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The 2012 Annual International Society of Travel and Tourism Educators (ISTTE) Conference will devote several sessions to the presentations of academic and research papers. It is the intent of these sessions to focus on a broad range of topics that are related to education, research, and management in the field of travel, tourism, and hospitality services. ISTTE is an international organization; therefore, submissions from international scholars are highly encouraged.

Contribution Areas: Contributions are invited in any of the following subject areas or their related areas

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- Perspectives on articulation and/or accreditation
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- Refereed full papers
- Poster papers based on refereed extended abstract
- Working papers based on refereed abstract

Types of Proceedings Papers: In this Proceedings, papers are presented in alphabetical order by author's last name in each of four sections:

- Full Research Papers
- Working Papers
- Poster Papers
- Abstracts

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Table of Contents

FULL RESEARCH PAPERS

A study of experience in using travel websites.....	4
The Shadless shadfest: shad festivals suffer from resource depletion.....	15
Predicting Students' Satisfaction in College-Sponsored Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Career Fair.....	29
The institutional framework for the implementation of the EU ecolabel scheme: The case of Greece.....	44
A Proposed Slow Food Agricultural Model to Help the Poor in Latin America through Tourism.....	59
The free provision of services in the field of guided tours: A legal approach.....	72
The internationalization process of the Balearic hotel industry.....	85
An investigation: If students reside on Facebook, should faculty reside there too?.....	104
Pro-poor tourism via community-based organizations: Evidences from Yuhu tourism co-operative.....	125

WORKING PAPERS

An overview of education for Australia: The tourism higher education context.....	138
Economic impact and destination marketing comparisons of the Motorcoach industry in Maine.....	151
“The trip helped me grow as a person and as a future professional”: The influence of a field experience on student engagement and professional preparation.....	163
A holistic approach for sustainable tourism education: An example from a European university.....	175
Estimating international tourism demand to Spain separately by the major markets.....	180
How to keep customers and CFOs happy: Application of Kano's Model in Travel and Tourism Industry.....	189
Rethinking tourism statistics for educational collaboration: A move toward application and solutions.....	196
An evaluation of the relationship between visitors' perceptions of service performance and on-site destination image.....	204
Does Shopping Matter? A Focused Expert Analysis of Revised Chinese Tariff Policy Governing Outbound Shopping Behavior.....	213

POSTER PAPERS

For business or pleasure?: Effect of time horizon on travel decisions 220
A study on zoo visitors and the impact of a zoo location on the structure of visitors 226
Cross-Cultural Identity in Art and Archaeology: A Case Study of Ancient Egypt 237
Informal education: A case study of art deco architectural tourism 247

ABSTRACTS

Utilising a Cultural Knowledge and Process Map of Travel Writing in Tertiary
Educational Contexts 254
Knowledge generation in tourism: Empirical evidence from two mature destinations . 255
Excellence in University Tourism, Hospitality & Events Education: Impressions
from 3 continents 256
Sponsorship and Event Quality: A Longitudinal Study..... 257
Tourism Impacts and Biodiversity Conservation Hotspots: A Meta-synthesis of Case
Study Research..... 258

INDEX.....258

Full Research Papers

THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU ECOLABEL SCHEME: THE CASE OF GREECE

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is an important aspect of the lives of the European citizens, who travel more and more for leisure or business. To this end, since the early 1980s the European Union and in particular, the European Commission and the European Parliament, have been developing actions aiming at promoting sustainable tourism development. The main goal is to improve the tourism services within the EU and foster competitiveness of the European tourism industry with respect to the natural and cultural environment. The EU Ecolabel, a voluntary scheme established in 1992 in order to encourage businesses to market environmentally friendly products and services, has been an important tool to this direction.

This paper aims at researching and studying analytically the EU institutional framework with regard to the EU Ecolabel awarding, highlighting the EU initiatives and actions for the promotion of the EU Ecolabel and exploring the way EU Regulations and Directives have been incorporated into the Greek law system.

KEYWORDS: EU Ecolabel, tourist accommodation, tourist campsites, sustainable tourism development, EU ‘flower’

INTRODUCTION

European Union and Tourism

Tourism is an important aspect of the lives of the European citizens, who travel more and more for personal or professional reasons. According to Eurostat (2009) in 2009 the European citizens made about 1.4 billion trips, 90% of which was within EU-27. The EU is regarded as the first tourist destination in the world, with 476,551,000 international arrivals for 2010, that is 50.7% of the total arrivals worldwide. The tourism receipts generated by these arrivals were €306 billion (UNWTO, 2011: 4-7).

Since the early 1980s, the EU and in particular, the European Commission and the European Parliament, have been developing actions aiming at promoting the sustainability of tourism. The main goal is to improve the tourism services within the EU

and foster competitiveness of the European tourism industry with respect to the natural and cultural environment. The European Ecolabel, a voluntary scheme established in 1992 in order to encourage businesses to market environmentally friendly products and services, has been an important tool to this direction. As tourism is an economic sector which often leads to wasteful consumption (Moira and Katsoula, 2008:293) and can have a devastating effect on natural and cultural resources, awarding tourist accommodation services and camp site services with the EU Ecolabel contributes enormously to the development of sustainable tourism. However, raising public awareness is necessary as the recognition of the (ecological, cultural, social and economic) value of the EU Ecolabel could encourage tourist accommodation providers to adopt it. Moreover, national bodies awarding the EU Ecolabel in each Member State should take the appropriate initiatives and actions in order to promote the EU Ecolabel as environmental excellence, which could help manufacturers, retailers and service providers gain recognition for good standards, while helping consumers make reliable choices.

Sustainable tourism development

In the beginning of the 21st century, the rational use of natural resources and the protection of the ecosystems, along with economic prosperity and a balanced social development, are fundamental for sustainable development. According to the World Committee on Environment and Development, sustainable development is a process of change which lays particular emphasis on the conservation of the available resources of each area with respect to the needs of the future generations (WCED, 1987). Many countries have developed different policies aiming at sustainable tourism development (Lane, 1993; Weiler and Hall, 1992). These policies approach tourism development as ecologically acceptable, economically viable and morally fair to local communities (EC, 1995). In this way, tourism becomes part of the natural, cultural and human environment with respect to the special characteristics of the host place. Sustainable development can only be achieved if tourism activities sit in harmony with the local environment (Eccles & Costa, 1996: 49). The concept of sustainable development dates back to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972), the Manila Declaration on World Tourism (1980), the Report of the Brundtland Commission, *Our Common Future* (WCED, 1987) and the Rio Summit (UN, 1992:282). Agenda 21 is a comprehensive blueprint of action of the United Nations to be taken globally, nationally, and locally by organizations of the UN, governments, and major groups in every area in which humans directly affect the environment. It seeks to reconcile environmental protection, economic development and fight against poverty in a sustainable way. More specifically, it stresses that «[c]ountries should promote, as appropriate, environmentally sound leisure and tourism activities» (UN, 1992:326). As the tourism sector has a significant contribution to national economies, sustainable tourism development can be attained through alternative forms of tourism based on the rational valorisation and protection of the natural and cultural environment (UNEP, 2000).

The principles of sustainable tourism development were laid down during the World Conference on Sustainable, in Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain, on 27-28 April 1995. The core of the principles focuses on: a) tourism development which must be ecologically bearable in the long term as well as economically and socially equitable for

local communities, b) the shared and coordinated effort of all the actors, both public and private, and c) the diversity of opportunities offered to local communities through tourism projects. The tourism industry depends, to a great extent, on natural and cultural resources, which are its major pillars. Nevertheless, tourism can have negative impacts on these resources, such as air and water pollution, environmental degradation and loss of cultural authenticity. These negative impacts influence in their turn the quality and the viability of the tourist destinations as well as the quality of life of the local communities.

In a concerted effort to mitigate the negative repercussions of tourism development, since the 1980s the European Union has been undertaking sets of actions embedded in different sectoral policies aiming at the protection of the environment. One of those actions is the establishment of the Ecolabel scheme of the European Community in 1992, whose objective was to encourage businesses to develop commercial goods and services with mitigated environmental impacts throughout their life cycle and to provide consumers with information regarding the effects these goods and services have on the environment. Moreover, Council Decision 92/421/EEC of 13 July 1992 on a Community action plan to assist tourism was very significant as it specified eleven Community measures, one of which was “Tourism and the environment”. Then under the guidance of the Tourism Advisory Committee of the Commission, four working groups were set up in order to improve quality in tourism. In particular, the objective of Group D was to promote environmental protection and sustainable tourism development (Mylonopoulos & Kontoudaki, 2011:56).

In addition to this, the Report of the Tourism Sustainability Group (TSG) entitled “Action for a more sustainable European tourism”, submitted to the European Commission in February 2007, was of high importance. The EU Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) has three key objectives: economic prosperity; social equity and cohesion; and environmental and cultural protection (TSG, 2007:3). As the 6th Community Environment Action Programme (EAP) (2002-2012) of the European Community states that this objective can be achieved through an integrated product policy approach that will encourage the taking into account of environmental requirements throughout the life-cycle of products (EC, 2002:5). The Communication from the Commission for an Integrated Product Policy¹ suggests a new strategy in order to strengthen the co-ordination and coherence between existing and future environment-related product policy instruments and help develop a market with more eco-friendly products. The EU eco-label is one of the tools that could contribute to the achievement of this goal.

Tourism was included for the first time as a provision in the Maastricht Treaty (1992). “The Community shall have as its task [...] to promote throughout the Community a high level of employment and of social protection, the raising of the standard of living and quality of life, and economic and social cohesion and solidarity among Member States” (Title II, Article G, B, Art. 2). “For the purposes set out in Article

¹ COM/2003: 302 final, 18.6.2003.

2, the activities of the Community shall include [...] measures in the spheres of energy, civil protection and *tourism*” (Article 3, (t)).

The Treaty of Lisbon,² which was passed in 2007 and entered into force on 1 December 2009, stipulates that “[t]he Union shall have competence to carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States. The areas of such action shall, at European level, be: [...] (d) *tourism*” (Article 2E).³ Furthermore, the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states that “[t]he Union shall complement the action of the Member States in the *tourism* sector, in particular by promoting the competitiveness of Union undertakings in that sector. To that end, Union action shall be aimed at: (a) encouraging the creation of a favourable environment for the development of undertakings in this sector; (b) promoting cooperation between the Member States, particularly by the exchange of good practice” (Article 195).

Moreover, the Transport and Tourism (TRAN) Committee of the European Parliament is in charge for issues related with tourism, while the European Commission, acknowledging the important role that tourism plays for the European economy has been dealing with tourism issues since the 1980, in collaboration with the Council and the European Parliament.

Regulations

Council Regulation (EEC) No 880/92 of 23 March 1992 on a Community eco-label award⁴ aimed at establishing an optional eco-labelling scheme, whose goal was to: a) promote products with reduced environmental impacts during the entire life cycle of the product, and b) provide consumers with better information on the environmental impact of products. “Within five years of the entry into force of this Regulation the Commission shall review the scheme in the light of the experience gained during its operation [and] propose any appropriate amendments to this Regulation” (Article 18). By virtue of this provision, Regulation (EC) No 1980/2000 of the European Parliament and the Council of 17 July 2000⁵ on a revised Community eco-label award scheme was published. Then, for reasons of clarity and security law, Regulation (EC) 66/2010 of the European Parliament and the Council of 25 November 2009⁶ on the EU Ecolabel entered into force. «By 19 February 2015, the Commission shall submit to the European Parliament and the Council a report on the implementation of the EU Ecolabel scheme. The report shall also identify elements for a possible review of the scheme» (Article 14).

«The EU Ecolabel scheme is part of the sustainable consumption and production policy of the Community, which aims at reducing the negative impact of consumption

² OJ C 306, 17.12.2007.

³ Article 6, Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, OJ C 83, p. 47-200, 30.10.2010.

⁴ OJ L 099, 11.4.1992, p. 1-7.

⁵ OJ, L 237, 21.9.2000, p. 1-12.

⁶ OJ L 027, 30.1.2010, p. 1-19.

and production on the environment, health, climate⁷ and natural resources. The scheme is intended to promote those products which have a high level of environmental performance through the use of the EU Ecolabel. To this effect, it is appropriate to require that the criteria with which products must comply in order to bear the EU Ecolabel be based on the best environmental performance achieved by products on the Community market. Those criteria should be simple to understand and to use and should be based on scientific evidence, taking into consideration the latest technological developments. Those criteria should be market oriented and limited to the most significant environmental impacts of products during their whole life cycle.» (Preamble, par. 5).

«For the acceptance by the general public of the EU Ecolabel scheme, it is essential that environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and consumer organisations play an important role and be actively involved in the development and setting of EU Ecolabel criteria» (Preamble, par. 8). The Regulation applies to any goods or services which are supplied for distribution, consumption or use on the Community market whether in return for payment or free of charge.

Commission Decision 2009/578/EC⁸ of 9 July 2009 establishing the ecological criteria for the award of the Community eco-label *for tourist accommodation services*. For administrative purposes the code number assigned to the product group 'tourist accommodation service' is '025'. (Art. 2). The product group 'tourist accommodation service' comprises the provision, for a fee, of sheltered overnight accommodation in appropriately equipped rooms, including at least a bed, offered as a main service to tourists, travellers and lodgers. The provision of overnight sheltered accommodation may include the provision of food services (e.g. breakfast), fitness and leisure activities (e.g. saunas, swimming pools) and/or green areas (e.g. parks and gardens which are open to guests) (Art. 1, 2).

In order to be awarded the Community eco-label for tourist accommodation service under Regulation (EC) No 1980/2000, a tourist accommodation service has to fulfil all of the following requirements: (a) it has to fall within the product group 'tourist accommodation service'; (b) it has to comply with each of the criteria set out in Section A of the Annex to the Decision; (c) it has to comply with a sufficient number of the criteria set out in Section B of the Annex to the Decision, in order to acquire the requisite number of points as referred to in paragraphs 2 and 3.

The scoring is increased by any of the following, if provided under the same management or ownership of the tourist accommodation service: (a) three points for food services; (b) three points for green/outside areas available to guests; (c) three points for leisure/fitness activities or five points if the leisure/fitness activity consists in a wellness centre. (Art.2). These criteria aim to set limits on the main environmental impacts from

⁷ «Preventing negative effects on the climate is an integral part of the Eco-label scheme.» Amendment 1, Proposal for a Regulation, Recital 4, Report of the European Parliament, A6-0105/2009, 25.2.2009, RR\418115EN.doc.

⁸ OJ L 198, 30.7.2009, p. 57-79.

the three phases of the life cycle of tourist accommodation service (purchasing, provision of the service and waste). In particular they aim to limit energy consumption, limit water consumption, limit waste production, favour the use of renewable resources and of substances which are less hazardous to the environment, promote environmental communication and education.⁹

In order to apply for the eco-label, the applicant must comply with Community, national and local legal requirements. In particular, it shall be guaranteed that a) the physical structure is built legally and respects all relevant laws or regulations of the area on which it is built, especially any related to landscape and biodiversity conservation, b) the physical structure respects Community, national and local laws and regulations regarding energy conservation, water sources, water treatment and disposal, waste collection and disposal, maintenance and servicing of equipment, safety and health dispositions and c) the enterprise is operational and registered, as required by national and/or local laws and its staff are legally employed and insured.

The mandatory criteria include, inter alia: energy, water, detergents and disinfectants, waste, general management, information to guests. The optional criteria include, inter alia: indigenous species used for new outdoor planting, bicycles made available to guests etc. Each of the criteria set out has been attributed a value expressed in points or fractions of points. In order to qualify for award of the eco-label, tourist accommodations must score a minimum of 20 points.¹⁰

Moreover, the Commission Decision 2009/564/EC¹¹ of 9 July 2009 establishes the ecological criteria for the award of the Community eco-label for campsite service. For administrative purposes the code number assigned to the product group 'campsite service' is '026' (Art. 5). The Community eco-label may be awarded to a product possessing characteristics which enable it to contribute significantly to improvements in relation to key environmental aspects. Specific eco-label criteria, drawn up on the basis of the criteria drafted by the European Union Eco-labeling Board, are established according to product groups. It provides that the review of the eco-label criteria, as well as of the assessment and verification requirements related to those criteria, is to take place in due time before the end of the period of validity of the criteria specified for the product group concerned. In the light of that review, it is appropriate, in order to take account of scientific and market developments, to modify the definition of the product group and to establish new ecological criteria. For campsite service, the ecological criteria should be divided into mandatory and optional criteria.

The product group '*campsite service*' comprises, as a main service provided for a fee, the provision of pitches equipped for mobile lodging structures within a defined area. It shall also comprise other accommodation facilities suitable for the provision of shelter

⁹ Annex, p. 60.

¹⁰ Annex II, p. 68.

¹¹ OJ L 196, 28.7.2009, p. 6-58.

to lodgers and collective areas for communal service if they are provided within the defined area (Art. 1, par. 1).

In addition to this, for the purposes of this Decision, food services include breakfast, fitness and leisure activities/facilities (saunas, swimming pools) and all other such facilities, which are within the accommodation grounds and green areas such as parks and gardens, which are open to guests, and which are not part of the campsite structure (Art. 1, par. 3). In order to be awarded the Community eco-label for campsite service, a campsite service has to fulfill all of the following requirements: (a) it shall fall within the product group ‘campsite service’; (b) it shall comply with each of the criteria set out in Section A of the Annex to this Decision; (c) it shall comply with a sufficient number of the criteria set out in Section B of the Annex to this Decision, in order to acquire the requisite number of points as referred to in paragraphs 2 and 3 (Art. 2, par. 1). For the purposes of paragraph 1(c), the campsite service shall acquire at least: (a) 20 points for the main service; (b) 24 points if other accommodation facilities, suitable for the provision of shelters for lodgers, are provided in addition (Art. 2, par. 2).

Mobile lodging structures as referred to in Article 1 are those such as tents, caravans, mobile homes and camper vans. Accommodation facilities suitable for the provision of shelter to lodgers are facilities such as bungalows, rental mobile lodging and apartments. Collective areas for communal services are such as washing and cooking facilities, supermarkets and information facilities.¹² The total score required shall be increased by 3 points for each of the following additional services which are offered that are under the management or ownership of the campsite — Food services (including breakfast), — Leisure/fitness activities, which include saunas, swimming pools and all other such facilities which are within the campsite grounds. If the leisure/fitness activities consist in a wellness centre, the score required shall be increased by 5 points, instead of 3, — Green areas which are not part of the campsite structure, such as parks, woods and gardens which are open to guests.¹³

These criteria aim to set limits on the main environmental impacts from the three phases of the service’s life cycle of campsite service (purchasing, provision of the service, waste). In particular they aim to limit energy consumption, limit water consumption, limit waste production, favour the use of renewable resources and of substances which are less hazardous to the environment, promote environmental communication and education¹⁴. In order to apply for the eco-label the applicant must comply with Community, national and local requirements (see above “tourist accommodation”).

Awarding and use of the EU Ecolabel

The logo of the EU Ecolabel, also known as EU ‘flower’, is a daisy surrounded by the 12 stars of the European Union. By establishing and using the specific logo, which

¹² Annex, p. 39.

¹³ Annex, Section B, p. 47.

¹⁴ Annex, p. 39.

denotes environmental issues (flower) and its source of origin (12 stars of the European Union), the public is able to identify it in an efficient way, as message and communicator are acknowledged at the same time. EU Ecolabel guarantees a high level of transparency, reliability and scientific credibility, which meets customers' green demands. And, unlike other environmental information or labeling, no technical understanding is required to read and understand the label. Its goal is to prove the reliability of the information provided by the European Union, with regard to its environmental performance, shows the commitment of the European Union to improving the environmental performance, and raise awareness among consumers, interested parties and organizations which are willing to enhance their environmental performances.

The EU Eco-label Flower labelling scheme is a voluntary system across Europe designed to encourage businesses to market products and services that are kinder to the environment and for European consumers-including public and private purchasers - to easily identify them through transparent procedures. Thus consumers gain more confidence about both the business and the product (Schulz, 2009:16-17).

With regard to the form of the EU Ecolabel, this can either take the form of a label or an optional label with text box. The label, the optional label with text box and the registration number shall be printed either in two colours (Pantone 347 green for the leaves and stem of the flower, the 'E' symbol, the web address and the EU acronym and Pantone 279 for all other elements, text and borders), or in black on white, or in white on black. (Annex II, Regulation (EC) 66/2010).

The EU Ecolabel may only be used in connection with products complying with the EU Ecolabel criteria applicable to the products concerned and for which the EU Ecolabel has been awarded. (Art. 9, par. 2) Moreover, Article 6 (par. 1-4) stipulates that: «EU Ecolabel criteria shall be based on the environmental performance of products, taking into account the latest strategic objectives of the Community in the field of the environment. EU Ecolabel criteria shall set out the environmental requirements that a product must fulfil in order to bear the EU Ecolabel. EU Ecolabel criteria shall be determined on a scientific basis considering the whole life cycle of products. In determining such criteria, the following shall be considered: (a) the most significant environmental impacts, (b) the substitution of hazardous substances by safer substances, (c) the potential to reduce environmental impacts due to durability and reusability of products, (d) the net environmental balance between the environmental benefits and burdens, (e) where appropriate, social and ethical aspects, (f) criteria established for other environmental labels, particularly officially recognised, nationally or regionally, EN ISO 14024 type I environmental labels, so as to enhance synergies, and (g) as far as possible the principle of reducing animal testing. EU Ecolabel criteria include requirements intended to ensure that the products bearing the EU Ecolabel function adequately in accordance with their intended use.

In addition to this, Article 7 provides that: «Following consultation of the EUEB, the Commission, Member States, competent bodies and other stakeholders may initiate and lead the development or revision of EU Ecolabel criteria. Where such other

stakeholders are put in charge of leading the development of criteria, they must demonstrate expertise in the product area, as well as the ability to lead the process with neutrality and in line with the aims of this Regulation. In this regard, consortiums consisting of more than one interest group shall be favoured.

The party which initiates and leads the development or revision of EU Ecolabel criteria, in accordance with the procedure set out in Part A of Annex I, has to produce the following documents: (a) a preliminary report; (b) a proposal for draft criteria; (c) a technical report in support of the proposal for draft criteria; (d) a final report; (e) a manual for potential users of the EU Ecolabel and competent bodies; (f) a manual for authorities awarding public contracts. Those documents are submitted to the Commission and to the EUEB.

The Commission no later than nine months after consulting the EUEB, has to adopt measures to establish specific EU Ecolabel criteria for each product group. These measures are published in the Official Journal of the European Union (Art. 8, par. 1, 2). So the Commission has to: (a) establish requirements for assessing the compliance of specific products with EU Ecolabel criteria ('assessment requirements'), (b) specify, for each product group, three key environmental characteristics that may be displayed in the optional label with text box, (c) specify, for each product group, the relevant period of validity of the criteria and of the assessment requirements, (d) specify the degree of product variability allowed during the period of validity referred to in point (c).

It should be noted that when laying down the criteria for the EU Ecolabel awarding, special care is taken in order not to take measures, the implementation of which might bring a disproportionate administrative and economic burden on SMEs.

A business wishing to use the EU Ecolabel should present an application to the competent body¹⁵. The application includes full details about the business, the product or service group, a full description of the product or service as well as any other information that the competent national body might request. Furthermore, all the documents defined in the Regulation, with regard to the award of the EU Ecolabel to the specific product or service group, are attached to the application.

Each applicant who has been awarded an eco-label will have to pay an annual fee for the use of the label to the competent body which has awarded the label.¹⁶ This fee cannot exceed 1,500 euros.

¹⁵ Article 4 par. 1, 2 & 7 par. 3 of the Regulation No 1980/2000 provides that: «[e]ach Member State shall designate the body or bodies, within government ministries or outside, responsible for carrying out the tasks provided for in this Regulation ('the competent body' or 'the competent bodies') and ensure that they are operational. [...] The composition of the competent bodies shall be such as to guarantee their independence and neutrality and their rules of procedure shall be such as to ensure transparency in the conduct of their activities as well as the involvement of all interested parties.»

¹⁶ Regulation No 1980/2000, Article 12 and Annex V, par. 2.

The eco-label may not be used, and references to the eco-label in advertising may not be made, until a label has been awarded and then only in relation to the specific product for which it has been awarded. (Art. 9, par. 2) Participation in the scheme is without prejudice to environmental or other regulatory requirements of Community or national law applicable to the various life stages of goods, and where appropriate to a service. (Art. 1, par. 3) The right for a product or service to use the EU Ecolabel does not allow its use as a constituent of its trade name¹⁷. Furthermore, any false or misleading advertising or the use of any label or logo which may lead to confusion with the Community eco-label as introduced by this Regulation is prohibited (Art. 9, par. 2). The competent public body has to check whether a specific product or service fulfils the EU Ecolabel awarding criteria and conduct periodical inspections in order to accomplish this goal. In case a complaint has been lodged, the competent body informs accordingly the user of the EU Ecolabel (product manufacturer or service provider) with regard to the complaint it has received and may request from them to reply to the complaint.

In case there is a breach of the Regulation provisions regarding the EU Ecolabel, member states are obliged to provide for effective, proportionate and discouraging sanctions and take all the necessary disciplinary measures in order to ensure its implementation and immediately inform the European Commission accordingly.

When an enterprise fulfils the terms of use of the EU Ecolabel, the competent body concludes a contract with that enterprise. To this end, a standard contract is used as it appears in Annex IV.¹⁸ Only after this contract has been concluded, can the enterprise print the EU Ecolabel on its product or service along with its registration number. Then the competent national body which has awarded the EU Ecolabel to a product or service notifies the European Commission. The Commission keeps a common register, which is updated regularly and is publicized through the dedicated EU Ecolabel website.

Competent Body in Greece

Pursuant to Article 5, par. 1 of the Regulation (EC) No 66/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2009 on the EU Ecolabel,¹⁹ the Commission has established a European Union Ecolabelling Board (EUEB) consisting of the representatives of the competent bodies of all the Member States and of other interested parties. Its aim is to contribute to the development and revision of EU Ecolabel criteria and to any review of the implementation of the EU Ecolabel scheme. It also provides the Commission with advice and assistance in these areas and, in particular, issue recommendations on minimum environmental performance requirements.

The Commission ensures that, in the conduct of its activities, the EUEB observes a balanced participation of all relevant interested parties in respect of each product group,

¹⁷ Brand name is every sign which can be graphically represented and distinguish the products or services of a business from those of other businesses (Mylonopoulos & Mentis, 2010: 84)

¹⁸ Regulation (EC) No 66/2010.

¹⁹ OJ L 27, 30.1.2010, p. 1-19.

such as competent bodies, producers, manufacturers, importers, service providers, wholesalers, retailers, notably SMEs, and environmental protection groups and consumer organizations. (Art. 5, par. 2)

Pursuant to Article 2 (par. 1, 2) of the Commission Decision 2010/709/EU of 22 November 2010²⁰, the EUEB is composed of the representatives of the Competent Bodies of each Member State, of the representatives of the Member State of the European Economic Area and of the representatives of the following organizations: (a) Bureau Européen des Consommateurs (BEUC); (b) EUROCOOP; (c) European Environmental Bureau (EEB); (d) Business Europe; (e) European Association of Craft, Small & Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME); (f) EUROCOMMERCE. The Commission may amend the membership of the EUEB as appropriate (Art. 2, par. 3), while each member of the EUEB has to designate a contact person (Art. 3).

In Greece, the national body for awarding the EU Ecolabel is the Supreme Council for the Awarding of the EU Ecolabel (ASAOS). It was established by virtue of the Joint Ministerial Decision 86644/2482/93 (Gov. Gaz. 763/B), implementing Council Regulation (EEC) No 880/92 of 23 March 1992.

The use of the EU Ecolabel is governed by: a) the Greek Market Provision F1-218/30.01.1998 (Gov. Gaz. 139/B), according to which the use of the adjective 'ecological' or the prefix 'eco' in the Greek or foreign language is forbidden for every product to be sold, consumed or advertised, if this product has not been awarded the EU Ecolabel by the national competent body, b) the provisions of the new Regulation (EC) No 66/2010 (Article 10: Market surveillance and control of the use of the EU Ecolabel and Article 17: Penalties).

The Supreme Council for the Awarding of the EU Ecolabel (ASAOS) consists of eleven members, which include representatives from the competent ministries and other production and consumption-related bodies and organizations.²¹ The President of the Board is the Secretary General of the Ministry for Environment, Energy and Climate Change. Pursuant to the Ministerial Decision, the competences of ASAOS are the following: (a) promote the planning, production, trading and use of products, which have reduced environmental impacts during their life cycle, (b) inform both consumers and businesses about the EU Ecolabel, (c) develop specific programmes for the definition of special ecological criteria for different product groups, by applying the Community legislation in force, so that the uniform and equivalent use of products is guaranteed in a precise and clear way, along with a high degree of environmental protection, (d) the selection of its technical and scientific support in the EU Ecolabel awarding procedures, (e) the selection of its technical and scientific support in the EU Ecolabel awarding procedures, in cooperation with the Greek Organization for Standardization (ELOT), the

²⁰ OJ L 308, 24.11.2010, p. 53.

²¹ For example, the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises, the Union of Hellenic Chambers, the General Confederation of Greek Workers, environmental and consumer organizations, etc.

General Chemical State Laboratory, the Ministry for Environment, other public and private sector agencies as well as experts, in order to certify that the product for which there is a request for an EU Ecolabel award conforms to the criteria laid down by the European Union, (f) to take every necessary or useful legal measure in order to accomplish its mission, (g) to organize or participate in seminars, conferences, lectures or public debates about the development and dissemination of the applications of the EU Ecolabel Award Scheme, (h) to exchange or borrow research material with similar national or foreign agencies and institutes and, (i) to invite and host experts and scientists whose research focuses on issues related with the goals of ASAOS (e.g. environmental product impacts during their life cycle, policy development about eco-products, etc.).

ASAOS may accept complaints with regard to the illegal or wrong use and application of the EU Ecolabel; however, it does not possess inspection or sanction competences. In such a case, ASAOS forwards the complaint to the Greek General Secretariat for Consumer Affairs, who is competent to check the complaints. ASAOS is a member of the network «Global Ecolabelling Network»²², an international network for the promotion of ecolabelling.

European Union actions

The European Commission has undertaken a set of actions and activities, on an annual basis, in order to increase the visibility of the EU Ecolabel in all member states. As far as tourism is concerned, the following actions have been implemented.

EU Ecolabel Communication Award. The European Commission has launched the annual EU Ecolabel Communication Award, which aims to recognise the EU Ecolabel license holders who have excelled at increasing public awareness and knowledge of the EU Ecolabel through their promotional campaigns. The Jury, made up of representatives from the European Commission, three Competent Bodies, the press, NGOs and educational institutions) evaluates the following aspects: quality and creativity of the campaign; effectiveness of EU Ecolabel logo use; relevance of promotional activities undertaken; results achieved.

The award was established in 2009. Portuguese hotel, Jardim Atlântico, based in Madeira, won the service provider category, for the year 2010. The hotel was praised for its campaign to raise awareness of the EU Ecolabel using different types of media and activities involving the local community. The Jury panel was impressed by the tools used to raise awareness about environmental protection and provide information on the EU Ecolabel: (a) meetings and guided tours of the hotel's facilities in order to educate participants on relevant information regarding the EU Ecolabel, (b) the "EU Ecolabel Week" event, (c) children's artwork, (d) display of the EU Ecolabel logo in all the hotel's marketing materials, including leaflets and website.

"Flower" month. The EU Ecolabel Month is an EU campaign to promote the EU Ecolabel. It is held between mid-September to mid-October in several Member States

²² See <http://www.globalecolabelling.net>, Access on 02.1.2012.

since 2006. The objective of this promotional campaign is to increase the knowledge of the EU Ecolabel and what it stands for among consumers, as well as to encourage its uptake in the manufacturing and tourism sectors.

For the year 2011, a typical example of EU Ecolabel month was that in the Piedmont region in north-western Italy, which included exhibitions, seminars and guided tours featuring EU ecolabelled products. Piedmont's EU Ecolabel Month featured diverse activities that engaged public officials, teachers, entrepreneurs, students and consumers at large. An exhibition that instructed participants on how to choose environmentally-friendly products was followed by an exhibition of some of Piedmont's own EU Ecolabel certified products. Moreover, in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce of Vercelli, a guided tour of an EU ecolabelled soap plant took place and interested visitors were able to learn about the life-cycle of an EU Ecolabel certified soap.²³ It has to be noted that the region of Piedmont is actively engaged in the field of responsible and sustainable tourism and that it has the second biggest number of EU Ecolabel holders in tourist accommodation services in Italy and in Europe.

The internet shop for official Ecolabel products. Since 2009 the European Commission has undertaken action for the setting up of Europe's first Internet Shop for official Ecolabel Products. The web-shop²⁴ was launched in January 2000, featuring 300 products. This project aims to significantly improve the sale and visibility of ecolabel products in Europe, raise European citizen's awareness about these products and reduce the emission of greenhouse gases linked with transport, by means of performance indicators. With regard to tourism, at first the website focuses on the hospitality industry (inc. hotels, campsites and restaurants) in German speaking countries.

CONCLUSION

Tourism as an activity with a social, cultural, environmental and economic dimension, is based on two pillars: the natural and the cultural environment. However, as these two pillars are threatened by economic development, the European Union develops policies for sustainable development. As far as tourism is concerned, the EU, through its institutions, undertakes actions aiming at sustainable tourism development. An important tool towards achieving this goal is the EU Ecolabel, awarded to tourist accommodations and campsites, by virtue of Regulation No 66/2010/EC of the European Parliament and the Council. As there is a legal framework established concerning the awarding of the EU Ecolabel to tourism businesses in all EU member states, we suggest that an empirical survey be conducted in order to explore the degree of visibility of the EU Ecolabel in the tourism industry, including tourism entrepreneurs, tourism staff and users of tourist services.

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²³ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/news/archives/news_alert/nov2011.pdf

²⁴ www.project.ecolabel-products.eu

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Index

Abu Stet	237	Meis	196
Alvarez-Díaz	180	Milman	29
Baldwin	163	Minihan	196
Basoglu	220	Moira	72
Best	254	Murphy	59
Boyle	138	Mylonopoulos	72
Bricker	258	O'Leary	196
Chen	59	Otero-Giraldez	180
Chou	4	Payeras	85, 255
Croes	59	Saltmarsh	204
Florido	85, 255	Sarnoff	258
Forristal	15	Slevitch	189
González-Gómez	180	Smith	257
Gough	151	Sung	196
Hartman	163	Tomas	204
Jacob	85, 255	Tuma	104
Kam	125	Upchurch	213
Kikilia	72	Vaníček	226
King	256	Whitney	29
Liu	213	Williams	247
Lobascio	163	Wyman	151
Lund-Durlacher	175	Xiaotao	125
McLinko	257	Yoo	220