

Implementing Rules for the Certification of Destinations

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The sustainability certification of a destination is based on a good interaction between the key tourism player, the so-called destination management organisation (DMO) and the participating tourism service providers within the destination (e.g. hotels, restaurants, transport companies). The DMO itself carries out a sustainability process in the company and acts as the lead player of the sustainability process in the destination.

1 Principles

- 1.1 Scope of application:** The TourCert Implementing Rules for destinations are an applicable annex of the TourCert Certification Guideline and the TourCert Set of Criteria. They define the general conditions of the sustainability process and the certification and apply to all destinations.
- 1.2 Deviations:** Deviations from the provisions defined in this document are only possible with the approval of the TourCert Certification Office.
- 1.3 Destination:** TourCert defines destinations as those geographical areas which are chosen as destinations by a guest or a guest segment. A destination usually provides all offers which are necessary for a stay such accommodations, restaurants and entertainment facilities.

The destination promotes itself as a joint unit of a tourism segment, both on the part of supply and on the part of demand. This includes landscape, fauna, flora, climatic conditions and cultural attractions (original offer). It forms an economic competitive unit. It refers to both small-scale structures (resorts, amusement parks - derived offer) and places (for example in city tourism), but also entire regions.

- 1.4 Destination Management Organisation (DMO):** A destination has a central organisational unit which acts both as a tourism service provider and as a coordinating / planning / marketing body for tourism products and services, e.g. management organisations, spa town administrations or tourist marketing. If there is no classic DMO in a destination, the central management tasks are assumed by a

DMO-like organisation. Alongside the DMO there are other organisations whose activities / planning have an influence on the (original and derived) tourism offer, e.g. institutions for economic development, building authorities, nature conservation authorities, transportation providers or agriculture.

For the sustainability certification, the DMO is the central entity to manage the sustainability and certification process with its management, communication, stakeholders and in exchange with the suppliers and other relevant stakeholders of the destination.

1.5 Partner Business: Partner Businesses are tourism suppliers in the destination who are committed to the sustainability process of the destination. Partner Businesses are defined as followed:

- The services offered are directed towards tourists as the main target group or end consumers. Companies that offer advisory services to address tourists (e.g. marketing services, strategic services) are also accepted.
- The services offered must be part of the overall product "travel/tourism".
- The tourism services offered must account for the main part of total sales.

The Partner Businesses compose the destination's partner network, the DMO coordinates this network and ensures its active participation through regular meetings or other activities. The partner network strives to improve the sustainability performance of its members.

The DMO's internal audit regularly checks the Partner Businesses' compliance with the requirements; during the external audit some Partner Businesses will be visited.

Recognized Partner Businesses can be those businesses or organizations who

- a) participate in the **TourCert Qualified** with its respective requirements
- b) or have one of the following recognized environmental or **sustainability certifications**:
 - TourCert Certification
 - Blue Flag
 - Blaue Schwalbe (Blue Swallow)
 - Certified Green Hotel
 - DGNB certification system for sustainable building
 - Klima-Hotels
 - Greentable

- Ecocamping
- Eco Hotels Certified EHC
- EMAS
- EU Ecolabel
- Green Globe
- Viabono CO₂-Fußabdruck
- Green Key
- Green Pearls
- Green Sign / InfraCert
- ISO 14.001:2004
- Ökoprofit
- Partner Nationale Naturlandschaften (National Nature Landscapes)
- Viabono
- Quality management Golf & Natur
- BIO-Hotels
- Tripadvisor Green Leaders with at least bronze status
- TUI Eco Resorts
- Ecolabel for alpine huts of the German Alpine Association DAV
- Wellness-Hotels & Resorts quality standards
- Wellness-Stars
- Bioland
- Naturland
- Dehoga Umweltcheck (NUR GOLD)
- Bio Zertifizierung
- EU-Bio-Zertifizierung
- Biokreis
- Demeter
- Fair'n Green
- FairChoice
- SQD NUR mit TourCert Qualified Modul

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Regional or other certifications must meet the following minimum requirements in order to be recognized:

- the focus is on environmental, social or sustainability aspects (at least 50% of the criteria) and covers various thematic areas
- the assessment is carried out as an on-site audit or as a verification by a third party (e.g. certification council or award committee)
- the validity period is no longer than 3 years

The recognition of certification systems will be evaluated by TourCert.

1.6 Sustainability Council: The appointment of a sustainability council for the destination is essential. The Sustainability Council is a strategic body that advises on the objectives and measures of the sustainability process, monitors implementation and helps to ensure quality and coordination.

2 Core Indicators

The core indicators of the destination are presented in the audit report and benchmarked against comparable destinations. The core indicators consist of available destination data and sustainability indices, which are collected by surveys and evaluations.

1. Percentage of recognized partner businesses (%)
2. Share of certified hospitality businesses in tourism (%)
3. Bed occupancy rates in accommodations (%)
4. Average CO₂ emissions from energy consumption of accommodations (Partner Businesses) (t)
5. Percentage of renewable energies (%) from total energy consumption (Partner Businesses)
6. Index destination evaluation DMO level (%)
7. Index destination evaluation destination level (%)
8. Index product evaluation (%)
9. Percentage of suppliers with a certification for accessibility in the hotel industry (%)
10. Percentage of tourism suppliers with a quality certification (%)
11. Percentage of sustainable products in the DMO (%)
12. Guest information (%)
13. Employee survey (%)
14. Business partner survey (%)
15. Tour guide survey %

3 Data Collection

Destinations seeking TourCert certification must meet basic requirements of data collection in order to apply for certification.

Minimum Requirements for Data Collection

Data collection includes the indicators defined in the Set of Criteria for Destinations. As a minimum requirement, it must contain the scope defined below.

The creation of a mission statement, sustainability report and improvement programme are fundamental requirements for certification. Furthermore, if the tourism strategy already exists, it must include a reference to sustainability. If there is no tourism strategy yet, it must also be developed with a reference to sustainability.

Evaluation/Survey	Scope
<i>Mandatory for all certifications</i>	
(0) Total data collection	
(1) Evaluation of sustainability measures already implemented in the DMO and the destination – Sustainability evaluation	One evaluation by the sustainability manager
(2) Evaluation of product development – Product evaluation	<u>Initial certification:</u> At least one product or offer for every business area or product line advertised by the DMO <u>Recertification:</u> In-depth evaluation of all products or offers of one business area or product line advertised by the DMO
(3) Evaluation of employee satisfaction (from at least 5 employees) – Employee survey	All employees of the DMO
(4) Evaluation of guest information – Guest information evaluation	All employees of the DMO with customer contact
(5) Evaluation of business partner satisfaction	Representative selection of relevant business partners of the DMO

– Business partners survey	
(6) Evaluation of the sustainability orientation of tour guides	Representative selection of tour guides of the destination
– Tour guides survey	

4 Requirements for Certification

4.1 Reporting Year: The data collected must relate to the last closed financial year. The reference date is the date on which data collection started.

4.2 Sustainability Manager: To implement and maintain the TourCert certification system, sustainability managers are required to have a respective qualification. This rule also applies if there is a change in assignment and another person takes on the sustainability management. Changes of responsibilities for the management must be communicated to TourCert.

It must be ensured that the knowledge about the TourCert certification process remains within the company. Interns are therefore not permitted as sustainability managers.

5 Deadlines and Periods

The TourCert sustainability system promotes the continuous improvement of the certified destinations' sustainability performance. This requires the timely submission of relevant documents and information in order to be able to monitor improvement and development in a timely manner.

5.1 Validity Period of the Certification: Destinations are considered certified as soon as the DMO has received a confirmation letter from the TourCert Certification Office. The certification period begins in the respective month.

The validity period of the certification is three years.

Every year (in the respective month) between (re)certifications, the certified destination must submit an updated improvement program to the TourCert Certification Office.

TourCert may contact the DMO regularly to discuss relevant changes of content or structure of the sustainability process. The update of the improvement program will be checked annually.

If the DMO has between 50 and 99 employees (full-time equivalents), TourCert examines whether an annual monitoring audit is required. An annual monitoring audit is mandatory for DMOs of 100 or more employees (full-time equivalents).

5.2 Responsibility of Companies to Meet Deadlines: Audit documents and updated improvement programs must be submitted to the TourCert Certification Office in time and unsolicited. It is the responsibility of the destinations to meet the relevant deadlines.

5.3 Request for Extension of Deadlines: If the deadlines for submission of the sustainability report or the updated improvement programs cannot be met for understandable reasons, the Certification Office must be informed in time and a request must be made for an extension of the relevant deadline.

The extension of deadlines will not change on the validity period of the certification. The date of the initial certification will always be the reference for future deadlines and periods.

5.4 Failure to Comply with Deadlines: Failure to comply with deadlines for the submission of the sustainability report or updated improvement program and failure to apply for an extension may result in the withdrawal of the TourCert label.

The sustainability report for recertification as well as the updated improvement program must not be submitted later than three months after the deadline.

6 Rules for Certification

6.1 Audit: Audits take place on site in the office of the DMO as well as by site visits in the destination (e.g. attractions) and visits of Partner Businesses.

For the audit the following documents must be submitted to TourCert:

- Sustainability report
- Improvement program
- Surveys and evaluations

6.2 Recommendations: The auditor's recommendations in the audit report should be included as measures in the improvement program. If individual recommendations cannot be implemented, this must be justified.

6.3 Conditions: Once the audit has been carried out, the auditor or the Certification Council can impose conditions, which may be either

- prerequisites for the current (re-)certification are or
- must be implemented in the coming certification period.

The auditor's conditions from the audit report must be included into the improvement program as measures and implemented within the agreed period. If individual conditions cannot be implemented, this must be justified.

6.4 Use of the Labels: After successful certification, the DMO receives the label "Sustainable Destination" and the TourCert label. The DMO may use both labels for public advertising. Companies or branch offices belonging to the DMO may only use the certification labels if they have been actively involved in the sustainability process and have been considered in the data collection. DMO shareholders do not automatically receive the certification labels.

Recognized Partner Businesses may use the label "Sustainable Destination Partner" to publicly advertise. If a Partner Business has been awarded with the TourCert Qualified, the company also receives this label.

The DMO must publicly communicate the certification of the destination. The following specifications apply to the use of the labels:

- The label "Sustainable Destination" must be placed prominently on the DMO website and linked to the TourCert website. The TourCert label should also be presented.
 - The TourCert label may only be published in the formats published by TourCert and only in the colours red or black.
 - The use of the label "Sustainable Destination" must comply with the requirements defined in the logo manual (the logo manual is handed out after certification).
 - The label „Sustainable Destination" is placed on publications of the DMO.
 - TourCert is a company and destination certification, not a product certification. References to the certification may only refer to the destination, DMO and Partner Businesses, not to the products and services offered.
 - If the certification is not renewed, DMO and Partner Businesses must remove all references to the certification from their own media and publications.

Destinations outside the German-speaking area only receive the TourCert label. If a Partner Business has been awarded with the TourCert Qualified, the company receive this qualification.

- 6.5 External Communication After Initial Certification:** Certified destinations must publish the current sustainability report on the DMO website and display the label "Sustainable Destination" in a prominent position on the website.

The TourCert certification must be explained at a suitable place. Further information and templates can be found in the TourCert Toolbox. The company receives the access data with the certificate.

- 6.6 Suspension of Certification:** If a destination is not interested in recertification or if the resources necessary for recertification are not available to the destination, the certification ends at the end of the certification period.

- 6.7 Re-application for Initial Certification:** If a destination is not recommended for certification by the auditor or if the Certification Council rejects a certification, the destination can apply for a new audit.

At least three months must lay between the first and second audit. A new data collection is not necessarily required. Which reporting year will be audited will be decided on a case-by-case basis by the auditor or the Certification Office.

- 6.8 Re-application for Recertification:** If a destination is not recommended for recertification by the auditor; if the Certification Council rejects recertification; if a destination loses the TourCert label due to non-compliance with deadlines or in circumstances that do not allow an audit; then the destination has the opportunity to be audited within six months without re-collection of data.

After six months, data collection must be renewed, and the renewed participation in the introduction workshop is recommended.