IMPROVING COMPETITIVENESS IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY BY BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY: EU APPROACH

• **MARIA TERESA CUOMO**
  ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, FACULTY OF ECONOMICS, UNIVERSITY OF SALERNO

• **GERARDINO METALLO**
  FULL PROFESSOR, FACULTY OF ECONOMICS, UNIVERSITY OF SALERNO

• **DEBORA TORTORA**
  RESEARCH FELLOW, UNIVERSITY OF SALERNO

• **MARIO TESTA**
  RESEARCH FELLOW, UNIVERSITY OF SALERNO


ABSTRACT

Tourism is not only one of the world’s major economic sectors, but also one of the mainstays of international trade as well as a dynamic catalyst for many other sectors. Its role is particularly significant in the context of natural resource protection, in cultural heritage and in promoting relationships among different peoples. However, this applies if it is achieved by means of a three-dimensional sustainability approach – economic, environmental and social – as is the case for many forms of tourism environmentally and socially friendly.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the state of the art relative to certification programmes in ecotourism and sustainable tourism around the world, in order to examine the crucial elements that have determined market confusion in one of the most important industries of the 21st century. In particular, EU strategies will be analyzed and the efforts needed to integrate the main available tools highlighted, so as to create a Life Cycle Thinking policy. This approach can effectively contribute to more coherent and more straightforward policy making and towards the efficient and effective improvement of tourist products and processes and consequently of company competitiveness.

KEY WORDS tourism | sustainability | certification

1. Introduction

The tourism sector – like many other relevant economic sectors such as the mining, energy, food, textiles, financial and telecommunications sec-
tors – has been whirled up in the innovative wave of the sustainability paradigm. Relevant activities on the part of International Institutions\(^1\) have contributed to the realization of objectives and programmes for the diffusion of “environmentally and socially friendly” types of tourism which up to a few decades ago, seemed relegated to the realms of Utopia.

One of the most important elements affecting demand for these new forms of tourism is the increase worldwide in environmental awareness determined, among other elements, by specific marketing and communication campaigns of environmental and overall social and ethical content, much more widely diffused than in the past\(^2\).

Attention addressed to the socio-environmental effects of economic activities over recent decades has promoted more widespread behaviour oriented towards development models of a sustainable kind, in a triple dimension sense (economic, environmental and social) in conformity with the Triple Bottom Line Approach.

This awareness has emerged with force on a planetary scale, initially within the confines of the UN World Conference on Human Environment, held in Stockholm on June 1972\(^3\). The subsequent constitution of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) – known as the Brundtland Commission\(^4\) – conferred effectiveness to the commitments underwritten, by promoting an operative approach to Sustainable Development, or in other words, a “development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

Twenty years after the first global conference, the UN sought to help Governments rethink economic development and find ways to halt the destruction of irreplaceable natural resources and pollution of the planet. In fact, in Rio de Janeiro, in June 1992, the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)\(^5\) took place.

The message resulting from the Summit reflected the complexity of the problems facing us: not only poverty, but also the fact that excessive consumption by affluent populations place damaging stress on the environment.

Other important events followed.

One of the most significant included the Earth Summit in New York (1997) held to evaluate the effective implementation of the programmes recommended by Agenda 21 during the Rio Summit; others were the Kyoto Protocol (1997) which discussed the issue of reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHSs) responsible for global warming; the Johannesburg Summit (2002) – the World Summit on Sustainable Development – for evalu-
ating the results of UNCD’s activities; the Bali Conference (2007) where a Road Map was devised consisting of a number of forward-looking decisions for achieving a secure future in terms of climate. Because of its scale and global extent, the tourism industry inevitably impacts significantly from an environmental and social perspective. Details of major environmental impacts of tourism as well as unsound eco-sustainable tourism, are briefly reported in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pressure on natural resources</th>
<th>Pressure on other local Resources (energy, food and raw materials etc.)</th>
<th>Pollution and waste</th>
<th>Social and cultural pressures relating to conservation/ sustainable use of biodiversity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land and landscape: sand mining, beach and sand dune erosion, soil erosion, urbanization, road and airport building, resulting in land degradation, loss of wildlife habitats, landscape deterioration</td>
<td>Harm to wildlife and habitats, with associated biodiversity loss Biological resources: disruption of wildlife habitats, clearance of vegetation for tourism development, increased pressure on endangered species due to trade and hunting, increased demand for fuel wood, forest fires Ecologically fragile areas, e.g. rainforests, wetlands, mangroves, coral reefs, sea grass beds: if not properly planned and managed, nature tourism threatens the world’s most ecologically fragile areas including parks and natural World Heritage sites</td>
<td>Land: solid waste and litter (tourists produce on average around 1 kg of waste a day) Freshwater: pollution by sewage Marine waters and coastal areas: sediment run-off, pollution from land-based hotels and marinas; waste and litter associated with marine sports and cruises (in 1995, it was estimated that cruise ships in the Caribbean alone produced over 70,000 tonnes of waste per year) Air: at local level, air pollution from transporting tourists; global impacts, especially from CO2 emissions, relating to energy use in transportation, air conditioning and heating of tourist facilities, etc. Noise: from ground as well as air transportation</td>
<td>Social and cultural impacts: disturbance of local way of life and social structures, changes in traditional practices that contribute to conservation (including conservation of biodiversity) Adverse impacts on livelihoods: lack of benefit sharing with those who bear both human and environmental costs Resource use conflicts: competition between tourism and local populations for limited water, sanitation and energy resources, competition with traditional land uses (especially in heavily used areas such as coastal zones)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


At the same time tourism depends heavily on natural resources: beaches, mountains, rivers, forests and biodiversity, but, as can be seen from the
Table above, it presents a significant threat to environmental as well as to cultural and biological diversity. It is noted that in all business activities generally speaking, a marked dichotomy exists between economic efficiency and the preservation of “socio-environmental capital”. This cannot be applied to tourist firms in that they draw their economic performance precisely from “socio-environmental capital”. Accordingly, the multiple forms of tourism sensitive to safeguarding the environment and social solidarity can play an essential role in the economy of many countries in terms of employment and market opportunities; on the whole, in local communities in poorer developing countries and for those lacking significant industrial, financial or raw material mining industries. In fact, while “green” innovation for mainstream tourism can reduce energy consumption and waste production, there are many other initiatives that go beyond issues of eco-efficiency and are more responsive to conservation of fragile ecosystems or protected areas as well as to national or local stakeholder concerns (Honey, 2001). This is because the potential to create positive environmental and social impact including the community benefits mentioned above, are then able to emerge, together with the opportunity to develop tourism in a way that minimizes the negative impacts so often associated with mass tourism, and to contribute in any event to the creation of economic value.

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) global tourism generates 11% of Global GDP and employs over 200 million people; it transports over 800 million international travellers per year and this quota is expected to double by 2020. UNWTO states that, worldwide, international tourist arrivals reached 903 million in 2007 up 6.6% compared to 2006 and 1.6 billion international tourist arrivals are forecast by 2020 (Table 2).

International tourism receipts grew to 856 US$ billion (625 € billion) in 2007 corresponding to an increase in real terms of 5.6% on 2006 (Table 3).

Furthermore, these data impact for about 40% in the export services in advanced economies and 70% in the world’s poorest countries. It is one of the top five exports for 83% of countries and is the main source of foreign currency in 38% of countries (Dowling, 2007). In addition, natural environment-based tourism is one of the fastest-growing segments of the tourism industry. The UNWTO has predicted substantial growth not only in the number of international tourist arrivals worldwide, but also in the overall percentage of this category of tourists taking part in eco-sustainable tourism.
### Improving Competitiveness in the Tourism Industry by Building Sustainability: EU Approach

**Tab. 2 - International tourist arrivals by region (1990-2007)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>1995</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007*</th>
<th>Change (%)</th>
<th>Average annual growth (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>633</td>
<td>803</td>
<td>847</td>
<td>903</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>262.6</td>
<td>311.3</td>
<td>393.5</td>
<td>440.3</td>
<td>462.2</td>
<td>484.4</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Europe</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>108.6</td>
<td>112.2</td>
<td>129.7</td>
<td>142.4</td>
<td>149.5</td>
<td>154.9</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central/Eastern Europe</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>87.8</td>
<td>91.5</td>
<td>95.6</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern/Mediterranean Eu.</td>
<td>93.9</td>
<td>102.7</td>
<td>140.8</td>
<td>157.3</td>
<td>164.8</td>
<td>176.2</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia and the Pacific</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>109.3</td>
<td>154.6</td>
<td>167.0</td>
<td>184.3</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-East Asia</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>104.2</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-East Asia</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>92.8</td>
<td>109.0</td>
<td>128.2</td>
<td>133.4</td>
<td>135.8</td>
<td>142.5</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>91.5</td>
<td>89.9</td>
<td>90.6</td>
<td>95.3</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsaharan Africa</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Tab. 3 - International tourist receipts by region (2006-2007)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007*</th>
<th>Change (%)</th>
<th>Share (%)</th>
<th>US$ Receipts (billion)</th>
<th>US$ per arrival</th>
<th>Euro Receipts (billion)</th>
<th>Euro per arrival</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>866</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>376.9</td>
<td>188.9</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>376.9</td>
<td>188.9</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Europe</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>376.9</td>
<td>188.9</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Europe</td>
<td>-0.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>376.9</td>
<td>188.9</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central/Eastern Europe</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>376.9</td>
<td>188.9</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern/Mediterranean Eu.</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>376.9</td>
<td>188.9</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia and the Pacific</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>376.9</td>
<td>188.9</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-East Asia</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>376.9</td>
<td>188.9</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-East Asia</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>376.9</td>
<td>188.9</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>376.9</td>
<td>188.9</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>376.9</td>
<td>188.9</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>376.9</td>
<td>188.9</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>376.9</td>
<td>188.9</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caribbean</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>-0.4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>376.9</td>
<td>188.9</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central America</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>376.9</td>
<td>188.9</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>376.9</td>
<td>188.9</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>376.9</td>
<td>188.9</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>376.9</td>
<td>188.9</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsaharan Africa</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>376.9</td>
<td>188.9</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>376.9</td>
<td>188.9</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>124.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The economic value of tourism derives principally from extremely diversified activities that range from travel to accommodation, catering and retail establishments, leisure and entertainment to sport and recreation. Therefore, the entire spectrum of these activities is difficult to assess, both in economic terms and relative to their environmental and social nature, not only as concerns variety, but also because many different enterprises (type and dimension) are involved and some of them are engaged in other activities as well. Besides, the kinds of tourism as well as aims, are extremely variegated6 (Figure 1) ranging from mass travel to adventure or wilderness treks, religious pilgrimages, cultural, archaeological visits, to sports and ecotourism and each is connoted by specific features that do not facilitate proper assessment.

One of the main objectives of the paper is to analyse the EU approach to sustainability in terms of activities correlated to the tourism sector, where short-term economic goals must be aligned with long-term commitments to sustainable development. In particular, it first presents an overview of key efforts made by the most important International associations in promoting programmes oriented to the diffusion of environmental and social issues in the tourism industry. Subsequently, it examines the state of the art relative to the numerous systems of Tourism Certification benchmarked on sustainability – in its triple dimension: economic, environmental and social – used worldwide. The factors which have led to extreme confusion on the tourism market are also highlighted. Finally, the EU approach is examined in terms of the focus on recent proposals of redirecting the main tools approved over the years, to promote the diffusion of new forms of tourism capable of integrating economic objectives and tourist company competitiveness with other objectives for achieving the conservation of natural capital and the enhancement of human capital.
2. Building sustainability in the tourism industry

Debate is underway on various levels, pertaining to ecotourism and sustainable tourism, terms are often used as synonyms. Generally speaking however, the term “ecotourism” can be encompassed within the broader or umbrella term of “sustainable tourism”. A confusing array of descriptions and definitions exists relative to tourism which imply conservation of nature, sustainable use of natural resources and socio-economic benefits for local populations. The most common labels are “green tourism”, “ecotourism”, “sustainable tourism”, “ethical tourism”, “responsible tourism”, “community tourism”, “wildlife tourism”, “geo-tourism” and so on. In 2002, on the occasion of the International Year of Ecotourism (IYE), UNWTO and other collaborating parties agreed that the ecotourism concept reflects “all forms of tourism in which a tourist’s main motivation is the observation and appreciation of nature, that contributes to the conservation of, and that generates minimal impacts upon, the natural environment of the cultural heritage”. UNWTO affirms that “sustainable tourism is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining the cultural integrity of essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems”.

Further efforts have been made in the direction of a generally acceptable interpretation of the term “ecotourism” and its more rigorous application. Nevertheless, at present, a number of definitions of ecotourism and its synonym is still widely employed.

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), the largest established organization in the world engaged in promoting and disseminating information on ecotourism and sustainable tourism, has defined a range of principles and provided guidelines and standards for promoting responsible travel to natural areas, for conserving the environment and for improving the well-being of local people. Its main activities concern:

- creating an international network of individuals, institutions and operators connected to the tourism industry;
- educating tourists and tourism professionals;
- guiding the tourism industry, public institutions and donors to integrate the principles of ecotourism in their operations and policies.

The most important efforts put in place by TIES are leading to the building of a global network of ecotourism professionals and travellers to make tourism an enjoyable experience, besides a profitable business for opera-
tors, but overall, a viable tool for natural areas: conservation, poverty alleviation, the protection of culture and bio-diversity, as well as sustainable development. TIES goals can be aptly synthesized in the following principles: to minimize impact; to build environmental experiences for both visitors and hosts; to provide direct financial benefits for conservation and empowerment for local people; to raise sensitivity towards the political, environmental and social climate of host countries.

Today ecotourism has achieved a great deal ranging from recognition of the valuable role that ecotourism plays in local sustainable development to maximizing the potential of well managed ecotourism as a key economic force for the conservation of tangible and intangible natural and cultural heritage; supporting the viability and performance of ecotourism enterprises and activities through effective marketing, education and training; addressing various issues reflecting current trends, including new opportunities to strengthen the benefits of ecotourism and new challenges to be met (TIES, 2007).

Even UNWTO, as the central tourism agency in the UN, and the leading international tourism body promoting responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism, has put in place various schemes, i.e. promoting socio-economic growth and people to people understanding. Its Members as well as Academic, Community, Private Sector and NGO Affiliate Members are committed to a Global Code of Ethics (GCE) and to Public/Private Partnerships (PPPs) in order to deliver this kind of tourism. The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism\(^\text{11}\) (GCET) is a comprehensive set of articles setting out nine points for destinations, governments, tour operators, developers, travel agents, workers and travellers themselves, while the tenth point involves complaints and the redress of grievances and marks the first time that a code of this type will have a mechanism for enforcement. The ten principles have the purpose of guiding stakeholders in tourism development. The GCET sets a frame of reference for a responsible and sustainable world of tourism and draws inspiration from many similar declarations and industry codes that have come before. Although not a legally binding document, it is an important tool to help minimize the negative impacts of tourism on the environment and on cultural heritage, maximizing the benefits for residents of tourism destinations.

On the recent occasion (September 27th 2008) of the official World Tourism Day (WTD) celebrations in Lima (Peru), a new framework for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (Testa, 2007) in tourism was launched by the UN Global Compact (GC) and UNWTO, reflecting the alignment principles of Global Compact\(^\text{12}\).
The most important commitments are:
• to enhance the principles of the initiative, offspring of GC and GCE principles;
• to promote awareness and practice with business partners in the supply chain and, with customers and staff;
• to use the logo and the collateral in their corporate social responsibility campaigns;
• to report annually on their plans and progress.

Nevertheless, it is possible to show defailances, because a lot of different problems need working out. The most important regard issues which are very difficult to contend with, because the growing interest in visiting natural areas and observing wildlife brings opportunities, but also pressures.

In fact, many governments have developed ecotourism strategies, but not all have been well integrated into mainstream tourism and environmental policies, in order to work against “green-washing”.

In the early 1990s TIES studied a guidelines development process based on a standardized approach. First, best practices information was gleaned from industry members through surveys. Second, participatory multi-stakeholder meetings, involving researchers, experts, operators, NGOs and communities were held in Northern and Southern locations.

At present, following numerous and diversified attempts to “ensure” a certain degree of “sustainability” of specific types of tourism, the implementing of a wide range of ecotourism “certifications”\textsuperscript{13} has become widespread, based both on measurable standards and indicators or on principles that are highly qualitative\textsuperscript{14}. The proliferation of these programmes however, has led to market confusion, because they lack comparable benchmarking standards and criteria. Valid certification has the potential to reduce the negative environmental and social impacts of tourism and ensure that the tourism industry is held accountable to stakeholders, providing marketing benefits to firms that meet certification standards (Font et al., 2003).

3. Main certification programs: an attempt of classification

If ecotourism is to become a successful sustainable development factor, adequate strategies are needed to plan and implement satisfactory programmes.

At present, the evident inclination of the ecotourism sector towards the evolution of principles, guidelines, labeling, best practices and certification based on environmental and social standards, places it in a sustainability associated niche market.
Generally, the challenge in terms of ecotourism sustainability is a recent factor that requires more expertise and greater commitment from governments, industries and development communities, a process begun a few years ago (Epler Wood, 2001).

Nevertheless, at present there are more than one hundred voluntary initiatives around the world setting standards within the tourism industry. They range from codes of conduct and suggestions for best practice to effective systems and tools of certification and labeling which are particularly complex, in that they are based on respect for differing standards relative both to the environmental and social spheres.

From an analysis of the complex scenario regarding the systems and tools used over the years in the different geographical areas of the world that specifically attest eco-compatibility, social responsibility, ethics or in other words, the “global sustainability” of activities put in place by tourism operators who are more sensitive to such issues, various difficulties emerge in terms of assessing the content and the efficacy of the schemes. Contrasting information disseminated by the schemes often impede tourists from making objective judgements and lead to market confusion.

The programs, involving a variety of stakeholders – operators, consumers, governments, NGOs, local communities and so on – and representing different interests that could potentially create conflicts during decision-making processes, can be classified in terms of a range of elements.

As concerns geographical context, they are characterised by different “boundaries” and accordingly, can be classified in international, national, regional and even local programmes. For example, programmes such as Green Globe 21, Ecotel, International Hotels Environment Initiative have an international character; others tend towards regulating the schemes of wide geographical areas, such as those implemented in Central America or in Europe; yet others, on the contrary, are initiatives relative to individual countries or specific places or even simply regional or provincial localities.

Furthermore, in the context of each of these schemes elements of marked differentiation emerge on account of the wide range of activity submitted for “assessment”. In fact, most certification programmes targets consider only the basic components – for instance, accommodation or beaches and marinas services15 – while others include the whole range of activities, adopting a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)16 approach, comprising both travel and food quality assessed in conformity with “green” and “socially responsible” standards.

In addition, the widely differing terminology to be found in the many programs can generate uncertainty and confusion on the part of end users.
Some schemes place the accent on natural environment and biodiversity protection in tourist areas. Others concentrate on the reduction of pollutant impact related to energy and water resources utilized only in a part of the entire life cycle. Yet others highlight respect for the concept of sustainability, as expressed by the Brundtland Commission. On the contrary, other schemes, especially those addressed to developing countries, focus objectives on improving the social and economic well-being of the host populations as well as on respecting the balance of different and, often, fragile eco-systems.

Besides, tourism eco-labeling and certification schemes are promoted by both private and public institutions and reflects a further difference in terms of their relative validity, above all in terms of the different procedures used for the accreditation17 of the competent Certification bodies.

In effect, all the certification programmes have diverse common elements. One of the most relevant is their “voluntary nature” besides the stipulation – unfortunately not always respected – that, at the very least, the organizations involved “should” comply with local or national regulations or, better, enhance them. Other important elements common to the schemes involve the use of logos, seals or brands not to mention assessment and auditing activities.

The rapid proliferation of very different kinds of certification, as a tool to increase the visibility of ecotourism has determined many efforts in favour of harmonization in order to standardize the legitimacy and credibility of the myriad of programs developed independently, one from the other.

The first significant effort made by the tourism community was the agreement of a framework of fundamental components that all “green” certification programmes are obliged to include. The Mohonk Agreement (New York 2000) was one of the first informal instances of consensus on harmonizing and developing a common baseline for ecotourism and sustainable tourism certification. It was unanimously adopted in November 2000 and contains a set of general principles and recommendations that should be part of any sound ecotourism and sustainable tourism certification program18. Another significant effort was the creation of the Quebec Declaration of Ecotourism (UN World Ecotourism Summit, Quebec 2002) containing 49 specific guidelines for sustainable ecotourism development and management19.

In that period the Rainforest Alliance began exploring the problem of discrepancies between the various certification systems and concluded that “the lack of a global accreditation body has become one of the main obstacles in turning certification into an effective tool for change” (Sustain-
able Tourism Stewardship Council Feasibility Study Summary). The outcome was the proposal to establish an international accreditation body for sustainable development, the Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council (STSC)\textsuperscript{20} that would award both ecotourism and sustainable tourism certifiers and promote globally, acknowledged high quality certification systems by means of a process of information sharing, marketing and assessment of standards (Sillence, 2007). Another more recent initiative, started in 2007, was the partnership between UN Foundation, the Rainforest Alliance, the UNEP, the IUCN, the UNWTO and ECOTRANS\textsuperscript{21} – The Global Partnership for Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC Partnership) – to develop Sustainable Tourism Criteria. The aim was to compare sustainability requirements from over 60 existing systems of certification, eco-labelling and best practices; codes of conduct as well as specific international guidelines to identify common sustainable tourism requirements. The result was a global, baseline set of international criteria and indicators, the minimum standard that any tourism business should aspire to reach in order to implement common tools for facilitating the harmonization and accreditation of initiatives across the world (Tab. 4). At the same time this would provide an opportunity for the tourism community and the media to identify the hotels and tour operators implementing sustainable practices. The Partnership conceives Global Sustainable Criteria as the beginning of a process to make sustainability the standard practice in all forms of tourism.

A. Demonstrate effective sustainable management.
A.1. The company has implemented a long-term sustainability management system that is suitable to its reality and scale, and that considers environmental, socio-cultural, quality, health, and safety issues.
A.2. The company is in compliance with all relevant international or local legislation and regulations (including, among others, health, safety, labour, and environmental aspects).
A.3. All personnel receive periodic training regarding their role in the management of environmental, socio-cultural, health, and safety practices.
A.4. Customer satisfaction is measured and corrective action taken where appropriate.
A.5. Promotional materials are accurate and complete and do not promise more than can be delivered by the business.
A.6. Design and construction of buildings and infrastructure:
   A.6.1. comply with local zoning and protected or heritage area requirements;
   A.6.2. respect the natural or cultural heritage surroundings in siting, design, impact assessment, and land rights and acquisition;
   A.6.3. use locally appropriate principles of sustainable construction;
   A.6.4. provide access for persons with special needs.
A.7. Information about and interpretation of the natural surroundings, local culture, and cultural heritage is provided to customers, as well as explaining appropriate behavior while visiting natural areas, living cultures, and cultural heritage sites.
B. Maximize social and economic benefits to the local community and minimize negative impacts.
B.1. The company actively supports initiatives for social and infrastructure community development including, among others, education, health, and sanitation.
B.2. Local residents are employed, including in management positions. Training is offered as necessary.
B.3. Local and fair-trade services and goods are purchased by the business, where available.
B.4. The company offers the means for local small entrepreneurs to develop and sell sustainable products that are based on the area’s nature, history, and culture (including food and drink, crafts, performance arts, agricultural products, etc.).
B.5. A code of conduct for activities in indigenous and local communities has been developed, with the consent of and in collaboration with the community.
B.6. The company has implemented a policy against commercial exploitation, particularly of children and adolescents, including sexual exploitation.
B.7. The company is equitable in hiring women and local minorities, including in management positions, while restraining child labour.
B.8. The international or national legal protection of employees is respected, and employees are paid a living wage.
B.9. The activities of the company do not jeopardize the provision of basic services, such as water, energy, or sanitation, to neighboring communities.

C. Maximize benefits to cultural heritage and minimize negative impacts.
C.1. The company follows established guidelines or a code of behaviour for visits to culturally or historically sensitive sites, in order to minimize visitor impact and maximize enjoyment.
C.2. Historical and archeological artifacts are not sold, traded, or displayed, except as permitted by law.
C.3. The business contributes to the protection of local historical, archeological, culturally, and spiritually important properties and sites, and does not impede access to them by local residents.
C.4. The business uses elements of local art, architecture, or cultural heritage in its operations, design, decoration, food, or shops; while respecting the intellectual property rights of local communities.

D. Maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts.
D.1. Conserving resources.
   D.1.1. Purchasing policy favors environmentally friendly products for building materials, capital goods, food, and consumables.
   D.1.2. The purchase of disposable and consumable goods is measured, and the business actively seeks ways to reduce their use.
   D.1.3. Energy consumption should be measured, sources indicated, and measures to decrease overall consumption should be adopted, while encouraging the use of renewable energy.
   D.1.4. Water consumption should be measured, sources indicated, and measures to decrease overall consumption should be adopted.
D.2. Reducing pollution.
   D.2.1. Greenhouse gas emissions from all sources controlled by the business are measured, and procedures are implemented to reduce and offset them as a way to achieve climate neutrality.
   D.2.2. Wastewater, including gray water, is treated effectively and reused where possible.
   D.2.3. A solid waste management plan is implemented, with quantitative goals to minimize waste that is not reused or recycled.
   D.2.4. The use of harmful substances, including pesticides, paints, swimming
pool disinfectants, and cleaning materials, is minimized; substituted, when available, by innocuous products; and all chemical use is properly managed.

D.2.5. The business implements practices to reduce pollution from noise, light, runoff, erosion, ozone-depleting compounds, and air and soil contaminants.

D.3. Conserving biodiversity, ecosystems, and landscapes.

D.3.1. Wildlife species are only harvested from the wild, consumed, displayed, sold, or internationally traded, as part of a regulated activity that ensures that their utilization is sustainable.

D.3.2. No captive wildlife is held, except for properly regulated activities, and living specimens of protected wildlife species are only kept by those authorized and suitably equipped to house and care for them.

D.3.3. The business uses native species for landscaping and restoration, and takes measures to avoid the introduction of invasive alien species.

D.3.4. The business contributes to the support of biodiversity conservation, including supporting natural protected areas and areas of high biodiversity value.

D.3.5. Interactions with wildlife must not produce adverse effects on the viability of populations in the wild; and any disturbance of natural ecosystems is minimized, rehabilitated, and there is a compensatory.

An eventual classification of the vast range of existing initiatives and the specificity characterizing each one could be put in place on the basis of the approach used for their implementation. In this way, it would be possible to circumscribe the myriad of existing programs to just two macrocategories: programs based on processes that are adopted and implemented and programs based on performance achieved and assessed.

4. The EU approach to tourism industry sustainability

The EU, right from the beginning of the Nineties to promote the diffusion of sustainability, has moved in two directions, favouring on the one hand, a product’s environmental performance and on the other, the implementing of organizational systems based on environmentally-aware processes. The former utilized internally created Environmental Management Systems (EMS) such as those implemented by international standard ISO 14001 or by EMAS (Environmental Management and Audit Scheme) together with initiatives for social responsibility, tailored to the specific activities of the organization implementing these tools. The latter on the contrary, through benchmarking or other specific criteria, besides evaluating socio-environmental performance, focuses on the comparison with that of other similar scenarios. In other words, experience focused not so much on “how” an organization operates, but rather on “what” a business does in a variety of environmental and socio-cultural areas. One of the most significant examples is the EU Eco-label scheme.

Furthermore, as will be clear later, the EU has recently adopted a new
policy; suggesting a synergic approach able to integrate the different features of the tools available as part of the wider sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan.

The EMAS scheme is a management tool for companies and other organizations to evaluate, report and improve their environmental goals. The scheme has been open to participation by companies since 1995 (Council Regulation (EEC) No 1836/93 of 29 June 1993) and was originally restricted to companies in industrial sectors. Since 2001 EMAS has been open to all economic sectors including public and private services (Regulation (EC) No 761/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 March 2001). In addition, EMAS was strengthened by the integration of ISO 14001 as the environmental management system required by EMAS; by adopting an attractive EMAS logo to signal EMAS registration to the outside world; and by considering more strongly indirect effects such as those related to financial services or administrative and planning decisions. Participation is voluntary and extends to public or private organizations operating in the EU and the European Economic Area (EEA).

At the present the leading industrial and service sector registered EMAS are shown in the following Table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industrial sectors</th>
<th>Organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sewage and refuse disposal</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemicals</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and beverages</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabricated metal products, except machinery and equipment</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, gas, steam and hot water supply</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Sectors Organizations</th>
<th>Organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotels and restaurants</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public authorities</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other business activities</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas

To receive EMAS registration an organization must comply with the following requirements:

- to conduct an environmental review considering all environmental aspects of the organization’s activities, products and services, methods to assess these, its legal and regulatory framework and existing environmental management practices and procedures. In the light of the results of the review;

- to establish an effective environmental management system for achieving the organization’s environmental policy defined by the top manage-
ment. The management system needs to set responsibilities, objectives, means, operational procedures, training needs, monitoring and communication system;

- to carry out an environmental audit assessing in particular, the management system in place and its conformity with the organization’s policy and program as well as compliance with relevant environmental regulatory requirements;

- to provide a statement of its environmental goals which sets out the results achieved against the environmental objectives and the future steps to be taken in order to continuously improve the organization’s environmental goals.

The environmental review, EMS, audit procedures and the environmental statement must be approved by an accredited EMAS verifier and the validated statement needs to be sent to the EMAS Competent Body for registration and made publicly available before an organization can use the EMAS logo. The main barriers in achieving the first EMAS registration are related to the cost of implementation – varying in different EU member states, sector of activities, size of the organization and so on – the lack of human resources and competences, the difficulties in involving and motivating internal staff. These barriers are particularly heavy for SMEs. On the other hand, EMAS is able to realize cost savings, because it improves the organization’s capacity to meet to legal and regulatory requirements. Nevertheless, its most important competitive advantage is the improving of organization’s image.

As can be seen from Figure 2, the EMAS registrations of main four countries is 86% of the total (3,967).

![Fig. 2 - EMAS registered organizations by country - March 2008](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas)

Source: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas)

The EU Eco-label (The EU Flower) has been in place since 1992 regulated by EC Regulation No 890/1992 and reviewed by another Regulation in 2000 (EC No 1980/2000). The overall objective of this Regulation is to en-
courage the sustainable production and consumption of products and the sustainable provision and use of services, by setting benchmarks for the good environmental performance of products and services, based on the top performers in the market. By guiding consumers towards them, the Eco-label logo promotes the products and services that have met these benchmarks compared to others in the same category. The scheme currently covers twenty-six product groups, including tourist accommodation and campsites, and the logo appears on thousands of products across Europe. In Figure 3 EU Flower classified by country and by product group are detailed.

The scheme is currently under review by the Commission, which coordinates the initiative. In July 2001, the European Commission commissioned ANPA (Italian Environment Protection Agency), later called APAT (Agenzia per la Protezione dell’Ambiente e per i servizi Tecnici) and now called ISPRA (Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale) to develop a draft criteria proposal Commission Decision establishing the ecological criteria for the award of the Community Eco-label to tourist accommodation in collaboration with the competent Greek Body. In July 2003 the European Commission commissioned APAT to develop ecological criteria for the award of the Community Eco-label to Campsite services in respect of which the Tourist accommodation product group definition was not suitable, due to the peculiarity of the service offered in open air conditions, and the Criteria were adopted with the Commission Decision dated 14 April 2005 (2005/338/EC).

Considering that the validity of the criteria for the two product groups expires on the 31st of October 2009, in November 2008, the European Commission entrusted APAT with the development of a proposal for the revision of the ecological criteria for the award of the Community Eco-
label for the two product groups “Tourist accommodation” and “Campsite Service”.

The aim is to identify possible improvement and upgrading for the criteria of Commission Decisions 2003/287/EC and 2005/338/EC (Table 6) the outcome of research on the state of the art of the European market regarding camp site service and tourist accommodation, including an analysis of existing eco-labels, as well as the study of the current legal framework in the field of environmental efficiency and impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tab. 6 – EU mandatory ecological criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Before-service phase</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Before-service phase** | **Water Saving** |
|  | • Water flow from tap or shower < 10L/minute. |
|  | • Appropriate waste bins in toilets. |
|  | • Appropriate systems to avoid continuous flushing in urinals. |
|  | • Water plants and garden after sunset or before high sun. |
|  | • Waste water has to be treated. |
|  | • Follow local waste water plan and water protection plan. |
|  | • Choice of low environmental impact water source (when applicable). |
|  | • When the campsite is connected to a septic tank, the waste from chemical toilets shall be separately or otherwise correctly collected and treated. Where the site is connected to the public sewerage system, a special sink or disposal unit aimed at avoiding spillage is sufficient. |
|  | • Limit amount of disinfectants used. |
|  | • Staff training for disinfectant and detergent usage. |

| **Operational phase** | **General management** |
|  | • No smoking section in common areas. |
|  | • Good maintenance and servicing of equipment, including yearly maintenance of boilers. |
|  | • Environmental policy statement and precise action programme. |
|  | • Staff training for application of environmental measures (including daily checking for leaks) and awareness raising. |
|  | • Data collection (energy and water consumption, chemicals use and waste production). |
The revision process in progress is conducted in parallel for the two product groups where the definitions and criteria overlap, but with special attention reserved to the distinctive elements of both groups which are to be handled separately (APAT, 2008).

The assessment study concluded that the original ideas behind the voluntary scheme were still valid and desirable from a business perspective. The EU Flower label provides consumers with an environmental certification they can trust, unlike certain labels which are “self-promoting claims”. Additionally, it can give businesses the opportunity to use one label for all their pan-European or global marketing. However there is a low awareness and uneven geographic take-up of the label and it suffers from cumbersome procedures and organizational structures. Besides, fees and the costs for obtaining the label are perceived as barriers. However, the Commission has proposed abolishing annual fees and limiting the rate of application fees. In fact, cost is the highest barrier for potential applicants as well as low awareness and lack of recognition and knowledge of the EU Eco-label by the different stakeholders on the market.

The Eco-label scheme is a well linked tool integrated in the wider Sustainable Consumption and Production policy framework of the European Commission engaged in reducing the negative impacts of production and consumption patterns on the environment, health and natural resources. The Eco-label can easily be associated with other tools, such as EMAS,

The recent EVER (Evaluation of EMAS/Eco-label for Revision) study carried out by a consortium of consultants led by the Bocconi University, aimed at providing recommendations for revision by the European Commission of the EMAS and the EU Eco-label, by detailing options for improvement and linkage between them and other related initiative and policies (Iraldo and Melis, 2008, pp. 52-55).

The European Commission intends to set up an overall framework for the integrated use of an instrument mix; this approach, based on “Life Cycle Thinking” (LTC) is oriented towards developing a “green” market with a view principally to:

- converting potential challenges into opportunities for EU industry competitiveness on the world market, by adopting environmentally friendly production methods based on ecological products and services, easily identifiable by consumers throughout the Community;
- developing a “green” market to ensure that the products and services respond to definite, common definition and are genuinely available in all the Member States;
- raising the European public’s awareness of responsible and more “eco-intelligent” consumption and the need for behaviour patterns that are more respectful of the environment;
- ensuring that the responsibility for sustainable consumption policy, in terms of decision-making and implementation, is shared among all the stakeholders and civil society organizations: producers, distributors, consumers, teachers, public authorities, environmental and consumer organizations and both sides of industry.

5. Conclusions

Environmental concerns, growing public pressure and regulatory measures, are changing the way people do business around the world. In the tourism industry consumers and stakeholders are increasingly demanding environmentally-friendly products and services by socially responsible companies. In fact the “tourism product” presents numerous peculiarities because it is very different from the concept of product obtained by other sectors. It synthesizes a combination of many different aspects deriving from a large variety of factors, such as place visited, modes of transport, types of accommodation, but also specific activities at destinations around a singular centre of interest, ranging from nature tours and life on farms to visits to
historical and cultural sites and cities, to the practice of sports. In other words, it is possible to define range of “tourism products” related to food, health, safety, culture and so on but which is still not adequately characterized from a standard perspective. As a consequence therefore, effective difficulty exists in terms of their classification for performance assessment. Nevertheless, it is becoming increasingly important for organizations to demonstrate that not only their philosophies but also their outputs and day-to-day operations are sustainable.

Quality environmental and social management in tourism sector is positively influenced thanks to a recent high awareness that contributes to reduce, at least, environmental risk, so that there is both a reduction of financial burdens due to reactive management strategies such as remediation, cleanups and paying penalties for breach of legislation and financial benefits better control of activities.

In the present global and rapidly changing market, the capacity to compete depends, among other factors, on the investments made to create a real attractive and safe product. For tourism these characteristics result from the sum of many contributions, involving many stakeholders, both private and public. In fact, assurance of safety, security and attractiveness represent a basic factor for high quality tourism product.

For this reason it needs an appropriate, common and transparent regulatory framework, as well as the establishment and recognition of mandatory or voluntary standards, best practices and minimum requirements, intervening in the quality of tourism activities and products.

The EU approach seems to go in this way, because in the recent years a particular focus was given in improving tourism industry competitiveness, reinforcing the collaboration between the private and the public sector. The real value of tourism processes and products, respectively, registered EMAS or labelled by Flower have become immediate and clear to consumer thanks an appropriate policy geared both to effective improved of performance and to integrate different instruments in order to reduce to bureaucracy, simplify the relative procedures and minimize the costs.

An EU-wide policy makes it easier also in tourism industry for businesses wishing to market more “environmentally and socially friendly” products within the EU and it means consumers can purchase so called “greener products” wherever they are, safe in the knowledge that these products share common credentials.
NOTES

1. Amongst the most active: The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), the Center on Ecotourism and Sustainable Development (CESD) as well as the World Tourism Organization (WTO), an UN agency that in order to avoid confusion with WTO, as World “Trade” Organization, is generally designed UNWTO. TIES, founded in 1990, is a non profit, non governmental and multi-stakeholder association that operates in over 90 countries, as a global source of knowledge and advocacy in ecotourism. CESD is a non profit research institution whose mission is to design, monitor, evaluate and improve ecotourism and sustainable tourism practices and principles. Its main Partners are Rainforest Alliance, a leading international conservation organization, The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The UNWTO is a specialized agency of UN and the leading international organization in the field of tourism. It serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and a practical source of tourism know-how. Moreover UNWTO plays a central role in promoting the development of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism, paying particular attention to the interest of developing countries.

2. The EU is dedicating particular attention to these aspects and recently (November 2008) the Italian government has launched among other things, an advertising campaign to combat the sexual exploitation of minors in the world, sustaining Certified Responsible Tourism, by means of adopting a new code of conduct on the part of major tourism operators. At International level under the guiding principles of the Globe Code of Ethics for Tourism (see note 14) the mission of a Task Force – established in 1997 – is to support efforts to protect children from all forms of exploitation in tourism, including child labour and trafficking in children and young people.

3. During this event, the representatives of over 100 Countries acknowledged the need for a common outlook and for common principles to inspire and guide the peoples of the world in the preservation and enhancement of the human environment.

4. The Brundtland Commission was convened by the UN in 1983. It was created to address growing concern “about the accelerating deterioration of the human environment and nature resources and the consequences of that deterioration for economic and social development”. The Report of the Brundtland Commission, *Our Common Future*, was published in 1978 by the Oxford University Press.

5. The representatives of over 170 Countries acknowledged that environmental issues need to be dealt with on a universal scale, through global involvement.


9. Recognizing ecotourism’s global importance, the UN designed 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism (IYE) in order to offer an opportunity to review successful ecotourism worldwide and consolidate tools and institutional frameworks ensuring its sustainable development in the future.
Additionally, the UN has set some basic principles required for ecotourism and sustainable travel; they are: observation and appreciation of nature as well as the traditional cultures prevailing in natural areas; educational and interpretation features; organization for small groups by specialized, small and locally owned business; minimization of negative impacts upon the natural and socio-cultural environment; protection of natural areas generating income for host communities, providing alternative employment and income opportunities, increasing awareness of the need for conservation of natural and cultural assets.

The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET) is a comprehensive set of principles whose purpose is to guide stakeholders in tourism development: central and local governments, local communities, the tourism industry and its professionals, as well as visitors, both international and domestic. The Code was called for in a resolution of the UNWTO General Assembly meeting in Istanbul in 1997. It sets a frame of reference for the responsible and sustainable development of world tourism. It draws inspiration from many similar declarations and industry codes that have come before and it adds new thinking that reflects our changing society at the beginning of the 21st century.

The Global Compact is a voluntary initiative designed to mainstream ten key Principles of social responsibility in business activities. They regards the following issues: human rights, labour standards, environment and anti-corruption.

Efforts to certify ecotourism business have been led by Australia, which established a research programme in 1994 and launched a federally funded initiative in 1996, the Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program (NEAP). Under NEAP nature tourism is defined as ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas, while ecotourism is a nature tourism that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation. In fact, tourism certification has emerged as a tool to reduce environmental impacts and subsequently has introduced “socioeconomic criteria to complete the triple bottom line of sustainability”. See Font X. and Harris C. (2004), “Rethinking standards from green to sustainable”, Annals of Tourism Research, Vol. 31, No. 4, pp. 986–1007.

For instance, it was found that 68% of the eco-labels is awarded to the accommodation sector, 18% to destinations, followed by 7% to tour operator, 5% to sport and leisure facilities and 2% transport. See Maccarone-Eaglen A. and Font X. (2002), “Ecotourism certification and accreditation. Some effects on the private sector”, Centre de Biodiversitat, Andorra, 17th July.

The Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC), founded in 1979, was the first international organization to fully recognize LCA’s potential value. According to SETAC “LCA is a process to evaluate the environmental burdens associated with a product, process or activity by identifying and quantifying energy and materials used and wastes released to the environment; to assess the impact of those energy and materials used and released to the environment; and to identify and evaluate opportunities to affect environment improvements. The assessment includes the entire life cycle of the product, process or activity, encompassing, transportation and distribution; use, re-use, maintenance; recycling and final disposal”. Also UNEP is involved in the LCA studies and in 2000 UNEP and SETAC established a joint effort to co-operate for the enhancement of this application. The goal of the UNEP/SETAC Life Cycle Initiative (2002) is to develop and disseminate practical tools for evaluating the opportunities, risks and trade-offs associated with products or services over their whole life cycle. Currently, it is into action the second phase (2007–2010) of this Life Cycle Initiative structured in five work areas: Life Cycle Capacity Building, Life Cycle Management: natural resources, Life Cycle Management: chemicals, Life Cycle Management: consumption clusters, Life Cycle Approaches methodology. See Valdiva S. and Sonnemann G. (2006), “Promoting Life Cycle Thinking at the

17 Accreditation is formal recognition that a qualified body (or person) has been independently assessed by an accreditation authority in some areas, such as: competence and experience of staff; integrity and traceability of equipment and materials; technical validity of methods; validity and suitability of results; compliance with appropriate management systems standards – for instance, quality management systems (ISO 9001) or environmental management system (ISO 14001) – and is found to be competent to carry out its services in a professional, reliable and efficient manner.

18 The principal aspects, beside those regarding the adaptation to local geographic conditions, are focused on criteria that reduce negative environmental and socio-cultural impacts.

19 The focus of Quebec Declaration of Ecotourism was on the following cross-cutting issues: the sustainability of ecotourism from the environmental, economic and socio-cultural point of view; the involvement and empowerment of local countries in the ecotourism development process; management and monitoring of ecotourism activities and sharing of benefits resulting from it. See Hansen A. (2008), “The ecotourism industry program (STEP)”, Edited by Cheng J., MPIA.

20 The STSC is expected to launch in January 2009 and its responsibility ranges from increasing credibility and transparency of sustainable tourism certification to providing information to consumers, tour operators and other industry players about sound, accredited programmes, from reducing “greenwashing” and false sustainability claims to helping improve environmental and social standards and their implementation.

21 ECOTRANS is a European network of experts and organizations in tourism, environment and regional development seeking to promote good practice in the field of sustainable tourism.

22 Life Cycle Thinking (LCT) is the process of taking into account, as far as possible, all resources consumed and all environmental and health implications that are associated with the life cycle of a product (good or service), considering e.g. the extraction of resources, production, use, transport, recycling and waste treatment and disposal. This process helps to avoid the “shifting of burdens”, i.e. of impacts or resources consumption, among life cycle stages, geographic areas and environmental and human health problem fields, such as Climate Change, Summer Smog, Acid Rain or Resource Depletion etc. Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) is the standardized quantitative method for compilation and evaluation of the inputs, outputs and the potential environmental impacts of a product system throughout its life cycle. See also Carnimeo G., Frey M. e Iraldo F. (2002), “Gestione del prodotto e sostenibilità. Le imprese di fronte alle nuove prospettive delle politiche ambientali, comunitarie e delle IPP (Integrated Product Policy)”, Economia e Politica Energetica e Ambientale.

REFERENCES

APAT (2008), Tourism Accomodation and Camp Site Service EU Eco-label Award Scheme, Working Plan, February


WEBSITES

*Flower News* (2008), “The European Ecolabel”, issue 2:  

Sustainable Tourism Stewardship Council Feasibility Study Summary:  

UNWTO (2008), International Recommendation for Tourism Statistics,  