New Zealand, Iceland, United States and Australia.

The Standard addresses key global ECSE issues. The Standard deals with environmental regeneration and environmental improvement as well as the conservation of existing heritage assets. The Standard targets important social issues which include improved community services, employment conditions, and improved local socio-economic benefits including poverty alleviation.

The following twelve (12) Key Performance Areas (KPAs) are addressed in this Standard and aim to improve the overall sustainability of the Destination.

1. Energy efficiency, conservation and management
2. Greenhouse gas emissions
3. Air quality protection, noise control, & light pollution
4. Management of freshwater resources
5. Waste water management, drainage and streams
6. Ecosystem conservation and management
7. Land use planning and development
8. Transport
9. Solid waste management
10. Management of environmentally harmful substances
11. Cultural and Social Management
12. Economic Management

The assessment includes:

Once a Destination has achieved initial Certification, annual Benchmarking and verification of ongoing compliance with the Destination Standard through an Onsite Certification Audit is required in order to retain Certification. Consistent commitment to Certification offers Destinations Silver Status (1-4 years), Gold Status (5-9 years), Platinum Status (10-14 years) or Master Status (15 years and over).

1. An initial Benchmarking Assessment & Report

The Benchmarking step requires the Destination Authority to collect information relating to the Destination and Destination Authority’s performance against the EarthCheck Sector Benchmarking Indicators for Destinations. This information is
submitted to EarthCheck for assessment using the online ‘My EarthCheck’ Benchmarking Software.

Once the Benchmarking Assessment has been completed, the Destination Authority is issued a Benchmarking Assessment Report by their Relationship Manager which provides a graphical and descriptive analysis of the total Destination’s performance. Where necessary, it includes recommendations to encourage improvement. This service is included in the annual EarthCheck Destination membership fee.

2. Onsite Certification Audit & Report

Onsite Certification Audits are conducted by approved EarthCheck third-party Auditors. These services are available at an additional cost to the annual EarthCheck Destinations registration fee.

The Onsite Certification Audit requires the Destination Authority to complete and submit the Destination Self-Assessment Checklist (contained within this document) and all supporting documentation. Completion of the Destination Self-Assessment Checklist assists the Destination Authority in ensuring the requirements of the Destination Standard have been met prior to Auditor arriving onsite.

Upon completion of the Onsite Certification Audit, an Onsite Certification Report will be issued. The Onsite Certification Report outlines recommendations for Certification and provides a qualitative evaluation of the Destination’s performance against the criteria of the Destination Standard highlighting areas of best practice and non-conformance.

3. Surveillance Visit

A surveillance visit may be required should a major non-conformance with the Destination Standard be observed during an Onsite Certification Audit and where follow-up is required onsite.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• A leading-edge online data-entry measurement and benchmarking tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An integrated, user-friendly platform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support from a dedicated Relationship Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An independent, third-party performance audit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Annual benchmarking reports with comparisons of baselines and best practice performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Environmental leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enables sustainability to be promoted as a market asset</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Connected to a global network of EarthCheck Leading Destinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awards</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How to apply**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eligibility</th>
<th>Destinations needs to go through a self-assessment. This assessment is undertaken once registration is complete and first year payments have been received. The appraisal assessment can also be undertaken with the assistance of an EarthCheck trained Consultant as an optional service.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>From 10,000 Australian dollars</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.3 NTOs and sustainability schemes: results of research survey

Surveys were sent to ETC members across Europe and to the tourist boards of Sweden and United Kingdom, with results received from 16 NTOs in total. The research was intended to establish the extent to which NTOS are engaged with sustainability schemes and gain understanding around the opportunities for using such schemes to drive sustainability and promote it to potential visitors.

All 16 had involvement with at least one sustainability scheme. The most popular sustainability scheme for destinations was Green Key which was utilised by eight NTOs, the next most popular was Blue Flag, used by three NTOs. Additionally, three destinations have developed their own sustainability scheme — Luxembourg (Ecolabel Luxembourg), Finland (Sustainable Finland) and Slovenia (Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism).
The research specifically sought information about schemes relevant to destinations. Within the category of ‘destination’ there are a wide range of potential scheme recipients. Some schemes are relevant for any destination that considers itself as such, others are aimed at urban areas (cities, towns and villages), others at parks and protected areas, or specific types of attraction and others still at specific areas such as coastlines. Possibly because they are the most numerous, it was discovered that the bulk of sustainability schemes which with destinations are involved, are aimed at businesses and other tourism providers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue Flag</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDEN</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean Coasts</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTO Scheme</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Key</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Charter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour Cert</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Globe</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISO14001</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travelife</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biosphere</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viabono</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecoxii Portugal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hellenic Agritourism Federation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biosphere Responsible Tourism</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The research shows that most schemes that NTOs are involved with, encompass environmental sustainability. Many of these schemes also cover social and cultural aspects of sustainability, with some also incorporating additional elements such as destination management.
Graph 2. What aspects of sustainability does the scheme cover? Number of respondents: 16, answers 30

Graph 3: In your opinion, what proportion of relevant potential recipients are aware of its existence? Number of respondents: 16, answers 30

NTOs generally feel that awareness amongst potential recipients, of the existence of particular sustainability schemes is fairly low. This probably reflects that a focus on sustainability by NTOs is relatively recent across the board and few destinations have undertaken a concerted effort to promote schemes to recipients, as part of a destination management strategy.
Typically, NTOs support or champion pre-existing sustainability schemes to the relevant service providers, destinations, attractions etc. rather than setting up new schemes. Although as mentioned, three destinations have established and are involved in the management of their own schemes. In Slovenia the Slovenia Tourism Board run the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism with their partner Good Place. In Luxembourg, Ecolabel Luxembourg is a collaboration between the Ministry of Economy and the NGO Oekozenter. While in Finland the Sustainable Finland Scheme is run by Visit Finland together with Business Finland.

NTO involvement in other schemes varies considerably. Some play an active role in promoting and championing the schemes to destinations in their country, particularly those that may lead to awards and promotional opportunities which may require the bringing together of a group of stakeholders. In other cases, NTOs are aware schemes exist and may let their members know about them, but don’t feel comfortable actively endorsing or recommending them.

The majority of the schemes promoted by NTOs are transnational, these include Green Key and Blue Flag (the two most popular schemes) as well as European initiatives such as Tour Cert, EDEN, The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism and schemes aimed at businesses, such as Green Globe and Travelife. Only a small number of sustainability schemes are those that are not managed by NTOs, but only operate within one country - such as Clean Coasts Ireland, or the Hellenic Agritourism Federation in Greece. This is encouraging, as it means there is significant scope for learning and knowledge sharing because the standards used by many destinations are recognised internationally. Many of the national schemes are also supported by, or linked to international ones. For example, the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism is supported by the Green Destinations criteria and ecoxxi Portugal is linked to Green Key.

The next section analyses some of the sustainability schemes in common use across Europe in more detail and highlights the benefits of each.
### 3.1 Slovenia

#### Section 1. Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination and organisation name:</th>
<th>Slovenia - Slovenian Tourist Board (STB)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Sustainability scheme/s adopted (and website/s):**

The Slovenian Tourist Board examined the range of external sustainability schemes and certifications available internationally and made the decision to combine these with a new scheme of their own. This was because they found that although the sustainability certifications for providers were well developed, none of those they came across for destinations fulfilled their requirements for a scheme that would connect those working at different levels in tourism and encourage destinations to work together. Thus in 2014 the STB established the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism (GSST) [https://www.slovenia.info/en/business/green-scheme-of-slovenian-tourism](https://www.slovenia.info/en/business/green-scheme-of-slovenian-tourism) which operates on two levels:

1. **For Destinations:** (which include municipalities, regions, parks, etc.). The scheme for destinations is based on Slovenia Green Certifications and has four levels (Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum). The criteria are quite strict and the standards high. This is deliberate as the STB wanted to ensure the certificates were meaningful. Typically, the time taken for a destination to achieve a certificate is around a year. The scheme is managed by the STB, who are working together with a nationally accredited partner (Good Place) to deliver it. The STB provide support to destinations throughout the application process in the form of free workshops, educational gatherings, translations of online materials, guidelines and handbooks on sustainable development and product development, and ongoing help through Good Place. To make sure the scheme had globally relevance STB entered into a partnership with Green Destinations. By using the sustainability criteria defined by Green Destinations, their certifications are valid at international level. However, rather than hand over the engagement work with destinations to Green Destinations (or another external body), the STB take on this responsibility themselves and work with the destinations in Slovenia to drive sustainability.

2. **For Tourism Provider:** To achieve the GSST Slovenia Green accreditation, providers must have an existing sustainability certification from the list of effective certifications compiled by STB. This list is reviewed regularly and the quality of the schemes are tracked by STB. It contains a range of
certifications relevant to each sector e.g. Travelife, Eco Camping, Europarc etc.). The Ministry of Economic Development and Tourism co-funds the certification costs for private sector providers. As long as the provider can show evidence of having achieved the certification and will sign the Green Policy of Slovenian Tourism, they can pay for Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism accreditation and will receive this automatically. They then benefit from becoming part of the network for destinations and providers ‘Consortium Slovenia Green’. The STB rely on the selected sustainability certification scheme organisers to ensure that providers are meeting required standards of sustainability and driving improvements.

What is the vision for sustainable tourism in your destination?

The 2017-2021 National Tourism Strategy aims to position Slovenia as ‘a global, green, boutique destination for demanding visitors who are looking for diverse, active experiences that provide inner peace and support personal growth’.

Everything the STB do is focused around ‘green’, ‘active’ and ‘heathy’ tourism to support this vision and achieve the goal of 100% participation in GSST.

Section 2. Planning

What strategies or initiatives have been adopted to encourage sustainability in your destination?

Slovenia recognised very early in the tourism planning process that sustainable tourism was the only viable route it could go in. Mass tourism was not an option or a direction the country wanted take.

A systematic approach to driving sustainability in the tourism sector was undertaken and the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism was set up to link those working at national level with those working at local level on sustainable tourism. The scheme has a network of members and co-ordinators in destinations. This is an important part of the strategy. As sustainability is a fairly new subject, it was seen as vital that the co-ordinators could help expand the knowledge and awareness of sustainable tourism amongst local decision-makers, particularly mayors who have control of budgets and resources.

To support local awareness the STB also developed ‘Consortium Slovenia Green’ which is run by the members themselves, assisted by Good Place. The 40 members of the consortium are all holders of the Slovenia Green certificate and do a lot of the work locally in raising awareness and promoting the benefits of sustainable tourism. They are also involved in product development. For example, the Five Star Green Experience initiative has been driven by consortium members.

Are there distinct steps that have been taken and/or particular management models adopted?

The Slovenian Tourist Board pledged to develop sustainable tourism from 2009. Key milestones on the roadmap have therefore been as follows:
2009 Strategic Guidelines and Development Measures established
2010 Hotel Guide for the introduction of sustainable business models launched
2011 Declaration on Partnerships for Sustainable Development of Slovenian Tourism signed by ALL key tourism stakeholders
2014 Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism development
2015 Pilot phase and first green destinations and providers certified
2016 Implementation of second phase of GSST, Consortium Slovenia Green established and Global Green Destinations assessment of Slovenia as a sustainable destination undertaken

There are particular practical implementation steps that the STB feel have been key:

1. Identifying the principle stakeholders at national level, brokering partnerships with key organisations and establishing formal groups (e.g. formation of the ‘Slovenia Green’ working group, which participated in the review and assessment of the GSST proposal).
2. Ensuring the credibility of the scheme by partnering with Green Destinations to establish globally comparable criteria.
3. Having people in place to link national tourism policy with what is happening on the ground has also been important. The STB have developed a network of co-ordinators for the GSST who have built up relationships with all the key stakeholders at grassroots level and ensured that the scheme is driving meaningful change. The STB feel that without this link, there would be a strong likelihood of the scheme falling apart or making very little progress.

How have the chosen sustainability scheme/s supported your sustainable tourism vision and contributed to your national tourism strategy?

After five years The Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism has reached almost 100 members (made up of 48 destinations, 35 providers, 4 national parks and 2 travel agencies - with 8 additional destination and 2 additional accommodation members in the pipeline). This membership covers 34% of Slovenia, but encompasses 74% of all overnight stays - so has a very significant impact in terms of changing practices and raising awareness.

Have the scheme/s supported market growth or boosted arrivals? If so how?

Slovenia has seen an annual increase of incoming tourists of around 15% per year since the implementation of the GSST. However, they also feel they have been successful in attracting the type of tourist they want, which has bought added value and supported their sustainable tourism aims.

Which stakeholders have been involved?

The STB have taken a collaborative approach, thus the involvement of stakeholders is seen as key, both initially and throughout the process. Those stakeholders involved include:
The private sector: i.e. company directors and those representing various business alliances (e.g. the spa industry alliance)

Public influencers and opinion leaders in the field of sustainability (e.g. a well-known Nobel prize-winning climate scientist)

Experts in tourism sustainability from Slovenia (it was felt essential to have experts who were national language speakers)

Local authorities, particularly local mayors as they hold responsibility for budgets and resources in destinations

Universities and research institutes within Slovenia - these have been very useful in helping access European funds

NGO’s and interest groups (although these are limited in Slovenia, as it is a small country)

Representatives from the government environment agency

Good Place (the accredited delivery partner)

Regular events are held to keep stakeholders involved, engaged and informed. These include the Slovenia Green consortium which take place 4-5 times per year. STB also organise the ‘Green Day of Slovenia Tourism’ – which brings together the Slovenia Green certificate holders and other influential people in sustainable tourism in Slovenia, to award new Green Slovenia recipients and hear from NGOs and international speakers. The aim being to keep stakeholders connected with what is going on.

Are there particular skills that have been needed?

It has been important that the emphasis on sustainability has come from the top, with the Director heavily involved from the outset. This leadership has meant that sustainability has been integrated into every aspect of the tourism strategy.

In terms of skills; senior management experience has been essential, as the ability to lead teams and develop projects strategically with a long-term outlook (as opposed to short term project management) has been key. Marketing and destination promotion experience has also been useful. Additional formal training has been provided in sustainability, although sustainable tourism knowledge has been greatly expanded through involvement in the initiative. Knowledge of sustainability issues locally, but also globally is further seen as important.

Head of Department with the STB has recently completed sustainability training in the US through the International Leadership Program (one of just 15 individuals worldwide to gain a place).

What are the main benefits seen?

The increased in visitor numbers is of course positive, but the main benefit is seen as being the added value bought by the type of visitor they have been able to attract. Slovenia set out to bring in visitors seeking experiences, green innovations and authenticity. This group, which the STB categorise as ‘Green Searchers’
are more aware and appreciative of Slovenia’s environment, people and culture, which results in greater financial benefits to local people and supports better guest/host relations.

From the outset, in their tourism strategy the STB have placed equal importance on the satisfaction levels of local people, visitors and businesses. With all needing to benefit. They feel strongly that these benefits cannot be realised through promotion of sustainable tourism alone. Instead, sustainability has to be driven through the sector with a systematic approach, so that it is bought to life.

**Do you have any advice or recommendations for other destinations wishing to become more sustainable?**

It is essential that any sustainable tourism plan developed, fits into the national strategy, otherwise it won’t be implemented long term.

Additionally, a systematic approach to driving the sustainability of the national tourism industry is important, to connect policy at national level with what is happening on the ground.

Likewise, it is key that good levels of awareness and knowledge around sustainable tourism are achieved at all levels, through continuous engagement of stakeholders and adoption of this systematic approach. Otherwise positive change cannot be achieved and sustainability remains at shallow level with sustainable tourism promotion having no substance and therefore no meaning, or longevity.

**Do you network with other European or International destinations involved in sustainable tourism? If so, which? And through which networks?**

Slovenia has been very outward looking from the beginning of their tourism strategy development. The STB Director has taken every available opportunity to network internationally on sustainable tourism and has participated in a range of international summits and forums. Of these, the PATA Summit is very valuable and there has recently been an effective gathering of European Ministers working on sustainable tourism development. However, they feel that as this is a new area there is a lack of strong international networks in sustainable tourism and to help address this, Slovenia were one of the founder members of the Global Leaders Network within Green Destinations. The knowledge and experience gained through sharing within external networks is very valuable and unofficial networking is also helpful.

### Section 3. Communication

**What is the key communications message on sustainability in your destination?**

All STB communications support the vision for ‘green, active, healthy’ tourism outlined above, within which sustainability is clearly embedded.

Until recently, all promotional activities referenced Slovenia Green and had a strong emphasis on sustainable and active tourism offerings. The strategy has now evolved further to build on the success of the Green/Active/Healthy campaign in raising awareness and the boutique element of the tourism proposition is being bought to the forefront. Thus, the current promotion focuses on ‘My Way’ Slovenia and highlights the
different opportunities for visitors to find their own unique, personal, five star experience, including green experiences.

How do you articulate the sustainability of your destination in print and on social media (please briefly describe your approach and provide 1-2 examples)


3.2 Portugal

Section 1. Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination and organisation name:</th>
<th>Portugal Turismo de Portugal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability scheme/s adopted (and website/s):</td>
<td>Turismo de Portugal encourage the Portugese industry to develop best practices and occasionally participate in the evaluation process of applications for some awards related to sustainability in tourism, but are not promoting particular schemes themselves at this stage. The organisation is however, evaluating several schemes for tourist destinations, to understand how Turismo de Portugal can use those platforms to accelerate the implementation of a sustainability certification process in Portugal.</td>
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</table>

What is the vision for sustainable tourism in your destination?

In 2017 The Portuguese Government launched the National Tourism Strategy 2027, which defines the vision for the Portuguese tourism industry for the next decade, as: “To affirm tourism as a hub for economic, social and environmental development throughout the territory, positioning Portugal as one of the most competitive and sustainable tourism destinations in the world”.

Social sustainability is a core element of the strategy, and ‘people’ have been put at the heart of Portugal’s priorities as a destination. This means: providing memorable experiences to visitors; promoting the quality of tourism employment and workforce skills and improving the quality of life of residents.

Section 2. Planning

What strategies or initiatives have been adopted to encourage sustainability in your destination?

The Portuguese National Tourism Strategy 2027 establishes five strategic pillars:
• To value the territory: capitalising on historical and cultural heritage, preserving authenticity and improving product development to better match consumer needs
• To boost the economy: promoting the competitiveness of the national tourism industry, promoting innovation and attracting foreign investment
• To promote knowledge, with an emphasis on skills development, creation of quality jobs, and dissemination of knowledge, tourism data and research throughout the tourism industry
• To generate networks and connectivity: improving air accessibility and promoting mobility and networks between tourism stakeholders
• To promote Portugal: improving Portugal’s positioning as an attractive destination to visit, invest, live and study.

The National Tourism Strategy 2027 has also set ambitious goals, which for the first time, have included specific sustainability goals, covering each of the three pillars of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental:

• In economic terms, Portugal aims to reach 80 million overnight stays in 2027, increasing tourist demand throughout the country, while duplicating tourism receipts in the same period.
• In social terms, the aim is to reduce seasonality and, with that in mind, the goal is to extend tourism activity year-round, reducing the seasonality rate from 37.5% to 33.5%. Also in the social plan, is the aim to double the number of qualifications of secondary and post-secondary level education in tourism and ensure that 90% of the residents in tourist zones consider the impact of tourism on their community to be positive.
• Finally, in the environmental plan, the goals are to ensure that 9 in every 10 companies in the country adopt efficient energy, water and waste management measures.

More information about Turismo de Portugal’s approach to sustainability can be found here: https://travelb.iturismodeportugal.pt/en-us/Pages/Sustentabilidade.aspx

Are there distinct steps that have been taken and/or particular management models adopted?

As part of the implementation of the action plan to achieve these goals, Turismo de Portugal has developed the Valorizar programme, which was developed to encourage more balanced distribution of tourism demand, reduce seasonality and generate value and employment throughout the country. Created within the scope of the National Tourism Strategy for 2027, Valorizar is a programme to support investment in the tourism sector by public and private agents, through grants and loans made available by Turismo de Portugal. The programme was initiated in 2016 and is structured through four financing lines that tackle the needs identified in the National Tourism Strategy:

• Wi-Fi Projects in Historical Centres: Support for investment in projects to provide Wi-Fi access in historical centres and tourist areas, maximising the tourism experience in Portugal and promoting the smart management of destinations
• Accessible Tourism Projects: Support for projects aimed at the physical adaptation of public spaces, resources and services of tourist interest to persons with special needs

• Valorisation Projects in the Country’s Interior: Providing support for projects aimed at developing and enhancing the heritage and resources of the regions

• Sustainable Projects: Support for initiatives/projects that promote greater integration between residents and tourists, improve quality of life for residents and promote greater community retention of the value generated through tourism activity

The Valorizar Programme has already supported +600 projects, representing more than EUR 134.1 million of investment.

The implementation plan places significant emphasis on the monitoring of sustainability goals, enabling policy evaluation and providing the private sector with instruments for decision-making. In response, Turismo de Portugal have developed a set of initiatives to improve the measurement of sustainability. One of these is the development of a network of regional sustainable tourism observatories, which support the management of tourist destinations at regional and local level and are integrated into the UNWTO’s INSTO Network and supported by a system of sustainable tourism indicators.

How have the chosen sustainability scheme/s supported your sustainable tourism vision and contributed to your national tourism strategy?

As mentioned, Portugal are not currently promoting specific sustainability schemes to support its sustainable tourism vision.

Turismo de Portugal are assessing existing schemes and considering whether it might be viable to launch a similar initiative to better position Portugal as a sustainable tourist destination.

Turismo de Portugal believe that implementation of the necessary measures to achieve their vision requires knowledge of good practice and access to tools for the effective promotion of sustainability. They are trialling different approaches to transfer sustainability knowledge and practice to businesses. As an example, to promote the adoption of good sustainability practices, the Portuguese Government has introduced changes in the rating/classification system of hotels to include sustainability criteria, and has also introduced positive discrimination criteria for investment projects. In addition, Portugal has developed specific programs to promote the sustainability of destinations and companies (e.g. the Valorizar programme previously mentioned), as well as supporting financing initiatives dedicated to improving the energy efficiency of companies in the tourism sector.

Have the scheme/s supported market growth or boosted arrivals? If so how?

As yet, there is no research on the impact of these measures in terms of tourism demand. However they are achieving recognition: In March 2019, Portugal was distinguished as the best European destination by the Sustainable Top 100 Destination Awards, promoted by Green Destinations.
Which stakeholders have been involved?

Turismo de Portugal recognises that implementation of its strategy requires co-operation between stakeholders and has established partnerships to develop projects with a range of associations within the tourism sector, regional tourism entities, academic institutions, environmental organisations and others - depending on the scope of the project.

Are there particular skills that have been needed?

The Turismo de Portugal team have an extensive track record of work experience gained in the tourism sector and also have a good level of knowledge of tourism sustainability. However the organisation has also benefitted from the support of a specialised consultant who assisted in the development of a shared strategy, achieved with civil society participation, encouraged through technological platforms, international focus groups and public sessions.

What are the main benefits seen?

Portugal’s National Tourism Strategy started in 2017 and runs over 10 years, so Turismo de Portugal recognise that there is still a lot of work to be done. The organisation is focused on developing a leading tourism proposition in the future, and feel that positioning Portugal as one of the most competitive and sustainable tourism destinations in the world, is crucial to this.

The ambitious goals in each one of the three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) built into The Tourism Strategy 2027 demonstrate the scale of the ambition to achieve sustainability benefits and are the first time that the national tourism strategy has defined specific goals in this area.

Portugal has a clear plan and a strategy for implementation, supported by efforts to monitor sustainability goals. This will enable additional benefits, such as the ability to evaluate policy effectiveness and will provide the private sector with instruments for decision-making.

Do you have any advice or recommendations for other destinations wishing to become more sustainable?

Turismo de Portugal suggest that first step is to analyse the performance of the sector in terms of sustainability and the next step is to clearly define the goals that it intends to achieve. This was the process that Portugal followed when defining its strategy and it has demonstrated very positive results in successive years record keeping.

The organisation additionally advises that the process should involve all stakeholders (public and private) and should ideally keep these stakeholders continuously involved at all stages in order to ensure successful strategy implementation.

Another valuable recommendation is to bring companies closer to the knowledge-producing entities in this area, creating instruments to promote the transfer of knowledge and the sharing of good practice.
Do you network with other European or International destinations involved in sustainable tourism? If so, which? And through which networks?

Turismo de Portugal participate in several international working groups linked to the sustainability of tourism and through them it shares experiences and gains new knowledge. Some examples of these networks include:

- The Working Group of Experts on Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (UNWTO)
- The Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (UNWTO)
- The Market Intelligence Committee (ETC)
- Green Destinations Global Leaders Network

### Section 3. Communication

What is the key communications message on sustainability in your destination?

To lead the tourism of the future means to position Portugal as a sustainable destination with a cohesive territory, innovative and competitive, a country that values work and talent. A destination to visit, to invest, to live and to study in. An inclusive, open and creative country that positions itself as a specialised hub for travel & tourism.

The principles of sustainable tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals are at the DNA of the Tourism Strategy 2027, which defines sustainability as its basis, in its vision and in its strategic priorities, defining ambitious specific goals in both economic, environmental and social pillars. Cultural heritage and environmental assets are also woven into the promotion of Portugal as a tourism destination.

How do you articulate the sustainability of your destination in print and on social media (please briefly describe your approach and provide 1-2 examples),

Within the Turismo de Portugal information platform online sustainability has its own dedicated area. Cultural heritage and environmental assets are also woven into the promotion of Portugal as a tourism destination.

Can’t Skip Portugal: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GU5W1LecyXw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GU5W1LecyXw)

Eco tourism in Castro Verde: [https://www.visitportugal.com/en/content/ecotourism-castro-verde](https://www.visitportugal.com/en/content/ecotourism-castro-verde)
### 3.3 Ireland

#### Section 1. Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination and Organisation name:</th>
<th>Ireland Fáilte Ireland (FI)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability scheme/s adopted (and website/s):</td>
<td>Fáilte Ireland are involved in a three sustainability schemes at national level:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. <strong>Clean Coasts</strong> (<a href="http://cleancoasts.org/">http://cleancoasts.org/</a>) receive sponsorship from Fáilte Ireland. Clean Coasts is an Irish programme working with communities to protect and care for Ireland’s waterways, coastline, oceans, seas and marine life. It facilitates community guardianship of adopted stretches of coastline and through this network mobilises volunteers to organise beach clean-ups. It also hold events, such as Clean Coasts Week and organises the Green Coast award, which recognises beaches with excellent water quality and effective and appropriate management to ensure the protection of the natural environment.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. <strong>Leave No Trace</strong> (<a href="http://www.leavenotraceireland.org/">http://www.leavenotraceireland.org/</a>) also receive sponsorship from FI. Leave No Trace is an outdoor sustainability and ethics programme based in Ireland and designed to promote and inspire responsible outdoor recreation through education, research and partnerships.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. FI lead Ireland’s involvement with the <strong>European Destinations of Excellence</strong> scheme (<a href="https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/eden_en">EDEN</a>) which promotes sustainable tourism development models across the European Union. The initiative is based on national competitions that take place every other year and result in the selection of a tourist ‘destination of excellence’ for each participating country. As the theme for 2019 is health and wellbeing tourism, FI have partnered with Healthy Ireland, a government-led initiative aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of everyone living in Ireland.</td>
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**What is the vision for sustainable tourism in your destination?**

Sustainability is very important for Fáilte Ireland as it is integral to the Irish product offering (which is synonymous with lush, green scenery and outdoor beauty). Thus, the key elements of sustainability, such as maintaining high quality environments, supporting local communities and maximising economic benefit for the destination is very much at the forefront of activity. As yet there is no overarching policy or vision in place specifically for sustainable tourism at a national level, however, Failté Ireland continues to ensure that all tourism initiatives are planned, developed and managed in a sustainable and integrated manner. The main objective of this is to protect, enhance and promote both natural and built heritage for the common benefit of visitors, industry, community and the environment. The **VICE (Visitor, Industry, Community and Environment) Model for Sustainable Tourism** is an approach that Fáilte Ireland adopts in all of our activities and outputs.
Section 2. Planning

What strategies or initiatives have been adopted to encourage sustainability in your destination?

Ireland’s high level tourism development strategy *People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025* incorporates more traditional elements of tourism management, such as marketing and visitor satisfaction but also references sustainable development.

To support the aims of the national tourism strategy the six counties of Ireland have been divided into four core brands to help organise and promote tourism. These are:

- The Wild Atlantic Way
- Ireland’s Ancient East
- Dublin
- Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands

Sustainability is integral to these brands, as each one offers a different experience based its geography and its natural and cultural heritage. In line with the high level strategy they are used to encourage tourists to spread their visits throughout the country and increase dwell time (i.e. the amount of time visitors spend in particular destinations within Ireland).

In addition to the national strategy, FI are committed to producing a sustainability policy for the tourism sector at national level in order to comply with UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Irish Government’s implementation of these. To support this a specific sustainable tourism development project managed by FI is underway. This is intended to establish a framework of guiding principles for sustainable tourism. The project will focus on research, future planning, policy development and implementation of sustainable tourism.

FI state that the safeguarding and successful growth of Ireland’s tourism sector calls for a sustainable and balanced approach. Environmental protection, economic competitiveness, community involvement and visitor experience all play a part in successfully achieving and benefiting from this approach. The sustainable tourism development project aims to build a strong foundation for a potential future sustainable tourism policy in order that the above may be achieved.

Are there distinct steps that have been taken and/or particular management models adopted?

As the national development authority for tourism, FI aim to ensure all their programmes, strategies and plans are ingrained in the Visitor, Industry, Community and Environment (VICE) Model for Sustainable Tourism. This, then also has a knock-on effect for all projects and initiatives that result from those plans at regional, programme and investment level.

Specific steps the sustainable tourism development project is planning to undertake include:

- Review of international and national statistics for economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism
- Review of existing sustainable tourism policy and agendas of key stakeholders
- Benchmarking of international sustainable tourism polices
- Proposals and recommendations for future planning and implementation of a sustainable tourism policy which will look at:
  - Assessing visitor numbers, types of visitors and carrying capacity
  - Development of metrics and indicators
  - Review of investment requirements
  - Responsibility matrices
  - Identification of interventions required to implement policy

Additionally, a Consumer Planning and Insights Team has been set up within Fáilte Ireland to unlock the growth potential for the Republic of Ireland as a holiday destination to Republic and Northern Ireland consumers, as well as understanding the in-market experience and needs of all tourists (domestic and international).

The destination had previously seen eco-tourism as something of a niche and had not felt there was much appetite for it, but have recognised more recently that interest is broadening, with many aspects (such as the desire to see a reduction in single-use plastic) that weren’t particularly included in the eco-tourism proposition, being picked up by the mainstream market, led by millennials.

**How have the chosen sustainability scheme/s supported your sustainable tourism vision and contributed to your national tourism strategy?**

Fáilte Ireland are conscious that lush, green landscapes, friendly people and authentic experiences are the primary reasons that visitors come to Ireland. Their involvement with the sustainability schemes they have chosen, strongly support their aims to maintain the quality of the outdoor environment and natural habitats. Leave No Trace are focused on the outdoors and excellence in quality of natural environments - which is absolutely aligned with Ireland’s reputation as a clean, green country. Clean Coasts are very much led by the community, as they encourage local people to come together to protect and preserve and value their environment – again FI see this as a good win for them in terms of maintaining the quality of their product offering. Additionally, both organisations are based in Ireland and have been established for many years.

The overall aim of the European Destinations of Excellence is to draw attention to the value, diversity and shared characteristics of European tourist destinations. To promote emerging European destinations, stimulate sustainable practices used in the chosen destinations and extend seasonality. The process thus aims to help de-congest over-visited tourist destinations. Fáilte Ireland feel that involvement with EDEN scheme helps bring greater visibility to lesser known but excellent tourist destinations and helps professionals and interested localities to maximise their potential and develop tourism services in line with sustainable development principles.

**Have the scheme/s supported market growth or boosted arrivals? If so how?**

FI are at an early stage in the development of their sustainable tourism policy so are not yet capturing this data formally. They also recognise it is likely to be difficult to separate sustainability and the effect of particular schemes, from other factors impacting arrivals.
However, anecdotally they feel that their involvement in the sustainability schemes has supported the inherent reason that tourists come to Ireland. Their 2018 research indicates that 93% of visitors said that beautiful scenery was main reason for visiting, while 88% said the natural attractions were very important. Fí’s support for Clear Coasts and Leave No Trace has helped maintain the quality of these key elements of the tourist proposition and which are linked with repeated growth in arrivals (with 2018 international visitors 6.9% up on 2017).

Which stakeholders have been involved?

Fáilte Ireland is currently undertaking stakeholder mapping to identify the key individuals and groups that should be involved in development and implementation of the sustainable tourism project. These are likely to include:

- Community Groups and community initiatives such as ‘Tidy Town’
- Local Authorities (particularly the local council forums, which also involve community groups)
- NGOs (such as Leave No Trace and the Irish Environment Network)
- Local development companies
- Farmers associations and agricultural groups
- Chambers of Commerce
- Government Departments (e.g. Marine, Airports, Climate Change, Heritage Council etc.)

Are there particular skills that have been needed?

External consultants have been bought in to support the sustainable tourism project with additional resource beyond Fí’s existing capacity and to provide specific expertise and knowledge in sustainability. The project was put to tender and was won by Earthcheck partnering with Eco tourism Ireland.

In terms of internal skills and expertise Fí feel that it is important to have an awareness of the market and the external trends impacting on it, to be able to stay ahead of the curve. Strategic planning and the ability to think long term has also been essential, as has the ability to engage stakeholders by selling the benefits and identifying the potential quick wins.

What are the main benefits seen?

One of Fáilte Ireland’s aims is to spread the benefits from tourism more evenly across Ireland. Research undertaken identifies that 70% of overnight stays were in 30% of the country, thus correcting this imbalance was seen as an important goal. The promotion of less well-known destinations associated with the EDEN scheme has helped this aim and is a clear benefit of participation in the scheme.

Though it is not yet being implemented, Fí also feel that the sustainable tourism project will support its other aims around alleviating pinch points, enhancing visitor satisfaction, increasing dwell time, increasing community satisfaction with tourism and by potentially diversifying the product offering, extend the season throughout the year.

Do you have any advice or recommendations for other destinations wishing to become more sustainable?
Fáilte Ireland’s feel that it is important for destinations to be aware of their market, the motivations of their visitors and crucially to recognise how important it is to protect their key assets—which in Ireland’s case are their authenticity, their green landscapes and friendly people.

They would recommend that destinations wishing to become more sustainable take a holistic approach and look at how the tourism sector interacts with all other sectors in terms of sustainability. They recognise that the scale of this can feel overwhelming but suggest breaking the task down, by starting to look at it with the long-term tourism vision and goals as a basis.

As an island nation they also feel it is important to consider the sustainability of how visitors travel to the destination, as well as the experiences they have when there and the way they interact with the different parts of the tourism industry.

Do you network with other European or International destinations involved in sustainable tourism? If so, which? And through which networks?

Fáilte Ireland find that being involved in the EDEN network is helpful, both with promotion (as mentioned) but also in sharing knowledge and learning from the experience of other destinations.

Section 3. Communication

What is the key communications message on sustainability in your destination?

Clean, green, authentic Ireland is the core message and is supported by Visitor Management Plans and monitoring and surveying (e.g. through the Wild Atlantic Way Monitoring Programme)

How do you articulate the sustainability of your destination in print and on social media (please briefly describe your approach and provide 1-2 examples)

Fill your heart with Ireland https://youtu.be/_187iYrb9Us


Hidden heartlands: https://www.google.com/search?q=failte+ireland+green+advert&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi8k bXp0ZjiAhVJURUIHVlpCucQ_AUIDigB&cshid=1557755125116104&biw=1354&bih=932#imgrc=3YF5qCe_ppckAM
PART 4: ANALYSIS OF THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND DESTINATION APPEAL

4.1 Key Findings

The survey also sought to understand how destinations engage with sustainability in general and use it as part of their promotional mix. Of the 16 who responded to the survey, when asked the question, ‘Has your country made a conscious decision to make sustainability one of its key selling points’? Ten answered yes, five answered no and one did not answer.

Graph 4: Has your country made a conscious decision to make sustainability one of its key selling points?

Of those six that either answered no, or did not provide an answer, one felt this was because ‘the government has not made sustainability a priority in my country’. Two replied ‘my country is not promoting sustainability yet, but will do so in the next few years’ and three agreed with the statement ‘my country is working to improve sustainability, but we have a long way to go before promoting this aspect to tourists’.

Additional comments added by respondents included the sentiment ‘we believe very hard in sustainability, but not as a selling point’. Which suggests that while some destinations recognise the need for improved sustainability, it is not realistic or desirable to try and include it in the promotional mix. This may be because other aspects of the destination take priority for promotion, or because the destination sees it as something that needs to be achieved regardless of the promotional opportunities presented.

Those destinations responding negatively to the question on whether sustainability has been made a priority in their country, ended the survey at that point. Where NTOs responded positively however the survey continued, to understand more about the motivations and implementation. Most NTOs responding positively felt that their country ‘Has many sustainable assets to promote’. Almost as many agreed with the statements that ‘Sustainability had been made a priority in my country’ and that ‘Sustainability gives my country a competitive edge’. Similarly, many responded
that ‘Sustainability has been identified as a trend my destination should capitalise on’. Other comments received were that ‘sustainability fits perfectly into our culture’

Graph 5: Has your organisation pursued or promoted any sustainability schemes as part of your destination or marketing strategy?

When asked the question, ‘Has your organisation pursued or promoted any sustainability schemes as part of your destination or marketing strategy?’ 60% of those responding said yes, while 40% responded negatively. Of those saying yes, 40% (two of five) monitor the success that this has had, while 60% (three of five) do not. When compared to the whole survey sample, only a very small number, just two of the 16 survey respondents currently monitor the impact of sustainability schemes. The monitoring undertaken out is for national schemes (specifically Slovenia’s Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism) and in one case a respondent ticked ‘yes’ to monitoring, but on closer examination, it appears this relates to more general environmental monitoring, rather than being linked to a particular sustainability scheme. So, in fact, only one destination amongst the entire ETC membership reported effectively monitoring the success of the sustainable tourism schemes they are promoting.

To continue the in-depth analysis, when asked the question “Has promotion as a sustainable destination increased visitor numbers”? Of the four destinations responding, only one was able to say ‘yes and we have data that shows this’. All three other respondents replied ‘we think it has but we don’t have data’. So, research into the impact of sustainability promotion is very limited in European destinations at national level. In many ways this is not surprising. Hard data which is able to single out individual reasons from the myriad of different motivations influencing the decision to select a particular destination to visit, is notoriously difficult to obtain. Added to this is the fact that ‘sustainability’ is not one single concept or idea, but a combination of environmental, social and cultural improvements and enhancements in a destination, which a visitor may not even be conscious of, let alone be able to gauge the level of impact on their holiday
choice – despite the fact that clean environments and authentic cultures may have been a major reason for the destination choice. In short, the effect may be subconscious rather than a conscious.

Consumer awareness of sustainability and the understanding of what is and what isn’t sustainable tourism is steadily growing, as previously mentioned. So although it may currently be difficult to isolate the impact on visitor numbers (and visitor quality) of integrating sustainability schemes into destination management, it will almost certainly get easier over time as; 1. destinations start to ask the right questions in surveys (i.e. is a clean environment important to you? Or is a friendly welcome from local people important? Rather than ‘Is sustainability important to you when you go on holiday? 2. travellers become more familiar with the concept of sustainability, related to tourism and 3. destinations make progress on implementing sustainability schemes. We have seen from this study that the one destination making significant progress on development and systematic implementation of a sustainability scheme is able to generate data illustrating the positive impact on visitor numbers.

Ten respondents replied to the question ‘Has promotion as a sustainable destination improved visitor satisfaction levels?’ Again, just one respondent was able to state ‘Yes and we have evidence for this’. The other nine all responded, ‘We think it has but we don’t have data’.

Graph 6: Has promotion as a sustainable destination improved visitor satisfaction levels?

The survey then asked respondents for anecdotal information on any impacts they felt that promotion as a sustainable destination had had – either positive or negative. No negative impacts were reported. The positive impacts included increased awareness amongst staff, partners, stakeholders and clients and a positive impact in terms of perception. Other NTOs, particularly those leading on implementing sustainable tourism in their countries referred to the way in which sustainability had helped support the aims laid out in the national tourism strategy and felt it played an important
role in the positioning of the destination. Recognition of achievements in sustainable tourism through awards earned (again, particularly by those NTOs taking a leading role) was also seen as a positive impact. This had also led to approaches from other countries interested in learning how the success was achieved. The alignment between sustainable tourism and the UN Sustainable Development Goals was also referred to.

Finally, participants were also asked for any further comments they wanted to share on the tourism promotion of sustainability in their country, both now and in the future. From the comments it is clear that many destinations recognise the need to do more on sustainability, by for example; communicating to stakeholders, both in the destination and externally, developing indicators for sustainability, setting goals and increasingly integrate sustainability into management plans. In this respect the knowledge sharing afforded through membership of the ETC will be incredibly valuable. Although aspects of sustainability boost competitiveness, to some extent sustainability transcends competition between destinations, because of course, a better world should benefit all. There is much to gain collectively from sharing knowledge, learnings and experience on sustainability. Not only will it enhance Europe’s reputation and attractiveness, but it will lead to improved visitor experiences across the board and a better quality of life for European residents, many of whom are impacted by tourism no matter where they live.

4.2 Conclusions and Recommendations

More awareness is needed regarding the use and the benefits of different sustainable tourism schemes for destinations

There are few examples of destinations implementing destination-based sustainability schemes to drive sustainable tourism in their country, with the aim of integrating this into the promotional mix (in this research we found only one). Some destinations are looking at the different sustainability schemes that exist and how schemes might be able to help them achieve their sustainability aims. Most however, are still at the stage of working out what they want to achieve in the area of sustainability (if anything) and many do not yet recognise it as integral to the maintenance of their country’s tourism offering. There is a lack of understanding amongst NTOs of what sustainable tourism is, how simple the basic principles are and how aligned they are to the essence of every destination management strategy. This lack of understanding is holding many NTOs back from integrating sustainable tourism into their strategic plans and promotional activities in any meaningful way. There is a knowledge gap and a lack of confidence in knowing how and when to promote sustainability in destinations. Thus, the recommendation is for this to be addressed with training on sustainability for NTOs and their marketing teams or communications partners (e.g. PR agencies).

The implementation of schemes should be supported by policies and monitored

Sustainability is starting to be included in National Tourism Strategies but in many cases it has yet to move from inclusion to implementation – let alone promotion. Three clear steps were identifiable from in the case studies:

1. Integrate sustainability into the national tourism strategy

2. Drive sustainability implementation within destinations and businesses through engagement with or creation of schemes
3. Integrate the elements of sustainability that particularly appeal to the market segments you aim to attract, into the promotional mix for the destination

A more systematic approach is needed and sustainability schemes can be a useful tool as part of this

The schemes listed in the Information Cards are all fairly robust and transparent. As such they are an effective mechanism for driving sustainability within a destination. It must be recognised however that resources and buy-in from stakeholders at all levels are needed to ensure the benefits of these schemes can be realised.

More cooperation between the destination schemes and businesses schemes is recommended

NTOs are in a strong position to bring together public and private sector schemes to work together to drive sustainability in their destination. Additionally, it is easier to adapt or adopt an existing scheme than create a whole new one. Anything that is created should align with international standards (such as those recognised by the GSTC) to be relevant globally.

It is important to acknowledge the challenge involved in measuring the impact of sustainability schemes on visitor numbers, but recognise implementation of such schemes, can enhance the product offering and bring additional benefits to the environment and local communities.

As the individual variables acting on the success of particular promotional campaigns are difficult to separate from their impacts on visitor numbers, no destinations have specific figures isolating the adoption of a sustainability scheme leading to an increase in numbers. The Slovenian Tourist Board who are amongst those leading on the development in sustainable tourism in Europe, report an increase in visitor numbers and most importantly an increase in the specific market segments they have targeted with the promotion resulting from implementation of their overall sustainability strategy, within which sustainability schemes play an important role. However, they also acknowledge the additional benefits that improving the sustainability of their destination has generated (See the Slovenia case study for more details).

Schemes owners should share more evidence regarding the benefits and the positive impacts

The schemes established through public funding in particular, are not great at promoting the benefits and positive impacts than can be gained through implementation. There is a real need to share models, success stories and best practise more widely. The recommendation therefore is that NTOs work more closely with their chosen sustainability schemes to undertake this.

Sustainable tourism and sustainability schemes could be better used to enhance the competitiveness of European Tourism

Building on the success that these schemes have had thus far, it is possible to envisage an iconic sustainable tourism map of Europe, which highlights the implementation of active sustainability schemes. This map could be quite extensive in time, including for example, the recipients of the, the various EDEN destinations, European Capitals of Culture and the new European Capital for Smart Tourism, as well as Green Destinations and those coasts and beaches awarded a Blue Flag. To make this a meaningful and effective tool to enhance the competitiveness of European tourism however, some steps forward need to be taken:
1. The sustainable tourism schemes must be supported with policies and strategies, to ensure a holistic approach and guarantee impacts at scale.

4. Governments/ NTOs must be aware of the multiple use and benefits that the tools can bring and measure the impact they generate.

5. Awareness of the value of sustainable tourism must be promoted amongst citizens and tourists.

6. Governments/ NTOs need to engage more actively with all the suppliers of the tourism value chain and encourage the adoption of sustainable consumption and production models.

7. A stronger link between sustainable schemes, tourism product development approaches and marketing opportunities must be created.

8. Destinations should be encouraged to recognise the fact that sustainability will increasingly become a selling point and communicate their sustainability activities to consumers.