

Certification of responsible tourism

A proposal for development of a responsible tourism certification system in Croatia, with selected examples of existing and future responsible tourism activities



I studied Philosophy and Linguistics at the University of Zagreb, and attended a course in Ecological Design at the Schumacher College. I have been an environmental activist since 1995, initially working on public advocacy and NVDA in Green Action/FoE Croatia, and afterward shifting my focus more towards peace advocacy work (with Center for Peace Studies), and sustainable development alternatives and permaculture (with Recycled Estate Vukomerić and the Balkan Ecovillage Network).

- In 2008 I founded a consulting company (Kabiri Consulting Ltd.), that focuses on fundraising support to innovative, interdisciplinary sustainable development projects. In this consulting capacity I worked for a range of public, private and non-profit organisations in Croatia, mostly within the framework of the EU pre-accession and EC funding programmes.
- I strongly believe in productivity of borderline areas, and find the border between radical environmentalism and mainstream EU funded development to be a productive niche for responsible entrepreneurship



- Public policy:

National youth policy croatia – participative process, civil society chapters

National framework for support to NGOs – foundations and philanthropy chapters

- EU local and regional development programming

Strategic development plan for the town of Skradin

Regional operational programme of the Požeško-slavonska county

- Fundraising:

Cca 10 M eur raised, 90% success rate, 200+ project applications assessed

- CSR

Coca Cola Beverages Croatia – corporate responsibility report (with prof. Paul Stubbs)



Some experiences...



...some projects under development...



Ptice.net: bird watching data, uploaded by portal members, to be utilised for birdwatching tourism

19-ruj-05	Kopacki rit - Posebni zoološki rezervat	Aegithalos caudatus	20
20-ruj-05	Kopacki rit - Posebni zoološki rezervat	Aegithalos caudatus	5
22-ruj-05	Kopacki rit - Posebni zoološki rezervat	Aegithalos caudatus	10
22-ruj-05	Kopacki rit - Ribnjaci Podunavlje	Aegithalos caudatus	5
24-ruj-05	Kopacki rit - Ribnjaci Podunavlje	Alauda arvensis	2
20-ruj-05	Kopacki rit - Posebni zoološki rezervat	Alcedo atthis	1
21-ruj-05	Kopacki rit - Posebni zoološki rezervat	Alcedo atthis	1
22-ruj-05	Kopacki rit - Posebni zoološki rezervat	Alcedo atthis	2
16-ruj-05	Kopacki rit - Ribnjaci Podunavlje	Alcedo atthis	3

Nomadi.hr: an adventure travel service, complemented by purchasing of clothes and toys for children living in orphan homes



...and some plans.



Island of Rab

An island traditionally oriented around the high-profile (even elite) tourism. Interested in further improving their service to tourists through establishment of a responsible/sustainable tourism offer.



Balkan Ecovillage Network

A network of communities formed around the idea of sustainable living. Open for tourists/visitors interested in volunteering.



Principles of responsible tourism

(World Tourism Organisation)

- 1. Economic Viability: To ensure the viability and competitiveness of tourism destinations and enterprises, so that they are able to continue to prosper and deliver benefits in the long term.
- 2. Local Prosperity: To maximize the contribution of tourism to the economic prosperity of the host destination, including the proportion of visitor spending that is retained locally.
- 3. Employment Quality: To strengthen the number and quality of local jobs created and supported by tourism, including the level of pay, conditions of service and availability to all without discrimination by gender, race, disability or in other ways.
- 4. Social Equity: To seek a widespread and fair distribution of economic and social benefits from tourism throughout the recipient community, including improving opportunities, income and services available to the poor.
- 5. Visitor Fulfillment: To provide a safe, satisfying and fulfilling experience for visitors, available to all without discrimination by gender, race, disability, or in other ways.
- 6. Local Control: To engage and empower local communities in planning and decision making about the management and future development of tourism in their area, in consultation with other stakeholders.



Principles of responsible tourism

(World Tourism Organisation)

- 7. Community Wellbeing: To maintain and strengthen the quality of life in local communities, including social structures and access to resources, amenities and life support systems, avoiding any form of social degradation or exploitation.
- 8. Cultural Richness: To respect and enhance the historic heritage, authentic culture, traditions, and distinctiveness of host communities.
- 9. Physical Integrity: To maintain and enhance the quality of landscapes, both urban and rural, and avoid the physical and visual degradation of the environment.
- 10. Biological Diversity: To support the conservation of natural areas, habitats, and wildlife, and minimize damage to them.
- 11. Resource Efficiency: To minimize the use of scarce and non renewable resources in the development and operation of tourism facilities and services.
- 12. Environmental Purity: To minimize the pollution of air, water and land, and the generation of waste by tourism enterprises and visitors



Types of responsible tourism

- Sustainable tourism
tourism that seeks to minimize ecological and sociocultural impacts while providing economic benefits to local communities and host countries
- Eco-tourism
responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people



What is certification?

- **Certification** is defined as “a voluntary procedure that assesses, audits and gives written assurance that a facility, product, process or service meets specific standards. It awards a marketable logo to those that meet or exceed baseline standards.”



Common elements of tourism certification systems

- voluntary enrollment by businesses
- well-defined standards and criteria
- assessment and auditing
- recognition and awarding the use of a logo
- periodic follow up audits to renew the certification
- continual improvement
- transparency
- participatory mechanisms to define standards



Quality factors for tourism certification systems

- Nondiscrimination: certification should be available to all applicants who meet the standards and whose activities are covered;
- Certification should be free of undue financial considerations and independent of size or membership in groups or organizations;
- The certification standard should consist of clearly defined criteria, specifically related to what is being certified;
- The certifying organization should be able to make impartial evaluations and certification decisions, based on clearly defined criteria;
- The certifying body should allow the participation of all parties significantly concerned with the activity being certified, with respect to the content and function of the certification system;



Quality factors for tourism certification systems

- The person who evaluates a business or activity should be separate from the entity that decides whether to award the certification; both should be independent of whoever provides consulting service to help the business qualify;
- The certification body should be free from commercial or financial pressures that might influence decisions;
- The certification should award a logo and include a sunset clause that requires re-application after a given time period;
- There should be established procedures for appeals, for revoking certifications, for revising and changing criteria and standards etc.



Models of certification

by identity of the certifying body

First, second, or third party certification

- *First-party certification* is self-evaluation. For example, when a company declares that its product meets certain standards but no one from outside verifies the claim. This is similar to a high school class where the teacher asks each student to grade his or her own exams.
- *Second-party certification* is when a purchaser or industry body assures that the product meets the purchaser's standards. This is similar to the high school teacher giving exams to see how the students in the class are performing relative to the teacher's expectations.
- *Third-party certification* is when a neutral, independent third party evaluates the compliance of the product with clearly defined standards. This is similar to the students taking a standardized test that is graded outside the school. Most credible certification programs require third-party assessment.



Models of certification

by the scope of certification

Certification of a business process

- Environmental Management Systems (EMS): ISO 14001 and related programs
- Management establishes systems for monitoring certain significant environmental aspects
- Usually requires outside consultants; relatively expensive for small and medium businesses
- Emphasis on internal cost savings & environmental impact mitigation • No universal standards: cannot compare across businesses
- Logo given for setting up process, not for achieving fixed goals
- Best suited for large businesses, where it is very cost-effective and offers economies of scale



Models of certification

by the scope of certification

Certification of a business result/performance

- Tangible criteria that permit comparisons among certified businesses
- Measure achievement and results, not intent
- Can include check list intelligible to both business and consumers
- More transparent; less expensive
- Can include environmental and socio-economic criteria within & without business
- Can involve variety of stakeholders
- Can offer different levels of logos reflecting different levels of performance
- Suited for small, medium & large businesses



Models of certification

by type of certificate issued

Certificate vs. „eco label”

Environmental certification is awarded to those businesses or activities that comply absolutely with a set of standards. Any number or all of the businesses in a sector can be certified, if they comply. Certification rewards meeting a set of *baseline* or *minimum standards*, which generally require more than what legal regulations do

A guaranteed minimum!

An **ecolabel** is an award that is given to a business or activity that has significantly better performance compared to the other businesses in its sector. Only the best performers, who show *exemplary performance*, according to the established criteria, receive the ecolabel. As the industry changes and more and more businesses adopt good practices, the requirements for receiving the ecolabel are raised, so that once again, only the obviously better environmental performance is rewarded. Ecolabels are based on comparison with the best performance (benchmarking), rather than compliance with baseline standards.

An exemplary level of performance reached/recognised!



Models of certification

by level of achievement

Certification vs. classification

When a person graduates from a school, he or she is awarded a diploma that certifies compliance with minimum requirements. This is **certification** of compliance or not. However, to earn that diploma, the person received letter or number grades for each course, which are averaged to give a final grade. This is **classification** on a graded scale of best to worst. Just as a student receives a diploma and a grade, some tourism certification systems not only certify baseline compliance, but also reward better performance. The best known example of this is the five-star system for rating hotel quality.

The model based on certification makes it possible to identify the subjects that achieve a minimal criterion, from those that do not.

The model based on classification makes it possible to recognise the different levels of achievement



Models of certification

by level of certification

Certification vs. accreditation

„Certifikacija” applies to the awards given to businesses, products, processes, or services

“Accreditation” applies to the process of qualifying, endorsing and licensing entities that perform certification. In other words, accreditation is certifying the certifier.



Responsible tourism certification in reality

- More than 60 different certification systems worldwide
- Global: STSC, UNWTO...
- EU: VISIT, EU Eco-label (European Flower)
- Croatia:

„Environmentally friendly” eco-label, given for minor achievements in a process-based, second party certification(?) system

„Blue flag” for beach safety and sea quality, according to the international standard



Certification in Croatia?

- How to choose between different models?
- Grassroots initiative, a state regulated system, or an internationally recognised system?
- Who should be involved in the initial establishment of the system?
- What will be the content of the system (criteria, benchmarks etc.)?
- How and where will the system be managed?



A project concept

Overall Objective:

To systematically reduce the negative impact of tourism on the environment and social structure in Croatia, through support to development of responsible tourism

Specific Objective

To establish a certification system for responsible tourism (in Croatia)

Expected results:

1. Accreditation and certification system articulated
2. Accreditation body formed : **NON-PROFIT**
3. First certifiers accredited : **PROFIT**
4. Pilot responsible tourism projects certified : **PROFIT**
5. Responsible tourism foundation established : **NON-PROFIT**



Possible funding sources

Core project:

1. The market!
2. IPA 1
3. IPA 2 CBC
4. CIP EEN

Complementary activities:

1. MINT, HTZ
2. IPARD
3. IPA 4 („green jobs“)

