

# Sustainable tourism

## - standards and benefits for communities and protection of natural areas

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# Topics for today

- Global sustainable tourism criteria for destinations and businesses
- Overview of sustainability certification programs in tourism
- National and regional sustainable tourism development programs
- Example: Bukovel's path towards sustainability

\* Sustainability vs environmental standards

\* International vs European standards

# Global sustainable tourism criteria



Global Sustainable Tourism Council

# The role of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council

- **Sets global sustainability standards** – Develops and maintains international criteria for destinations, businesses, and tour operators to follow.
- **Accredits certification programs** – Approves and recognizes credible sustainability certification programs that meet its standards.
- **Provides training & education** – Offers courses, workshops, and webinars to help tourism professionals understand and implement sustainability practices.
- **Supports governments & destinations** – Helps countries, regions, and cities integrate sustainability into tourism policies and planning.
- **Promotes sustainable tourism worldwide** – Connects stakeholders and encourages responsible tourism that protects nature, respects culture, and benefits local communities.

# Global sustainable tourism criteria by GSTC

## For different organisations

- Tourism destinations
- Hotels
- Tour operators
- Attractions
- MICE
- Food services

## Areas covered

- Sustainability management
- Socio-economic aspects
- Cultural aspects
- Environmental aspects

# Global sustainable tourism criteria by GSTC

<p><b>A6 Visitor engagement and feedback</b></p> <p>The destination has a system to monitor and publicly report visitor satisfaction with the quality and sustainability of the destination experience and, if necessary, to take action in response. Visitors are informed about sustainability issues in the destination and the part that they can play in addressing them.</p>	<p>a. Visitor surveys (and other feedback mechanisms) – carried out and reported.</p> <p>b. Surveys and feedback includes visitor reaction to sustainability issues.</p> <p>c. Evidence of actions taken in response to visitor survey/feedback findings.</p> <p>d. Examples of visitor information that covers sustainability issues and how to respond to them.</p>	  
<p><b>A7 Promotion and information</b></p> <p>Promotion and visitor information material about the destination is accurate with regard to its products, services, and sustainability claims. Marketing messages and other communications reflect the destination's values and approach to sustainability and treat local communities and natural and cultural assets with respect.</p>	<p>a. Current information and promotional material with appropriate content.</p> <p>b. A process exists for checking the accuracy and appropriateness of destination promotion and information.</p> <p>c. Evidence of consultation with local communities and environmental and cultural bodies on communications content and delivery.</p>	  
<p><b>A(c) Managing pressure and change</b></p>		
<p><b>A8 Managing visitor volumes and activities</b></p> <p>The destination has a system for visitor management which is regularly reviewed. Action is taken to monitor and manage the volume and activities of visitors, and to reduce or increase them as necessary at certain times and in certain locations, working to balance the needs of the local economy, community, cultural heritage and environment.</p>	<p>a. The destination management strategy and action plan addresses seasonality and spread of visitation.</p> <p>b. Variation in visitor volumes throughout the year is monitored, including in the most visited locations.</p> <p>c. Impacts of visitor volumes and activities are identified through observation and community and stakeholder feedback.</p> <p>d. Actions taken to manage visitor flows and impacts.</p> <p>e. Marketing strategy and selection of target markets takes account of visit patterns, the impact of activities and destination needs.</p>	  
<p><b>A9 Planning regulations and development control</b></p> <p>The destination has planning guidelines, regulations and/or policies which control the location and nature of development, require</p>	<p>a. Specific policies/regulations/ guidelines which control development – documented and identified by title and date.</p>	 

GSTC INDUSTRY CRITERIA	INDICATORS FOR HOTELS
<p><b>SECTION A: Demonstrate effective sustainable management</b></p>	
<p><b>A1 Sustainability management system</b></p> <p>The organization has implemented a long-term sustainability management system that is suitable to its size and scope, addresses environmental, social, cultural, economic, quality, human rights, health, safety, risk and crisis management issues and drives continuous improvement.</p>	<p>a. The Sustainability Management System is clearly documented.</p> <p>b. The SM System covers environmental, social, cultural, economic, quality, human rights, health and safety issues.</p> <p>c. The SM System includes consideration of risk and crisis management.</p> <p>d. Documentary evidence shows implementation of the SM system.</p> <p>e. The SM System includes a process for monitoring continuous improvement in sustainability performance.</p>
<p><b>A2 Legal compliance</b></p> <p>The organization is in compliance with all applicable local, national and international legislation and regulations including, among others, health, safety, labour and environmental aspects.</p>	<p>a. An up-to-date list of all applicable legal requirements is maintained.</p> <p>b. Certificates or other documentary evidence show compliance with all applicable legal requirements.</p>
<p><b>A3 Reporting and communication</b></p> <p>The organization communicates its sustainability policy, actions and performance to stakeholders, including customers, and seeks to engage their support.</p>	<p>a. Regular reports are made available on sustainability performance.</p> <p>b. Sustainability policies and actions are reported in external and internal communication material.</p> <p>c. Communications contain messages inviting consumer and stakeholder support.</p>
<p><b>A4 Staff engagement</b></p> <p>Staff are engaged with development and implementation of the sustainability management system and receive periodic guidance and training regarding their roles and responsibilities in its delivery.</p>	<p>a. Evidence is available of staff involvement with the SM System.</p> <p>b. Records of courses and on-the-job training, with attendance levels, are available.</p> <p>c. Staff training and guidance materials are available in accessible format, (including use of minority languages where needed).</p> <p>d. Staff hold certificates and qualifications in relevant disciplines/skills.</p>
<p><b>A5 Customer experience</b></p> <p>Customer satisfaction, including aspects of sustainability, is monitored and corrective action taken.</p>	<p>a. A customer feedback system is in place, together with analysis of the results.</p> <p>b. Negative feedback and responses made to this are recorded.</p> <p>c. There is evidence of corrective actions taken.</p>
<p><b>A6 Accurate promotion</b></p> <p>Promotional materials and marketing communications are accurate and transparent with regard to the organization and its products and services, including sustainability claims. They do not promise more than is being delivered.</p>	<p>a. Images used in promotion are of actual experiences offered and facilities provided.</p> <p>b. Sustainability claims are based on records of past performance.</p>

**SECTION C: Maximize benefits to cultural heritage and minimize negative impacts**



**C1. Cultural interactions**

Venue	Event Organizer	Event/Exhibition
<p>The venue provides information about local culture to clients and staff as needed. A communication mechanism is in place for local communities to report adverse impacts from visitors, and corrective action is taken where appropriate.</p>	<p>The event organizer consults with local communities and Indigenous groups regarding visits to cultural sites. A communication mechanism is in place for local communities to report adverse impacts from visitors, and corrective action is taken where appropriate.</p>	<p>The event organizer consults with local communities and Indigenous groups regarding visits to cultural sites. A communication mechanism is in place for local communities to report adverse impacts from visitors, and corrective action is taken where appropriate.</p>
<p>1. When the venue's clients plan visits to Indigenous communities or sites of cultural or historical significance to Indigenous groups, the venue provides relevant information from Indigenous groups to the clients.</p>	<p>1. The event organizer consults with Indigenous groups to determine appropriate behavior and recognition prior to any visits to Indigenous communities or sites of cultural or historical significance to Indigenous groups.</p>	<p>1. The event organizer consults with Indigenous groups to determine appropriate behavior and recognition prior to any visits to Indigenous communities or sites of cultural or historical significance to Indigenous groups.</p>
<p>2. When the venue's clients plan visits to culturally or historically sensitive sites, the venue provides relevant information about local regulations and guidance from impacted local communities.</p>	<p>2. The event organizer follows local regulations and guidance from impacted local communities regarding any visits to culturally or historically sensitive sites.</p>	<p>2. The event organizer follows local regulations and guidance from impacted local communities regarding any visits to culturally or historically sensitive sites.</p>
<p>3. The venue provides staff that are not local to the event destination with guidance about appropriate behavior in light of local customs, traditions, and etiquette.</p>	<p>3. The event organizer does not include visits to orphanages or residential care facilities as part of the event program.</p>	<p>3. The event organizer does not include visits to orphanages or residential care facilities as part of the event program.</p>
<p>4. The event organizer provides staff that are not local to the event destination with guidance about appropriate behavior in light of local customs, traditions, and etiquette.</p>	<p>4. The event organizer provides staff that are not local to the event destination with guidance about appropriate behavior in light of local customs, traditions, and etiquette.</p>	<p>4. The event organizer provides staff that are not local to the event destination with guidance about appropriate behavior in light of local customs, traditions, and etiquette.</p>

# Sustainable tourism criteria for destinations

## Sustainable Destination Management

- Management structure & framework
- Responsible organization & strategy
- Monitoring & reporting system
- Stakeholder engagement
- Visitor volume management
- Planning regulations
- Climate change adaptation
- Risk & crisis management

## Socio-economic Sustainability

- Local economic benefits
- Tourism's economic contribution
- Decent work & career opportunities
- Supporting entrepreneurs & fair trade
- Community support
- Preventing exploitation & discrimination
- Property & user rights
- Safety & security
- Access for all

## Cultural Sustainability

- Protecting cultural heritage
- Safeguarding cultural assets
- Artifact sale governance
- Supporting intangible heritage
- Traditional access rights
- Intellectual property protection
- Visitor management at cultural sites
- Accurate interpretation & education

## Environmental Sustainability

- Conservation of natural environment
- Responsible wildlife interaction
- Animal welfare
- Energy & water management
- Wastewater & solid waste management
- Greenhouse gas reduction
- Low-impact transportation
- Light & noise pollution control

# Sustainable tourism criteria for hotels

## Effective Sustainable Management

- Sustainability management system
- Legal compliance
- Staff engagement
- Customer satisfaction
- Buildings & infrastructure
- Land, water & property rights
- Interpretation
- Reporting & communication
- Accurate promotion
- Destination-level engagement

## Socio-economic Sustainability

- Community support & infrastructure
- Safeguarding local livelihoods
- Local employment
- Equal employment opportunities
- Preventing exploitation & harassment
- Decent work
- Local and sustainable purchasing
- Supporting local entrepreneurs
- Accessibility

## Cultural Sustainability

- Responsible cultural interactions
- Preservation of cultural sites & traditions
- Authentic cultural representation
- Respecting intellectual property
- Ethical handling of artifacts

## Environmental Sustainability

- Resource conservation
- Energy management
- Water management
- Pollution reduction
- GHE reduction
- Waste & wastewater management
- Biodiversity & ecosystem protection
- Preventing invasive species
- Responsible wildlife interaction
- Animal welfare



# Sustainability certification in tourism



# Differences between certification programs

- Certification vs recognition

# Certification vs recognition



Recognition



Certification

# Differences between certification programs

- Certification vs recognition
- Type of audit (1st-, 2nd-, 3rd-party)

# Audit type comparisons

	Definition	Objective	Auditor	Example
First-party Audits	Also known as internal audit. Conducted by the business itself or by someone within the business who is independent of the activity being audited.	To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the business's internal processes, systems, and controls. To identify areas for improvement, monitor progress, and ensure compliance with internal policies and standards.	Internal auditor or employee.	A company audits its own accounting records to ensure accuracy and transparency.
Second-party Audits	Also known as external audit. Conducted by a customer, supplier, or other interested party who has a contractual relationship with the business.	To verify that the business meets the requirements and expectations of the customer, supplier, or other interested party. To evaluate the quality and performance of the products or services provided by the business.	Customer, supplier, or other interested party.	A retailer audits its supplier's manufacturing facility to check the quality and safety of the products it purchases.
Third-party Audits	Also known as independent audit. Conducted by an independent and impartial organization that has no contractual relationship with the business.	To certify that the business complies with external standards, regulations, or laws. To provide assurance and credibility to external stakeholders, such as shareholders, customers, suppliers, and regulators.	Independent and impartial organization, such as a certification body or a regulatory agency.	A certification body audits a company's environmental management system to verify that it meets the ISO 14001 standard.



# Differences between certification programs

- Certification vs recognition
- Type of audit (1st-, 2nd-, 3rd-party)
- National / internationally recognised (ISO/IEC 17065:2012\_Conformity)
- Theme of certification (environmental / sustainability)
- Scope of certification (Organisation vs product/ service)
- For tourism / multisectoral
- Minimum standards (not best practices)

# Why certification?

- **Reduces risks & ensures compliance** – Helps meet environmental regulations and avoid greenwashing.



# Greenwashing

*['grēn-,wò-shin]*

The act of providing the public or investors with misleading or outright false information about the environmental impact of a company's products and operations.



# EU Regulations to keep in mind

- European Green Deal
- Sustainable & smart mobility strategy
- Single-Use Plastics Directive
- Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive
- Green Claims Directive (*in the review process*)
- Biodiversity strategy



# Why certification?

- **Reduces risks & ensures compliance** – Helps meet environmental regulations and avoid greenwashing.
- **Enhances market competitiveness** – Attracts eco-conscious travelers, improves brand reputation, and differentiates businesses and destinations.
- **Boosts cost savings** – Reduces energy, water, and waste management costs through efficient resource use.
- **Increases guest satisfaction** – Provides authentic, responsible, and high-quality tourism experiences.
- **Strengthens local economies** – Supports local employment, fair wages, and small businesses.
- **Protects nature and culture** – Encourages conservation of biodiversity, landscapes, and cultural heritage
- **Improves sustainability management** – Provides a clear step-by-step framework to track progress, set goals, and continuously improve.

# Certification standards for destinations (selected)



EARTHCHECK



BLUE FLAG



QualityCoast



Designed for tourism

Different sectors, including tourism

# Certification standards for businesses (selected)



For hotels



Performance,  
Credibility,  
Transparency



For tour companies



# National / regional sustainable tourism development programs



# National / Regional sustainable tourism programs



**SUSTAINABLE  
DESTINATION**  
LOCAL ENGAGEMENT  
IN A LONG PERSPECTIVE



**SUSTAINABLE  
TRAVEL**  
FINLAND



# Goals of national/ regional programs

## Internal

- “Political decision” - Achieving national goals related to sustainable development (role of the tourism industry)
- Compliance with new regulations (national, EU)
- Protecting the country's natural and cultural assets and meeting specific challenges (environmental/social/cultural)
- Educating and raising awareness of the tourism industry about sustainable development

## External

- Improve image and increase tourist satisfaction
- Attract the right tourists (not quantity but quality)
- Promote entities that already implement sustainable practices
- Increase transparency of promotional activities (avoidance of greenwashing, “responsible marketing”)

# National / Regional sustainable tourism programs

Education and support	Monitoring	Certification	Communication and promotion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training</li> <li>- Guidance</li> <li>- Tools</li> <li>- Financing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set of indicators</li> <li>- Specific goals</li> <li>- Data collection</li> <li>- Public reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Own certification programs (eg. Turkey, Norway)</li> <li>- While label programs (eg. Slovenia)</li> <li>- Promoting existing certifications “umbrella programs” (eg. Switzerland, Finland)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National/ Regional label (eg, Swisstainable, Sustainable Südtirol)</li> <li>- Tourism offer based on recognised entities</li> <li>- Promotion of recognised entities</li> <li>- Public communication about national initiatives</li> </ul>



# Sustainable tourism program for Ukraine?

## Clarity about the goals - some may be conflicting

- Compliance with the EU standards
- Attracting international audience
- Increasing competitiveness of businesses
- Protecting natural / cultural heritage and resources
- Enabling local communities and income generation

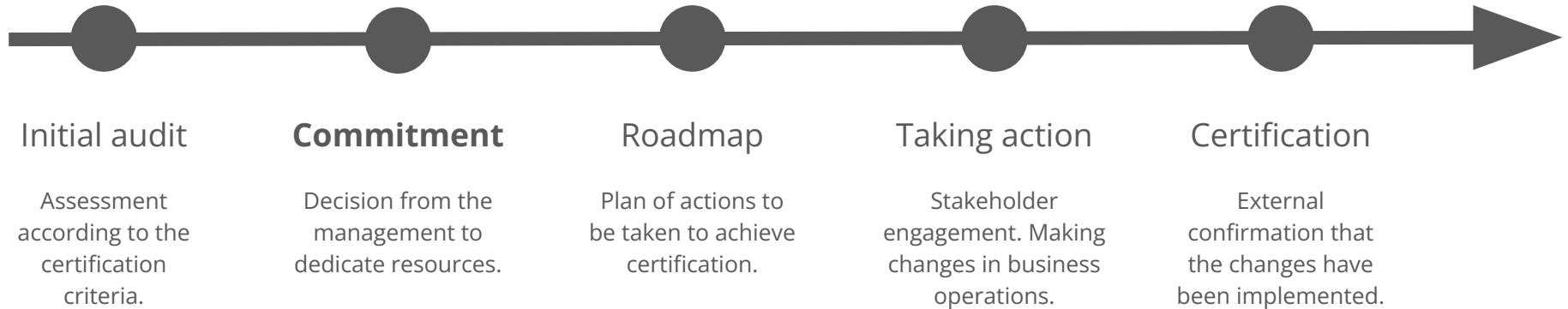
# Bukovel's path towards sustainability

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# Bukovel's path towards sustainability



# Bukovel's path towards sustainability



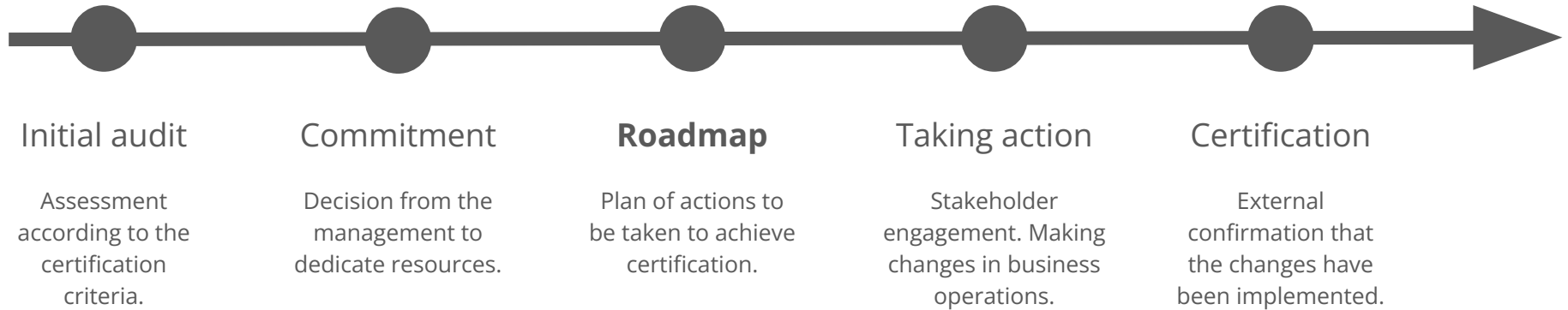


# Bukovel's commitment

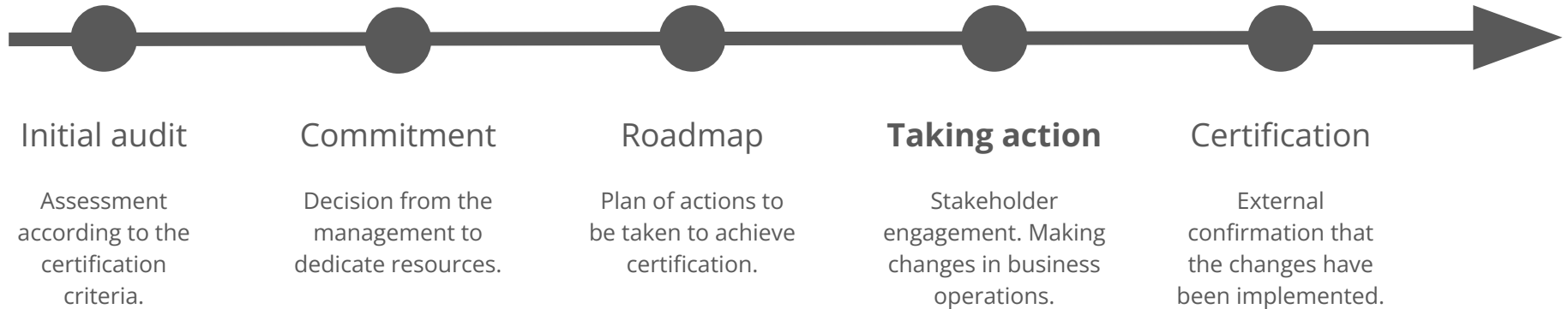
From a ski resort to a year-round tourism destination, leading the way towards sustainable transformation of the whole Carpathian region.



# Bukovel's path towards sustainability



# Bukovel's path towards sustainability



# Taking action - what has been done so far

## Sustainable Destination Management

- Dedicated team and resources
- Assessment of tourism impacts (in the process)
- Employee engagement and training
- Engagement of local businesses & certification
- Cooperation with external stakeholders

## Socio-economic Sustainability

- Tourism monitoring
- Decision to support local communities

## Cultural Sustainability

- Review of current destination assets
- Cooperation with dedicated organisations

## Environmental Sustainability

- In-depth review of current situation
- Waste separation
- Air pollution



# What's next?



Certification  
of businesses



Destination  
certification



Sustainable  
development center  
for the Carpathians

**Thank you!**

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Linked in