

Ecotourism Certification System

“ECO-ROMANIA”



EVALUATION PROGRAMME

The Association of Ecotourism in Romania is currently running the **Ecotourism Certification System (evaluation component) under the name of “Eco-Romania”**. This programme has been established with support from the **Environmental Partnership Foundation**, the **United States Agency for International Development (USAID)** and **Doen Foundation – the Netherlands**.

**You are invited to take part in
the first ecotourism certification system in Romania !**

Steps towards the certification process:

- 1. fill in the application form for evaluation of tour or accommodation;**

[download application form tour]

[download application form accommodation]

- 2. fill in the self-evaluation form for tour or accommodation;**

[download self-evaluation form tour]

[download self-evaluation form accommodation]

- 3. send the application form and self-evaluation form to:**
eco.romania@gmail.com;

For further details please read the **Guide to the procedure** below.

Guide to the evaluation procedure

Ecotourism Certification System "ECO-ROMANIA"

The ecotourism certification system is a mechanism which recognises the compliance of ecotourism products developed by agencies and tour-operators, local communities and accommodation facilities to the requirements of nature conservation principles, of sustainable development of local communities and of promotion of natural and cultural assets.

The system is not compulsory; but it is based on voluntary participation among its beneficiaries.

The certification system operates with a **set of criteria** established by the Association of Ecotourism in Romania, which must be fulfilled by the products of the tour operator, or the Destination respectively, which are subject to the certification procedure.

The criteria fall into two categories:

- **Basic criteria.** These represent the basic norms that must be fulfilled by the product or Destination undergoing certification in order to obtain a temporary classification from the point of view of ecotourism.
- **Complementary criteria.** These are the norms that establish the classification of a product or Destination in terms of ecotourism. Besides fulfilling the basic criteria, fulfilling 50% of the complementary criteria leads to certification of the product or destination as complying with the principles of ecotourism.

Who is the system addressed to?

- **travel agencies, tour-operators or guides** who offer tourist activities within a tour. A **tour** represents a product offered by a tour-operator which includes a package of services within a pre-established programme and which takes place during at least one day. It is characterised by clearly defined themes, pre-communicated to the potential customers.
- **ecotourism destinations.** A tourism **destination** can be defined as a geographical area, territorially delimited, which offers, promotes and coordinates a series of tourist products and services, and that strives to promote a unifying image of the area. The destination is administered / coordinated from a tourist point of view by a body or representative of the local administrative authorities and/or partner organisations, with clearly defined responsibilities in this field. In order for a tourism destination to enter the certification process it must fulfil a preliminary condition which facilitates the monitoring of local operators. Thus, the manager of the Destination must demonstrate the wish to promote and develop the area by drawing up agreements of collaboration and ecotourism promotion with at least 75% of the local tour-operators.
- **accommodation facilities.** These are guesthouses with a limited number of rooms (maximum 25).

Certification procedure

a. Preliminary stage. The operators who wish to obtain the certification must first fill in a self-evaluation form for each of the products of the type *Tour* or *Accommodation* that they wish to certify, or the self-evaluation form for *Destinations*, respectively. They will also fill in an application form for certification.

The forms can be obtained from the AER website, www.eco-romania.ro. In the self-evaluation form the applicants will record their own observations and will estimate the points obtained.

b. First stage. After filling in the self-evaluation form(s) and the application form, the operators will send these to the Certification Department within AER, to the address: eco.romania@gmail.com .

c. Second stage. The Certification Department will record all these requests and will contact the evaluators and the applicant, in order to determine the following:

- the number of days necessary for each evaluation;
- the evaluation period for each product/Destination;
- the number of evaluators necessary for evaluation of one or several products;
- the evaluation fee that the applicant has to pay.

The information above will be communicated to the applicant within **5 working days** from the date of the submission of the self-evaluation form(s).

Within **5 working days** from receiving the information above, the applicant will have to pay the evaluation fee into the AER account **no. RO21 RNCB 0059 0091 7190 0001**, opened at BCR Titulescu, Braşov.

In case the evaluation fee is not paid **5 days before** the date agreed for the travel of the evaluators, at the latest, the application will be cancelled.

The evaluation fee has been established in Euro and represents the equivalent in lei on the date of payment. It consists of:

- **travel costs of evaluators – 25 Euro/trip;**
- **accommodation costs – 25 Euro/night;**
- **evaluators' fees – 50 Euro/evaluation day;**
- **other costs (administrative costs) – 30 Euro/evaluated product.**

The evaluator's fee estimated for a product of the type Tour/Accommodation: 180 Euro (this includes travel costs, 2 days of evaluation and one night of accommodation for evaluators).

The evaluation fee estimated for a Destination: 300 Euro, which represents travel, 4 days of evaluation and 3 nights of accommodation.

Fees can vary according to the distance involved, accommodation facilities in the area and the number of evaluators necessary.

d. Third stage. On the established date the evaluator(s) will travel to the location indicated by the applicant in order to begin the on-site evaluation procedure. They will verify the information given by the applicant via the self-evaluation form and will make their own observations.

Within **10 days** of the on-site evaluation, the evaluators will analyse all the documents submitted by the operator and will establish the number of points after their own evaluation. After analysing all the information, the evaluators will fill in the evaluation form of the product, along with the points obtained and the recommendations made. All this will then be submitted to the Certification Department which, according to the number of applications, will plan the meeting of the Certification Committee.

In order to obtain the ecotourism certification the product/Destination undergoing the evaluation process must fulfil all the basic criteria plus 50% of the complementary criteria applicable to the product/Destination.

For temporary certification, the product/Destination undergoing the evaluation process must fulfil all the applicable basic criteria, on condition that they will fulfil 50% of the applicable complementary criteria within a year of receiving the eco-certified logo/certificate.

e. Fourth stage. The committee will meet on the established date and analyse all the applications. The results of the analysis can lead to the following decisions:

- *Awarding* the eco-certified logo over a period of 3 years if the products of the applicants, or the Destination respectively, fulfil all the applicable basic criteria plus a minimum 50% of the applicable complementary criteria.
- *Temporary awarding* of the eco-certified logo over a period of maximum one year if the products of the applicants, or the Destination respectively, fulfil all the applicable basic criteria but do not fulfil minimum 50% of the applicable complementary criteria. The eco-certified logo is awarded temporarily on condition that this requirement is fulfilled within maximum a year.
- *Not awarding* the eco-certified logo to the applicants' products that fail to meet the requirements established in the evaluation criteria.
- *Withdrawal* (over a period of up to 6 months) of the eco-certified logo for products that no longer fulfil initial awarding conditions, but that can be addressed within a time limit set by the Committee. For this to happen, the applicant will sign a statement regarding the measures taken in order to address the situation.
- *Final withdrawal* of the eco-certified logo from the products/Destination that no longer fulfil the initial awarding conditions and that:
 - a) can no longer be addressed; or
 - b) have not been addressed within the time limit; or where
 - c) the operator has not signed the statement regarding the measures taken.

The withdrawal can also be decided if the applicant has abused the right of use of the eco-certified logo.

The award of the eco-certified logo for the products/Destination that fulfil the minimum conditions is the responsibility of the Certification Department and will take place within **10 days** of the decision of the Certification Committee. The eco-certified logo will be sent electronically and, upon receipt, the operator will sign a statement regarding the right to use the logo.

For further details about eco-certification, please contact us by phone:

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0724 749470

or by e-mail:

florescu.florentina@gmail.com

eco.romania@gmail.com

Thank you and we are looking forward to receiving your applications.

Andrei Blumer

President

Association of Ecotourism in Romania

www.eco-romania.ro