

Appendix to TourCert Certification Guideline:

Implementing Rules for the Certification of Tour Operators

March 2014

1. General Terms and Conditions

1.1. Scope of Application

The TourCert Implementing Rules for Tour Operators is a document to accompany the TourCert Certification Guidelines as well as the TourCert Set of Criteria. These Implementing Rules determine the formal framework of the CSR process and apply to all tour operators.

1.1. Deviations

Deviations from the provisions defined in this document are possible only with the authorization of TourCert.

1.2. Tour Operators

TourCert considers tour operators to be commercial companies with legal status which, according to national legislation:

- a) offer at least two travel services, as a separate travel package, as the contracting party of the traveller, and therefore use service providers as agents, and
- b) whose annual turnover is mostly generated by self-organised tours.

2. Core indicators

The core indicators of each tour operator will be benchmarked against average values of comparable companies.

1. Return on Sales
2. Local added value
3. Product ecology: CO₂-emissions per guest/day (with compensation rate)
4. Quality index of customer information
5. Satisfaction index customers (with response rate)
6. Satisfaction index employees

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- 7. Business ecology: CO₂-emissions per employee (with compensation rate)
- 8. CSR-Index partner agencies
- 9. CSR-Index accommodations
- 10. CSR-Index tour guides

3. Data collection

Tour operators who are seeking certification through TourCert must meet basic minimum requirements regarding the scope of data collection. The minimum requirements are meant as a prerequisite for admission to the certification.

Minimum Requirements for Data Collection		
The data collection includes all the criteria and indicators which are defined within the Set of Criteria for Tour Operators. To meet the minimum requirements, the company has to comply with the scope of data collection as defined below. It is important to ensure that all relevant destinations are taken into account, so that a representative assessment is guaranteed.		
	SME	250 or more employees
(1) General data collection including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CO₂ footprint of travel offers - Product offer Check 	80% of all overnight stays/ total turnover	50% of all overnight stays/ total turnover
(2) Evaluation of customer information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customer information Check 	All employees with customer contact	
(3) Evaluation of staff satisfaction	All employees	
(4) Evaluation of suppliers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partner agency Check - Accommodation Check - Tour guide Check 	80% of all travel offers checked under (1)	50% of all travel offers checked under (1)
As part of the re-certification process, CO ₂ footprint of travel offers, product offer check, customer information check and the staff survey will be checked again as defined above. The evaluation of suppliers will be reduced to re-evaluation of the lowest third (from the previous certification), as well as new suppliers.		

4. Regulations for the CSR-Process

4.1. Reporting Year

All the data collected must come from the most recent closed financial year. The time of auditing applies as a reference.

4.2. Approved Certification Systems

TourCert recognizes all certification programs and labels that have been recognized, approved or accredited by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC). If suppliers (partner agencies and accommodations) are already certified by such a certification scheme, there is no need to invite the supplier to a self-assessment. Instead such suppliers automatically receive the highest possible CSR-score (100%) and thus increase the overall supplier-index of the tour operator.

4.3. CSR Manager

To install and maintain the TourCert Certification System, CSR managers must demonstrate a qualification in the field of CSR. This regulation applies even if a change of assignment takes place and another person takes over the CSR assignment. Should there be a change in the CSR assignment, then it is necessary to inform TourCert.

It is important that the knowledge of the CSR Process by the tour operator remains in the company. Trainees are therefore not permitted to work as CSR managers.

4.4. CO₂-Offset

Offsetting of flight emissions will be recognized if

- a) The calculation of the emissions is based on a RFI of at least 2.7
- b) The compensation projects are CDM Gold Standard certified (CER and VER)

If there hasn't been used an according RFI or if the offsetting has been done with another offset scheme, the compensation will not be recognized. Reforestation projects will not be recognized.

5. Dates and Deadlines

The TourCert CSR system aims to continuously improve the sustainability performance of certified tour operators. This obligation requires the timely submission of the relevant documents and information in order to promptly understand steps for improvement and developments.

5.1 Regular cycles of the CSR process

Tour operators are considered to be certified as soon as they have received the approval letter from the TourCert certification office. The certification includes year and month.

The certification is valid for two years.

In each year between (re-)certification certified tour operators are required to provide an updated improvement program to the TourCert certification office.

5.2 Responsibility of Companies for Compliance with Deadlines

The sustainability reports as well as the updated improvement program have to be submitted unsolicited and by the deadline at the TourCert certification office. The responsibility to comply with the deadlines is up to the companies.

Should there be a need for additional consultation, it is necessary to make plans well in advance with the appropriate consulting body.

5.3 Request for Extension of Deadlines

If it is not possible to meet the deadlines for submission of the sustainability report or the updated improvement program due to understandable reasons, then the certification office must be informed in due time and an application to extend the applicable deadline must be filed.

If the deadlines are extended, then this has no effect on the regular cycles of the CSR process. For future dates and deadlines the date of initial certification is essential.

5.4 Failure to meet Deadlines

If deadlines for submission of the sustainability report or the updated improvement program cannot be met or no application for extending the deadline is submitted, then the respective company will receive a reminder by telephone or an electronic reminder from the certification office. The second reminder defines the final deadline. Failure to meet the final deadline may result in withdrawal of the TourCert label.

The sustainability report and the updated improvement program may under no circumstances be filed later than two months after the deadline.

6. Requirements for Certification

6.1. Audit

Audits are held on site at the offices of the tour operator. The certification authority can make exceptions in individual cases.

6.2. Conditions

After completion of the audit the assessor or the Certification Council can impose restrictions on the tour operator, which are either

- the conditions for (re-)certification or
- which must be implemented in the upcoming certification period.

The following aspects may be part of the conditions, if the auditor or the Certification Council considers certain criteria are not or insufficiently satisfied:

- Necessary documents or documentation such as financial statements, income and loss statements, customer questionnaires, documents for carbon offsetting etc. are not available at the time of the audit and must be submitted later.
- The principles of the CSR report (truth, materiality, clarity, comparability, verifiability) are not sufficiently satisfied; the sustainability report has to be revised in form or content.
- Significant weaknesses were not identified or there were no measures formulated in the improvement program for significant identified weaknesses. The improvement program must be extended.
- The objectives and measures of the improvement program are inadequately substantiated and do not allow an effective monitoring (responsibilities, deadlines, indicators).
- Substantive recommendations of the auditor must be applied directly as measures into the improvement program.

The deadline to comply with the conditions is at the discretion of the auditor or the Certification Council.

6.3 Usage of the label

After the successful certification companies may advertise publicly with the TourCert label and the commitment of the company must be externally communicated. There are therefore the following guidelines for using the label:

- The label should be placed in a prominent position on the company's website and directly linked to the TourCert website.
- The label may only be published in the formats issued by TourCert and only be posted in the colors red or black.
- The label will be placed on the company's publications.
- TourCert is a corporate certification, not a product certification. References to the certification may relate only to the company and not to products and services offered by this company.

The company must remove all references to the certification of its own media and publications, if the certification is not renewed.

6.4. External Communication after Successful Certification

Certified tour operators must place at least the following aspects on their company website:

- Mission Statement

- Values of the ten core indicators (SME under 250 employees may omit only the following indicators: “profit margin”, “customer satisfaction index”, and “employee satisfaction index”)
- Improvement program (objectives and measures)
- Information about TourCert:
“With the CSR label we acknowledge our responsibility for sustainable tourism. Our management- and reporting system has been certified according to the certification standards of TourCert and validated by an independent auditor. With the CSR label we have committed ourselves to continually make improvements in the areas such as environmental protection, working conditions, customer information, human rights and fair business relations. We are in dialogue with our suppliers in the destinations and we consider ecological and social criteria when developing and arranging our travel deals.”

6.5 Suspension of Certification

Should a company not be interested in a re-certification or should a company not have the required resources for a re-certification, then the certification expires at the end of the certification period.

In the event of a renewal process and a renewed audit, the company will be assessed according to the audit priorities of the recertification (see Certification Guidelines).

6.6 Repeated Application for First Certification

If the auditor does not recommend certification of a tour operator or if the Certification Council rejects a certification, then the company can apply for a re-assessment.

There should be at least three months between the first and the second assessment. It is not necessary to collect all the data again. Which annual data will be the basis of the audit is to be decided on an individual case by the auditor or the Certification Council.

6.7 Repeated Application for Re-certification

Should a tour operator not be recommended for re-certification by the auditor, or should the Certification Council reject a re-certification, or should a company lose the TourCert label due to failure to meet deadlines or if other circumstances do not allow an audit, then the company has the opportunity to be audited within six months without additional costs for the use of software or without further data collection.

After six months it is necessary to collect new data and participation in the introductory workshop is required. Audit costs occur in both cases.

In case of a repeated process and a repeated audit, the company will be audited according the audit priorities of the re-certification (see Certification Guidelines).