



Association of Ecotourism in Romania

Tel./Fax: +40 368 441 084
175 Lungă st.
Braşov 500500

info@eco-romania.ro
www.eco-romania.ro
www.asociatia-aer.ro

Guidelines for the evaluation procedure under the ecotourism certification system

ECO-ROMÂNIA



ECO-ROMANIA CERTIFIED BY AER

The Eco-Romania Ecotourism Certification System was developed by the Association of Ecotourism in Romania (AER) with support from the Romanian Partnership Foundation, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Doen Foundation - Netherlands between 2005 and 2007.

This guide details the evaluation procedure for tourism products that can be evaluated under the certification scheme.



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ECO-ROMÂNIA Ecotourism Certification System

The ecotourism certification system was created as a mechanism to recognise the compliance of ecotourism products developed by tour operators and accommodation facilities with the principles of nature conservation, sustainable development of local communities and enhancement of natural and cultural resources.

The system is non-binding and based on voluntary participation by its beneficiaries.

The certification scheme operates with a set of criteria divided into two categories:

- Basic criteria. These are the basic criteria that must be met by the product subject to certification for the assessment to continue.
- Complementary criteria. These are the criteria that finalise the assessment of a product as being ecotourist. In addition to meeting the basic criteria, meeting at least 50% of the complementary criteria certifies the product as compliant with the ecotourism principles.

To receive the ecotourism certification, the product must meet all the basic criteria plus 50% of the complementary criteria applicable to the product.

Which products can be certified?

- Tour programmes (tours) offered by licensed travel agencies or guides, and which include at least one night's accommodation and have a maximum of 15 clients per guide.
- Accommodation establishments, such as guesthouses (maximum 15 rooms, totalling not more than 60 places) and other tourist accommodation facilities licensed under the legislation in force with a maximum of 25 accommodation places (accommodation places means rooms, bungalows, tents, caravans, etc.).

Certification procedure:

Step I: Read the procedure guide to understand the steps to be taken to obtain the Eco-Romania Ecotourism Good Practice Certificate.

Step II: Fill in the application form and the corresponding self-assessment form and send them to us at info@eco-romania.ro. We consider this step particularly important because the honest completion of the form will show us your chances of obtaining the certificate. We want to start the assessment procedure itself only with those products that have a real chance of obtaining the certificate. **This stage is particularly important both for you to familiarise yourselves with the set of criteria on which the assessment will be based and for us to continue the assessment procedure only with those products that have a real chance of obtaining the certificate.**



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The assessment fee will be paid only if we have decided to continue the certification procedure.

Step III: Agree on an assessment visit and pay the assessment fee. The estimated cost for the evaluation of a service is **€300** and includes the evaluator's fee, transport, meals, accommodation, and a small percentage of administrative costs for AER.

The actual evaluation will only take place after payment of the evaluation fee, based on the tax invoice issued by AER.

Step IV: The actual evaluation visit. At the time of the evaluation of an accommodation unit it is mandatory that the unit has guests. For tours, the assessment will be done during a tourist programme with guests. AER has a network of third-party assessors with whom it collaborates. The assessor must have access to all parts of the accommodation and be able to interact with guests and staff. The assessor shall also be presented with documents that prove that the criteria have been met (certificates, attestations, contracts, invoices, etc.).

Step V: The documentation prepared by the assessor is sent to the AER Certification Department which, depending on the number of requests, schedules the meeting of the Certification Committee.

Step VI: The Certification Committee will decide if and under which conditions the Eco-Romania certificate will be awarded. The decision may be accompanied by a set of recommendations based on the unfulfilled or partially fulfilled criteria. The beneficiary will receive the certificate and the certification logo after signing the logo agreement.

Validity of a certificate:

Following the assessment, the Certification Committee has the following options:

- **to grant the ecotourism certificate for a period of 36 months** if the product meets all the applicable basic criteria plus a minimum of 50% of the applicable complementary criteria.
- **to grant the ecotourism certificate for a period of 18 months** if the product meets all the applicable basic criteria but does not meet at least 50% of the applicable complementary criteria. The temporary award of the logo is subject to the condition that this deficiency is filled within a maximum period of one year.
- **not to award the ecotourism certificate** to products that do not meet the conditions laid down in the assessment criteria.
- **to make receipt of the certificate conditional on the implementation of compliance recommendations** within a maximum of 3 months. If evidence of implementation of all these recommendations is not provided, the certificate is not granted and the whole procedure must be repeated.



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Suspension of the certificate:

Suspension (for up to 6 months) of the use of the certification logo for products that no longer meet the initial conditions for award, but which can be rectified within the time limit set by the Committee. For this the applicant will sign a statement whereby measures will be undertaken to restore the situation.

Permanent withdrawal of the certificate:

Permanent withdrawal of the certificate occurs in the case of products which no longer meet the original conditions for granting and which:

- can no longer be rectified; or
- have not been rectified within the suspension period; or if
- the product operator has not signed the statement to remedy the situation.

Withdrawal may also be decided if the applicant does not respect the right to use the logo mentioned in the logo use agreement.

Members of the certification committee:

- Andrei Blumer, AER President
- Carmen Chaşovschi, Associate Professor at "Ştefan cel Mare" University of Suceava
- Paul Iacobaş, President of the Centre for Protected Areas and Sustainable Development Bihor

For further details please contact us:

0368 441 084

info@eco-romania.ro

Thank you and we look forward to your participation in the first ecotourism certification system.