

# BIODIVERSITY SELF-CHECK

## Recreational activities



## *European Living Lakes Association (ELLA)*



***European  
Association***

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## BIODIVERSITY SELF-CHECK

### Recreational activities

**With the help of this biodiversity self-assessment, you, as a tour operator, will be able to determine your commitment to biodiversity conservation and identify potential areas for action.**

Intact nature and biodiversity are the pillars of tourism and are fundamental to the economic success of a tour operator. The beauty of natural landscapes attracts a large number of visitors, so biodiversity is one of tourism's greatest assets - it is its natural capital. Tourism therefore depends on biodiversity and has not only the obligation but also the need to protect it. This task responsibility of everyone involved in tourism, as the loss of ecosystems such as forests and wetlands, the overexploitation of natural resources and the drastic decline of species around the world have not stopped.

Biodiversity is colorful and heartwarming. There are multiple options through which tour operators can get involved in protecting it. Some examples are the inclusion of destinations and accommodations with sustainability certificates, allowing clients to decide on environmental quality, or the offer of activities to explore nature and biodiversity designed with responsibility and knowledge. The environmental education of staff and tour guides ensures high quality and responsible tourism.

Tour operators can counteract negative effects on biodiversity and influence the conservation of natural resources by avoiding directing clients to ecologically sensitive sites, considering the carrying capacity of ecosystems, eliminating activities that damage biodiversity, using recycled paper for printing catalogues, and encouraging hotels and restaurants to offer regional and certified food products.










Environmental quality as a selection criterion is gaining importance among tourists, and their expectations of tourism offers with regard to biodiversity protection are becoming increasingly high. This increased environmental sensitivity means that quality seals and certificates have to meet a greater number of biodiversity protection criteria.












#### The biodiversity self-check








- offers the tour operator the opportunity to identify its points of influence on biodiversity and determine its current impact.
- includes proposals for practical measures that can contribute to the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity.
- contains references to best practice examples, key stakeholders, legal bases and standards compiled on the DestiNet tourism and sustainability platform ([www.destinet.eu](http://www.destinet.eu)).
- contains the lexicon collected in the knowledge database [www.destinet.eu](http://www.destinet.eu).
- covers the different areas in which a tour operator can have an impact on biodiversity: purchasing/supply chain, customer information, buildings and outdoor facilities, training and capacity building, protected areas and landscape development, management and strategy, and corporate social engagement.
- is the first step towards the integration of biodiversity as an aspect of the company's environmental management.





#### What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity or biological diversity refers to the variety of life on Earth. This includes the diversity of plants, animals and genetic diversity, as well as the diversity of habitats.

Biodiversity-related areas	Completed	In preparation	Not completed	Costs	Links and Knowledge Base 
 <b>Strategy/Management</b>					
<p>The tour operator is aware of and respects the environmental legislation and regulations for the protection of habitats and species.</p>					
<p>The tour operator requires contractors to respect regulations and ensure environmental protection and species conservation.</p>					
<p>As part of the company's environmental and sustainable management, the operator establishes objectives for the conservation and promotion of biodiversity.</p>					
<p>One staff person is responsible for managing and monitoring the implementation of biodiversity-related activities as well as the impact of these activities.</p>					
 <b>Purchasing /Supply Chain</b>					
<p>The operator is aware of the different certificates/labels for sustainable tourism and the criteria they guarantee</p>					<p>- <a href="#">List of current certificates, seals and competitions in sustainable tourism</a></p>
<p>Preferably, certified companies with a sustainability label are hired.</p>					
<p>Priority is given to contracting companies that can demonstrate that biodiversity is an important part of their (environmental) management.</p>					
<p>Own or contracted excursions are conducted only with qualified guides trained in biodiversity protection aspects. The tour operator verifies the environmental qualification.</p>					

	Completed	In preparation	Not completed	Costs	Links and Knowledge Database 
<b>Biodiversity-related areas</b>					
<p>The tour operator motivates contracted companies to sell or process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certified sea fish, certified farmed fish, or fish from the region that are caught or farmed in an environmentally friendly manner and can be verified.</li> <li>Certified organic and/or locally grown products produced in an environmentally friendly manner.</li> <li>Products with sustainability certification that are not grown in the country/region (e.g. tea).</li> <li>Products produced with respect for animal welfare.</li> </ul>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">- Marine Stewardship Council. Certified sustainable fish and seafood seal (MSC)</a></li> <li><a href="#">- Aquaculture Stewardship Council. Certified farmed fish and seafood seal (ASC)</a></li> <li><a href="#">- Examples of sustainability labels: Rainforest Alliance, Fairtrade, GEPA</a></li> </ul>
<p>The tour operator obliges the contracted companies not to buy or sell products (souvenirs or food) with components included in the CITES agreement or that are otherwise protected.</p>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">- Endangered species worldwide:</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">- Information on CITES</a></li> <li><a href="#">- CITES Checklist</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>No visits to dolphin or orca shows or other activities where animal welfare is disregarded and a suitable environment for the animals is not guaranteed.</p>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">- Guide to good practices for animal welfare in the tourism sector</a></li> </ul>
<p>Printing material and paper products (restaurant menus, napkins, toilet paper, printer paper, etc.) are of recycled and/or certified origin.</p>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">- Sustainable wood and paper products (FSC)</a></li> </ul>
<b> Customer information</b>					
<p>Clients receive information on nature/biodiversity and recommendations for the protection of their recreational area.</p>					
<p>The tour operator informs customers about the environmental/biodiversity situation and promotes sustainable use of water resources in the recreational area.</p>					
<p>The operator offers activities to explore nature and biodiversity in a respectful way.</p>					
<p>The customer satisfaction questionnaire includes questions related to biodiversity. The results will be available for biodiversity monitoring in the region.</p>					
<b> Training/capacity building</b>					
<p>Nature conservation and biodiversity are an important part of staff training.</p>					
<b> Commitment</b>					
<p>The operator offers customers the possibility to actively participate in and/or financially support nature conservation projects.</p>					

	Completed	In preparation	Not completed	Costs	Links and Knowledge Database 
<b>Biodiversity-related areas</b>					
<i>Destinations and contractors are motivated to protect threatened ecosystems, animals and plants by (financially) supporting conservation measures.</i>					
<i>The tour operator is involved in the protection of threatened ecosystems, animals and plants by (financially) supporting conservation measures.</i>					- <a href="#">International Red List of endangered species (IUCN)</a>
<i>The tour operator participates, together with the staff, in projects of nature conservation organizations and authorities (corporate volunteering).</i>					- <a href="#">Whale project</a>
<b> Buildings and outdoor facilities</b>					
Natural design of the external facilities of the contracted companies (if any)					
<i>Contractors are encouraged to design and maintain at least 30% of the exterior surface in a natural way by:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Avoiding pesticides and herbicides</i></li> <li>• <i>Promoting structural diversity and wilderness in certain areas of the facility (unmowed grass margins, dead wood, dry stone walls, hedgerows with native shrubs, etc.).</i></li> <li>• <i>Use of plants native to the countr/region</i></li> <li>• <i>Facades and roofs with natural coverings</i></li> </ul>					Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="#">Greening of the company's facilities</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Swiss foundation for nature and economy</a></li> </ul>
Natural design of own outdoor facilities (if any)					
<i>At least 30% of the exterior surfaces are designed as described above.</i>					
<b> Protected areas and landscape development</b>					
<i>The tour operator motivates the authorities of its tourism destination(s) to include biodiversity protection in tourism planning.</i>					
<i>No excursions that threaten ecologically sensitive areas or endangered species take place, or they are offered only for very limited groups and with qualified guides, respecting environmental regulations.</i>					
<i>If the tour operator carries out activities in or near protected areas, she/he:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>performs simple but meaningful monitoring of biodiversity status and development.</i></li> <li>- <i>has identified indicators in collaboration with conservation organizations, government agencies or scientific institutions.</i></li> <li>- <i>periodically requests monitoring results and pursues the implementation of recommendations</i></li> </ul>					- <a href="#">International map of protected areas</a>

	Completed	In preparation	Not completed	Costs	Links and Knowledge Database 
<b>Biodiversity-related areas</b>					
<i>In regions with water scarcity: - detailed information on water sources is requested. - the operator exerts its influence on the responsible authorities to ensure the implementation of a drinking water source(s) management plan and monitoring by a neutral body</i>					
 <b>Waste and waste management</b>					
<i>The tour operator and the contracted guides are responsible for ensuring that no garbage is left at the excursion sites.</i>					
<i>The tour operator avoids the use of plastic cups, plates, bags, etc. and uses alternative materials (e.g. plates made of banana leaves).</i>					
<i>In destinations where there is no adequate waste and wastewater treatment, the operator exerts strong influence to improve this situation.</i>					

## The road to becoming a biodiversity-friendly tour operator - 10 steps to a successful engagement

1. Are you environmentally engaged? Use the biodiversity self-check to determine your current commitment. All measures that are already being implemented can be counted in the "**Completed**" column and those that are planned for the near future in the "**In preparation**" column.
  2. If you answered most of the questions with "**Completed**" or "**In preparation**", your company has already started to take steps towards biodiversity protection - congratulations, you are on the right track! You can find more suggestions on how to intensify this commitment at [www.destinet.eu](http://www.destinet.eu).
  3. Make your company an example of good practice and a model for others. You will find a form for the submission of your measures as a model on DestiNet (in German - sorry): <http://destinet.eu/topics/natural-cultural-heritage/biodiversity/germany/gute-praxis>
- Are you not only committed to biodiversity but also to other environmental aspects? Then apply for a national or international sustainability certificate. You will find more information on seals, certificates, regulations and calls for applications in the knowledge database.
5. As a certified best practice example, it will be published in DestiNet - a source of information for travel agencies and "green" online booking portals.
  6. If you answered "**Not completed**" to most of the questions, you should increase your commitment. There are many measures for biodiversity protection that can be implemented without much effort.
  7. Every start is easy! Determine what you would like to implement in the short, medium and long term. The measures that require a minimum investment (human, financial) are marked in the list with a 😊 symbol.
  8. Other recommendations for biodiversity protection can be found in "Biodiversity criteria for tourism: recommendations for standards, labels and competitions": <http://www.business-biodiversity.eu/default.asp?Menu=226>.
  9. Get advice and support! In the DestiNet knowledge base there is a selection of national and international contacts ("Who is Who?") - contact NGOs and administrations involved in nature conservation in your country! Global Nature Fund experts can conduct an in-depth Biodiversity Check.
  10. Recommend the "biodiversity self-check" to others. Apart from your involvement in the areas of your operation, contribute in some other way to sustainable tourism in your country.

This self-check is available in digital format, allowing direct online access to the sources cited in the "Tourism and Biodiversity Knowledge Base".

→ <http://destinet.eu/topics/natural-cultural-heritage/biodiversity/germany/self-checks>