

Green Destinations

Standard & Reporting System



Version 1.4

November 2017

www.greendestinations.org



1. Introduction

The **Green Destinations Standard** is a tool to measure, monitor and improve the sustainability profile of destinations and regions. The **Green Destinations Standard** for sustainable destination development and management satisfies the need to make sustainable development concrete, objective and demonstrable. Destinations worldwide can adapt their sustainability management system and implementation actions to the requirements the Green Destinations standard and obtain recognition of their efforts.

The Green Destinations standard is inspired by internationally recognised standards such as ETIS, ISO 14001, EMAS and the Global Reporting Initiative. The standard is “Recognised” by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC).

The **Green Destinations Standard** originates from an assessment system to gauge sustainability and quality of coastal destinations: the QualityCoast programme. Based on this system, an initial Global Sustainable Tourism Review (GSTR) was developed to cover also non-coastal destinations. Through a consultation round in the months of July-August 2015 under Green Destinations partners, the current Green Destinations Standard was developed.

2. Scope

The scope of the standard refers the tourism sector of destination. Hence, the environmental impacts to be addressed, and stakeholders to be involved, should be related to the tourism sector.

However, the standard only assesses and awards the destination and its management organisation. Other organisations and companies such as hotels and tour operators in the destination are not part of the scope of the standard and therefore not entitled to use the logo / name of the standard as promotion of their own company. Individual enterprises are advised to pursue a relevant, GSTC recognized /approved, standard and certification system for accommodations or tour operators.

The Green Destinations standard is applied for Certification and (pre-certification) Award programmes. Current programmes that apply the standard are:

Certification

- Green Destinations Certification Programme

Awards that can be considered benchmarks towards Green Destinations certification:

- QualityCoast (www.qualitycoast.info)
- QualityTourism and [QualityDestination](#)
- Slovenia Green (www.slovenia-green.si)
- ECOXXI in Portugal (<https://ecoxxi.abae.pt/>).

A list of representatives for the Award and Certification Programme can be found in Annex II.

Turn-key solution

The online assessment & reporting system is set up in such a way that countries, regions and existing or new sustainability certification or development programmes can use the Green Destinations standard and its reporting system, branded as their ‘own’ scheme (‘powered by Green Destinations’). See as example www.slovenia-green.si.

3. Organisation and ownership

The Green Destinations standard is owned based on equal shares by a consortium of 3 organisations based in The Netherlands:

- Green Destinations
- Coastal & Marine Union – EUCC
- European Centre for Eco and Agro Tourism (ECEAT)

The daily management of the standard is performed by Green Destinations.

The **Green Destinations Partnership** is forming the Advisory board of the Green Destinations Standard and its related Reporting System. The role of the advisory board is to provide input to review and improvement processes, and to support the application of the standard in various corners of the world.

The Partnership and Advisory Board consists of individual experts from around the world related to tourism in the field of Education/Science, National and International NGOs, and members with a tourism industry background.

4. Standard review and revision

The Green Destinations Standard criteria review and revision processes described below are designed to be in line with the requirements and provisions of GSTC Recognised Manual Version 2.0 and other relevant international standard requirements.

Criteria review process

The Green Destinations Standard shall be reviewed on a periodic basis for continued relevance effectiveness in meeting its stated objectives and compliance with any update of the GSTC benchmark criteria for destinations. If necessary, the Standard shall be revised in a timely manner. A review process shall occur at least every five years. The date of any revisions or reaffirmations of the Standard shall be noted in the Standard.

Revision process

The secretariat makes a proposal for the revision of the standards. Such proposal will consider:

- Feed-back from certified destinations.
- Feed-back from relevant stakeholder groups.
- Feed-back from expert organizations.
- Feed-back from auditors.
- The secretariat's own observations.
- Newly developed tools (which make implementation more practical / feasible).
- General industry performance (benchmark results).
- Adaptations of international standards and guidelines on which the Green Destinations standard is based upon (e.g. GSTC).
- Recommendations from the Advisory Board.

The revised draft standard will then be submitted for consultation to key stakeholders and further adapted. The final proposal is endorsed by the Advisory Board.

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The revisions will be communicated to any bodies that have recognized the standard, such as the Global Sustainable Tourism Council.

Compliance with the new standard

The Green Destinations Secretariat may establish the period within which all destinations will have to comply with the new standard. This period may differ for the various criteria. The minimum period is however six months. The maximum period is 2 years.

5. Nature of the standard

The Green Destinations Standard consists of 100 criteria, covering the following 6 main themes:

1. Destination Management
2. Nature & Scenery
3. Environment & Climate
4. Culture & Tradition
5. Social Well-being
6. Business & Hospitality

The standard has several 'special' criteria:

- **"Optional"** these criteria are not mandatory
- **"Optional: can be required by specific certification programmes"**: these are not mandatory by the 'base' standard, but may be required by specific countries or programmes, such as ecotourism destination programmes, or by countries where community development is of high importance
- **"Extra"**: these criteria show where the 'base' standard goes beyond GSTC requirements
- **"Not Applicable"**: these criteria are important enough to be included in the base standard, but may in certain circumstances not apply to certain destinations.

In order to comply with the Green Destinations standard, destinations should comply with every criterion except those marked 'Optional' or in case 'Not Applicable' is justified.

Countries or programmes that use the standard may decide to recognise the efforts of destinations that partly comply with the standard, by attributing for example Awards to certain levels of compliance.

Details of the standard can be found in Annex I.

Leiden, The Netherlands, November 2017

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Annex I: Green Destinations Standard

Green Destinations Standard 2.0 (GSTC-Recognised in March 2016)				* Optional: not mandatory in GD Standard * Extra: mandatory in GD Standard, not in GSTC-D		
Themes and Sub-theme	Criteria			Optional* or Extra*	Explanation when criterion may be Non-Applicable	
Theme 1: DESTINATION MANAGEMENT						
The destination demonstrates appropriate destination planning and environmental management of the territory.						
1	COMMITMENT & ORGANISATION Sustainable development and management of the destination is supported by an adequate organizational structure.	1.1	Sustainability coordinator	A person has been assigned the responsibility and authority for the adequate implementation and reporting of sustainable destination management.		
		1.2	Management structure	An appropriately funded organisation or management structure suited to the size and scale of the destination is responsible for coordinating and promoting sustainable tourism development and management.		
		1.3	Vision	The destination has defined, in consultation with stakeholders, a Vision which has integrated sustainability principles and is publicly communicated.	Extra	
		1.4	Trained coordinator/ team	The person or team responsible for destination development and management is adequately trained on sustainability.		
		1.5	Tourism sector involvement	The destination management organisation or structure cooperates with the private and public sector in sustainable destination management.		
2	PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT Tourism in the destination is carefully planned.	2.1	Inventory	The destination has a publicly available and regularly updated inventory of its assets and attractions including natural and cultural sites.		
		2.2	Baseline Assessment	The destination has conducted a Baseline Assessment analysing tourism impacts on nature & scenery, environment & climate, culture & tradition, and the local community; and describing the visitor profile.		
		2.3	Tourism policy	The destination has an up-to-date, publicly available, multi-year tourism policy or strategy addressing environmental, aesthetic, social, cultural, economic, quality, health and safety issues.		
		2.4	Transparency and enforcement	The development of destination planning is conducted in close inclusive consultation with stakeholders and is subject to a thorough public review process. Planning regulations and decisions are publicly communicated and are enforced.		
		2.5	Tourism action plan	The destination is implementing a sustainable tourism action plan, including targets, actions, measures, responsibilities and time planning.		
		2.6	Stakeholder involvement	The destination involves stakeholders in the implementation of the action plan and acknowledges them as partners for successful and continuous sustainability improvements.	Optional (ISO)	

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		2.7	Visitor Management	Adequate visitor management is applied to optimise tourism impacts on the natural, cultural and social assets of the destination, as identified in the Baseline Assessment.		
		2.8	Financial strategy	Through a financial strategy and planning the destination aims to strengthen its long-term financial viability and independence.	Optional	
3	MONITORING & REPORTING Sustainability issues and developments are monitored and reported	3.1	Indicators	Relevant destination sustainability indicators and developments including environmental, economic, social, cultural, tourism, and human rights issues are adequately monitored and publicly reported; and the monitoring system is periodically reviewed		
		3.2	Review and evaluation	The objectives and targets of the policy and action plan are regularly monitored and updated, making use of documented procedures.	Optional (ISO)	
		3.3	Corrective measures	In case evaluation shows any discrepancy between planned objectives and actual performance, the causes are identified and effective corrective measures are taken.		
		3.4	Communication	Stakeholders are regularly updated on the destination's sustainability policy, activities, and results.	Optional (ISO)	
		3.5	Records	The destination establishes and keeps records and documents that are necessary to demonstrate conformity to the requirements of its sustainability management system.	Extra	
		3.6	Management reporting	At least once a year the sustainability co-ordinator reports to the highest political body on the effect of the implemented policies and actions, and on the status towards the defined objectives, and formulates recommendations for improvements and next steps.	Extra	
		3.7	Public Reporting	The key sustainability results are reported to the public at least every two years and are available on the destination's public website.		
4	LEGAL & ETHICAL COMPLIANCE The destination adheres to legal and ethical requirements.	4.1	Legal requirements overview	The destination maintains an up-to-date list of international, national and local legal requirements applicable to its tourism operations. Legal requirements to be considered include health, safety, labour and environmental aspects.	Optional (ISO)	
		4.2	Legal compliance	The destination's development and management activities comply with all applicable laws and regulations.		
		4.3	Ethical code	The destination has an ethical code for its management and other staff.		
		4.4	Corruption	A guideline against corruption and bribery exists and is complied with. Non-compliance by the destination or its suppliers is contested. No negative consequences for staff who, in good faith, inform relevant authorities on non compliance.	Optional (ISO)	
		4.5	Non-compliance	In the event of sanctions imposed as a result of non-compliance with legal requirements and ethical principles, the destination explains the cause and the corrective measures that have been taken.	Optional (ISO)	
		4.6	Fair competition	The destination complies with national laws for public procurement and rewards contracts on the basis of quality, price and sustainability aspects.	Optional (ISO)	

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Theme 2: NATURE & SCENERY						
The destination is carefully avoiding substantial damage to its typical natural and scenic values, and natural wildlife in and around the destination						
5	NATURE & CONSERVATION: Nature is enhanced and effectively protected	5.1	Nature protection	The protection of natural sites, habitats, species, and ecosystems (incl. marine and aquatic) is effectively addressed and enforced. Nature degradation is mitigated and where necessary addressed and reversed, or compensated.		
		5.2	Natural resource protection	The protection of natural resources is adequately organised and enforced, and unsustainable use is avoided.		
		5.3	Exotic species	The introduction or spread of invasive alien species is adequately addressed and prevented.		
		5.4	Wildlife protection	Harvesting, capture, display, and sale of plants and animals is effectively regulated in order to comply with local and national regulations and international conventions and agreements, ensuring their protection and sustainable management.		
		5.5	Monitoring tourism impacts on nature	The destination monitors the impact of tourism on ecosystems, natural sites, species and their habitats as identified in the Baseline Assessment (criterion 2.2).		
6	NATURE EXPERIENCE: Tourism is respectful to nature and wildlife, and supportive to its protection.	6.1	Nature experience	Tourism is respectful to nature and wildlife, and supportive to its protection. Nature and wildlife experience is genuine and responsible.		N/A if nature (flora; fauna) is no tourism asset
		6.2	Animal ethics	The use of animals in tourism is effectively controlled in order to decrease the risk of unnecessary suffering, disease, and death.	Optional	
7	LANDSCAPE & SCENERY: Open landscapes and scenic views are protected, and landscape degradation is avoided	7.1	Landscape & Scenery	Natural and rural scenic views are protected and the sense of place is maintained; landscape degradation and urban sprawl into scenic landscapes is effectively avoided.		

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Theme 3: ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE							
The destination is carefully avoiding substantial damage to a healthy and clean environment.							
8	LAND USE & POLLUTION: Sustainable land use and pollution is effectively addressed.	8.1	Environmental risks	Environmental risks are adequately addressed, based upon the risks and impacts identified in the Baseline Assessment (criterion 2.2).			
		8.2	Air pollution	Air pollution is adequately addressed, based upon the risks and impacts identified in the Baseline Assessment (criterion 2.2); impacts of tourism related air pollution are effectively controlled.			
		8.3	Noise	Noise is adequately regulated and minimised, based upon the risks and impacts identified in the Baseline Assessment; enterprises and visitors are encouraged to minimise noise.			
		8.4	Light pollution	Impacts of light pollution to wildlife and to visitor experience are adequately addressed, based upon the risks and impacts identified in the Baseline Assessment.			
		8.5	Land use & planning	Land use and maritime spatial planning is subject to environmental, economic and social impact assessment, aiming to optimise the impacts of development and infrastructure projects during planning, design, construction and demolition.			
9	WATER MANAGEMENT: water quality, water management, and efficient water use are adequately addressed	9.1	Water sourcing	The destination's water resources and usage are adequately managed and monitored and it is ensured that water use by tourism enterprises does not jeopardise the water requirements of residents			
		9.2	Water quality monitoring	Drinking and recreational water quality is adequately monitored and the results are publicly available.			
		9.3	Water quality response	There is an adequate response system to water quality problems.			
		9.4	Waste water treatment	Waste water treatment is adequately organised and relevant regulations are enforced, aimed to minimise impacts to people and the environment; this also relates to siting, maintenance and testing of discharge from septic tanks.			
10	SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY: Impact from transportation to people, environment and climate is adequately addressed.	10.1	Soft mobility	The destination has a soft mobility strategy to minimize high-impact transportation (as identified in Baseline Assessment) in touristic zones; walking and cycling is facilitated and encouraged.			N/A if soft mobility measures are no viable solution (to be clarified and reconsidered every 2 yrs)
		10.2	Public Transport	Public transportation is adequately organised and its use is encouraged.			N/A if public transport is not viable (to be clarified and reconsidered every 2 years)
		10.3	Travel & Climate	The destination has a strategy aimed at measuring and minimising the carbon footprint connected to the travel of its visitors.	Optional		
		10.4	Carbon compensation	The destination considers the carbon footprint related to the travel of its visitors, and promotes appropriate measures aimed at an effective carbon compensation.	Optional		
11	WASTE & RECYCLING: Separate waste collection,	11.1	Solid waste reduction	Any solid waste is adequately monitored, reduced, separated and recycled, and quantitative goals are set, especially regarding the reduction of plastic waste.			
		11.2	Waste separation	Facilities are in place for an adequate separation of municipal and industrial waste.			

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	recycling and re-use of waste is adequately addressed.	11.3	Waste disposal	Any residual solid waste that is not reused or recycled is disposed of safely and sustainably.		
12	ENERGY & CLIMATE CHANGE Renewable energy and reduction of greenhouse gases are promoted.	12.1	Energy consumption monitoring	Measures are taken to reduce energy consumption in the destination; residents and visitors are encouraged to reduce energy consumption without compromising service or safety		
		12.2	Reduction fossil fuel dependency	Adequate measures and incentives exist to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and to encourage renewable energy technologies.		
13	CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION: Adaptation to climate change is getting all necessary attention.	13.1	Responding to climate risks	Climate change adaptation receives all necessary attention in accordance with the Baseline Assessment; this includes identification of risks and opportunities, addressing development, siting, design, and management of facilities, enhancing the resilience of the destination.		
		13.2	Climate change information	Residents, tourism enterprises and visitors are informed about climate change, in an appropriate way.		

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Theme 4: CULTURE & TRADITION						
The destination is carefully avoiding major damage to its typical local values and character, and cultural heritage in and around the destination.						
14	CULTURAL HERITAGE: Cultural sites and landscapes, built heritage and artefacts are effectively protected	14.1	Cultural heritage conservation	The conservation, authenticity and aesthetic presentation of cultural resources such as sites and built heritage, typical or traditional architecture, town design, cultural sense of place, urban scenic views, and archaeological sites, is adequately organised and enforced according to internationally recognized standards.		N/A if destination has no cultural heritage
		14.2	Protecting artefacts and fossils	Sale, trade, display or gifting of historical and archaeological artefacts is adequately regulated and enforced.		N/A if no cultural/ archaeological artefacts are present (incl sale/ trade) within the destin.
		14.3	Managing tourism impacts on culture	Tourism related to cultural sites, built heritage, culturally important landscapes, land-use and sense of place is carefully managed to avoid negative impacts. Any impacts such as damage, disruption and degradation are adequately monitored and addressed.		
15	PEOPLE & TRADITION: Tourism is respectful of the living culture and traditions, and supportive to its protection.	15.1	Intangible heritage	Intangible cultural heritage and local life and culture, are adequately protected and respected.	Extra	N/A if destination has no intangible cultural heritage
		15.2	Respecting authenticity	Tourism is respectful of the living culture and traditions, supportive to its protection and celebration, and not interfering with its practice. The practice of tourism in observing the living culture and traditions is genuine and respectful. When traditions are replicated they remain genuine and authentic.	Optional	

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Theme 5: SOCIAL WELL-BEING							
The destination is taking good care of the inhabitants and visitors of the destination.							
16	HUMAN RESPECT: Inhabitants and visitors are protected against violations of civil rights and corruption.	16.1	Property rights	Property and water rights are adequately registered and protected and are compliant with indigenous and communal rights; regulations are enforced, and are subject to public consultation.			
		16.2	Resettlement	Resettlement of residents is only possible with prior informed consent and reasonable compensation.			
		16.3	Indigenous rights	Rights of indigenous and local people to access and visit natural and cultural sites are ensured by law, unless this access has adverse effects on destination sustainability.			
		16.4	Indigenous intellectual property	Intellectual property rights of indigenous people, locals and communities are effectively protected by law.			N/A if there such rights are not present within the destination
		16.5	Protection of people	The destination takes adequate measures to protect all people legally and effectively against commercial, sexual, or any other form of exploitation and harassment, particularly of children, adolescents, elderly, disabled, women, and minorities.			
		16.6	Public communication of laws	The legal and effective protection of people against exploitation and harassment is publicly communicated, and is obvious to offenders.			
		16.7	Monitoring human rights	The destination takes adequate measures to monitor respect of universal human rights.			
17	COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION: Community participation and stakeholder involvement in destination management and development is ensured.	17.1	Inhabitants involved in planning	The process of developing general planning policies and guidelines, and of preparing destination management and development, is open and accessible to public stakeholders.			
		17.2	Inhabitants informed about tourism	Residents are regularly involved in discussions on opportunities, challenges and sustainability of tourism development.			
		17.3	Stakeholder contributions	Enterprises, visitors and the public are offered opportunities to contribute to community and sustainability initiatives, as a volunteer, in cash or in kind.			
		17.4	Inhabitant satisfaction	The satisfaction of residents with tourism development and destination management is adequately monitored regularly, and the results are publicly reported in a timely manner.			
		17.5	Community Empowerment	The destination is consciously supporting integration of community members in the management of the resources with a view to creating destinations stewards beyond the boundaries of the destination.	Optional		

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18	LOCAL ECONOMY Tourism's contribution to the local economy is optimised.	18.1	Optimising private sector contribution	Measures are taken to optimise private sector contribution to the local economy, with special attention and support to local small and medium-sized enterprises.		
		18.2	Promoting local products and services	The inclusion of local artisans, producers and service providers in the tourism value chain according to fair trade principles is supported; local and sustainable products that are supportive to the area's nature, culture, local identity, and local economy, are promoted. These may include food and beverages, crafts, performance arts, agricultural products, etc.		
		18.3	Monitoring economic impacts	The contributions of tourism to the destination's economy are annually monitored and publicly reported, and should include visitor expenditure, revenue per available room, employment, and investment data.		
		18.4	Socio-economic development	The destination promotes socio-economic development in the community.	Optional	
19	SOCIAL IMPACT MANAGEMENT: The effects of tourism are adequately managed.	19.1	Optimising social impacts	The impact of visitors to the local community and other visitors is appropriately monitored, and measures are taken to optimise their contribution to the local economy.		
		19.2	Real estate exploitation	The impact of real estate development on the local community is appropriately monitored, and measures are taken to optimise their contribution to the local economy.		N/A if no real estate is privately owned in the destination
		19.3	Seasonality	Options to combat seasonality are investigated and implemented, including a mechanism to identify year-round tourism opportunities, where appropriate—taking into account the needs of the local economy, community, cultures and environment.		
20	HEALTH & SAFETY: A healthy, safe and secure environment is ensured for inhabitants and visitors.	20.1	Health & safety prevention & response	Crime, safety, and health hazards are adequately prevented and addressed.		
		20.2	Health & safety monitoring	Crime, safety, and health hazards are adequately monitored and publicly reported.		
		20.3	Crisis & emergency response	The destination has an appropriate, up-to-date crisis and emergency response plan to address natural and man-made disasters (as identified in the Baseline Assessment). The plan is publicly available and funded; training is provided for staff, visitors, and residents.		

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Theme 6: BUSINESS & HOSPITALITY

The destination ensures involvement of the business sector in sustainability; appropriate destination information and marketing; and acts as a good host.

21	BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT: The tourism sector takes its responsibility for sustainability in the destination	21.1	Sustainability standards	Internationally recognised sustainability standards consistent with the GSTC Criteria for tourism enterprises are promoted by the destination or the business sector.		
		21.2	Publication of certified enterprises	A list of for sustainability certified or verified tourism enterprises is maintained and publicly available.		
		21.3	Water consumption	Enterprises are encouraged to reduce and publicly report on water usage.		
		21.4	Waste water treatment	Enterprises are assisted to find and implement solutions to effectively treat and reuse wastewater. Local and national regulations are effectively enforced.		
		21.5	Solid waste	Enterprises are encouraged to reduce, reuse, and recycle solid waste.		
		21.6	Energy and greenhouse gas	Enterprises are encouraged to adequately monitor, minimise, mitigate, and publicly report energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions from all aspects of their operation.		
		21.7	Equal and fair employment	The destination promotes occupational safety, fair wages, fair trade, equal employment and training opportunities in the tourism sector, and enforces the relevant regulations in this field.		
		21.8	Tour guide codes of practice	Tour guides are trained to apply a relevant code of practice, and adhere to the code in order to optimise the impact of the tour.		N/A if no tour guides are active
		21.9	Product development	The destination has a functional product development strategy to ensure the competitiveness and financial sustainability of the destination	Optional	
22	INFORMATION & MARKETING: Destination promotion and information to visitors is accurate and respectful	22.1	Respectful promotion	Destination promotion is authentic and respectful to residents and visitors.		N/A if dest. does not publish promotion
		22.2	Accurate promotion	Destination promotion is accurate in its description of products, services and sustainability claims.		N/A if dest. does not publish promotion
		22.3	Visitor behaviour at sensitive sites	Guidelines for appropriate visitor behaviour are developed and made available, aimed to minimize adverse impacts on sensitive sites and to strengthen positive visitor behaviour. Local stakeholders are involved in the development of information for visitors.		
		22.4	Sustainability information	Visitors are adequately informed about relevant sustainability issues in the destination including natural, environmental, cultural and social issues, and including the tourist's role regarding these issues.	Optional	
		22.5	Interpretive information	Interpretive information provided at natural and cultural sites is accurate, respectful to different cultural values, developed with community collaboration, and communicated in most relevant languages.		N/A if no natural or cultural sites or attractions exist in the destination

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		22.6	Green destination marketing	The destination promotes itself as a green destination, as well as the art and culture in the destination for their revitalization	Optional	
23	HOSPITALITY & SATISFACTION The destination is a good host, caring for feedback from tourists	23.1	Visitor monitoring	The characteristics and preferences of visitors are monitored and publicly reported	Optional	
		23.2	Visitor satisfaction	Visitor satisfaction is systematically measured and the results are taken into account for destination and service improvements.		
		23.3	Sustainability in visitor survey	Visitor surveys collect feedback on sustainability aspects.	Optional	
		23.4	Accessibility	Access to tourism sites is supported for individuals with disabilities, where possible, whilst not harming the sites and their sense of place.		