



Background Note Green Tourism Organization - Eco-labeling Tourism Organizations

Green Tourism Organization
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Sustainability is an increasingly important part of tourism

Tourism organizations play a central role in the tourism industry and contribute to how tourists choose to spend their holidays and free time. Therefore, it is important to strengthen the green efforts of this group of companies. The green efforts can serve as a supplement and promotion of what these organizations are already doing as well as strengthen the connection to other areas of the tourism industry that have launched green initiatives and inspire to eco-labeling.

Experiences from Green Key can be used for further work in this sector. Green Key is the tourism industry's international eco-label, which started in Denmark in 1994. Currently Green Key is widely used in over 55 countries and awarded to over 2,900 tourism organizations. The eco-label focuses primarily on the accommodation sector such as hotels, hostels and camp sites.

In connection to an inquiry, Green Keys International Steering Committee has proposed for Denmark to establish a parallel arrangement of the Green Key eco-label.

As Denmark has noticed a need to promote sustainable tourism, HORESTA has chosen to establish a clone of the Green Key eco-label with the aim to target tourism organizations under the name of "Green Tourism Organization"

For HORESTA it is important that the scheme is reliable, therefore it is created based on the recognized concept of Green Key, which include strict criteria and a credible application and control process. Applicants are also treated and approved by a jury constituting of at least one other green organization.

It is also important that the scheme follows the industry and that it's easy to access, market and that it's understandable for guests. Therefore, the development of the scheme has been done in close cooperation with Wonderful Copenhagen, who focuses on the sustainable agenda and, among other things, is engaged with the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS Index).

This document contains the following chapters:

1. Tourism organizations also need to show their environmental efforts
2. Target Group
3. Strengthening the environmental work and Green Key
4. Organization and Procedures
5. Content and Criteria for a Tourism Organizations Eco-Label
6. Economy
7. Timeframe
8. Marketing of the Scheme



1. Tourism organizations also need to show their environmental efforts

Why is the environmental efforts particularly interesting for tourism organizations?

- **Green destination:** It strengthens the image of the destination as well as its businesses in regards to sustainability. It also ensures that nature, culture and the environment is not being harmed. Internationally, there is an increasing focus on sustainability, and the UN organized a sustainable tourism year in 2017. Additionally our German neighbors as well as Swedes have a strong environmental focus.
- **Better image and more guests:** A green profile strengthens the tourism organizations as well as the image and it can also attract more customers. The same applies to the increasing number of businesses that are required to use sustainable alternatives in connection to meetings, conferences and events.
- **Walk-the-talk:** It may be difficult for tourism organizations to market a sustainable destination and encourage other tourism companies to take action if they do not do it themselves.
- **Public Focus:** Many tourism organizations belong partly or completely to the public sector, which often has more of an environmental focus.
- **Environmental Impact Tools:** Tourism organizations often lack a tool or scheme for their environmental efforts.
- **Increased marketing:** By reducing operating costs for individual organizations, there will be more money for marketing of the destination.
- **GDS Index:** Many tourism organizations from around the world participate in a Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS Index), where they benchmark their sustainability efforts compared to other similar organizations. Extra points will be given if the organization has an eco-label. www.gds-index.com

2. Target Group

There are different tourism organizations and inter-municipal destination partners which are relevant to this scheme. Additionally, there are a number of major tourism organizations around bigger cities and local tourism agencies, usually marked with an "I", in the countryside.

An expanded target group can also include organizations in charge of national parks, private tourism organizations as well as agencies etc.

3. Strengthening the environmental work and Green Key

An eco-labeling system for tourism organizations provides an opportunity to strengthen sustainable tourism as well as Green Key.

- **Less environmental impact:** Tourism organizations can with an eco-label lower their environmental impact while they at the same time contribute to an increased focus on sustainability.
- **Marketing of Green Key businesses:** Tourism organizations that make an environmental effort is more eligible to promote sustainable tourism and can also increase their marketing of Green Key and other eco-labeled companies.
- **Increase the likelihood of a Green Key stay:** When traveling to a destination that is marketed as sustainable, there will be a greater likelihood of eco-labeled accommodation alternatives than elsewhere.
- **Several eco-labeled companies:** An eco-labeled tourism organization that is committed to working with sustainability can spread the message and inspire other tourism businesses to get certified.
- **Sustainable tourism as a strategic choice:** The environmental initiative can promote a strategic approach to sustainability and environmental efforts in tourism, where other businesses can be involved as well.
- **A green connection for eco-labeling of the tourism sector:** The scheme enables tourism organizations to use recognized eco-labels to make it easier for the tourists to choose familiar alternatives and see the results of them.

4. Organization and Procedures

As earlier mentioned, the similar procedures as Green Key is used for the eco-labeling of tourism organizations.

The purpose of the procedure:

- To ensure that Green Tourism Organization companies comply with established criteria and compliance standards to maintain a high and credible environmental effort.

Application process

- Interested tourism organizations submit a completed application form including relevant documentation to the secretariat. Documentation must consist of an environmental action plan, a draft of a cooperation agreement, list of cleaning products and additional information that can strengthen the application.
- A consultant or the secretariat visits and reviews the site to ensure it meets the criteria or if it is about to do so.
- Once all the documentation and practical work is in place, the secretariat will forward the case to the jury who will make the final decision.
- Based on the decision of the jury, a cooperation agreement is signed.
- All mandatory criteria must be met to be granted the eco-label.
In special cases the jury may consider justified dispensation if a mandatory criteria can't be fulfilled by the applying organization.

Jury

All applications must be treated and approved by the jury. The jury shall consist of at least one representative from a sustainable NGO and one from an industry organization. Unless agreed otherwise, the chairman of the jury is from an industry organization and the vice-chairman from a sustainable NGO.

Participants	Name
HORESTA	Kirsten Munch Andersen
The Outdoor Council	Torben Kaas
The Danish Environmental Protection Agency	?
External consultant	A consultancy firm verifies efforts and eco-labeled companies every two years. (This is a continuous process managed by the international coordination)

The presidency decides, through recommendation of the secretariat, possible additional members of the jury.

The jury's responsibilities

Managing cases:

- Approval of applicants for Green Tourism Organization
- Refusal of applicants or already labeled organizations
- Approval of dispensations
- Annual assessments of cases
- Managing consultancy visits



Criteria:

- Approval of Danish additions to the criteria
- Discussing existing and new criteria
- Suggesting changes to criteria

Meetings:

- Annual meeting at the end of each year - normally in November. Additional meetings can be arranged according to need.
- The secretariat is responsible for invitation and meeting preparations
- Status report is sent to the jury before the meeting

Procedures:

- The presidency receives preferences and dispensation cases from the secretariat.
- The decisions made by the presidency are annually verified during the jury meeting.
- Before the annual meeting, the jury receives a status report with information regarding the eco-labeled companies and their efforts to maintain their environmental efforts.
- Any change suggestions in regards to the criteria etc. is discussed by the jury at the annual meeting or through written correspondence.
- Every two years, the jury and their work is evaluated by an external party.

Control & Verification

A GREEN TOURISM ORGANIZATION is regularly checked both before and after the labeling to ensure that the organization meets its obligations and criteria.

GREEN TOURISM ORGANIZATION has a number of procedures to ensure compliance with criteria and progress in environmental efforts.

- The application process
- Approved by a Jury
- Ongoing audit and inspection visits
- Ongoing documentation and ensuring compliance

The application process

To be awarded the GREEN TOURISM ORGANIZATION, an application must be submitted with relevant documentation from the relevant tourism organization. Then a consultant visits the organization to help and ensure that all the requirements are met and the necessary documentation is found or developed.

Approved by a Jury

When all requirements are met and the documentation is in place, the application for approval by a Jury is canceled. If the jury approves the application, the company can then be awarded the GREEN TOURISM ORGANIZATION.

Ongoing audit and inspection visits

At the initial consultancy visit, the form is filled in and jointly prepared environmental procedures, objectives, activities and information material targeted at the organization.

All GREEN TOURISM ORGANIZATION organizations receive inspection visits prior to allocation and visit again after approximately one year. Thereafter, the company is

visited every two or three years, ensuring that the requirements are still met, so that the company can maintain GREEN TOURISM ORGANIZATION and advice on how to proceed with environmental work.

The audit is carried out by consultants who have a thorough knowledge of the scheme and its environmental requirements and who can also advise and save with the labeled companies.

Costs for the inspection visit will be borne by GREEN TOURISM ORGANIZATION, while all expenses incurred. consultancy, necessary investments, etc. is held by the organization.

Ongoing documentation and ensuring compliance

In addition to the ongoing inspection visits, the organization must submit information about selected criteria and how the site is continuously improving at the turn of the year.

The ecolabel can be removed from the organization if the criteria are not fulfilled.

5. Content and Criteria for a Tourism Organizations Eco-Label

A tourism organization wishing to be awarded the Green Tourism Organization certification is required to make environmental efforts which is considered to include:

- A. Admission Requirements:** The area covered by the tourism organization must have a at least a 50 % share of eco-labeled accommodations.
- B. Sustainability efforts:** The tourism organization and the municipalities covered by the organization must work actively with sustainability and environmental efforts.
- C. Organization / Office Labeling:** The criteria are adapted, improved and adjusted based on the Green Key criteria and the former labeling system for holiday home rental agencies.
- D. Agreement for future cooperation:** The tourism organization must sign a cooperation agreement together with the national agency with the aim to inform and promote environmental labeling and environmental efforts.

5A. Admission Requirements

The tourism organizations will not receive a Green Tourism Organization certification solely based on the fact that the Green Tourism Organization label will actively be used in marketing of the destination. It is crucial that the destination actually offers eco-labeled accommodations as well.

It has previously been suggested that the admission requirements should be set to half of the requirements of the destination's eco-labeled hotels and hostels. Currently 20 % of the country's municipalities can live up this requirement. However, a new structure for the Danish Tourism Industry that has been published in 2018 and has an intention of creating more inter-municipal cooperation, which has a potential of improving the number further.



1.11	Eco-labeled Accommodation	A minimum of 40 % of the destinations hotels or hotel rooms are eco-certified.	Mandatory
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Further on, it can also become possible to include hostels.

5B. The Effort of a Sustainable Destination

It is important that the tourism organization actively works to increase the environmental efforts of the destination. To accommodate this, additional criteria is proposed.

Additional criteria to complement the criteria of hotels

1.10	Sustainable destination	The organization works actively to improve the destination's environmental efforts	Mandatory
1.12	Sustainable organizations	The organization actively assists and supports the destination's tourism organizations regarding environmental efforts and helps with eco-certifications in the area. <i>This step includes signing a cooperation agreement regarding the efforts</i>	Mandatory
1.13	Cooperation with authorities	The organization collaborates with local authorities to make the destination more sustainable.	Mandatory
1.14	Sustainable promotion	The organization communicates credibly and reliably about the destination's environmental and sustainability efforts.	Mandatory

5C. Certification of the organization/office

Green Key has created a model to review environmental efforts in tourism organizations. The model as well as Green Key's criteria are used as the basis for the development of the eco-label for tourism organizations.

Below a few of the environmental impacts of tourism organizations are presented. As a basis for the review, the most recent criteria for hotels are used as well as the previous criteria for rental agencies.

Building Conditions

Many tourism organizations are located in older buildings. In addition, tourism organizations have daily opening hours, which means that the energy consumption can partially be shut off when the office is closed. Some tourism organizations may even be closed some parts of the year.

The building conditions of a tourism organization are similar to those in other buildings awarded with a Green Key label. There is for example water, lighting, insulation, heating, ventilation and cleaning to take into account.

The existing Green Key hotel criteria will therefore cover these aspects.

Tourism organization's environmental impact

In addition to the building itself, the services that the tourism organization's offer are usually guided tours, meeting activities and exhibition of material and objects. Particularly related to this is:

- **Communication:** Especially signs, TV screens, touch screens, projectors, back-lighting and power for exhibitions.
- **Exhibition lighting:** Exhibition lighting may be daylight, spots (often LED or halogen), stands with back light, projectors or screens.



- **Maintenance and storage:** This can be storage for items that are not currently in use during e.g. exhibitions.
- **Transportation of equipment:** Transportation to and from the sites with shorter and longer-lasting exhibitions.
- **Other services:** Tourism organizations may, depending on the location, have extra activities such as shops, restaurants and cafes, teaching and meeting rooms, auditoriums, offices for administration etc.

Based on the above, the following may have a similar environmental impact as compared to e.g. Green Key criteria for hotels.



Area	Description	Output	Relation to the Hotel Criteria	Possible Action
Communication	TV screens, touch screens, projectors, backlighting etc.	CO2 and electrical waste	Partially covered by existing criteria, but more effort can be made.	Mandatory requirements for time and demand management
Communication	Signs, postings, posters and leaflets	CO2 and waste such as paper and metal	Covered by existing criteria	
Exhibition lighting	Lighting with spots and backlight	CO2 and waste such as light bulbs with and without mercury	Partially covered by existing criteria, but more effort can be made. For example, outside opening hours and when there are no guests	Mandatory requirements for time and demand management
Exhibition lighting	Lighting with projector or monitor.	CO2 and electrical waste	Partially covered by existing criteria, but more effort can be made. For example, outside opening hours and when there are no guests	Mandatory requirements for time and demand management
Maintenance and storage	Temperature in the rooms	CO2	Covered by existing criteria – although focus is on opening hours	Mandatory requirements for time and demand management
Maintenance and storage	Storage of items not currently in use	CO2	Covered by existing criteria	
Maintenance and storage	Exhibition cases	CO2	Covered by existing criteria	
Maintenance and storage	Special cleaning	CO2	Covered by existing criteria	
Transportation	Transportation to and from the site with shorter and longer-lasting exhibitions	CO2	Part of existing criteria	
Other Services	Restaurant and cafe	CO2	Part of existing criteria	
Other Services	Teaching and meeting rooms and auditorium	CO2	Part of existing criteria	
Other Services	Store	CO2	Part of existing criteria	
Other Services	Offices for administration and research	CO2	Part of existing criteria	

Need for additional criteria

A review of a number of tourism organizations shows that there are many of the same areas that are already covered by Green Key criteria for hotels - and therefore can be applied directly. In addition to the proposed criteria in 5B, a criterion for demand and time management can be added for exhibitions:

7. X	Demand and time management to be added for exhibitions	The company must have the demand and time management of electrical installations at exhibitions such as lighting, projectors or TVs etc.	Mandatory
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The proposed criteria will mean more strict criteria in relation to the former scheme for holiday rentals.

5D. Cooperation Agreement

A certification of a tourism organization will be complemented by a cooperation agreement where the tourism organization commits to cooperating with the national Green Tourism Organization in regards to increasing the sustainable tourism efforts of the destination.

A cooperation agreement with the Green Tourism Organization obliges the tourism organization to promote eco-certifications, such as the Nordic Swan or Green Key, to other tourism companies in the area, see criterion 1.11. Specific goals must be set for improving the number of eco-labeled hotels in the area etc.

See the proposed cooperation agreement in Appendix 2.

6. Economy

Development of the criteria as well as material and meetings are covered by Green Key / HORESTA and latter on a Green Tourism Organization secretariat.

Green Tourism Organization will charge a participant fee covering the costs of the scheme including visits and marketing etc. To adapt to all types of organization the fee will be adjusted according to the size of the tourism organization in a similar manner to how the fee's for sports facilities and hotels have been calculated.

Following is the proposed level of fees:

Larger tourism organizations. Applicable to nationwide, regional and metropolitan offices	15.000 DKK /year
Medium tourism organizations Applicable to offices in medium-sized cities and regions	10.000 DKK /year
Small tourism organizations Applicable to offices in smaller towns and cities	5.000 DKK /year



7. Timeframe

April 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Final schedule set together with Wonderful Copenhagen</i>• <i>Official inquiry to the Outdoor Council regarding jury</i>• <i>Draft of name and logo</i>
May 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Review and clarification together with Wonderful Copenhagen</i>
June – July	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Final application sent to the secretariat</i>• <i>Response from the Outdoor Council</i>• <i>Holiday, lobby and customization</i>
August 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Compilation of articles of association</i>• <i>Sending of a recommendation to the jury</i>• <i>Website ready</i>• <i>Preparation of promotional material</i>• <i>Logo completed</i>
September 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Founding jury meeting</i>• <i>Approval at HORESTA board meeting</i>• <i>Information for VisitAarhus, VisitAalborg and Destination Bornholm and Inspiring Denmark</i>• <i>Reply to Wonderful Copenhagen</i>• <i>Publication of labeling scheme</i>• <i>13th - Deadline for submission to GDS index</i>• <i>Possible start up of SusDaneable</i>
October 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Possibly a review by VisitAarhus, VisitAalborg and Destination Bornholm</i>• <i>Launch of the Sustainable Bottom Line with Gate21</i>• <i>Reporting to the jury</i>
November 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Jury meeting</i>
December 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Submission of new material</i>
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Bigger launch</i>• <i>Communication to the entire industry</i>• <i>Open consultation based on experience</i>• <i>Possible adaptation of criteria approved by the jury</i>• <i>Meetings and visits to interested organizations</i>• <i>Launch of additional clones</i>



8. Marketing of the Scheme

To market the scheme, the following initiatives will be launched:

- Development of the website and connecting it to the existing Green Key page
- Development of promotional material that focuses on the benefits of the Green Tourism Organization eco-label
- Informational letter to relevant tourism organizations
- Personal contact with relevant people through network and steering group
- Creating Sustainable networks
- Meeting - especially aimed at informing about the initiative in areas that have many eco-labeled accommodations

The starting point is a label and partnership agreement with some major tourism organizations that are interested in the scheme.

Synergy in the promotion

Synergy is expected in connection to the promotion of the scheme. Tourism organizations can market Green Key to businesses and visitors - and at the same time push for more accommodations and tourism companies to apply for an eco-label.

Similarly, tourism businesses may insist that tourism organizations are labeled or focused on sustainable efforts in their marketing.

This focus can lead to more eco-labeled companies within existing categories, but also to the development of new categories and a destination scheme.



Appendix 1 - SWOT regarding extension to tourism organizations

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased focus on sustainable tourism• Shorter reaction time in connection to interest• Direct advice regarding sustainability for customers e.g. organizers• Good contact with other tourism businesses with a possibility to influence their environmental efforts• Synergy within marketing with benefits for new and existing eco-labeled businesses• Additional eco-labeled tourism companies within the existing Green Key category	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Possibility of only gaining a few eco-labeled organizations
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potential in relation to attractions and events• Potential in relation to the destination• In the long term, the label can be extended to private organizations, for example travel and rental agencies• Being a front runner to not have to compete with other similar efforts.• International adoption as Green Key	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If other tourism organizations won't support it



Appendix 9.1 - Draft of Cooperation Agreement

X enters into this cooperation agreement with the secretariat of HORESTA in connection to X receiving the Green Tourism Organization eco-label.

In connection to receiving the eco-label, X is required to spread information about sustainable tourism. In addition, X needs to promote eco-labels, such as the Nordic Swan and Green Key, see criterion 1.11, to the tourism businesses within their area.

The following goals are set:

- X works to improve the number of eco-labeled hotels in the area over Q years to increase the amount from Y to Z%.
- X works to introduce eco-labeling for campsites, hostels, attractions and museums located in the area during Q years
- ...

Date

Name
Responsible
X Organization

Name
Chairman
Green Tourism Organization