

The *VISIT* Initiative

**Tourism eco-labelling
in Europe – moving
the market towards
sustainability**



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About this publication

The European VISIT (Voluntary Initiative for Sustainability in Tourism) initiative has been designed to demonstrate how tourism eco-labels in Europe can collaborate and move the tourism market towards sustainability.

This publication should help the reader to gain a better understanding of this joint initiative, and identify the opportunities and mutual benefits of collaboration.

The texts, tables and illustrations should encourage:

- *destination managers* to assess and monitor their progress towards sustainability and quality.
- *eco-labelling bodies* to identify their strengths as well as their potential for improvement and contribute to more sustainable tourism in the destinations.
- *tourism suppliers* to apply for certification of their good environmental performance.
- *tourist boards, tour guide publishers, tour operators, travel agencies* to collaborate with VISIT eco-labels, to prioritise and promote certified products with added value for both clients and the environment.
- *stakeholder associations, as well as politicians* to recognise and support the potential of harmonisation and strengthening "eco-labelling" in the context of complementary initiatives and legislation.
- *all professionals in tourism* to contribute, to develop, improve, promote and market eco-labels and their underlying projects as "the better choice" and to monitor and report on the progress towards more sustainable tourism in Europe.

The **chapters** focus on some key aspects of the current situation and the results of the VISIT initiative so far, giving examples and ideas of individual and joint action. A list of contacts is provided for further information and to exchange experiences and build partnerships.

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Foreword

Sustainable Tourism The value of the VISIT initiative



*Eugenio Yunis, World Tourism Organisation, Chief,
Department of Sustainable Development of Tourism*

The VISIT initiative has come at the right moment and in the right place. It concerns Europe, where the large majority of international and domestic tourist movements take place, and where the consumers are more aware about the environmental and social implications of their tourism activities. It is also in Europe where certification systems and eco-labels applicable to the tourism industry were born, back in the mid-1980s, and where 15 years later some 60 or so of these schemes co-exist, sometimes complementing each other, sometimes competing.

From the very beginning of this initiative the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) supported and gave advice, when required, to the various certification schemes that met in early 2001, to consider the possibility of co-ordinating their efforts under one umbrella. This support was based on the belief, expressed by the WTO at the UN Commission on Sustainable Development in 1999, that the proliferation of too many certification schemes could be counterproductive. Instead, a co-ordinated effort and the definition of common certification criteria could help to make these schemes more useful to guide consumers towards the selection of more sustainable tourism products and services.

VISIT is the result of careful, conscientious and dedicated work undertaken by numerous people under the able direction of ECEAT and ECOTRANS. ECOTRANS was also responsible for the inventory and evaluation of the more than 100 certification schemes world wide, as part of a WTO-commissioned study undertaken in 2000-2001. The results of this study were published by the WTO under the title "Voluntary Initiatives for Sustainable Tourism".

The WTO will continue to support VISIT, whilst encouraging governments and the tourism industry to strive for a higher level of sustainability. Duly conceived, properly managed and suitably co-ordinated eco-labels and certificates can certainly contribute to make this vibrant industry more sustainable and to better contribute to the Millennium Development Goals.



Europe

The world's leading tourism destination

The rich diversity

Fifty percent of international tourism takes place in Europe. Its coasts, mountains, beaches, lakes, cities and towns are the most frequented destinations in the world. Europe offers hundreds of thousands of indoor and outdoor sport and leisure facilities and an endless list of summer and winter tour packages. Tourism and travel is one of Europe's biggest and most rapidly expanding industries, and this is expected to double over the next decade.

European tourism can trace its roots back more than two centuries to the growth of spa resorts catering to the wealthy and middle classes. Today Europe can claim to combine a rich diversity of cultures, languages, landscapes, nature, climatic zones, people, lifestyles and social values, together with a high standard of living, an excellent infrastructure and an expansion of leisure time.

This growing interest in visiting cultural, heritage and natural sites has grown in parallel to an increasing concern for the environment by consumers and host populations. Europe has, for instance, some half million accommodation providers that both impact on the environment, yet depend directly on the quality of their natural surroundings for their success. 95% of these

businesses are micro or small enterprises with less than fifty employees. Yet, because they are dependent on their natural location, many of them are very active and innovative in minimising their environmental impact and preserving their environment.

The challenge of sustainability

Although the rapid expansion of tourism in Europe has increased environmental threats, the parallel acceleration of technical and management solutions to environmental problems has created better market opportunities for sustainable products. One of the challenges is to ensure that the more sustainable products are easily recognised and offered, enabling the consumer to make the "green" choice. It is here that tourism certification programmes can play a vital role. The dual function of these voluntary initiatives is to direct travellers to environmentally and socially responsible tourism businesses and to encourage improvements and set standards within the tourism industry.





European Union Committed to sustainable development

European environmental policy contributes towards sustainable development in tourism with directives, voluntary tools and basic orientations, including:

Directives: high relevance for destinations

Managing Natura 2000 Sites

The EU Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Fauna and Flora establishes a community wide network of Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protected Areas. It is a key means of achieving the principle of environmental integration and ultimately sustainable development.

► <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/>

Water Framework Directive

This new directive expands the scope of water protection to all waters and sets clear objectives that a "good status" must be achieved for all European waters by 2015 and that water use is sustainable throughout Europe.

► http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/water/water-framework/index_en.html

Bathing water quality

The 1976 *Bathing Water Directive* has set binding standards for bathing waters throughout the European Union. The annual Bathing Water Report and Tourist Atlas show substantial progress in the quality of bathing waters and large public awareness.

► http://europa.eu.int/water/water-bathing/index_en.html

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The SEA-Directive is to ensure that there is an environmental assessment of the impact of regional and local plans and programmes during their preparation and *prior* to their adoption.

► <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/eia/home.htm>

In addition to such European directives and national legislation the EU member states have signed International Conventions aiming to preserve the rich diversity of nature and limiting their effects on climate change: the *Convention on Biological Diversity* (► <http://www.biodiv.org>) and the *Kyoto Protocol* (► <http://unfccc.int>)

Voluntary tools for tourism businesses

Environmental and Audit Management Scheme (EMAS)

EMAS is a voluntary management system for businesses and organisations that wish to improve their operational environmental protection measures on a continual basis beyond the practices called for by law. It goes beyond the ISO 14001, the international standard for environmental management in businesses.

► http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/emas/index_en.htm

European Eco-label for tourist accommodation service (EU Flower)

Since 2003 the "European Flower" has been available to hotels, guesthouses, youth hostels and similar services and in 2004 the scheme is being extended to cover camping sites. Thus any accommodation service in Europe can apply for certification of its environmental performance.

► <http://www.eco-label-tourism.com>

Basic orientation for the sustainability of European Tourism

This paper, published in November 2003, emphasises the need to ensure the consistency of various Community policies and measures affecting the sustainability of tourism and the competitiveness of the industry.

► http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/services/tourism/index_en.htm

The VISIT partners support the implementation of EU-Directives, voluntary tools and basic orientation. They hope that within the European Commission the collaboration between DG Enterprise and DG Environment can be strengthened and lead to further improvements towards sustainable tourism.





Destinations

Key indicators to monitor sustainable tourism development

Monitoring is a “must”

The typical European tourism product depends to a large extent on the sustainable development of destinations. The vast majority of tourists are looking for intact nature, beautiful landscapes and a rich cultural heritage; they want a clean and healthy environment and they want to enjoy a socially friendly climate. In fact there is a strong link between sustainability and quality: most issues such as low noise, less traffic, clean air and water, rich culture and bio-diversity, are the focal points of sustainability strategies and crucial for the quality of destinations.

Tourism itself also plays a positive or negative role in the context of sustainability. It consumes non-renewable resources such as land, water and energy; tourism transport generates noise and air pollution and contributes increasingly to global

warming and tourism may also seriously affect the social and economic welfare of local communities. For tourism businesses it does not make much sense to invest a lot of money into reducing their environmental impact and raising quality when, at the same time, the whole destination is losing its attractiveness.

These are the main reasons why the partners of the European LIFE project “VISIT” developed and tested indicators for sustainability in tourism destinations which shall allow to extend the concept of sustainability in tourism to the level of destinations. Friends of Nature International together with ARPAER have been entrusted with this work. The results below shall help tourism destinations to introduce both an indicator system and an Environmental Management System in order to make



Sustainable development

The concept of sustainable development has become the focus of political, economic and social strategies, since economies have come up against the limits set by the natural environment (its “carrying capacity”). This happened, for example, at the beginning of industrialisation, when industry used a lot of wood to produce energy thus endangering the existence of forests especially in Europe. It was at that time that forestry developed the concept of sustainable planting and harvesting of woods. In 1975, the Club of Rome published its famous report, “Limits to growth”, demonstrating that the resources on which our industrial economies primarily depend, such as oil, gas or coal, may be exhausted within the 21st century. In 1987, the Brundtland Report to the World Commission on Environment and Development, “Our Common Future”, for the first time mentioned “sustainable development” at the global level as “a development that meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

The World Summits of Rio de Janeiro (1992) and Johannesburg (2002) have agreed on an action plan to implement the concept of sustainability on global and local level (Agenda 21). Sustainable development should become a focal point of economic, social and environmental management, but include also the cultural and institutional dimension. Sustainability stands for finding satisfying ways of life for all within the capacity of the planet now and in the future.

Essentially, the concept of sustainable development tries to cope with three important problems: the issue of an increasing depletion of non-renewable resources, the issue of overexploiting renewable resources and nature and the issue of equity between people or nations. The latter means, that the depletion and overexploitation of resources and nature by the industrialised part of the world reduces not only the chances of future generations, but also that of other parts of the world. We propose to call these three issues the sustainability problems.

Sustainable development is a political concept for the balanced development of societies on the basis of the available natural and human resources on our planet. The implementation of sustainable development requires integrated strategies whereby we try to reduce the use of non-renewable resources, to safeguard nature and earth as our only living base and to realise more global justice and equity in the use of and access to those natural resources.



their tourism product more sustainable. Tourism authorities, local administrations and experts dealing with sustainable regional development policy and tourism sector management can use the indicators to introduce appropriate measures and to monitor the level and progress of sustainability in their destination.

How can we assign sustainability to a certain territory, person or activity?

What does sustainability mean in practical terms for individuals, for tourism businesses, for villages or towns? How much energy, how much land is available for the individual? How many kilometres per year are we allowed to travel by plane or by car? How much water should a tourist consume?

Unfortunately there is no specific answer to any of these questions. Even if we had a precise eco allowance, e.g. annual maximum amount of CO2 emissions, for every person on our planet, and if we knew the sum total of resources, e.g. raw materials or energy, we use, or the sum total of pollutants we emit into the environment, there would be little sense in allocating specified, individual consumption or pollution rights. First of all, because living conditions on our planet differ substantially. In a northern country, such as Norway, more energy must be used for heating than, for instance, in Spain. Secondly, because we live in a world characterised by different availability of resources (the free market and the proviso for relative wealth on individual and community bases) Thirdly, because we are unable to estimate how much or how little future generations will consume.

We know that certain resources and raw materials, such as oil or coal, are being rapidly depleted, because annual consumption is constantly increasing. We know that our fish stocks are dwindling, that water and soil are contaminated and many important species are threatened by extinction. We know that the global atmosphere will continue to heat up, if we fail to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases. We know that even now it would be impossible for the entire world population to indulge in the wasteful lifestyles of people living, for example, in the industrialised countries. If we fail to respond to these pressures in good time, we shall drift from environmental crisis to crisis with our eyes open. What we face are global sustainability problems, which have to be solved by all of us – inter alia by the tourism community.

The solution needs not necessarily lie in “giving things up”, it lies in re-setting our course: by using energy from renewable sources instead of oil and

coal, by using less land area thanks to better land-use planning and better organisation of our economic activities, by reducing waste, etc.

Added to these global problems are local sustainability problems, which arise from the situation of a given destination. For example, if islands or southern destinations have not enough drinking water, they are faced with a sustainability problem, even if sufficient water resources may be available somewhere else. The same goes for all the other ‘stationary’ resources, such as land or natural landscapes.

So there are sustainability problems that arise from global development and others, which are rooted in the limits to local environments.

How can we link this to tourism?

Very simply by analysing in what way tourism adds to global and local sustainability problems at the global and local level. Once we have identified tourism's role in these issues, we can take measures to reduce this impact and to enhance any positive contribution tourism may be able to make to sustainability.

It should be clear that we cannot denote any tourism-related process as inherently sustainable - since sustainability always refers to a community, nation, or the whole globe. Tourism is only one factor among many which are effective within a specified territory. It may contribute positively or negatively to the sustainability of that territory. To facilitate our communication we should rather talk of more or less sustainable tourism.

The role of indicators

What is required for implementing sustainability policies in tourism is, on the one hand, knowledge about the impact of tourism on global and local sustainability and, on the other hand, policies and measures designed to respond to this impact. There is no lack of theoretical systems for the purpose of describing the relationship between human society, economy and the environment. One such method has been developed by the

The VISIT approach in combination with the European Eco-label for Tourism Accommodation Services is a major step forward to create a reliable framework for the further development of sustainable tourism. It will help destinations in their engagement to create a long-term sustainable vision for their tourism activities.

We will promote the VISIT standards through our tourism activities and network of tourism destinations. We also support the further development of indicators and management systems for sustainable tourism destinations in relation to the Thematic Strategy for the Urban Environment in the European Union. (source: ICLEI)



European Environmental Agency (EEA) and is called the DPSIR concept, which consists of a chain of causal relations stringing out from **Driving forces** (economic sector, human activities) via **Pressures** (emissions, waste, etc.) to **States** (physical, chemical, biological, etc.) and **Impact** (on eco-systems, human health, etc.) and possible

political **Responses** (political, economical, institutional, etc.). Such a comprehensive approach would allow us to systematically analyse sustainability, to identify trends and to develop forecasting models. Tourism is one of the driving forces and we want to know which pressures and impacts it brings to bear on our environment and on societal and economic living conditions and how we can respond to it.

Another important task is to make these processes visible to all citizens. In the case of tourism it would mean to make them visible to tourists, local residents, those politically responsible, owners of businesses, etc. The only way of implementing sustainability policies is by getting all the "stakeholders" to interact. The stakeholders have to understand, how their daily actions are linked to sustainable development. They need to recognise where they stand at the moment and what are the goals to achieve in future.

For the description of these relations we need to find indicators which are acceptable and convey a clear message to all stakeholders concerned in order to change the practice.

Indicators are a method of establishing a simple figure to represent a more complex relationship (between a number of conflicting forces or divergent factors). Indicators are used to provide a coherent and headline result as a summary for a larger audience. The next step is to analyse the process of tourism and to find indicators which show how this process is affecting sustainability within a specified area in a positive or negative way. With the help of these indicators we can

- compare the future performance of tourism within a specified area (for example, by evaluating measures to influence it);
- compare similar tourism processes within different territories (for example, mountain

tourism in different mountain ranges, beach tourism in different beach destinations);

- introduce a best-practice benchmarking system;
- evaluate whether the political measures and instruments with which we respond to different problems have led to the intended results or how they have failed.

A major problem is posed by the fact that there is no consistent system of data collection for tourism and the environment at the community level in Europe. Local communities very often do not have the capacity to collect new data, so that we are bound to prioritise and concentrate on those cases where tourism is highly dependent on or where tourism plays a major – positive or negative – role in sustainable development.

The Cycle of Tourism

As tourism by definition involves the movement of people from one place to another, it affects not only local sustainability, but also sustainability at the regional or even global level. In the past, this problem has not been covered sufficiently by tourism science nor by tourism policies. No matter whether a journey is organised independently or through commercial agents, the cycle of the tourism activity can be divided into three stages: access and return travel, stay and activities. Each of these three stages has a different action radius and different effects.

- Travel forms part of each individual tourism cycle; its effects belong to the supra-regional to global level.
- The stay at the destination is another defined and measurable component of every tourism activity (either with overnight stay or without, as in the case of day trips); its effects are primarily regional.
- The activities at the destination differ from tourist to tourist and depend on the offers and opportunities at the destination, and their effects are again felt primarily at the regional level.

Main problems concerning tourism and sustainable development

The following key problems can be identified after careful analysis of current trends in tourism:

- **Tourism transport (access to destination and return travel, local mobility in the destination):** tourism transport, especially air transport and the use of private cars contribute increasingly to global warming and climate change and to the depletion of oil resources. Emissions, noise and congestion are also growing problems in tourism destinations and along the big tourist routes. 90% of energy used in the tourism sector is used for access and return travel. There is a growing trend towards air travel and particularly short distance flights, towards traffic intensive event tourism, larger destinations and unsustainable vacation patterns (more travels per year and person, shorter stays, longer distances, anti-cyclic activities, such as skiing in summer or swimming in win-

What is a destination?

A destination within this project is any kind of territory which brands itself as a tourism brand and is perceived as such by the general public. Usually a destination is defined by geographic or topographic criteria. To facilitate statistical analysis we propose that boundaries of destinations should always follow the boundaries of municipalities, so that a destination can consist of one or more municipalities.

Level	Global/Regional Level	Local Level	
Cycle	Access and return travel	Stay at the destination	Activities at the destination
Description	Tourism transport, journey with different means of transport	Construction of accommodation Maintenance and operation of accommodation Supply with food and other goods Disposal of waste	Construction of tourism facilities Maintenance and operation of tourism facilities Local mobility Tourism activities linked to facilities Tourism activities not needing special facilities

Table 1: Cycle of tourism



ter), which increases the impact of tourism transport.

- **Carrying capacity - land use, bio-diversity, tourism activities:** tourism is a heavy consumer of land area and nature at the local level. Negative trends are increasing numbers of secondary residences or tourism activities with intensive use of nature (e.g. golf, skiing) or motorised activities in nature.
- **Use of energy:** tourism facilities are using more and more energy for air conditioning, transport or in-door activities so that the source of energy (renewable - non-renewable) is also becoming a focus of interest.
- **Use of water:** some destinations, such as islands or southern coastal destinations, have increasing problems with the freshwater supply and there is even competition for water between local economy (for example agriculture) and tourism. Waste water may also become a problem for high seasonal mass tourism destinations.
- **Solid waste management:** waste is becoming a major problem for tourism destinations and rural societies, which may become overwhelmed and which do not have sufficient capacity to cope with this particularly seasonal problem.
- **Social and cultural development:** bad working conditions in tourism, seasonal employment and high dependence on the tourism industry may create a negative social climate, detrimental to the quality of the entire destination.
- **Economic development:** high dependence on the tourism sector, high seasonal variation of tourism or a high percentage of day visitors may also be harmful to the community and have negative effects on the economic development.
- **Institutional governance:** measures undertaken by local and regional institutions may have created or contributed to environmental problems through the strategies and initiatives they have established.

Which type of indicators?

There are 100s of indicators available to monitor all relevant issues in very detail. A short set of “key indicators” should include ones

- with high efficiency with regard to sustainable tourism development (particularly in the tourism sector)
- with high relation to tourism quality (positive or negative)
- with high impact on consumer perception
- which can be derived from existing or easily accessible data (if some key figures are not available, destinations are asked to give at least estimated figures based on visitor surveys or regional expertise)
- which are highly reliable and permit comparison between different regions

These indicators should demonstrate the performance in destinations instead of mere opportunities and potential not really used by tourists, for example: “ratio of environmentally-friendly arrivals”, and not only the “existence of pick-up

systems from airports and train stations” which most tourists do not use.

The indicators shall allow to derive comparable values for all destinations. Northern or alpine destinations, for instance, need more energy for the heating of accommodation and facilities than sun and beach destinations. It would not make sense to measure only the amount of energy used – as the values depend on the situation of the destination. But, if we look at that part of total energy use which comes from renewable resources, we have a valid indicator for all destinations. Another example could be water: here the project suggests to look only at the sustainable use of water and not at the total amount of water used.

A draft set of indicators was identified and tested in 10 destinations: *Riviera dei Gelsomini/Italy, Lillehammer/Norway, Praesto Fjord/Denmark, Soumenlinna/Finland, Söderslätt/Sweden, Comune di Ravenna/Italy, Werfenweng/Austria, Hallstatt/Austria, Sîrnitz/Austria and Lesachtal/Austria.*

The testing results led to the core set of indicators below (table 2). They are recommended as “priority indicators” for which data are available or relatively easy to provide by the destination.

Successful eco-labelling of tourism services is seen as a “driving” tool to achieve the related sustainability and quality objectives (see indicators A5 and A6).

Editorial remarks

This text has been drafted and edited by Manfred Pils (International Friends of Nature). The final version includes contributions from: Herbert Hamele (ECOTRANS), Cristina Laghi (ARPAER), Claudia Milan (ARPAER), Aurelie Pelletreau (EEA), Patrizia Vitali (ARPAER)

The indicators chosen and/or developed by this project have been tested in 10 European regions:

<i>Riviera dei Gelsomini/Italy</i>	<i>320 km², 72.500 inhabitants, 8.561 guest beds</i>
<i>Lillehammer/Norway</i>	<i>2037 km², 35.900 inhabitants, 22 hotels</i>
<i>Praesto Fjord/Denmark</i>	<i>533 km², 33.700 inhabitants, 473 guest beds</i>
<i>Soumenlinna/Finland</i>	<i>2 km², 870 inhabitants, 0 guest beds</i>
<i>Söderslätt/Sweden</i>	<i>No concrete data, but comments</i>
<i>Comune di Ravenna/Italy</i>	<i>219 km², 99.500 inhabitants, 53.882 guest beds</i>
<i>Werfenweng/Austria</i>	<i>45 km², 800 inhabitants, 1765 guest beds</i>
<i>Hallstatt/Austria</i>	<i>59,8 km², 948 inhabitants, 931 guest beds</i>
<i>Sîrnitz/Austria</i>	<i>99,3 km², 1100 inhabitants, 500 guest beds</i>
<i>Lesachtal/Austria</i>	<i>190 km², 1550 inhabitants, 1.700 guest beds</i>

Expert team involved in the discussion on indicators for sustainable development in tourism destinations during the three workshops in Rimini 2001, Hannover 2002 and Ravenna 2002:

Steen Achton, Christian Baumgartner, Rob uit de Bosch, Lorenzo Canova, Laura Capone, Richard Denman, Otto Fichtl, Isabelle Gachet, Herbert Hamele, Torben Kaas, Naut Kusters, Cristina Laghi, Sigrid Mehle, Claudia Milan, Aurelie Pelletreau, Manfred Pils, Fernando Prats, Jonathan Proctor, Barbara Putzi, Raffaella Raffaelli, Luigi Rambelli, Licia Rubbi, Karl Reiner, Ian Salter, Gordon Sillence, Ronan Uhel, Patrizia Vitali.

Table 2: Final core set of indicators

Results of the testing phase with 10 destinations (working group "Indicators", led by ARPAER- Environmental Agency of Emilia Romagna Region- Italy; NFI – Friends of Nature International; September 2003)

A Political implementation of sustainability concepts

Key questions for sustainability:

- Existence and evaluation of the effectiveness of environmental management and monitoring tools for a more integrated tourism strategy?
- Are different stakeholders involved in the process?

Key questions for the quality of the region:

- Is there a continuous reporting and monitoring system designed to improve or maintain the destination's quality?

No.	Description of Indicator	How to measure, further explanations
A-1	Existence of a local policy for enhancing sustainability in the destination	Existence of a political strategy decision (Yes/No) Existence of an action plan (Yes/No) Number of the following issues covered by this action plan: transport, land use and biodiversity, energy, water, waste, social issues, economic issues
A-2	Involvement of stakeholders	Are there stakeholders continuously involved in designing, revising and monitoring the sustainability strategy (Yes/No) Is there extra staff employed for the implementation (number of staff)
A-3	Existence of an inventory of sites of cultural interest	E.g. monuments, buildings, UNESCO heritage sites: Yes or no
A-4	Existence of an inventory of sites of natural interest	E.g. protected areas, habitats, especially vulnerable areas, Natura 2000: Yes or no
A-5	Number of eco-labelled tourism facilities or facilities applying for environmental management schemes (such as EMAS or ISO 14000)	Including hotels, restaurants, camping sites or other tourism services
A-6	Number of sites monitored with Blue-Flag-System and total number of bathing sites (if applicable)	

B Environmental Indicators

B1. Tourism transport (access to destination and return travel, local mobility)

Key questions for sustainability:

- Is the amount of transport pressure caused by tourism decreasing?
- Are tourists arriving by more sustainable means of transport? Current situation and evolution in time to see whether there is change towards improvement, or not.
- Is the length of stays decreasing or increasing? More day visitors or longer staying tourists?
- What are the main means of transport tourists are using during their stay at the destination?

Key questions for the quality of the region:

- Impact of transport on noise and air quality, traffic jams?

No.	Description of Indicator	How to measure, further explanations
B1-1	Share of environmentally-friendly modes of transport in all arrivals	How many tourists (staying at least for one night) used the following main means of transport: car, plane, train, bus, ship or bicycle to come to the destination (total figures per year if available, percentage in case of guest surveys or estimates). How many day visitors used the following main means of transport: car, plane, train, bus, ship or bicycle to come to the destination (total figures per year if available, percentage in case of guest surveys or estimates).
B1-2	Number of same-day visitors per km ²	Monthly table of day visitors (total figures, if no data available figures from previous visitor surveys or estimates). Monthly table of meals sold in all restaurants (if available).
B1-3	Local mobility	Monthly table of the number of passengers transported by local public transport. Percentage of accommodations, tourism facilities and other tourist attractions accessible by public transport (less than 10 minutes walking distance to next station/stop). Extra means of transport especially set up for tourists (type of transport and number of passenger places available per month)

B2. Carrying capacity - land use, bio-diversity, tourism activities

Key questions for sustainability:

- How much land is taken up by tourism accommodations?
- What is the amount of area occupied by second homes?
- Does the destination try to protect and preserve natural areas?
- Impact of different tourism activities on bio-diversity?

Key questions for the quality of the region:

- Degree of urban sprawl, which reduces attractiveness of destinations?
- Amount of natural areas, which raise attractiveness of the site?

Coastal destinations:

Key questions for sustainability:

- What is the pressure on aquatic systems (coasts, lakes, rivers, etc.)?

Key questions for the quality of the region:

- Are coasts in danger of becoming overcrowded?

Mountain destinations:

Key questions for sustainability:

- Tourist pressure in mountain destinations?

Key questions for the quality of the region:

- Are mountain destinations in danger of becoming overcrowded?

No.	Description of Indicator	How to measure, further explanations
B2-1	Maximum population density (peak season) per km ²	Table of number of total population (incl. tourists) per month
B2-2	Beds in secondary residences (in % of total lodging capacity)	Lodging capacity (by means of accommodation)
B2-3	Ratio of built-up area to natural areas	Types of area of destination (built-up area, area reserved for building, green land, forest, water, other) in km ²
B2-4	Size of protected natural areas (in % of total destination area)	Total size of protected natural areas (any kind of degree of protection) in km ²
B2-5	Evolution of different leisure time activities with intensive use of resources	Evolution of different leisure time activities with intensive use of resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total size of golf course(s) (in km²) • Number of guests at golf course(s) per year • Number of snow canons • Area covered with artificial snow • Capacity of lifts, cable cars and similar transport facilities (in persons-vertical meters/year) • Number of tourists transported with helicopters • Capacity of harbours and marinas (number of motor boats) • Number of hydro speeds or similar water sports equipment
B2-6	Percentage of natural coastline (if applicable)	Percentage of length of natural coast line (not built-up within a zone of 1 km from the water) on total coastline

B3. Use of energy

Key questions for sustainability:

- How effective is the use of energy in the destination (total amount of energy used for tourism and source of energy)?

Key questions for the quality of the region:

- No direct quality issue – but necessary to reduce effects of climate change, which may have a long-term impact on the quality of the destination

No.	Description of Indicator	How to measure, further explanations
B3-1	Percentage of renewable energy in total energy consumption (entire destination, locally produced or imported)	Ratio of energy consumption per year covered by renewable resources.
B3-2	Energy use by type of tourism facility and per tourist	Total consumption of energy per year per type of tourism facility (accommodation, facilities, sport, tourist transport means) divided by total number of persons using this type of facility.

B4. Use of water

Key questions for sustainability:

- What is the pressure on the local water resources?

Key questions for the quality of the region:

- Is there enough water available for tourists?
- Are the water bodies (groundwater and surface water) in good quality?

No.	Description of Indicator	How to measure, further explanations
B4-1	Sustainable use of water resource	Ratio of water imported (pipelines, ships etc.) or coming from processed sea water to total water sources Average development of ground water table in the last 5 years (in +/- cm)
B4-2	Percentage of houses and facilities connected to waste water treatment plants	Percentage of houses and facilities connected to waste water treatment plants

B5. Solid waste management

Key questions for sustainability:

- Is there a system of effective waste management?

Key questions for the quality of the region:

- Is waste illegally dumped in nature, are there negative effects of waste treatment on health (e.g. by waste incineration)?

No.	Description of Indicator	How to measure, further explanations
B5-1	Percentage of solid waste separated for recycling	Percentage of solid waste, separated, collected in comparison with the solid waste total
B5-2	Total of solid waste land-filled and/or incinerated (in tonnes)	Total of solid waste land-filled and/or incinerated (in tonnes)
B5-3	Monthly table of waste production	Monthly table of waste production

C Social and cultural performance indicators

Key questions for sustainability:

- Development of living conditions for local population?
- Are developments driven by external influences?

Key questions for the quality of the region:

- Do tourists feel accepted by residents?
- General safety of tourists?

No.	Description of Indicator	How to measure, further explanations
C-1	Percentage of non-resident employees in total number of tourism employees	Seasonal percentage of non-resident employees in total number of tourism employees
C-2	Average length of contracts of tourism personnel	Average length of contracts of tourism personnel
C-3	Percentage of land owned by non-residents	Percentage of land owned by non-residents
C-4	Number of recorded thefts	Number of recorded thefts
C-5	Tourist/host population ratio	Tourist/host population ratio

D Economic performance indicators

Key questions for sustainability:

- Economic viability of tourism sector?

Key questions for the quality of the region:

- Dependence of economy on tourism sector?
- Seasonal variation of tourism income?

No.	Description of Indicator	How to measure, further explanations
D-1	Seasonal variation of tourism-related employment	Tourism-related employment in peak season/low season in relation to total employment in the destination
D-2	Share of tourism in overall destination GDP	Share of tourism in overall destination GDP
D-3	Seasonal variation of accommodation occupancy	Monthly table of nights spent in the destination
D-4	Total accommodation capacity per capita of resident population	Total accommodation capacity per capita of resident population
D-5	Average length of stay	Average length of stay

Eco-labelling tourism

Many certificates – limited effectiveness

In 2000/2001, the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) commissioned ECOTRANS to carry out a global study on voluntary initiatives for sustainable tourism. More than 100 eco-labels, awards and self-committing initiatives were studied in the first comparative analysis worldwide, to assess the history, development, objectives, requirements, procedures and effectiveness of each and every initiative.

The study found that many eco-labels are struggling to survive and meet the promises they made to their certified businesses in terms of significant cost savings and increased consumer demand.

Diversity of tourism – diversity of eco-labels

Europe has far more “green” certification programmes than any other region of the world. In the 1980s - 90s, an increasing number of tourism associations, consumer groups, and governmental bodies began to pay attention to ecologically sound tourism. In 2004, there are more than 50 environmental certificates and awards in Europe covering all types of tourism suppliers, including accommodation, beaches, marinas, protected areas, restaurants, handicrafts, golf courses, tour packages and various other tourism-related activities. More than 40 schemes certify accommodation services: hotels with or without restaurants, camping sites, youth hostels, farm houses, alpine huts, holiday houses, guest houses, bed and breakfast lodgings and others. ► www.eco-tip.org

The diversity of tourism in Europe presents, however, enormous challenges for certification initiatives. In developing an eco-label, a number of questions must be asked: Which product groups to select? Which services to include? Which criteria should be mandatory or optional? What is the balance between process (environmental management systems) and performance criteria? How to get applicants? How to train and advise them? How to verify and guarantee the compliance of the applicants with the required criteria? How to reach tour operators and individual consumers to generate a demand for the sustainable products?

In principle, a tourism eco-label needs a homogeneous product group with clear and common components or services, to ensure that environmental impacts can be compared and rated. Every tourism eco-label initiative has to face this diverse range of products and issues when defining the product group and developing the criteria for a certification scheme. The ideal eco-label requires a set of criteria for “better environmental performance”, which

- goes beyond what is required by law (national or regional), and
- is achievable by a significant proportion of the target group of tourism providers in order to provide a real “better choice” to the consumer.

info@ecotrans.de



Low market share

In 2003, tourism eco-labels as a whole certified 4000 accommodation suppliers, which represents less than 1% of the market share. Only a few schemes, for example in Scotland or Denmark can offer a choice of 10% or more. There is significant evidence that many of the participants in these eco-labels successfully reduce their water and energy consumption, waste production, contribute to overcome traffic-related problems and help to preserve the biodiversity and beauty of the surrounding landscape. However, businesses voluntarily enrol in certification programmes on the assumption that consumers will patronise the services that have received an eco-label. The evidence indicates that many of these eco-labelling programmes have not been very effective in publicising their programmes to consumers.



WTO Book “Voluntary initiatives in Tourism, Worldwide Inventory and Comparative Analysis of 104 Eco-labels, Awards and Self-Commitments”

Order book/CD ROM on:

www.world-tourism.org

The diversity of eco-labels

Each certificate has its own history. All together they cover an enormous treasure of knowledge and experience with relation to their specific situations and conditions for operating. One can find:

- Public, private and public-private schemes
- For all kind of products and services, or only for accommodation
- Operating since 15, 7 or only 2 years
- Diverse conditions for their “better than” criteria: differences in climate, environmental needs, national legislation, technical standards
- Different levels of environmental criteria, bronze-silver-gold systems
- Many or only few certified products (e.g. 0,5 – 20 % of accommodation businesses in the operation area)
- Small – large area of operation (regional, national, international)
- Comprehensive or more simple verification procedure
- High, medium or low fees for applicants and licensees
- Comprehensive or very limited marketing activities
- Excellent or very poor information about the schemes
- ... and many more

The tourism market

Potential demand for certified products

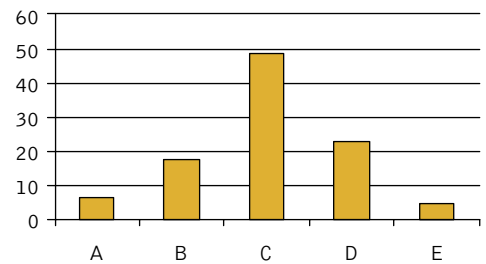
A. Consumers expect environmental quality

The best holiday is when the guests are completely satisfied. Studies have demonstrated that consumers in Europe, for example from Germany, United Kingdom and the Netherlands are aware of environmental impacts that can be caused by tourism. They expect a high environmental quality in their destination, prefer eco-labelled accommodation services, would like to see certified products in travel catalogues and have access to all "green" tourism products in Europe. Some examples:

Environmental quality aspects

- Two out of three UK travellers think it is important that the tour package is "specifically designed to cause as little damage as possible to the environment." More than 80% said dirty beaches and a polluted sea, "mattered a great deal" in choosing or recommending travel destinations.
- Half of all Germans are looking for high environmental quality. They want to spend their holiday only where the environment is still unspoiled. What do they expect in detail when thinking of their next holiday trip?
 - One third of all Germans would like to be able to reach the destination by bus or train, and would also prefer to have good public transport at the holiday destination instead of having to use the car.
 - The majority of German visitors attach great importance to clean beaches and water. They do not wish to find rubbish near their accommodation or in the surrounding area, and are strongly opposed to noise pollution caused by traffic, discothèques and the urbanisation

The importance of an eco-label versus quality label



- A: An eco-label is far more important (6%)
 - B: An eco-label is more important (18%)
 - C: Both themes are equally important (48%)
 - D: Classification stars are more important (23%)
 - E: Classification stars are far more important (5%)
- Source:Oranjewoud, Netherlands; 1998

of rural areas. A good protection of nature is considered a must for a quality holiday.

- Approximately 40% of the Germans think that it is particularly important to find environmentally-friendly accommodation.

Information to tourists

- Nearly 20% of German tourists would welcome catalogues of tour operators, accommodation networks and destinations to clearly indicate offers, which are particularly environmentally-friendly. Approximately 14% of German tourists wish to have easy access to all certified products, e.g. via the Internet.
- Approximately 50% of all UK consumers are interested in finding out more about local social and environmental issues before booking a trip. Three out of four UK package vacation travellers declare that the inclusion of social and environmental information in tour operators' brochures is important to them.
- 82% of Dutch tourists believe that integrating environmental information into all travel brochures is a good idea. 73% stated that they would use this information when selecting accommodation.
- Half of Dutch consumers give an eco-label for accommodation the same importance as a quality classification system, others prefer one or the other. They wish to be informed about both service quality and environmental quality. (Taking this into consideration one could have the idea of simply combining the well-known 5 star classification system for hotels with an extra "green star" for preferable environmental performance!)

Consumers are not aware of the existing eco-labels

- Although a majority of Germans are familiar with product labels, current German tourism eco-labels are recognised by not more than 3 – 19% of the consumers.
- In the Netherlands only 6% of the consumers know the Dutch Milieubarometer eco-label for tourism services. The positive exception here is the International Blue Flag: 27% are familiar with this symbol for beaches and marinas.

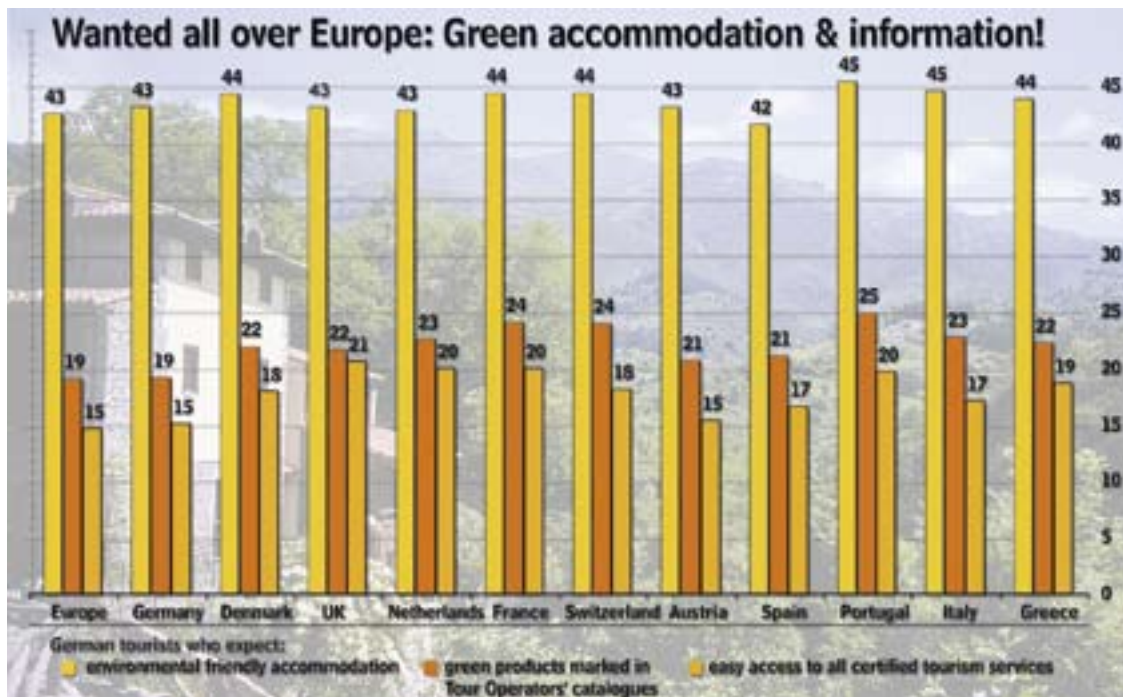
HOLIDAY 2002: German tourists expect environmental quality

When thinking about your next holiday, which of the following environmental factors is most important to you?

- 64.5 %: clean beaches and water
- 59.1 %: no rubbish in the resort or in the surrounding area
- 51.0 %: no noise pollution from traffic or discothèques
- 50.0 %: no urbanisation of rural areas
- 45.8 %: good nature protection in the holiday destination
- 41.8 %: environmentally-friendly accommodation
- 35.1 %: little traffic and good public transport in the destination
- 29.0 %: possibility of reaching the destination easily by bus or train
- 18.7 %: indication of environmentally preferable products in the tour operators' catalogues
- 14.2 %: easy access to information on all tourism products with certified environmental quality (eco-labels)

Source: ECOTRANS / F.U.R. (Reiseanalyse 2002)

Sample: n = 7872 / representative for 60 m Germans aged at least 14 years



B. Tour operators need reliable information

As intermediaries between tourists and tourism service providers, tour operators bring together a variety of tourism-related services to form a complete holiday package, which is then marketed to customers either directly or through travel agents. Each package generally consists of accommodation (often including some food provision), transport, both to and from the destination, transport within the destination and events or activities such as excursions and social activities. Tour operators are not always in direct control of the environmental and social impacts of those products. Yet, consumers increasingly expect the tour operators they buy from to ensure that their products provide not just service quality and value for money, but also safeguard environmental and social sustainability.

Tour operators take an active approach

Since the 1990s some tour operators began to integrate sustainability practices into their daily work, examples include:

- Internal management, by saving energy and using re-usable and recycled resources (e.g. office supplies and printed materials).
- Product development and management by planning tours and selecting holiday package components that minimise environmental, economic and social impacts.
- Customer relations, by indicating sustainable offers in catalogues, promoting responsible behaviour (e.g. code of conduct) and informing about sustainability issues at their destinations.
- Supporting community efforts by addressing sustainability issues (e.g. to local governments) and by financially contributing to conservation and development projects.
- Giving preference to eco-labelled suppliers by integrating sustainability principles (environmental impact assessments, etc.) into the selection criteria and service agreements of suppliers.

Eco-labelled suppliers create benefits for tour operators

Working with eco-labelled suppliers can result in a number of benefits for tour operators:

- Eco-labelled products can be seen as quality+ products. For many of the certified suppliers environmental quality is the next step in an ongoing process towards total quality.
- Certification schemes provide the tour operator with an independent guarantee on the environmental performance of the supplier.
- It pays to go green. From a financial standpoint, improved sustainability can lower costs through increased operating efficiency and reduced waste generation.
- A strong positive reputation as a company that cares about sustainability issues can result in increased customer satisfaction, strengthened brand value, enhanced publicity and marketing opportunities.
- Good performance and a high-quality, sustainable product can also help a tour operator reduce the risk of conflict or problems with governments, local communities, and improve its status as a respected partner in destinations. This may mean enhanced access to key business resources such as capital, the ability to develop products to meet growing market demand, improved relationships with governments and a motivated and loyal staff.
- Working with sustainable suppliers and destinations will also guarantee that over a longer term the tourism product offered remains attractive as such a clean environment, which is of high value to most tourists.

Tour operators are ready to promote eco-labelled products

Based on a survey conducted by ECEAT in 2002 approximately 65% out of 150 European tour operators surveyed are interested in promoting eco-labelled products by marking them as "green" in their catalogues. In reality, however, only 5% do so. There are several reasons:

- Most tour operators are not aware that they already collaborate with certified hotels. Only 10% of the eco-labelled accommodation busi-

nesses that co-operate with tour operators had actively informed their partners about their certificate.

- There is still an enormous lack of eco-labelled products in most of the European destinations, especially in Southern and Central Europe.
- Tour operators perceive a lack of clarity and transparency within the certification schemes for sustainable tourism. They feel there are too many labels, which are difficult to compare. They are looking for one broadly accepted label or standard that is recognised all over Europe or even at a global level.
- Tour operators need easy access to reliable "green" products, but most tour operators do not know how to find them. They perceive a lack of information and overview.
- Often tour operators lack capacity in order to invest in "greening" their tourism product.

Corporate initiatives

Although each company has its own responsibility to address the challenges of sustainability, sectoral approaches and corporate initiatives can effectively complement individual companies' efforts, and create synergies throughout the industry.

► Tour Operators' Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development

The Tour Operators' Initiative for Sustainable Tourism Development is a voluntary and non-profit initiative, open to all tour operators worldwide. The 22 members commit themselves to *work together* through common activities to promote and disseminate methods and practices compatible with sustainable development. Their report Sustainable Tourism, The Tour Operators' Contribution is available at:

► www.toinitiative.org

► forum anders reisen

The forum anders reisen (far) is an umbrella association of about 80 small and medium sized German tour operators and travel agencies. They are committed to high environmental and social standards. They have also joined forces in order to promote their sustainable packages jointly to the larger public. far plays an active role in the new "atmosfair" initiative (carbon offset fund).

► www.forum-anders-reisen.de

► ANVR, Dutch tour operator association

The Netherlands Association of ANVR tour operators is implementing an *Integrated Responsible Tourism Programme*. The programme is obligatory for all of its 200 members. It includes an action package with steps tour operators need to take: internal management and involvement of staff, purchasing and contract management to the provision of transport, excursions and entertainment in the destination.

► www.anvr.nl

Conclusion: the lack of a "green corner"

The potential demand of consumers and the interest and commitment of tour operators should encourage eco-labels to collaborate. Most certificates offer the added value that tourists demand. The European tourism "supermarket" needs a visible, attractive "green corner" which can develop from a small niche market to the mainstream, thereby moving tourism towards more sustainability.

This is the joint challenge for the VISIT initiative in co-operation with all stakeholders involved.





The VISIT approach

Joint steps to make eco-labelling a success



The success of tourism eco-labelling in Europe depends upon efforts to increase co-operation and consolidation among certification programmes, to develop joint marketing activities, to reduce cost and to raise their profile and market share.

The approach of the VISIT initiative focuses on five tasks:

1. Achieve agreement with leading initiatives on a standard for eco-labels

In Europe about 40 schemes certify the environmental performance of tourism services. Consumers expect that the certified products, e.g. hotels, beaches, etc. are achieving practical and demanding criteria with a suitable verification procedure to ensure their environmental aspirations are met.

*VISIT approach: 10 and more leading eco-labels shall discuss and agree on a set of key requirements, which shall be fulfilled by all tourism eco-labels in Europe and be used to identify highly reliable certificates: **The VISIT Standard.***

2. Identify highly reliable eco-labels with their individual strengths

All eco-labels promise "better than" environmental quality of

their licensees. However, what about their reliability and level of quality? Which labels do consumers and tour operators prefer?

*VISIT approach: comparison of the criteria and procedures of all certificates in Europe, assessment of the compliance with the VISIT Standard and the individual strengths of the leading schemes: **The VISIT Eco-labels***

3. Raise the awareness for tourism eco-labels

Each eco-label has its own awareness raising strategy (usually limited by low budgets). In tourism eco-labels are hardly recognised, the added value of their certified products is not clear.

*VISIT approach: the partners and participating eco-labels carry out a joint image raising campaign: **The VISIT Message.***

4. Facilitate the access to all certified products

Consumers would like to give preference to products with certified environmental quality as an added value when their other quality and destination choices have been made. Therefore, they need easy access to a good choice of eco-labelled products, and they wish to see

them marked in tour operators' and destinations' catalogues.

*VISIT approach: to develop a common database with all certified products of the VISIT eco-labels and to give free access on the Internet: **The VISIT Promotion and Marketing***

5. Establish a European network of eco-labels

The certificates all have the same objective: to provide a good choice to the consumer, and thus to move the market towards more sustainability. The international market and the limited resources require joint efforts.

*VISIT approach: to facilitate exchange of information and experiences, to stimulate collaboration between schemes for mutual benefits, to establish an independent platform for tourism eco-labels open for partnership with complementary initiatives: **The VISIT Association.***

The VISIT Standard

21 key requirements for tourism eco-labels in Europe

VISIT's remit is to promote those eco-labels, which guarantee a high level of environmental quality of their products in their respective countries. A common standard for tourism eco-labels in Europe is required in order to recognise those eco-labels that are highly demanding and reliable. According to International Standards Organisation (ISO) terminology, this means fulfilling the requirements for so called 'type I' third party verified certificates. This ensures that eco-labelled products meeting the standard are not misleading

consumers or making erroneous claims regarding their environmental quality.

In 2001/2002, a partnership with 10 regional, national and international eco-labelling schemes was established within the VISIT project. Together with ECOTRANS, as independent co-ordinator, these labels based their work on the internationally recognised *ISO 14024 standard for "Type I Eco-labels"*. Step by step, all ISO requirements were discussed and adapted to the needs of tourism services in Europe. The profound knowledge

of the different circumstances in the countries involved, and the daily work experience of the experts, resulted in the "VISIT Standard for tourism eco-labels in Europe".

At the end of 2002, the participating eco-labelling organisations recognised this standard for their own schemes. The "heart" consists of 21 key requirements. The recognition of the VISIT Standard and the compliance with its requirements was accepted as a precondition for any later promotion as "VISIT eco-labels".

The eco-label for tourism services ("VISIT eco-label")

1. aims to contribute to *sustainable tourism* development in Europe and - as far as possible - to verify those products with advanced performance in terms of environmental qualities.
2. aims to contribute to maintaining and enhancing *service quality* in tourism in Europe.
3. *recognises* other eco-labels meeting the VISIT Standard.
4. has considered *product life cycle* issues when setting product environmental criteria.
5. requires *attainable levels* and gives consideration to relative environmental impacts ("per unit"), measurement capability and accuracy.
6. is based on sound scientific, engineering, management and social principles. The criteria are derived from data that support the claim of *environmental preferability* (high environmental benefit and/or efficiency).
7. takes into account, during the process of establishing the criteria, *relevant* local, regional and global environmental issues, available technology, and economic and social *issues* avoiding compromising service quality.
8. *reviews* the criteria and product functional requirements within a predefined period.
9. declares that compliance with environmental and other relevant *legislation* is a pre-condition for the applicant to be awarded and to maintain the label.
10. selected *product environmental criteria*, which are expressed in terms of *impacts* on the environment and natural resources or *emissions* to the environment. Such performance criteria shall be expressed in absolute (numbers) or relative (%) figures and measure units (e.g. kWh, litre, volume, weight per product, room, bed, overnight stay, m²) and may also recommend the exclusion / non-use of special materials or substances.
11. requires criteria in the following *environmental fields* as far as relevant in its area of operation and as far as relevant for the specific product group: Purchasing, transport and mobility, energy, water, waste, chemical substances, air, noise, nature/landscape.
12. for accommodation shall have the following *management* criteria, which complement other Environmental Management Systems: Environmental commitment, Environmental co-ordinator, communication and training: guests, staff, public; Monitoring regularly energy, water, waste consumption/overnight.
13. is able to demonstrate *transparency* through the following stages of its development and operation: product categories, product environmental criteria, period of validity of criteria, testing and verification methods, certification and award procedures, compliance verification procedure, complaints procedure.
14. legally *protects* the eco-label (i.e. the certification mark/logotype) in order to prevent unauthorized use and to maintain public confidence in the programme.
15. is *voluntary* in nature.
16. is open to all potential *applicants* of the predefined product group in the area of operation. All applicants who fulfill the product environmental criteria and the other programme requirements are entitled to be granted a *license* and authorized to use the label.
17. guarantees that all the elements in the product environmental criteria and product function characteristics are *verifiable* by the eco-labeling body.
18. has a *verification procedure*, which guarantees a high level of reliability. This includes on-site visits at least once every three years (accommodation: once per certification period).
19. has general rules guiding the overall operation of the programme. These general rules control the *general conditions for the awarding* of the licence and the use of the label.
20. issues awards on business performance against criteria that apply to the site for a predefined *period* of not more than three years.
21. maintains a publicly available *list of products*, which have been awarded the label.

(Version 12/2002; to be revised until 12/2004; full standard and comparison with ISO 14024 published on: ► www.yourvisit.info)

Assessment of the compliance of 12 eco-labels with the VISIT Standard

The following documents from each eco-label were checked by ECOTRANS as independent project partner in 2002 and 2003:

- A signed declaration on the compliance with each of the 21 requirements together with a list of documents to show evidence.
- The complete list of environmental performance and management criteria for each label.
- A detailed description of the application, verification and certification procedure.
- The full up-to-date list of certified tourism products in Europe.
- Additional print material and information on the eco-labels' websites.

At the end of 2003 this pre-assessment of the compliance with the 21 key requirements of the VISIT Standard had led to a positive result with 12 eco-labels.

Quick check:

Does your eco-label comply with the VISIT Standard?

- Does the eco-label aim to contribute to sustainability and service quality?
- Do the criteria include performance and limit consumption requirements in most relevant environmental fields and along the "life cycle" (purchase - service - waste)?
- Do the criteria go beyond legislation?
- Must the licensees monitor their consumption of energy, water and production of waste?
- Does the verification procedure include independent on-site audits?
- Is the period to use the licence limited to a maximum of 3 years?
- Are the criteria and the list of certified tourism services available to the public?

If "yes" – congratulations! You should benefit from the VISIT initiative.

If "no" – no problem! You may wish to exchange with VISIT eco-labels and to improve your scheme.

Requirement # 12: "Monitoring regularly energy, water, waste consumption / overnight"

TOURBENCH:

The on-line benchmarking system for the measurement of environmental consumption.

There is no doubt: less water and energy consumption, decreasing use of detergents and less waste production, mean a decrease in costs. A typical medium-sized hotel or camping site can annually easily save up to € 20,000 with the above mentioned measures. However, stressful everyday life at work does not allow 95% of all small and medium-sized enterprises to systematically undertake the steps needed. In order to minimise this problem, from 2005 onwards a new international monitoring and benchmarking system TOURBENCH will be ready to use, on-line and in 9 languages. After a basic set of data input the system will outline the main priority measures the business should focus on. It will outline which areas they can improve their business and which is the most effective way to decrease expenditure and improve efficiency.

Moreover, non-certified accommodation businesses can gain basic help in identifying and meeting the standards to obtain a relevant eco-label. Already certified accommodation businesses can also measure their environmental consumption with TOURBENCH; in doing so they fulfil one of the most important requirements within the framework of the certification system.

Registration and use of the website is free of charge (launch in September 2004):

www.tourbench.info



The VISIT eco-labels

Individual strengths and potential for harmonisation



Italy
Legambiente Turismo
 300 eco-friendly accommodation businesses

Since 1997, when the certification system "recommended eco-friendly hotels" was first launched in the bathing resort of Riccione, Legambiente Turismo's scheme has been steadily growing. In 2004, 192 hotels and 46 other accommodation businesses (totalling over 45.000 beds), 42 bathing establishments and 20 camping sites along the coasts, mountains and cities-of-art in Italy were awarded Legambiente Turismo's eco-label with the well-known Green Swan logo. Its criteria include a better use of water and energy resources, reduced waste production, good local cuisine and breakfast choice of organic ingredients, tips to help visitors become acquainted with the local culture and natural environment, and cycle hire.
www.legambienteturismo.it



International
Blue Flag International
 2.211 beaches and 605 marinas all over Europe in 2004

Clean bathing water and beaches are essential for an enjoyable seaside holiday. Since 1987, the Blue Flag has signalled that water quality, beach cleaning and waste disposal are all of high quality - from sandy beaches in Greece or France to yachting marinas in Italy or Germany. The holiday resorts provide visitors with up-to-date information, opportunities for environmental education and commitments to preserving other aspects of the coastal environment.
www.blueflag.org



Switzerland
Steinbock Label
 15 hotels in 6 Swiss cantons

The Ibex-label allows Swiss hotels and restaurants to show their engagement for all sustainability responsibilities: environment, staff and the entire society as well as economic results. A hotel is distinguished with up to 5 ibexes.

Fifteen hotels in six Swiss cantons have been awarded 3, 4 or 5 ibexes to date. These hotels encompass both traditional 3* to 5* hotels as well as hotels which are strongly oriented towards ecological issues. All of them - according to the labelled level - care both for the guest's well-being as well as for nature and society.
www.oe-plus.ch



France
La Clef Verte
 100 camping, caravan and chalet sites, guest-houses

France is a paradise for camping enthusiasts in Europe. There are around 10,000 camping sites offering visitors a vast choice, from basic, idyllic camping on farms to luxurious sites by the sea or near a tourist attraction, with every conceivable facility. Since 1999, the Green Key has provided a guarantee that environmental protection does not suffer beside all the luxury. There are 100 sites from Brittany to the Mediterranean, which take specific measures to maintain biodiversity, the effective preservation of resources and undertake environmental education.
www.laclefverte.org



Austria
Das Österreichische Umweltzeichen für Tourismusbetriebe
 Approximately 200 places to stay of all kinds and restaurants

The Austrian eco-label for tourism with the "Hundertwasser" logo is the first state eco-label for tourism in Europe. Whether you want to go on a city tour to Vienna, hiking in the mountains, or fancy a lakeside or winter holiday:

since 1997 Austria has offered visitors a growing choice of hotels, holiday farms, youth hostels, private guesthouses, camping sites, holiday apartments, mountain guesthouses and restaurants, which are guaranteed to comply with high environmental standards. In addition, they offer excellent cuisine with regional produce grown on mountain farms, which also helps to maintain a diverse and intact natural environment.
www.umweltzeichen.at



Spain
El Distintivo de Garantia de Calidad Ambiental
 70 accommodation businesses in Catalonia

This label has been implemented in 1994 by the province of Catalonia (Spain): it initially addressed only industrial products. Since 1998, the label is also available for services and in the field of tourism: So far 70 accommodation businesses have been awarded: 26 hotels, 16 camping sites, 20 youth hostels and 8 rural farmhouses. The management and measurement criteria are divided into mandatory and optional criteria and cover waste management, saving of resources (water and energy), landscape impact, green purchasing, noise and information to guests about environmental issues, local excursions and typical regional products.
www.gencat.net/mediamb/qamb/inici.htm

visit



Latvia
Zalais sertifikats

53 accommodation businesses in the Latvian countryside

Pristine lakes and rivers, flowery meadows, forest-grown hills and sandy beaches make up the beautiful variety of landscapes in Latvia. The natural bounty can be enjoyed best in the countryside, where attractions of nature combine with the hospitality of rural homes creating a visitor-friendly environment. Since 1999, the Green Certificate has awarded rural tourism establishments in Latvia, such as country homes, vacation cottages, guesthouses and camping sites, combining environmental quality with a high standard of services.

<http://www.eco.celotajs.lv/>



Denmark, Estonia, Greenland, Sweden
Den Groenne Noegle

Over 100 accommodation businesses from youth hostels to 4 star luxury hotels

Since 1994, The Green Key has been awarded to hotels, youth hostels, holiday cottages and camping sites. Whether you want to go on a seaside and island holiday with family or friends, stay in a comfort-

able guesthouse in Kalundborg with a youth group, or in a luxury hotel in Copenhagen, over 100 establishments offer excellent environmental quality, which visitors will notice as soon as they arrive. Since 2001, Green Key has been awarded to establishments in Estonia, Greenland and Sweden.

www.dengroennenoegle.dk



United Kingdom
Green Tourism Business Scheme

Over 450 tourism businesses in Scotland

The Green Tourism Business Scheme is the UK's tourism eco-label. The scheme was developed in 1998 by VisitScotland (The Scottish National Tourist Board). It has over 450 businesses in Scotland ranging from croft houses and distillery visitor attractions in the Scottish Islands, to the Edinburgh International Conference Centre, major

sporting estates and hotels as well as family run self-catering cottages, youth hostels, visitor attractions and bed and breakfasts. All businesses must meet a relevant quality standard (star rating). The scheme is being adopted in England with 100 members in key destinations in Devon, the East of England, Blackpool and the North West. There are 3 levels of awards, Bronze for good practice, Silver for best practice and Gold for overall excellence in environment and sustainable practices.

www.green-business.co.uk



EcoLabel

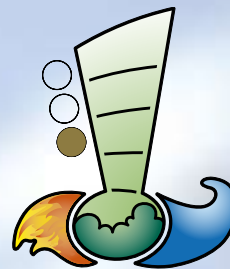
Luxembourg
EcoLabel Luxembourg

23 places to stay in town and country

The diversity of the landscape and culture of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, with the attractions of its towns, national parks and forests is reflected in the excellent accommodation offered here. Since 1999,

visitors have been able to choose from a range of particularly environmentally-friendly hotels, youth hostels, private accommodation, holiday apartments, gîtes and camping sites by the Upper Sûre Reservoir, in the Our Valley or in the city of Luxembourg. In addition to a high environmental standard, these 23 establishments offer excellent local produce and high-quality service.

www.emweltzenter.lu/emweltzenter/oekofonds/ecolabel/virstel-lungeng.htm



Netherlands
The Milieubarometer

230 camping sites, holiday resorts, hotels, group accommodation and attraction parks

In the Netherlands the Milieubarometer shows visitors what level of environmental quality is offered by the tourism business, with its wide range of leisure facilities for families, youth

groups and other visitors. Since 1998, three different categories of the Milieubarometer can be reached. Bronze is good, Silver is even better and Gold fulfils even the high standards of the State eco-label Milieukeur. Visitors can enjoy their holiday at these sites with a clear conscience.

www.milieubarometer.com



Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Norway
Nordic Swan

79 hotels in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Iceland

In 1989, consumers got the opportunity to choose environmentally suitable products with high quality, helped by the official eco-label, the Nordic Swan.

Today, travellers have also got the opportunity to stay at an eco-labelled hotel in these countries, as since 1999 hotels have been awarded the eco-label.

The Nordic Swan shows that the hotel has got a carefully considered long-term environmental programme, covering the entire business with limit values, for example, for water, chemical and energy consumption.

www.svanen.nu



Potential for harmonisation VISIT eco-labels & the EU Flower

The VISIT eco-labels (for accommodation) have intensively collaborate with each other, and are developing relation with other initiatives for sustainable tourism, including the European Eco-label for tourist accommodation service (EU Flower).

The basis of joint efforts is a significant group of common criteria and a highly reliable verification procedure of all schemes.

*Criteria overlap:
The 30 most common
criteria in the EU
Flower and the VISIT
eco-labels*

6 out of 11 eco-labels require activity in this area

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
Eco-label													
CH MANAGEMENT	waste data collection												6
	energy consumption data												9
	policy setting manager												8
	policy action plan												10
	Policy setting policy												9
	Information to guests												10
	staff training												11
	water consumption data												10
WASTE	avoid chemicals												10
	refillable bottles/bags/barrels												9
	Disposable products												10
	Composting												11
	Hazardous waste												11
	Paper products												9
	Breakfast packaging												9
	waste separation guests												11
	waste separation staff												11
	WATER	Rainwater/ recycled water											
water-saving machines													7
Leaks													7
Water flow taps/showers													11
WC flushing													11
ENERGY	insulation of buildings												7
	boiler efficiency												8
	switching off heating												9
	window insulation												6
	switching off lights												8
	energy efficient devices												10
	renewable sources												11
	energy efficient light bulbs												10

Source: ECOTRANS, project "Tourbench", 2004

Criteria overlap:

- 9 out of 11 VISIT eco-labels for accommodation already require same or similar criteria for 23 different environmental issues. These aspects also form part of the EU Flower.
- This "criteria overlap" allows the VISIT eco-labels and the EU Flower to agree on joint targets for the next revision of their criteria with the aim to have; for example, in 2008 a set of 20 mandatory criteria implemented at more than 1000 certified hotels and camping sites in Europe.
- This "common environmental quality" level should be communicated as added value by the tour operators and promotion and marketing organisation.

Verification procedure:

- The VISIT standard requires an "on-site visit" as part of the verification audit, at least once every 3 years. The degree of detail differs from scheme to scheme. The EU Flower does not yet make it obligatory, but recommends on-site audits to the national competent bodies, which are responsible for the verification.
- All the schemes wish to limit the cost – and thus the fee for the applicants. The experiences with the effectiveness and control of hundreds of environmental criteria should allow the eco-labels to agree on a short list of those criteria, which in any case are controlled on-site. Such a short list may minimise the audit cost without reducing the credibility of the results.
- On a national level the competent bodies responsible for the EU Flower can collaborate with the VISIT eco-labels: such as linking auditing and marketing activities. For the applicant this would mean, limited cost and time and "two for one" benefits.

Promotion:

- Each eco-label has its own promotion and marketing approach. Based on a set of common criteria for accommodation services and with focus on their individual strengths, the VISIT eco-labels and the EU Flower, should have joint promotion for mutual benefits.



Special strengths of the VISIT eco-labels

Each eco-label has its own additional standards which are considered important to the national or local situation. These may relate to additional legislation, specific environmental risks, local climatic factors or relate to the existing achievements of the tourism product in their operation areas. This tends to ensure that the eco-label is restricted to the better performing tourism practitioners in their area.

Such individual strengths can be seen as justification for the existence of national eco-labels beside international certification programmes.

They are more appropriate to local situations, they can consider national standards and strategies when updating their criteria and can more readily develop their scheme for new product groups along the tourism supply chain. They should be more destination specific than international schemes, and thus be in a position to exchange new experiences and maintain their focus on leading the way in sustainable development in tourism practice.

Some examples of special strengths and differences:

- *Nordic Swan* is the only scheme in Europe, which requires numerical limit consumption criteria per overnight, specified, e.g. for accommodation with or without swimming pool (water) or for different levels of altitude (energy, waste, chemicals).
- Das *Österreichische Umweltzeichen für Tourismusbetriebe* shows high overlap with the EU Flower and requires additional criteria with focus on Austrian agriculture and local products.
- *Green Tourism Business Scheme* is awarded to the widest range of tourism business types in Europe, including visitor attractions and distilleries. It shows best success in Europe with 15% of the accommodation bed nights certified in Scotland.
- *Steinbock Label* is the first and only full "sustainability certificate" in Europe with very demanding environmental, social and economic criteria.
- The *Green Key* certifies tourism businesses in a variety of countries in Europe. The Green Key camping sites are aware of environmental impact and nature preservation, and the

Green Key hotels offer high quality services combined with a minimal impact on the environment. From 2004 onwards the Green Key collaborates with the network behind the Blue Flag campaign.

- *Legambiente Turismo* is fully controlled by the leading independent environmentalist organisation in Italy, called Legambiente. It only starts certification in a region if an agreement of collaboration with local tourism organisations is signed.
- The *Milieubarometer* shows a unique private public partnership with the Dutch Milieukeur label: businesses reaching the golden level are certified with both eco-labels.
- The *EcoLabel Luxembourg* is based on a strong public private partnership and offers comprehensive information and training services for applicants.
- *El Distintivo* in Catalonia as a regional governmental eco-label is highly compatible to the European EMAS, and encourages accommodation businesses to enhance their environmental management.
- *Zalais Sertifikats* in Latvia reduces the cost for on-site audits by collaborating with classification audits for quality of tourism services.
- *Blue Flag International* is the best known tourism eco-label in the world. It proved its important role in making the European Bathing Water Directive a success.

All together the VISIT eco-labels demonstrate their high value for sustainable tourism development in Europe by

- showing best practice in the various countries and product groups,
- raising the awareness of and gaining recognition by consumers,
- giving orientation to governments on issues with legislation including the opportunities or requirements to improve,
- greening the tourism supply chain and making connections to green activities in the destination,
- fostering the demand for eco-labelled and environmentally-friendly products, i.e. organic food,
- contributing with their certified services to sustainable development in their destinations (see chapter "Destinations").

The VISIT message

Added value for the visitor AND the environment

In raising the image of eco-labels and underlying products a proper communication to the consumer is essential. In-depth consumer (panel) research has shown that – although consumers are aware of the potential environmental implications of their holiday – environmental issues are of only minor importance for most consumers during the holiday decision making process. Psychologically a holiday is perceived as “individual freedom in an intact world” (ECEAT projects). During their holiday, people would like to forget personal and collective problems and their own limitations.

This psychology is used when selling tourism products to consumers. Within product descriptions, images and brochure design, the concept of “complete freedom in a world, which still is as it should be” is communicated. Therefore, from a marketing perspective the reference to a “damaged” environment or to an expected

“correct” behaviour can be easily counter productive. Selling environmentally-friendly or responsible products should therefore never be primarily focused on “moral” aspects only, e.g. “by buying this product you contribute

to the social well being of the poor local population” or “by booking this trip you support the struggle against the destruction of nature”.

However, as consumers are attracted to destinations with an image of an unspoiled environment, they do feel disrupted and irritated if their holiday destination is not “intact” (waste, dirty bathing water, noise, bad treatment of local employees, damaging local environment). It is therefore increasingly important that tourism marketers do not only promote the image of an ideal world, but that they can also guarantee this to the consumer. Eco-



www.eco-world.de



www.arte-tv.com



VISIT promotion at the Reisepavillon 2002 in Hanover, the leading tourism fair for sustainable tourism in Europe: Jürgen Trittin - German Minister for the Environment, visits the VISIT stand.

labels help to provide such a guarantee. Such an "added value" can make the difference in a highly competitive tourism market. Consumers should realise that an intact environment is not assumed, but should be taken into account when choosing a destination for a holiday.

The VISIT awareness and image campaign

It is essential to inform tourists in a positive way by linking the environmental quality with the quality of the product and the experience. Environmental quality should be connected with positive feelings and experiences, such as: small-scale, quality service, personal relations, traditions, intact and protected nature, rest, modern lifestyle and healthy (organic) & local food.

Quality and environment are naturally two sides of the same coin: eco-labelled products

provide good quality service and quality products should respect the environment: eco-labelled products are "Quality Plus" products.

Based on this understanding of consumer perception the VISIT initiative has developed its communication strategy for environmental quality in tourism. In 2002, the UN Year of eco-tourism, the VISIT image campaign was launched under the motto:

"Caring for the Environment ... is caring for the Visitor"

This slogan connects environmental quality with the quality of the product and experiences. The pictures combine the "visitor" with the "environmental quality", the short text raises awareness and can easily be understood and accepted. Published in many languages the slogan contributes to raise the overall awareness of the issues and the image of eco-labels complying with the VISIT standard. Thus, it is complementary to individual promotional activities on a national level, or with focus on specific target groups.

This campaign will be carried on after the end of the LIFE project.



www.reisepavillon-online.de



Easy access to eco-labelled products

In order to move the market towards sustainability it is essential to create an overview of existing eco-labelled products. Up until 2003 such an overview did not exist. As part of the VISIT initiative two database powered websites have been established to offer consumers and tour operators full and free access to all accommodation and other tourism services certified by the VISIT eco-labels; these are the "VISIT Holiday Guide" and the "Green Travel Market".

VISIT Holiday Guide: the European guide with a 'Plus' in Environmental Quality.

The *VISIT Holiday Guide* was launched in 2003 under the motto "Your visit makes the difference". It is available online in English, German and Dutch, and provides a detailed and structured description of more than 1,000 hotels, bed & breakfasts, holiday houses, youth hostels, camping sites and restaurants, combined with attractive pictures. As added value to their environmental certificate they all offer a 'Plus' in quality.

Thus, for the first time ever, consumers can find appropriate environmentally-friendly accommodation for their next holiday just by clicking on holiday destinations on the map of Europe.

The VISIT eco-labels in Austria, France, United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Italy, Spain and Latvia guarantee that their awarded businesses conform to high standards in all important environmental aspects, and that these are checked on-site by independent auditors. In addition, the VISIT Holiday Guide also promotes more than 2,000 beaches and 600 marinas certified by the well-known Blue Flag International.

► www.yourvisit.info / search for accommodation

Green Travel Market: sustainable tourism information service for tour operators



The Green Travel Market is an online "business to business" service for tour operators, journalists and other professionals. It gives up-to-date and reliable information on existing eco-labelled and "Fair Trade" tourism products. All sustainable products presented on this virtual market place have been screened on quality and sustainability aspects. Different types of highly sustainable tourism products along the "tourism supply chain" participate in the Green Travel Market: destinations, protected areas, accommodation networks, individual accommodation, community based tourism networks, visitor attractions and activities, excursions and tours, incoming tour operators and transport services. This market offers a wide array of services to help tour operators to integrate sustainable products into their packages. A team of professional matchmakers from different countries is assisting interested tour operators in finding reliable partners, and creating highly sustainable and exciting tour packages.

Registration is free and provides access to a growing database of attractive sustainable tourism products from all over the world.

► www.greentravelmarket.info



Co-operating with the travel industry

Tour operators, travel guides and tourism promotional boards play an important role in informing consumers. Different strategies are needed, each catering for their own target groups.

1. Reaching the highly motivated consumers: integrated quality products for niche markets

An estimated 2 - 5% of consumers give high priority to environmental and sustainable aspects in their decision making process. They take an active approach towards environmentally-friendly products and this group could trigger the further development of sustainable products. In order to reach this small but pioneering group of "believers", certified products will have to be grouped and branded based on their specific qualities in co-operation with specialised marketing networks, travel book publishers, niche tour operators or specific brands of larger tour operators.

A good example of branding environmentally-friendly products is the Green Holiday Guide issued by the Dutch Touring Club ANWB in co-operation with ECEAT. The guide contains 1.000 environmentally-friendly rural accommodation services/businesses. Other examples are the GRECOTELS, the BIOHOTELS, the niche tour operators associated with the German forum anders reisen, or VIABONO in Germany.

2. Reaching wider target groups: integrate and Indicate "eco-labelled" products within conventional marketing channels

About 30 – 60% of the consumers are willing to take into account environmental and social considerations while booking their holiday. However, for this group sustainability issues are only a final argument after priority has been given to other aspects, such as: country, region, price, kind of accommodation, atmosphere, activities and attractions offered. In order to reach and inform these wider tourist target groups, labelled products should be integrated into conventional marketing channels and presented in an attractive manner next to non-labelled products. Consumers should be given the option to choose. To reach this goal VISIT co-operates closely with mainstream marketing organisations, such as:

- Travel guides publishers
- Hotel and accommodation guides and websites
- Tourism promotion boards
- Tour operators

VISIT supports these tourism marketing organisations to include more certified products in their existing offers, and to identify and indicate existing certified products.

To indicate eco-labelled products in travel books, tour operators' catalogues and websites different options are provided:

- Indication of the specific logo of the (national) certification scheme.
- Indication with the international VISIT umbrella logo together with the message: *Certified by one of the VISIT eco-labels.*
- Indication with a special symbol - e.g. a "green star" - only used by the specific tour operator or information channel. The message is again: *Certified by one of the VISIT eco-labels.*



The Touring Club Italiano publishes the "Legambiente Turismo" certified tourism services in its "Blue Guide" 2004.

Exemplary Collaboration



TUI Netherlands and Milieubarometer

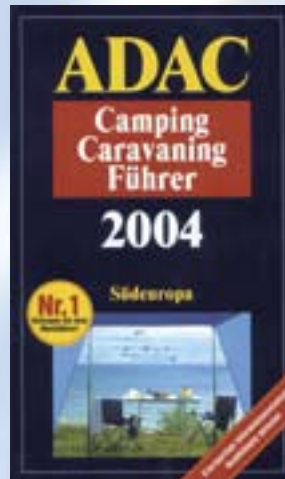
TUI Netherlands, the Dutch daughter of Europe's leading tour operator TUI International, has made an agreement with the Dutch VISIT eco-label *Milieubarometer*, whereby TUI Netherlands commits itself to prioritise certified products above non-certified products.

► www.tuinderland.nl/Milieu/index.html



ADAC Camping and Caravanning Guide
Europe's leading touring club ADAC in Germany (with almost 15 million members) indicates camping sites, which are certified by an eco-label in its Camping Caravanning Guide.

► www.adac-verlag-gmbh.de/magazine



VisitScotland

The Green Tourism Business Scheme in Scotland is one of the national tourist board's Quality Assurance schemes and all certified tourism services are highlighted in their brochures & on their website. According to an independent annual occupancy survey the GTBS businesses show an occupancy rate 10% above the average.

► www.visitscotland.com/sitewide/greentourism



ANWB Green Holiday Guide

The "Green Holiday Guide Europe" is published by ECEAT (European Centre for Eco Agro Tourism) in collaboration with ANWB (Dutch National Touring Club). The guide includes more than 1,200 organic farms, environmentally-friendly camping sites and places to stay in 13 European countries. Rural accommodation businesses certified by VISIT eco-labels have been integrated into the guide.



ECO-TOUR website

The Friends of Nature International website highlights the VISIT Holiday Guide in their online information service on environmentally-friendly tourism.

► www.eco-tour.org

The VISIT Association

European platform for eco-labeling in tourism

VISIT stands for "Voluntary Initiative for Sustainability in Tourism", and was created within the frame of an EU funded LIFE project in tourism eco-labelling. The name outlines the concept of the organisation: a positive collaboration between distinct initiatives working towards achieving sustainability in tourism.

The Association was established in 2004 at REISEPAVILLON, Europe's leading Green and Eco-tourism Fair. This was the culmination of ongoing liaison and co-operation between a dozen leading tourism eco-labels from 2001 onwards. Eight of these labels (based in the Netherlands, Italy, Denmark, Latvia, France, United Kingdom, Switzerland and Luxembourg) founded the organisation together with over 1,500 participating tourism enterprises, as well as strategic bodies as supporters and associates, e.g. the environmental management certificate ECOCAMPING. Further eco-labels, e.g. from Austria and Spain already expressed their interest to join the Association.

In general, the eco-labels involved represent nationally based organisations in (primarily) tourism accommodation.

The alliance between the labels within VISIT is based on mutual understanding and recognition and the agreement to adopt a common standard. This standard sets the framework by which credible tourism eco-labels should operate in Europe. This ensures the consumer has a reliable environmentally-friendly tourism choice and an indication that there are efforts to improve the destination towards more sustainability.

VISIT is the first association of its type anywhere in Europe and its primary goal is to ensure that eco-labelling in tourism is successful, practical and responsible. The secretariat of the organisation is run by ECOTRANS, an international organisation with a strong reputation in establishing effective networks and collaboration between tourism and environmental organisations.

Since its inception in early 2004 the VISIT organisation is encouraging other tourism eco-labels and initiatives to become involved. The main activities planned for the next three years are focused on:

- Developing promotional campaigns with national and international tour operators
- Establishing a VISIT Association website as a hub connecting the different participating eco-labels
- Piloting a verification procedure for eco-labels based on assessing the effectiveness of their management procedures, their auditors as well as a sample of their certified products (those awarded with the eco-label).
- Creating practical and helpful strategic tools for member eco-labels, such as performance evaluation (benchmarking), promotional messages and market research



www.yourvisit.info

VISIT Constitution, Article 2: Mission statement

VISIT promotes and supports sustainable tourism development through the representation, promotion and mutual co-operation of international, national and regional certification schemes and other voluntary initiatives for sustainable tourism at an international level.

Sustainable tourism is defined as: "tourism development that meets the needs of the present tourists and host regions, while protecting and enhancing the opportunities for future generations. It is envisaged as leading to the management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled, while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems" (WTO, EU)

- Maintain and enhance the partnership between separate eco-labelling activities. This will be achieved by co-operation and collaboration within the VISIT Association, as well as with other international initiatives, such as the EU Flower, World Tourism Organisation and Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council.

Membership to VISIT is available at two levels as a full member or as an associate member. Full membership is open to tourism eco-labels. These are environmental certification systems operating in the tourism sector that require an on-site verification undertaken by an independent certification body. All full members of the Association are required to comply with the statutes of the organisation. They must be prepared to recognise other full members as legitimate national eco-labels, co-operate with them, and work towards the objectives as well as meet the common standard of the organisation.

Associate membership is open to any organisation with an interest and/or commitment to the objectives of the VISIT Association.

Membership levels have been set at a low minimum level to establish the organisation and encourage further participation.

The main office bearers in the Association are the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary.

The Association is registered in the Netherlands, and a copy of the VISIT constitution is available from the VISIT website www.yourvisit.info.



Outlook 2010

Eco-labelling tourism: Approaching an effective tool

The steps that have been taken so far by the VISIT initiative to build a more sustainable tourism industry in Europe are encouraging, but not yet sufficient. There are many difficulties, and the most challenging are how to:

- increase the number of certified sustainable tourism products,
- raise consumer awareness and demand for these products,
- reduce duplication of efforts and resources in the field of sustainable tourism.

In addition, European certification programmes can benefit from exchange of experience and co-operation within the new VISIT Association as well as organisations running or starting programmes in the Americas, Asia-Pacific and Africa.

It is likely that further developments will lead to the creation of a global forum and accreditation body for sustainable tourism certificates (between 2005 and 2010), which can investigate, recognise and promote tourism certification schemes world wide. The new **Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council (STSC)** initiative is a promising approach, which could fulfil much of these objectives. Based on the various developments inside and outside Europe, it is our vision that:

1. A global STSC is established and represents the relevant economic, social and environmental interests. This committee agrees upon an international standard for sustainability certificates for tourism services, based on existing experiences and approaches.
2. The VISIT Association in Europe as regional partner network, contributes to the development of an international standard and com-

plements it with European specifications for the accreditation of certificates.

3. The participating *eco-labels* collaborate with each other to harmonise part of their criteria and procedures, and establish a common communication strategy (logo) to consumers. Thus raising the effectiveness of marketing and promotion and minimising costs.
4. These *eco-labels* will collaborate with *eco-labels* for non-tourism products and other complementary initiatives for sustainable tourism development.
5. The *tour operators' associations* together with their members recognise and promote the international standard and make progress on "greening" their supply chains.
6. The *eco-labels* and their products are widely promoted by the above associations (STSC, VISIT, tour operators' associations), with full and easy access to their *certified products and programmes*.
7. National and international *tour operators and tourist boards* will increasingly collaborate with these certificates and schemes, prioritise certified products in their marketing and highlight them in their catalogues and web-sites.
8. An increasing number of *travel agencies, information and reservation systems* offer a "green filter" to easily identify certified products in a given destination and even certified destinations from the whole choice.
9. *Destinations* monitor and report their progress towards more sustainable development, including the contribution of certified tourism services to their environmental, social and economic objectives.

THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL (STSC)

The *Rainforest Alliance* co-ordinates the development of a global accreditation body for sustainable tourism certification programmes. The implementation plan is designed to strengthen existing certification programmes and allow for grassroots participation in the STSC in three phases:

1. to establish regional networks to encourage dialogue among stakeholders, to act as regional clearinghouses for certification information and to provide technical assistance relevant to the certification process.
2. to increase marketing and training activities for certification programmes committed to accreditation
3. to maintain network activities and to accredit certification programmes to raise their accountability and to improve consumer confidence in third-party sustainable tourism certification.

Parallel to the successful implementation of the VISIT network in Europe, the launch of the Sustainable Tourism Certification Network of the Americas took place in Bahia, Brazil in September of 2003.

► www.rainforest-alliance.org/programs/sv/index.html



10. *Governments* improve the market conditions for eco-labelling, i.e. by reduced taxes for certified products and services and thus complement national and international legislation and programmes.
11. *Businesses* along the tourism supply chain become increasingly interested to raise their "sustainability" performance and competitiveness. They will implement environmental management systems and join relevant eco-labels.
12. *Consumers' and environmental associations* continuously contribute to the awareness raising for sustainable development and the role of tourism.

It is envisaged that these public and private partners create an international sustainable tourism shelf in the "global tourism supermarket" and stock it with environmentally and socially preferable products, meeting these newly recognised standards.

The market share of certified sustainable tourism products rises from less than 1% to 5% and the voluntary tool of eco-labelling in tourism, becomes a growing success.

Word of thanks

We would like to thank all participating eco-labels for their strong commitment and trustworthy collaboration, the members of the international VISIT advisory group with leading stakeholder associations for their helpful comments and ideas, the media for their dissemination support – and the thousands of certified tourism services for their ongoing commitment to sustainability of tourism in Europe.

We are glad that the new VISIT Association will continue this work to make tourism eco-labelling in Europe a successful tool.

The VISIT project partners



European Environment Agency



The VISIT Initiative

Tourism eco-labelling in Europe –
moving the market towards sustainability

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Caring for the Environment ...



... is caring for the Visitor.

Holidays at last! The best weeks of the year. Preferably in attractive surroundings. With healthy and tasty food. In Europe there are many sustainable holiday destinations: At the seaside, in the mountains or in the countryside. For them, taking care of you is naturally linked with caring for their surroundings. It is a matter of quality. The VISIT eco-labels guarantee this quality. They show you where your host cares for the environment.

