Annex to the TourCert Certification Guideline

Implementation Rules for the Certification of Tour Operators

July 2022

1 Principles

1.1 **Scope of application:** The TourCert Implementing Rules for Tour Operators 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 tour operators.

1.2 **Deviations:** Deviations from the provisions defined in this document are only possible with the approval of the TourCert Certification Office.

1.3 **Tour Operators:** TourCert defines tour operators as commercial enterprises with their own legal form, which according to national legislation

a) are a contractual partner of the traveller and offer at least two travel services as their own travel package by employing suppliers as subcontractors

b) generate their annual turnover mainly from own-operated tours.

TourCert defines **micro tour operators** as tour operators with up to 4.9 full-time positions.

2 Core Indicators

The core indicators of the company are presented in the audit report and benchmarked against comparable companies.

1. Share of the Travel Price Staying Within the Destinations
2. CO_2 Emissions per Flight-Guest/Day (without compensation)
3. CO_2 Emissions per Flight-Guest/Day (minus compensation)
4. Satisfaction Index* Business Partners
5. Quality Index Customer Information
6. Satisfaction Index Employees
7. CO_2 Emissions at the Office per Employee
8. CSR Index Product Development
9. CSR Index Partner Agencies

10. CSR Index Accommodations
11. CSR Index Tour Guides

The core indicator "Satisfaction Index Business Partners" is only collected during recertification, unless the coach considers it useful for the initial certification.

In justified cases, **micro tour operators** do not need to collect the core indicator "Employee Satisfaction Index".

For **benchmarking** the two following core indicators the companies are divided into four categories, depending on the flight duration (one-way) of the most booked flight category: „CO_2 Emissions per Guest/Day (with and without compensation)“

Short distance. Up to 3h flight duration

Medium distance: 3-6h flight duration

Long distance I: 6-9h flight duration

Long distance II: more than 9h flight duration

3 Data Collection

Tour operators 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 Tour Operators. As a minimum requirement, it must contain the scope defined below. To ensure a representative evaluation, all relevant destinations must be considered.

The creation of a mission statement, sustainability report and improvement programme are basic requirements for certification.

Supplier surveys are carried out as self-assessments. The number of suppliers defined below must be actively invited to participate in the self-assessment.

The survey of employees is not mandatory for **micro tour operators**.

	up to 4.9 employees	from 5 employees	from 250 employees
(0) Total data collection			
(1) Travel Offer Assessment - CO_2 Balance of Travel Offers - Product Evaluation	Those offers that combined generate 80% of all overnight stays		Those offers that combined generate 50% of all overnight stays
(2) Customer Information Evaluation	All employees with customer contact		
(3) Employee Satisfaction Survey	-	All employees	
(4) Supplier Surveys - Partner Agencies - Accommodations - Tour Guides	Survey of all suppliers of the most booked travel offer	80% of suppliers of the destinations or offers assessed in (1)	50% of suppliers of the destinations or offers assessed in (1)

Minimum Requirements for Recertification

During the recertification process, the indicators defined in the Set of Criteria for Tour Operators will be collected again. Moreover, the CO_2 Balance of the transportation emissions off all travels will be calculated. For the Product Evaluation, the Customer Information Evaluation, the Supplier Surveys the most booked country or the most booked representative travel offer from each continent will be selected. Additionally, an Employee Satisfaction Survey has to be conducted.

Micro tour operators carry out the mentioned evaluations for the most booked travel offer. The Employee Satisfaction Survey is not mandatory.

In addition, the following survey is carried out for recertifications

(5) Business Partner Survey	Representative selection of relevant business partners

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 sustainability 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 sustainability 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.

4.3 **Recognition of Compensation:** Flight compensations are 100% recognized if

a) their calculation is based on an RFI[1] of at least 2,7

b) The compensation project/s is/are certified according to CDM Gold Standard[2] (CER or VER)

If no RFI is used or if another voluntary standard is applied, the compensation will not be recognized. Reforestation projects will not be recognized[3].

5 Deadlines and Periods

The TourCert certification fosters the continuous improvement of the certified tour operators´ 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**: Tour operators are considered certified as soon as they have received a confirmation letter from the TourCert Certification Office. The certification period begins in the respective month.

The certification period for the initial certifications is two years (based on the respective month) and three years after every recertification.

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[1] RFI stands for Radiative Forcing Index or the global warming potential of certain emission sources. This factor is used to calculate the total climate impact of flight emissions. The CO2 emissions are multiplied by the RFI to measure not only CO_2 but also other climate-relevant gases.

[2] The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) describes a mechanism under the Kyoto Protocol for offsetting greenhouse gas emissions not where they were emitted but in developing and emerging countries. The Gold Standard defines special quality requirements. A CDM Gold Standard is therefore a kind of quality label for compensation projects. The savings achieved by compensation projects are labelled as CERs (Certified Emission Reduction) if they have been verified by the UN climate protection agency and they are VERs (Verified Emission Reduction) if they have been verified by an authority other than the UN.

[3] More information: https://www.atmosfair.de/en/standards/forest_projects/

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

5.2 **Responsibility of Companies to Meet Deadlines:** The sustainability reports and the updated improvement programs must be submitted to the TourCert Certification Office in time and unsolicited. It is the responsibility of the companies 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 and 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 offices of the tour operator. In justified cases (for companies with up to 10 full-time equivalent employees), the Certification Office may make exceptions.

6.2 **Recommendations:** The auditor´s recommendations in the audit report should be included as measures in the improvement program.

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 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 Label:** After successful certification, companies must publicly display the label and the certification must be communicated. The following standards apply to the use of the label:

- The label must be placed prominently on the corporate website and linked to the TourCert website.
- The label may only be published in the formats published by TourCert and only in the colours red or black.
- The label shall be placed on corporate publications.
- TourCert is a company certification, not a product certification. References to the certification may only refer to the company itself, not to the products and services offered by the company.

If the certification is not renewed, the company must remove all references to certification from its media and publications.

6.5 **External Communication After Initial Certification:** Certified tour operators must publish the current sustainability report on the company website and display the certification label 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 company is not interested in recertification or if the resources necessary for recertification are not available to the company, the certification ends at the end of the certification period.

When the process is restarted and the audit is carried out again, the companies are audited according to the main focal points of the recertification audit (see Certification Guideline).

6.7 **Re-application for Initial Certification:** If a tour operator is not recommended for certification by the auditor or if the Certification Council rejects a certification, the company 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 tour operator is not recommended for recertification by the auditor; if the Certification Council rejects recertification; if a company loses the TourCert label due to non-compliance with deadlines or in circumstances that do not allow an audit; then the company 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.

When the process is restarted and the audit is carried out again, the companies are audited according to the main focal points of the recertification audit (see Certification Guideline).

TourCert gGmbH
Blumenstraße 19, 70182 Stuttgart
Amtsgericht Stuttgart, HRB 753972
GF: Marco Giraldo

Tel: +49 711 248397-0
Fax: +49 711 248397-22
E-Mail: info@tourcert.org
Web: www.tourcert.org

GLS Gemeinschaftsbank eG
IBAN: DE 2743 0609 6770 3627 7900
BIC: GENODEM1GLS
UID/VAT: DE301725515