



Criteria for Sustainable Tourism

for the three Biosphere Reserves
Aggtelek, Babia Góra and Šumava



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CRITERIA FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

for the three Biosphere Reserves

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FOREWORD

Biodiversity is under serious threat from unsustainable exploitation, pollution and land-use changes throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Ecotourism while still at a relatively modest level of development in the region, provides opportunities as well as challenges for the sustainable use of biodiversity. Environmentally sustainable investments in the ecotourism sector could produce vital benefits to communities and provide an important and viable alternative to investments with negative biodiversity impacts.

The project "Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity through Sound Tourism Development in Biosphere Reserves in Central and Eastern Europe" will strengthen protection of globally significant mountain ecosystems in selected Biosphere Reserves of Central and Eastern Europe. The project is partly funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and also supported by UNESCO. It aims at implementing the CBD Guidelines for Biodiversity and Tourism Development as well as UNESCO's Man and Biosphere concept.

This is being achieved through the development of new and innovative management systems with a special focus on tourism-related uses of the sites. Concurrently, awareness raising and capacity building systems are being developed and implemented, to ensure long term sustainable impacts. Tourism model initiatives and activities are being initiated to ensure distribution of returns for conservation purposes as well as to local stakeholders.

The "Criteria for Sustainable Tourism" have been elaborated in the framework of the project, considering the different sets of criteria and indicators discussed in publications of UNEP/UN-WTO, the criteria of the German umbrella brand for environmentally-friendly tourism VIABONO and the CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development, and taking into account the circumstances and needs of people and organisations that aim to develop sustainable tourism in protected mountain areas in Central and Eastern European countries. The document is a working document which will be used by the project partners as a basis for monitoring and evaluating the project's activities. The criteria will thus be tested within the framework of the project and their applicability will be evaluated at the end of the project.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this document

The GEF Project "Sustainable Tourism in Biosphere Reserves in Central and Eastern Europe" aims at promoting sustainable tourism development in three selected Biosphere Reserves in Central and Eastern Europe. These three Biosphere Reserves are: the Aggtelek Biosphere Reserve in Hungary, the Babia Góra Biosphere Reserve in Poland and the Šumava Biosphere Reserve in the Czech Republic.

The numerous activities which take place in the course of the project deal with tourism management and the development of sound tourism products. They seek to integrate regional development and conservation of biodiversity by following the principles of sustainability in the field of tourism.

In order to monitor and evaluate these activities and their success, the elaboration of a set of criteria which is commonly accepted by the project partners is of particular importance. It will be used by the three Country Executing Agencies as guideline for the planning, monitoring and evaluation of their activities and allow an appraisal of the individual results by comparable items. The criteria will thus be tested within the framework of the project and their applicability will be evaluated at the end of the project.

While people usually have similar ideas on what sustainable tourism is, there is no generally binding set of criteria for sustainable tourism. There are different proposals from internationally well-known organisations dealing with the question which criteria and indicators are to be selected to evaluate sustainable tourism. Still, it was decided to develop a separate document within the framework of the project. The purpose of this document will be to achieve a generally accepted set of criteria which integrates the appraisal of the project partners which criteria they regard as important and suitable for estimating tourism development in their regions. This common understanding was the result of an exhaustive discussion process – a process which would not have taken place if one of the existing documents on criteria would have served as basis for the project's work. Nevertheless, the criteria selected and described in this document are based on the various references which exist related to the topic. In doing so, they intend to reflect the similarities rather than the differences in the concept of sustainable tourism adopted by the various institutions and organisations that work in that field all around the world. However, this document was developed taking into

Many different sets of criteria for the evaluation of sustainable development do already exist. This paper combines them in a way which is most useful for the GEF Project.

account the circumstances and needs of people and organisations that aim to develop sustainable tourism in protected mountain areas in Central and Eastern European countries. The set of criteria therefore should not be judged mainly by its worldwide applicability but by its usefulness for the purpose of the project.

The main references that were used are a publication from UNEP/WTO, the criteria of the German umbrella brand for environmentally-friendly tourism VIABONO and the CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development. (See References)

1.2 Definition of Sustainable Tourism

The concept of sustainable tourism was developed to achieve certain goals. These goals are mentioned in the various definitions of sustainable tourism. One well-known example is the definition of the WTO:

"Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to 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 system."

(<http://www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/doc/a21-def.pdf>)

In other words, sustainable tourism development is ecologically sustainable, economically viable as well as ethically and socially equitable. So, sustainable tourism integrates the natural, cultural and human environment. Therefore it respects the fragile environmental balance that characterises many tourism destinations, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas. Furthermore, it is characterised by a long term perspective.

To evaluate if tourism development accomplishes these goals, a set of criteria has to be developed which serves as a frame to identify and structure the different aspects the goals of sustainable tourism are referring to.

1.3 The purpose of criteria and indicators

Criteria express the goals we want to achieve by sustainable tourism development. They describe a state and/or the improvement of certain features of a region, a tourism product or tourism development in general. If these criteria are fulfilled or true, it can be stated that tourism was developed and/or takes places in a sustainable way.

To measure if a criterion is fulfilled, certain indicators can be used. Indicators are characteristics or figures that demonstrate the state or the change of the state of a criterion. Each criterion must have at least one, better several indicators which can be measured in a scientifically valid and preferably objective way. To adjust the importance of single indicators for one criterion, they can be weighted to different degrees to evaluate the state or the improvement of a criterion in an adequate way. When describing indicators, not only the characteristic or figure itself, but also the method of its measurement should be described, so that it is clear how to collect the data for the evaluation of tourism or tourism development in the right way.

It is very important to note, that the figures measured by the indicators need to be subject to qualified and adequate interpretation by independent experts. As the framework of tourism and the economic and social conditions vary decisively from one region to another, bare figures merely provide sufficient evidence to draw valuable conclusions whether a criterion is fulfilled or not.

It is also important to realize that while the presented list of criteria for sustainable tourism in principle is applicable to every region and every kind of tourism all over the world, the set of indicators belonging to each criterion should be selected and adjusted according to the special conditions of the area where the sustainability of tourism is evaluated. Therefore, the indicators mentioned in this document do not represent a complete or obligatory list, but are meant as examples to illustrate the dimensions of criteria.

2 Four clusters of criteria for sustainable tourism

What do we want to achieve by sustainable tourism development? Two clusters of criteria mirror the answers to this question.

1) Community well-being

Sustainable tourism development supports and ensures the economic, social and cultural well being of the communities in which tourism takes place. The criteria belonging to this cluster are ranging from the generation of income over the enhancement of local traditions up to the strengthening of participatory processes.

2) Protection of the natural and cultural environment

Sustainable tourism allows the use of natural and cultural resources for gaining economic profit while at the same time guaranteeing that these resources are not deteriorated or destroyed. Additionally, tourism is expected to be a

Criteria reflect the objectives of the project, therefore they can help to measure the success of the project.

Indicators are the tools used to evaluate criteria.

Main purposes of sustainable tourism development from point of view of the host communities:

1. *Community well-being*
2. *Protection of the natural and cultural environment*

driving force with regard to the establishment or the enhancement of nature protection and the maintenance of cultural values.

Two major approaches in the scope of nature protection can be identified within the tourism business. The first one to be mentioned is visitor management; it minimises the negative impacts of tourism on ecosystems and biodiversity. Therefore this criterion is closely connected to cluster 4. The second option, funding of conservation measures through financial resources directly or indirectly gained out of tourism, can be evaluated with the aid of the criterion "Tourism's support of conservation".

While these two clusters refer to the "inside perspective", namely the success of sustainable approaches within the tourist destination, there is also an "outside perspective" on the sustainability of tourism. So, a third cluster of criteria exists, which provides for the fulfilment of the tourists' wishes and expectations, for their well-being and for their satisfaction. The motivation to integrate this perspective into the set of criteria is the intent to ensure the economic viability and the long-term perspective sustainable tourism fosters: Only satisfied tourists will come back or recommend the destination to others and only good tourism products will be successful in the market and therefore be profitable in the long run. As the economic viability is one essential part of the benefit tourism should bring to a community (a contribution to the community's well-being), it is questionable if this third cluster should be really an additional one or if it rather belongs to the first cluster and should be an integrative part thereof. Regardless of this question, in this document tourist satisfaction and the quality of tourism products are taken as a third cluster of criteria because it simplifies the structure of the set of criteria. Additionally, it is important to stress the perspective of the customer and the tourism market in all tourism development projects. The third cluster is therefore:

3) Product quality and tourist satisfaction

The quality of tourism products offered by a region is a key factor for the economic success of tourism. It is not only characterised by material criteria like the quality of transport, accommodation and food, but also by non-material criteria like hospitality or the quality of experiences. At first sight, tourist satisfaction may be hard to measure due to very subjective impressions, but a detailed and well-structured analysis can be a valuable source of advice for the improvement of the quality of tourism products.

The evaluation of criteria can either be done by external experts who check and assess the quality, or by the means of surveys which use questionnaires for gathering the tourists' opinions. To interpret the tourists' expectations, their

Most important claim of sustainable tourism development from point of view of visitors:

3. Product quality and tourist satisfaction

needs and how they appraise the products, it is useful to dispose of some information about them: their origin (domestic or international tourists), their age, gender, occupation, level of education, mode of travelling (individual tourists, group travels), etc. may be of help. The data for this tourist profile can be collected easily and is supportive when working on the improvement of tourism product quality.

When discussing the individual criteria of the three clusters in the following chapter, it becomes evident that there are some additional requirements for successful sustainable tourism development. These needs do not belong to the real aims of sustainable tourism, but they represent measures that are indispensable for ensuring the achievement of the criteria of the three clusters. Therefore, a fourth cluster is established.

4) Management and monitoring

To ensure that tourism is developed in a way which is feasible and fulfils the criteria of the first three clusters, adequate management and monitoring must be established. Sustainable tourism development theoretically could be implemented without management and supervision, but in reality is not likely to be ensured without. Therefore, “management and monitoring” is rather a tool which is responsible for achieving the other goals. Nevertheless, also this category can be assessed regarding its successful implementation through criteria.

In the next chapter, the criteria of the individual clusters are listed and described in detail. Some of the criteria are difficult to assign to one single cluster because they refer to different aspects. However, this is not a major problem as the clustering is only undertaken in order to ensure a better structuring of the criteria. The interrelations between the different criteria are explained in their description.

The set of criteria can be used in the clustered division as presented in the following. But it is also possible to use the list of the 18 criteria without this division as it can be found in appendix 2.

To evaluate the success of these three criteria, a fourth indicator had to be established:

4. Management and Monitoring

3 Criteria for sustainable tourism

3.1 Community well-being

1 Income and revenues

Monetary income is contributing to the improvement of living conditions, to social security and stability and it opens up opportunities for development and self-sufficiency. Tourism can provide income for individuals, families or whole communities in many different ways. These can be direct or indirect and in form of employment, private businesses, taxes, charges and investments.

When evaluating the revenues tourism brings to a region, it is useful to not only consider the mere numbers of cash flows, but also to have a look at the efforts made by sustainable tourism developers to influence visitor spending. Possibilities are e. g. the support of regional supply chains through the establishment of local or regional cooperation or the enabling of local people to participate in the tourism business through capacity building, education and training programs. Such activities are also related to criterion 3 “Strengthening of the local economy”.

Possible Indicators:

- Percentage of community income coming from tourism
- Percentage of local families who have income from tourism
- Type of income (supply of goods and services, employment, enterprises)
- Ratio of the number of local to external businesses involved in tourism
- Proportion of tourism in the GDP

2 Employment

The employment criterion does not only refer to the economic benefit of tourism due to wages. Sustainable tourism should also be a driving force for improving working conditions, ensuring and enforcing labour regulations and promoting poverty alleviation and social equity. The introduction of jobs, trainings and education particularly for marginalized people and those individuals who formerly had only little chances or difficulties in entering the labour market, is especially noteworthy. The likeliness of tourist regions to become too much dependent on tour-

It is essential to enhance income and revenues in order to stimulate development within a community.

ism is especially problematic as the tourism sector is underlying rapid changes and fluctuations. The risk of an economic crisis and the degradation for the whole region because incomes from tourism are decreasing is therefore rather considerable. In the frame of the criterion "Employment" it is thus especially important to provide for measures and strategies to reduce this risk of dependency as well as the risk due to seasonality of employment.

Possible Indicators:

- Percentage of people employed in tourism or tourism related jobs
- Percentage of qualified employees in tourism
- Percentage of fulltime and part time jobs in tourism
- Local unemployment rate off-season
- Percentage of seasonal and year round jobs in tourism
- Percentage of locals in tourism jobs / Percentage of labour imported
- Possibilities of on-the-job-training, opportunities for qualification
- Measures taken to reduce the dependency on tourism

Next to economic benefits, sustainable tourism should also have an effect on labour conditions, social equity, etc. The dependency of the destination from the tourism sector has to be implicitly avoided.

3 Strengthening of the local economy and of long-term economic viability

To avoid financial leakages, sustainable tourism development should be accompanied by efforts to strengthen the local economy. Further the participation of locals in the business and thus the chance for them to obtain the maximum of revenues from tourism should be strived for. If tourism makes use of the local supply, i.e. local goods and services, it contributes to the income of locals and reduces external costs due to transport. Besides, tourists and locals should be able to share the tourism infrastructure and to jointly use the local products made available in the course of tourism development. The competition between locals and the tourism business regarding supplies in the high season should be avoided as well as a lack of supply for the local population in the low season. Tourism should also serve as an economic multiplier by enforcing links between businesses and creating net benefits.

Additional to the direct leakages in the tourism business, tourism can also cause shortages caused through necessary investments in the tourism sector, e. g. road constructions or other (tourism) infrastructure facilities, which the local communities has to pay for. Another factor that may reduce the tourism-related income of

the local population is the general increase of living costs in the destination. Summarizing, it should be ensured, that the costs of tourism are not exceeding the revenues.

Possible Indicators:

- Number of local SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) related to tourism on site
- Percentage of local population involved in tourism business
- Volume of goods coming from local sources
- Measures taken to cope with and diminish leakages and non-local ownership
- Measures taken to enable the local economy to obtain maximum benefits from tourism, e. g. via capacity building, small business incentives, credit programmes
- Amount of additional revenues generated from tourism in other businesses
- Percentage of annual community expenditures on tourism with regard to the total tourism revenue
- Figures that show the seasonality of tourism (number of tourists/month)
- Provision of year-round infrastructure (opening times of tourism businesses, season-related offers)

4 Improvement of living conditions

Sustainable tourism development can be a driving force for good governance which then contributes to the improvement of living conditions through a sound utilisation of public funds. This is a quite demanding goal. Therefore also other, more direct ways to accomplish the maintenance or the improvement of the quality of live are necessary, e. g. the investment in programmes established by tourism business stakeholders, e. g. tour operators. Because the tourism business is free in how to utilise its benefits, it is able to engage in social programmes directly. This engagement can be undertaken individually by tour operators or tourists, but it can also be organised in cooperative funds, projects, programmes and the like. These efforts may also be applied to reduce negative impacts of tourism in a region.

Sustainable tourism should serve as a driving force for good governance; this implies the improvement of living conditions through a sound handling of public funds through local institutions.

Possible Indicators:

- Number and quality of infrastructure development stimulated by tourism
- Percentage of locals using tourism related infrastructure
- Proportion of tourism revenues reinvested by local administration in public responsibilities
- Number and quality of direct engagement of the tourism business in projects/programmes for the improvement of living conditions

5 Participation & local control

Any kind of tourism development must be approved by the local population. The participation of the locals in the decision-making process regarding spatial planning of tourism facilities and infrastructure as well as concerning type and level of tourism and tourism related developments must be ensured by adequate means of stakeholder involvement, notification and approval. The participation of the local inhabitants in the management processes should also be intended. This co-determination is not only essential in order to ensure that the local population is able to fully utilise the benefits tourism brings. It is also essential because the inhabitants should have the right to determine the way of use of the natural and cultural resources of their region.

This experience of co-determination in tourism projects can foster local empowerment in other fields as well. For this purpose, the efforts undertaken to ensure public participation in tourism projects should include measures of capacity building and public awareness raising on political and planning issues.

Possible Indicators:

- Number of places where information on tourism development is available
- Number of people accessing this information
- Percentage of people that have a clear understanding of the role of sustainable tourism (planning)
- Percentage of people that participated in discussions and decision-making processes
- Degree and quality of stakeholder participation in the planning and implementation processes of tourism development
- Satisfaction of local inhabitants with participation possibilities

The participation of the local population is a priority. Tourism development needs to be approved by the locals in order to guarantee the successful implementation of the development process.

6 Satisfaction with tourism

The satisfaction of the local population with tourism development is closely connected to the above mentioned issue of participation. While the evaluation of the prior criterion is targeting rather the technical and organisational procedures of participation, the evaluation of satisfaction with tourism can lead to conclusions about the feelings and attitudes of the locals towards tourism. Therefore it can partly serve as a barometer for the success of the participatory process. The satisfaction of local inhabitants with tourism also contributes to the hospitality and the willingness of the local people to provide the goods and services which the tourists desire.

Possible Indicators:

- Percentage of locals who believe that tourism helped to bring new services and infrastructure into the region
- Percentage of locals who are satisfied with tourism development
- Attitudes of locals towards tourists

7 Strengthening of social and cultural patterns

Tourists should be encouraged to get to know everything the region has to offer - including the hospitality of local people. By showing interest and appreciation as well as by making efforts in adopting themselves to the local specialities and customs, tourists can contribute to a positive self-awareness among the locals. The experience of visitors that enjoy local habits and cultural assets can strengthen the local people's own appreciation of their culture and their traditions and will thus contribute to the conservation and the liveliness of these social and cultural patterns. A precondition for this criterion is that tourism itself does not destroy the socio-cultural characteristics of a region or lead to serious cultural changes.

This will be further discussed in cluster 2.

Possible Indicators:

- Level of awareness of local values
- Percentage of locals who are proud of their community and culture
- General changes in local lifestyle
- Increase/decrease in cultural activities or traditional events

- Measures of working with communities on the sensitive presentation and promotion of culture and traditions

3.2 Natural and cultural environment

8 Sustainable use of natural and cultural resources

Sustainable tourism development aims at minimising negative ecological impacts by adequate resource management, e. g. the reduction of resource consumption, the efficient use and the proper disposal and recovery of resources. Therefore scientific and technological innovation should be used where appropriate. Regarding cultural and immaterial resources, responsible dealing with culture and traditions is required. This means, that local customs should be respected and conserved in the most original way possible.

Every part of the tourism chain, from transport over accommodation and restaurants to outdoor activities, needs to integrate measures of resource management. The appropriate integration of tourism-related constructions, infrastructure and activities into the given natural and cultural environment has to be planned and managed carefully. This is true for the design, the level of technology and the intensity of use. Different complementary approaches shall help to guarantee these requirements:

- techniques and technical equipment,
- codes of conduct that lead to an environmental-friendly and appropriate behaviour of tourists and tourism providers and
- management and control mechanisms.

In the tourism sector, certification or labelling schemes for “eco-friendly” or “sustainable” tourism facilities or businesses are a good way to integrate these approaches. Moreover they credibly communicate the benefits of the certified products to the tourists and the local inhabitants. That way the certificates ensure the liability of resource management while at the same time the certified or labelled businesses benefit from it concerning marketing purposes.

If tourism development is harmonised with all these requirements, it provides a good alternative to less sustainable activities and helps to reduce overexploitation. Moreover, sustainable tourism can encourage other regional businesses to integrate environmental management into their activities.

One appropriate opportunity to guarantee the quality of sustainable tourism products are certification or labelling schemes.

Possible Indicators:

- Percentage of tourism businesses with appropriate resource management
- Effectiveness of resource management measured e. g. by amount of waste and water consumed per tourist per day
- Scale of impacts due to tourism infrastructure (e. g. erosion caused by trails, consumption of territory)
- Type and percentage of transport facilities used (tourists arriving by car, train, etc., number of tourists using public transport)

9 Protection of natural heritage

To achieve the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of a region, tourism should make a direct contribution to the funding of conservation programmes. This is normally accomplished by entrance and parking fees or charges and donations dispensed by individual tourists or tourism enterprises. The purchase of site-related products and services also directly generates funding. Cooperation with protected areas and conservation initiatives on the global and local level is especially useful to contribute to the protection of the features the tourists enjoy during their trip. Besides the financial contribution, sustainable tourism also means to abandon certain activities in favour of the protection of the natural environment.

The evaluation of this criterion should not only take into account the amount of money gathered for conservation, but it should also measure the real effects which conservation projects funded by this money have. Non-monetary ways of contribution, e. g. tourists doing voluntary work in conservation programmes, also need to be taken into consideration.

Possible Indicators:

- Amount of contribution of tourism to funding of conservation
- Level and intensity of use of protected areas and natural environment
- Quality of ecosystems (biological diversity, habitat status)
- Type and extension of protected areas in the region
- Expenditures on conservation measures
- Percentage of the locals employed in conservation activities

To support the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, direct contributions of the tourism sector towards their protection are important.

10 Protection of cultural heritage

If tourism development integrates sound visitor management and protection measures it can support the preservation and the appreciation of cultural goods and services by locals as well as by visitors. Tourism's contribution to the conservation and promotion of the cultural heritage can be realised in various forms. On the one hand, direct support through funding of conservation measures and visitor management (see also cluster 4) have to be mentioned. On the other hand, the design of tourism products, the established codes of conduct and the attitudes of tourists and tourist guides play a crucial role for the evaluation of this criterion. Furthermore they are decisive in order to ensure the preservation of the cultural heritage for the tourism-related use also in the future.

Tourism products should be designed in a way that avoids negative cultural changes which lead to a loss of cultural heritage, social instability and the decline of living conditions. As a matter of course cultural changes are not completely preventable, but all the more tourism should not overrun local societies with technological innovations and social upheavals. Generally, the disturbance of local structures should be kept to the lowest possible extent.

Possible Indicators:

- Tourism's contribution to the preservation of cultural goods
- Total expenditures on preserving cultural and historical features
- Number, type and quality of promotion of cultural values
- Number of local businesses related to the local culture (handicrafts, music, food)
- Existence of traditional events and level of participation
- Extent of traditional land use

11 Enhancement of environmental awareness

Tourism should support the appreciation of natural and cultural resources and contribute to more environmental awareness among local inhabitants and businesses. The circumstance that nature and culture can be regarded as economic goods which can be sold at the tourism market, can lead to strengthened efforts from locals as well as from national, regional and local governments to enhance environmental education and protection activities. Tourists may contribute to

The proper design of tourism activities, the careful dealing with heritage, or the enhancement of the local's appreciation of heritage as well contribute decisively to the long-term preservation of local goods.

Environmental awareness should be encouraged among the local inhabitants as well as among the tourists.

awareness raising by transferring their positive attitude towards conservation and by initiating changes in the way of thinking and behaving of the local population, of community administrations and of business owners towards a more sustainable patterns.

Possible Indicators:

- Number and type of measures to engage locals in protection activities (meetings, programs, expenditure)
- Percentage of locals actively involved in conservation activities
- Percentage of tourism managers with environmental training
- Percentage of tour operators and hotels with an environmental strategy or policy
- Percentage of tourists aware of the importance of a conservation site
- Behaviour and attitudes of tourists and locals towards environmental protection

3.3 Tourism product quality and tourist satisfaction

12 Quality of services and experience

This criterion evaluates the quality of the tourism products offered in a region. Therefore it takes into consideration the whole tourism chain, i.e. transport, accommodation, food and visitor infrastructure as well as facilities for sport and leisure, cultural activities and other services. The quality of guides and information (e. g. panels, brochures) provided to the tourists should also be included. Furthermore, aspects like security, hospitality and the variety of recreational activities should be evaluated.

The quality of experiences tourists may gain is on the one hand based on the just mentioned factors. On the other hand it depends on the quality of the environment and the attractiveness of the region. Consequently, all these factors should be paid attention to during the evaluation. Where possible, special services should be offered to families with children and to elderly and disabled people.

Possible Indicators:

- Number and type of tourism attractions, tourism products and visitor infrastructure
- Quality of accommodation, food, transport and other services
- Evaluation of hospitality
- Evaluation of safety
- Accessibility of sites for disabled and elderly persons

13 Tourist satisfaction

While the prior criterion evaluates the quality of tourism products directly from an expert point of view, "Tourist satisfaction" measures the subjective impressions of tourists. Asking tourists whether they are satisfied with their trip and why, can be very helpful when identifying lacks of quality and possibilities of improvement. By constantly checking the visitor satisfaction, the success of measures taken to improve the products offered can be evaluated.

Possible Indicators:

- Percentage of tourists satisfied with the destination
- Percentage of visitor expectations met
- Percentage of return visitors

14 Tourism product quality and economic viability

The continuous compliance of tourism products with determined quality standards provides for the satisfaction of the visitors, which then results in the returning of the tourists and in their recommendations for the destination towards others. Besides the quality maintenance, efforts should also be made to increase the level of visitor spending and to broaden the range of tourism products and thus to prolong the tourism season. That way, the quality of the tourism products and the connected satisfaction of the tourists contribute to the economic success and the long-term viability of tourism in a region.

Possible Indicators:

- Evaluation of existence and success of quality management
- Number of return visitors
- Increase of the total number of tourists
- Increase of visitor spending
- Length of the tourism season

15 Communication of sustainability to the tourists

Concerning the intent of natural and cultural heritage conservation, tourism products and services should include education on these issues and motivate tourists to behave appropriately. Sustainable tourism products therefore integrate information on and promotion of biodiversity conservation and the preservation of cultural heritage into their scope.

Possible Indicators:

- Evaluation of the existence and the quality of interpretation, education and information
- Evaluation of tourist behaviour
- Evaluation of the tourists' knowledge and attitudes

16 Cultural exchange as a driving force for peace

Following the principle of “getting to know is losing fear and prejudices”, sustainable tourism can contribute to mutual understanding and satisfaction. However, this demand can only be met if tourism offers real opportunities for cultural exchange and does not force people to get into contact. Therefore this criterion is connected with the criterion “strengthening of social and cultural patterns”. Though hard to measure, the benefits cultural exchange may entail shouldn't be neglected. Therefore, the inclusion of this topic into the set of criteria shall at least help to keep the issue in mind during planning, implementing and monitoring tourism in a region.

Possible Indicators:

- Evaluation of the tourists' experiences

The criterion is connected to criterion 7 "Strengthening of social and cultural patterns".

- Evaluation of the local inhabitants' experiences with and attitudes towards tourism
- Evaluation of the single parts of tourism packages regarding the involvement of cultural and social aspects
- Evaluation of the behaviour of tour guides and tourists towards local people and local habits

3.4 Management and monitoring

17 Planning and management

This criterion evaluates the existence and the quality of tourism management in a region. Regular destination planning and appropriate control mechanisms should be established in every tourism region. Visitor management and adequate infrastructure for visitor reception and regulation additionally contribute to the aims of minimising the negative impacts of tourism while extending its benefits. Well managed tourism can be achieved e. g. through a tourism management plan, the integration of tourism into existing spatial planning instruments, the establishment of visitor regulations, adequate resource management or the promotion of codes of conduct towards tourists and tourism providers. Planning and management is successful if it achieves the maintenance of the site's quality. This quality can be measured through various well-known indicators for biodiversity or the state of ecosystem conservation (already described above under criterion 9). The main focus of planning and management, however, is not placed on these indicators, but on monitoring and the control of visitor impacts, including also active protection measures which consequently need to be taken to achieve the final goal of good quality.

Possible Indicators:

- Existence and quality of management plans, visitor regulations and monitoring measures
- Existence of zoning for tourism use, regulations and codes of conduct
- Number of staff in tourism management/visitor services (ratio staff to tourists)
- Level of training (guards, guides, information, catering, management, etc.)

It is crucial to support the quality of the region's tourism development by good planning and management.

- Existence and quality of basic visitor facilities (access, toilets, catering, parking) per number of visitors
- Existence and quality of visitor/information centres, interpretative materials (e.g. brochures, panels), guided tours, trails, cycling routes, signage (length of trails, number and language of signs)

18 Carrying capacity

The definition and the proper operationalisation of the carrying capacity are of such vital importance for the management of tourism that they need to be examined with the aid of an individual criterion. The definition of the carrying capacity of the area intended for tourism development is part and parcel of tourism management. The carrying capacity comprises the total number of tourists, the distribution of visitors throughout the year, the type of use and the level of use intensity. It is important that the management not only determines the carrying capacity, but also operationalises the results of this study for its corporate policy. This means that concrete maximum visitor numbers, a maximum use intensity and the corresponding mechanisms to control these numbers have to be established. Finally, actions to be taken if the defined numbers are exceeded need to be identified and responsibilities for these actions need to be assigned.

Possible Indicators:

- Existence of a defined carrying capacity
- Existence of an appropriate visitor registration system
- Existence of a land use or development planning process including tourism
- Percentage of area designated for tourism purposes
- Existence of specific criteria for tourism development control in plans, such as maximum numbers of hotels/beds, density standards, design control, etc.
- Systematic enforcement of regulations regarding the exceeding of maximum visitor numbers

To provide sustainability, the carrying capacity should be constituted and restrained.

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Appendix 1: Criteria for sustainable tourism (clustered)**Cluster 1: Communities' well being**

1. Income and revenues
2. Employment
3. Strengthening of the local economy and long term economic viability
4. Improvement of living conditions
5. Participation in decision-making and local control
6. Satisfaction with tourism
7. Strengthening of social and cultural patterns

Cluster 2: Natural and cultural environment

8. Sustainable use of natural and cultural resources
9. Protection of natural heritage
10. Protection of cultural heritage
11. Enhancement of environmental awareness

Cluster 3: Tourism product quality and tourists' satisfaction

12. Quality of services and experience
13. Tourists' satisfaction
14. Tourism product quality and economic viability
15. Communication of sustainability towards the tourists
16. Cultural Exchange as a driving force for peace

Cluster 4: Management and monitoring

17. Management and monitoring planning
18. Carrying capacity

Appendix 2: Criteria for sustainable tourism

1. Income and revenues
2. Employment
3. Strengthening of the local economy and long term economic viability
4. Improvement of living conditions
5. Participation in decision-making and local control
6. Satisfaction with tourism
7. Strengthening of social and cultural patterns
8. Sustainable use of natural and cultural resources
9. Protection of natural heritage
10. Protection of cultural heritage
11. Enhancement of environmental awareness
12. Quality of services and experience
13. Tourists' satisfaction
14. Tourism product quality and economic viability
15. Communication of sustainability towards the tourists
16. Cultural Exchange as a driving force for peace
17. Management and monitoring planning
18. Carrying capacity



Aggteleki Nemzeti Park

Aggtelek Biosphere Reserve and National Park is situated in a vast karst area which belongs to the southern limestone foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, at the northern frontier of Hungary with the Slovak Republic.

Aggtelek Biosphere Reserve and National Park

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Babiogórski Park Narodowy

Babia Góra is the highest massif in the West Beskidy mountains which form part of the Western Carpathians, situated in the Southwest of Poland at the frontier with the Slovak Republic. With a peak of 1725 m, Babia Gora is a perfect example of plants zonation in European mountains.

Babia Góra Biosphere Reserve and National Park

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Správa Národního Parku Šumava

The Biosphere Reserve and National Park in the Šumava mountain range, situated along the southwest borders of the Czech Republic with Germany and Austria, covers a great variety of precious natural habitats, including remnants of primeval mountain forests, glacial lakes and extensive peat lands.

Šumava Biosphere Reserve and National Park

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Ökológiai Intézet a Fenntartható Fejlődésért Alapítvány

The Institute, founded in 1992, aims to promote the idea of sustainable development by building understanding on the idea of sustainability and helping the practical implementation of sustainable development.

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Stowarzyszenie Przyjaciele Babiej Góry

The main goal of the Friends of Babia Gora Association is to support sustainable development of local communities living around Babia Góra through the development of the economic sector with simultaneous protection of its rich natural and cultural heritage.

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The Institute, established in 1993, focuses on dynamic properties of biological and ecological systems at various hierarchical levels, from molecules to landscape. Scientific research and graduate education are its primary activities.

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Ökologischer Tourismus in Europa (Ö.T.E.) e.V.

The society, founded 1991, offers information and education about environmentally friendly forms of tourism. It carries out regional model projects designed to promote sustainable tourism as an element of sustainable regional development.

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