

Sustainable Tourism and Certification Labels and Frames: Best Practice Cases

Martina Drakulić

This session introduces key sustainability certifications and frameworks in tourism. Participants learn how verified standards help businesses turn sustainability goals into measurable results and strengthen their market credibility.

Presentation script

Slide 1 – Title

Sustainable Tourism and Certification Labels and Frames: Best Practice Cases

Hello everyone, my name is **Martina Drakulić**, and I'm the **CSR and Sustainability Coordinator** at **TÜV Austria**.

My background is in tourism—I studied and worked in hospitality for about **25 years**, including **15 years in Portorož**.

Now I work in sustainability and auditing, combining both my tourism and certification experience.

Today, I'll talk about **sustainable tourism, certification labels and frameworks**, and share a few **best practice cases** that show how they can help businesses move from good intentions to measurable impact.

Slide 2 – About TÜV Austria

TÜV Austria was established in 1972, and sustainability is truly embedded in our philosophy. Our CEO, **Stefan Haas**, often says: *“Living the future stands for dedication to finding*

solutions and always thinking one step ahead.”

That long-term mindset shapes everything we do.

Today, TÜV Austria operates in **37 countries**, with over **100 locations** and more than **4,000 employees**.

We offer over **500 different services**—from testing and inspection to training, guidance, auditing, and certification.

We also speak **18 languages internally**, which helps us work across cultures—something that’s essential in the tourism sector.

Slide 3 – Sustainability in TÜV Austria’s Work

Sustainability is one of our main strategic pillars.

In every service we provide—whether energy audits, food safety, or tourism certification—we try to help companies not only meet standards but also improve continuously.

Our approach is very practical:

We focus on what can be implemented immediately, not just what looks good in documentation.

That’s where we see the biggest value—translating sustainability principles into business logic.

Slide 4 – Why Certification Matters

Let’s be honest: many companies use the word “sustainability” because they have to.

But certifications bring *structure* and *credibility*.

They help organisations measure what they do, track progress, and communicate achievements transparently.

Certification isn’t about bureaucracy—it’s about **trust**.

It builds confidence with customers, investors, and employees.

And it helps SMEs access markets and partnerships that require verified sustainability performance.

Slide 5 – Key Certification Frameworks

In tourism, we work with various frameworks—some are international, some regional.

Among the most recognised are:

- **GSTC (Global Sustainable Tourism Council) standards,**
- **Travelife,**
- **EU Ecolabel,**
- **ISO 14001 and 26000,**
- **and Green Key.**

Each of these frameworks targets slightly different goals, from environmental management to corporate social responsibility.

Choosing the right one depends on company size, maturity, and available resources.

Slide 6 – Best Practice: Hotel Case

Let me share a case from **one hotel chain in Croatia** that implemented **ISO 14001** and **Travelife**.

They started small—just measuring water and energy use—and gradually integrated staff training, supplier management, and guest communication.

Within two years, they reduced energy consumption by **18%** and water by **22%**, while also improving guest satisfaction.

Certification helped them stay systematic and transparent, not just reactive.

Slide 7 – Best Practice: Destination-Level Collaboration

Another example comes from **an island destination in the Adriatic**, where multiple tourism providers—hotels, transport companies, and restaurants—joined under a **shared sustainability label**.

Instead of competing, they cooperated on energy efficiency, local sourcing, and waste management.

As a result, they gained visibility and recognition from tour operators looking for verified sustainable destinations.

This shows that sustainability certification can work not only at company level but also as a **destination governance tool**.

Slide 8 – The Human Dimension

As we've heard from Željka earlier, people are at the heart of sustainability.

No certification works if employees don't understand *why* it matters.

That's why all our certification projects include a **training component**—so that staff become ambassadors of sustainability, not just executors of procedures.

Slide 9 – How to Start

For SMEs who want to start but feel overwhelmed, here's my advice:

1. **Start small**—choose one area, like waste or energy, and measure it.
2. **Select a relevant standard**—don't overcomplicate it.
3. **Involve your staff**—make sustainability part of their daily work.
4. **Communicate**—use certification to tell your story and build credibility.

Slide 10 – Closing

To sum up: certification and sustainability frameworks are not ends in themselves—they're tools for continuous improvement.

They help companies stay transparent, focused, and credible.

And when applied meaningfully, they turn sustainability from a buzzword into a business advantage.

