

RESEARCH ON POSSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTING ECO-LABEL FOR ACCOMMODATION SERVICES IN AGROTOURIST GUESTHOUSES

CRISTIANA TINDECHE¹
PETRICĂ ȘTEFAN¹
ALEXANDRA MUSCĂNESCU¹

¹ *University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Bucharest, Romania*

Abstract: *The hereby work wishes to study the main rules applicable to granting the eco-label for accommodation services in our country, as well as the possibility of introducing these rules in the rural areas, specifically in some Agro hostels. Although the law governing the eco-label has existed since 2005 and it is based on an older European rule, there have been taken few steps in our country to introduce the eco-label for accommodation services. Our data show that there is only one housing unit holding the eco-label: a hotel in Saturn resort. Based on these reasons, we have studied the possibility of introducing the eco-label in agrotourism. The study was conducted on a sample of 100 representative hostels located in the main agrotourist areas of the country: Bucovina, Neamt, Maramures, Bran, Marginimea Sibiu, Vrancea-Buzău, Danube Delta, Harghita Covasna, the Apuseni Mountains and Oltenia under Mountain*

Key words: *eco-label, agrotourism, guesthouses, the comparative analysis*

INTRODUCTION

The assignment criteria of the ecologic label for tourist housing services are governed by the Government decision no. 1855/2005. This law transposes the European Commission Decision no. 287/2003/CE regarding the establishment of ecologic criteria applicable for the assignment of ecologic label for community tourist housing services, published in the Official Journal of the European Communities (JOCE) no., L102/2003.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study has been performed during the 1st of September and the 1st of December 2012 on a sample of 100 hostels situated in the main agrotourist areas in the country: Bucovina, Neamț, Maramureș, Bran, Mărginimea Sibiului, Buzău-Vrancea, Delta Dunării, Harghita-Covasna, the Apuseni mountains and the higher parts of Oltenia. In order to get correct and useful information, the comparative analysis has been focused on 10 hostels representative for each region, within localities with high tourist attraction potential, each of the hostels holding 3, 4 or 5 stars.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The researches carried out in the field have aimed at comparing the criteria of assigning the ecologic label for tourist housing services with the real existing conditions, as well as at underlining the agrotourist locations where the ecologic label can be implemented.

These criteria can be divided into two groups: compulsory and optional criteria.

1. COMPULSORY CRITERIA.

All such criteria in the group must be fulfilled.

1.1. Energy

1. Electric energy coming from regenerating resources – At least 22% of the electric energy has to come from regenerating resources. In conformity with The Government Decision no. 1535/2003, the regenerating un-fossil resources are: the wind,

the solar, the geothermal, the winds, the high tides, the hydro-electrical, the fermenting gas of scraps, the gas deriving from the used water and biogas separators.

2. Coal and hard oil fuel – The coal and the resources of hard oil fuel having a sulphur concentration higher than 0.2% is not to be used as energy resources. This criteria is applicable only to tourist housing hostels with own heating system.

3. Using electric energy for heating – At least 22% of the electric energy used for heating rooms and sanitary hot water has to come from regenerating energy resources.

4. Working capacity of hot water boilers – The effective working capacity of a new boiler/heat generator purchased within the period for which the ecologic label is assigned has to be of at least 90%.

5. Air conditioning units – All air conditioning units purchased within the period for which the ecologic label is assigned has to be classified at least as having B category energetic efficiency.

6. Windows insulation – All room windows have to have a high level of thermo insulation in conformity with the local climate and have to offer an adequate level of sound insulation.

7. Heat and air conditioning stop – If the air conditioning and heat are not automatically switched off when opening the windows, there has to be an easily accessible announcement reminding tourists to close the window/windows when the heating or air conditioning systems are working.

8. Lighting switch off – If the room is not equipped with a lighting automatic switch off, there has to be an easily accessible announcement reminding tourists to switch off the lights every time they leave the room.

9. Low energy consumption bulbs – Within one year from the date of submitting the request for the ecologic label, at least 60% of all the electric bulbs in the housing unit have to belong to class A of energy efficiency. Within one year from the date of submitting the request for the ecologic label, at least 80% of all electric bulbs situated in places where they are supposed to work more than 5 hours a day have to belong to class A of energy efficiency.

10. Sauna timing out – All sauna installations have to be equipped with timers.

1.2. Water

11. The housing unit has to announce the authority responsible for the water supply with regard to its intention of switching to another water supply resource, such as: water from the public or the surface networks, if studies within the water protection plan demonstrate that using the current water resource has a great environmental impact. This criteria is applicable only for tourist housing units that are not supplied with water from the main water pipe of the public network.

12. Water flow at taps and showers – The water flow at taps and showers should not exceed the amount of 12 liters/minute.

13. Saving bathroom and toilet water – Both in bathrooms and toilets, there have to be adequate information regarding the best way tourists can contribute to saving water.

14. Garbage baskets in toilets – There should be a garbage basket in every toilet and tourists should be advised to use this one instead of the toilet basin for some scraps generated when using the toilets.

15. Water flow for wee units – Wee units should be equipped with an automatic or manual washing system that should not allow the cleaning of more than five units at a time.

16. Leakages – The personnel has to be trained to check on a daily basis for possible visible leakages and act accordingly. The tourist has to inform the personnel with regard to occurrence of such leakages.

17. Changing towels and bed sheets – The tourist has to be informed with regard to the environment protection policy used by the housing unit according to which the bed sheets and towels are changed either upon request or once a week for inferior housing units or two times a week for superior housing units.

18. Watering plants and gardens – Flowers and gardens have to be watered before noon or after sunset if the area or the climate conditions impose as such.

19. Used waters treatment – All used waters must be treated. If there is no such possibility of connecting to the local station for treating used waters, the housing unit must have one of its own.

20. Administration of used waters – The housing unit has to request the water management plan from the local authorities and in case such a plan exists, they are forced to respect it.

1.3. Detergents and disinfectants

21. Disinfectants – The disinfectants are to be used only when it is needed for respecting the legal hygiene imperatives.

22. Personnel training regarding the use of detergents and disinfectants – The personnel have to be trained not to use a higher quantity of detergent or disinfectant than the one stipulated on the package.

1.4. Waste

23. Separating waste by the tourist – The housing unit has to supply adequate recipients to allow tourists to separate waste in conformity with the local or national systems. There have to be clear information in every room inviting tourists to separate waste.

24. Dangerous waste – The personnel has to separate the dangerous waste. This includes toners, ink, freezing devices, batteries, pharmacy products. If the local authority does not ensure the discharge of dangerous waste, then the economic agent has to submit annually a declaration to the local authorities stipulating that there is no waste clearing off system.

25. Waste separation – The personnel has to separate the waste by categories that can be handled distinctly in the local or national installations for administrating wastes. If the local or national authorities do not provide the possibility of collecting and/or eliminating separately the wastes, the housing unit has to send a letter expressing the wish to separate wastes.

26. Waste transport – If the local authorities do not collect waste at the housing unit or nearby, the latter has to provide the transport of its own wastes to the right place, reducing as much as possible the distance on which these wastes are carried.

27. Single use products – Unless the law expressly enforces it, in rooms and restaurants there will be no single use products such as: ‘sliced’ or single use care products such as shampoo, soap, glasses, plates, dishes.

1.5. Other services:

28. Non smoking areas in the common places – In the common places, there have to be a non-smoking area.

29. Public transportation – Tourists and personnel have to be able to get easy access to information regarding the way they can reach the housing unit and other local places by means of the public transportation.

1.6. General management system

Economic agents requesting the assignment of the ecologic label that apply an environment management system registered in conformity with the Order of the agriculture, forest, water and environment ministry no. 50/2004 or certified in conformity with the Romanian standard SR EN ISO 14001:2005 have to comply automatically with the following compulsory general management criteria.

30. Maintenance and general repairs – All installations used for tourist housing services are to be repaired and maintained in conformity with the national legislation in force and whenever necessary, the works will be performed by trained personnel.

31. Maintenance and repairs of hot water boilers – The maintenance and repairing of hot water boilers will be done at least once a year or even more frequently if such thing is stipulated by the national legislation in force or it is necessary.

32. Establishing policy and action plan – The managing board of the housing unit has to have a policy regarding the environment and to make a simple statement regarding the environment protection and a clear action plan to ensure that the environment protection policy is applied.

The action plan identifies the performance goals in the environment protection field with regard to energy, water, chemical substances and waste that have to be set up every 2 years in consideration of the optional criteria. The program establishes the person responsible for the environment protection within the housing unit. Tourists have to be invited to express their comments.

33. Personnel training – The housing unit has to offer the personnel information and training courses, as well as written procedures and manuals in order to ensure the correct application of the environment protection measures.

34. Tourist information – The housing unit has to offer tourists information regarding its own environment protection policy, the actions taken in consideration hereof and the ecologic label. The information have to be offered to tourists in an active way at the reception and the announcements inviting tourists to support the environment goals have to be visibly posted, mainly in the rooms.

35. Data regarding the energy and water consumption –

36. Other data gathering – The housing unit has to hold procedures of collecting and supervising the data regarding the chemical substances consumption (grams of dry substance) and the generated amount of waste (litres and/or kg of waste not separated).

37. Information shown on the ecologic service:

Paragraph 2 on the ecologic label has to comprise the following text:

- a) measures taken for saving energy and water
- b) measures taken for reducing waste
- c) general measures for a better environment

2. OPTIONAL CRITERIA

2.1. Criteria regarding the scoring

Based on the information comprised in the title of each criteria in this section, a scoring has been established for all optional criteria. The number of complied criteria has to amount to a total of 16.5 points. The total scoring will be increased with one point for each of the following three supplementary facilities offered which are administrated or constitute the property of the tourist housing unit: food services, sport activities and green areas. The food services include breakfast. The sport activities include sauna, swimming pools and other facilities located on the ground of the housing unit. Green areas include parks and gardens open for the tourists.

2.2 Energy

38. Photovoltaic and wind generation of electric energy (2 points) – The housing unit has to have a photovoltaic and wind electricity generating system which supplies or will supply 20% of the total annual consumption of electric energy.

39. Energy for heating deriving from regenerating energy resources (1.5 points) – At least 50% of the total quantity of energy used for heating rooms or hot water has to come from regenerating energy resources.

40. Energy efficiency of hot water boiler (1 point) – The housing unit has to hold a hot water boiler classified with ‘****’ energy efficiency.

41. The NO(x) releases of the hot water boiler (1.5 points) – The hot water boiler has to be included in class 5 in conformity with the Romanian standard SR EN 297/A3:201 that govern the NO(x) releases and it has to release less than 70 mg No(x)/kWh.

42. The urban central heating (1 point).

43. The combined heating and electric energy production (1.5 points)

44. Heating pumps (1.5 points).

45. Heat recuperation (2 points) – The housing unit has to be equipped with a heat recuperation system for one (1 point) or two (2 points).

46. Heating adjustment (1.5 points) – The temperature in each room has to be individually adjusted.

47. Insulation of the existing premises (2 points) – The building has to be insulated according to the national minimum criteria so that it provides a significant decrease of the energy consumption.

48. The air conditioning (1.5 points) – The air conditioning system has to be included in the A class.

49. Automatic switch off of the air conditioning (1 point) –

50. Bioclimatic architecture (2 points) – The housing unit has to be built in full respect of the bioclimatic architectural principles.

51. Freezers (1 point), dish washing machines (1 point), laundry washing machines (1 point) and office equipments (1 point) that are efficient from an energetic point of view, class A.

52. Location of freezers (1 point)

53. Automatic lighting switch off in the tourist rooms (1 point)

54. Automatic outdoor lighting switch off (1 point)

2.3. Water

55. Using rain water (1.5 points) and re-circulated water (1.5 points) –

56. The water flow at taps and showers (1.5 points).

57. The toilet water flow (1.5 points).

58. The dish washing machines water consumption (1 point)

59. The laundry washing machine water consumption (1 point)

60. The temperature and water flow of the tap water (1 point)

61. Shower timers (1 point)

2.4. Dangerous chemical substances

62. Detergents (maximum 4 points) – 80% should have an ecologic label.

63. Dyestuff and indoor varnish (1 point) – 50% ecologic label

64. Swimming pools disinfectant dosage – (1 point)

65. Mechanical cleaning (1 point)

66. Ecologic gardens (1 point)

2.4. Wastes

67. Tin packing (2 points)

- 68. Single use doses for drinks (2 points)
- 69. Breakfast packing (2 points)
- 70. Fat/oil discharge (2 points)
- 71. Old textile materials and furniture (2 points)

2.5. Other services

- 72. Communication and education regarding the environment protection (1.5 points)
- 73. Rooms for non-smokers (1 point)
- 74. Bicycles (1 point)
- 75. Recyclable bottles (2 points)
- 76. Paper products (up to 2 points)
- 77. Long lasting goods (up to 3 points)
- 78. Ecologic food (1 point)
- 79. Local food products (1 point)

2.6. General management

- 80. EMAS registration (3 points) or ISO certification (1.5 points) of the housing unit
- 81. EMAS registration (1.5 points) or ISO certification (1 point) of the suppliers
- 82. Questionnaire regarding the environment protection (1 point)
- 83. Electricity and water meters (1 point)
- 84. Extra measures for the environment protection (maximum 3 points)

Evaluation and verification: *The economic agent requesting the assignment of the ecologic label has to submit declarations of fulfilling these criteria together with the relevant technical documents.*

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of the comparative analysis of the legal criteria regarding the assignment of the ecologic label for the housing services and the possibilities of implementing it in the 100 hostels located in the main agro tourist areas in the country, we have succeeded in identifying the regions where this program could be more easily or more difficult to introduce:

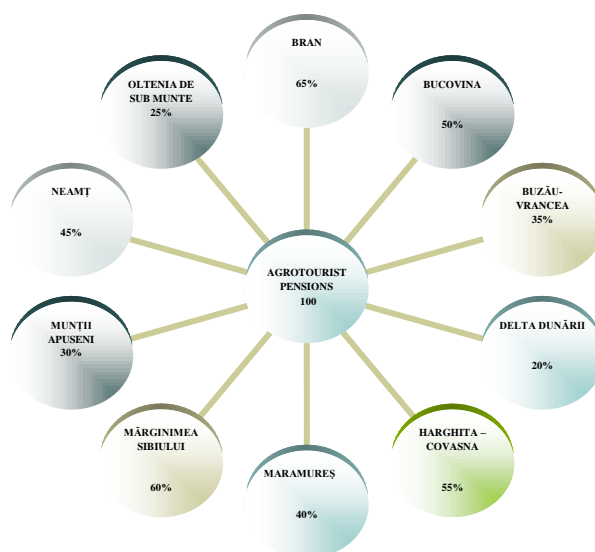


Figure. 1. The possibilities of implementing eco label in the 100 agrotourist guesthouses

1. Easy to introduce: Bran, Mărginimea Sibiului – all compulsory criteria and part of the optional ones can be fulfilled with minimum investments of the hostels owners;

2. Relatively easy to introduce: Harghita-Covasna, Bucovina, Neamț, Maramureș, Buzău-Vrancea – The criteria can be met with average investments of the hostel owners and the local councils;

3. Difficult to introduce: The Apuseni Mountains, the higher parts of Oltenia – problems linked to the sewage system, transport, waste stocking, and the trained personnel is not sufficient;

4. Very difficult to introduce: The Danube Delta – there is no commune sewage system; the water resources are polluted; there is no transport and waste stocking system; the personnel with environment training is lacking; it results that a big allocation of funds is needed, both from the local and central authorities to improve the infrastructure and a big effort from the hostel owners. These investments can not be covered only by the profit resulted from introducing the ecologic label.

REFERENCES

1. **ANTONOAIE N., FORIȘ Tiberiu, CREȚU Romeo**, 2002, *Tourism management. Eco-tourism - component of modern tourism*, Psihimedia Publishing House, Sibiu, p. 100-102;
2. **CREȚU R. Cătălin**, 2012, *Legislation in catering and tourism*, CERES Publishing House, p. 80-82;
3. **NEACȘU, NICOLAE**, 1999, *Tourism and sustainable development*, Expert Publishing House, București, p. 55;
4. *** - National Institute of Statistics. *Romania tourism - Statistical Summary*, 2000-2012.
5. *** - Official Journal of Romania, tourism legislation 1997-2013
6. *** - Vacanțe la Țară Magazine, 2004-2013