

## **Success factors for a tourism ecolabel: evaluation of the capabilities of tourism stakeholders in Belarus in developing a successful ecolabelling initiative**

Viachaslau Filimonau<sup>1</sup>

Tourism is an industry with considerable environmental and social impacts; in order to stimulate reduction of these impacts, a number of voluntary recognition schemes i.e. ecolabels and certification programmes have been introduced to motivate tourism businesses to improve their environmental performance, encourage more sustainable practices and patterns, make tourism customers conscious and better informed about their selection of products and services and the effect which this selection may make on the environment. The voluntary recognition schemes are believed to successfully complement regulatory economic instruments and provide an adequate incentive to the representatives of industry to pay more attention to the burdens which they impose on the environment.

Despite a proliferation of tourism ecolabelling initiatives, not all of them are successful. In order to facilitate an effective work of certification schemes, it is necessary to understand conditions in which their success happens. These conditions constitute determinant factors for an ecolabel; if they are understood properly and adequately fulfilled, it helps promoters of certification schemes to achieve the best outcome upon completion of an ecolabelling project.

The determinant factors of success for a certification scheme are closely related to the issue of its stakeholders' involvement in the development of an ecolabel, and in order to ensure that the factors are fulfilled, the capabilities of stakeholders in their addressing should be identified. If they have appropriate capabilities to fulfil the factors of success, an ecolabelling initiative has higher chances to get effectively realized; if not, it may create problems later on. It is important to study if the matching between available capabilities and factors of success exists. It helps make an optimal allocation of the roles of stakeholders which they would be capable to play in the fulfilment of the ecolabel's factors of success. Therefore this research identifies factors of success for the development of an ecolabel based on the evaluation of capabilities of stakeholders to address these factors.

Based on the extensive literature review, five success factors for a tourism ecolabel were identified together with capabilities needed by tourism stakeholders in order to fulfil them. The cases of existing ecolabels demonstrated also that there is a clear link between available capabilities of tourism actors, and the potential roles they can play in the development of such a scheme. The value of performing the evaluation of stakeholders' available capabilities, prior to the establishment of an ecolabelling initiative, was proven by performing a gap analysis on a case study in Belarus – the country where a tourism certification programme is going to be developed in the nearest future. Contrary to the initial hopes of this research, the results showed that in this particular case, the conditions for setting up an ecolabel are not mature enough to secure the viability of such an initiative there. Once more, the need for having such a preliminary evaluation of available stakeholders' resources is demonstrated. Further, the study was concluded with suggestions for focused enhancement of stakeholders' capabilities in Belarus that should lead to a better fulfilment of the certification scheme's success factors and consolidation of its long-term survival.

<sup>1</sup> Belarusian Environmental Research Center “БелНИЦ “Экологія” at the Ministry for the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection  
Krupskai vulica 61 - 53,  
212011, Mahileu, Belarus  
Phone: +375 29 2534175,  
e-mail: [slavafil@yahoo.com](mailto:slavafil@yahoo.com)