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A fair and sustainable
tourism for all

TourCert

Travel for Tomorrow

REPORT SELF CHECK TOOL

Pilot self-assessment tool
on social responsibility
and sustainability

JUNE 2023

Acknowledgements

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What is sustainability in tourism?

Sustainability in tourism is a widespread concept which meaning has sometimes been misused or blurred. It is therefore difficult to find a single definition. However, many definitions of sustainability applied to tourism have been coined. The development of the "sustainable tourism" concept can be traced back to the 1970's, particularly in 1975 with the publication of Jost Krippendorf's "Die Landschaftsfresser" (The Landscape Eaters) who described the impacts of tourism on the Alps landscapes. However, it is only later, in 1987, that the concept of sustainability took an international dimension through the United Nations Brundtland Commission, which established a definition of sustainability known as: "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

In "Sustainable tourism: Its evolution and its future", Bernard Lane describes the early stage of the sustainable tourism concept in the 1990's as a purely reactive concept, trying to reduce or stop the aftermath of tourism and tourists while encouraging an environmentally-friendly form of tourism. From 1990 to 2010, sustainable tourism has become gradually more proactive, aiming to create positive change through innovations in product development, marketing and accommodation creation, and a source of new types of destination planning.

More recently, former UNWTO Secretary General, Taleb Rifai, described, in 2017, sustainable tourism as "a unique opportunity to advance the contribution of the tourism sector to the three pillars of sustainability - economic, social and environmental - while raising awareness of the true dimensions of a section which is often underestimated"

What is corporate social responsibility (CSR)?

The use and dissemination of a tool such as the Self-Check is linked to ISTO and TourCert's objective to develop and promote sustainable tourism as a way to contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is described by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) as "a management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns into their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders. CSR is generally understood as the means by which a company achieves a balance between economic, environmental and social imperatives" (UNIDO, 2022).

When applied to tourism, CSR is understood as a moral obligation to give back a share of its revenues to the society and to environmental conservation. Thus, it contributes to sustainable development by supporting education, healthcare, environmental protection and social inclusion while curbing poverty , violence and discriminations (Tigu, G., Popescu, D., & Hornoiu, R. I., 2016).

ISTO's role

LISTO's values and DNA are strongly linked to the concepts of sustainability and social responsibility. Through its strategic positioning, ISTO contributes to making tourism accessible to the greatest number of people by supporting different forms of tourism that favour the service of people, communities and territories. The balanced tourism that ISTO ambitions focuses on 5 axes, which are: accessibility, solidarity, quality of life, fair trade, and environment conservation. ISTO is also an intermediary and interlocutor between the different organisations that stand for sustainable, social, and fair tourism.

TourCert

TourCert is a non-profit innovation and certification company founded in 2009 that is dedicated to promoting ecological, social and economic corporate responsibility in tourism. TourCert advises and accompanies tour operators, accommodation providers in destinations and other tourism entities in order to implement a consistent and sustainable approach. It also provides certification through different kinds of seminars and online trainings offered by the TourCert Academy. They certify participants with the international TourCert label for sustainability and corporate responsibility (CSR) in tourism and, as an initial recognition, award the TourCert Check. Since October 2018, TourCert has been working closely with ISTO and became a member of ISTO's Board of Directors.

What is the Self-Check tool?

The Self-Check tool is a pilot self-assessment tool developed by TourCert that gives the users an overview of the status of their organisation at a given moment in terms of social responsibility and sustainability. It allows organisations to identify its weaknesses and strengths regarding sustainability. The self-check tool is made up of the following components:

- Organisation's information
- Sustainable management
- Sustainable human resources management
- Sustainable and ecological mobility
- Regional and fair trade organic purchasing
- Sustainable resources management
- Waste and pollution prevention
- Effective communication

The self-check tool allowed participants to indicate whether the measures described were implemented, being implemented, not implemented at all or not applicable. Based on the participants' responses given to the Self-Check tool, each organisation was provided with suggestions to improve the activities that had not yet been implemented in each respective area.

The self-check tool implementation

This report was made possible by a process begun in mid-2022. ISTO first surveyed its members through a questionnaire that included a wide range of topics. One of the sections focused on sustainable, responsible and fair tourism in order to determine the members who would be willing to participate in the Self-Check tool application. The results of this survey showed that, out of all ISTO members, approximately 45 members desired to use a self-administered tool to measure their corporate sustainability and identify measures needed for improvement. In August 2022, ISTO contacted the members who would potentially be interested and sent them the Self Check tool in Excel format as well as its user guide. Among the 45 organisations contacted, ISTO received a quarter of the Self-Check tools completed. This provided data that was aggregated by TourCert and is presented in this report.

One of ISTO and TourCert's objectives through this pilot initiative was to supply participating entities with a tool able to measure their degree of involvement in terms of sustainability as well as giving useful insights on how to move towards a more responsible and sustainable tourism. Simultaneously, another objective was to produce a report in line with ISTO's ambition to create an Observatory of Fair and Sustainable Tourism for All that would provide results and tangible data that can be used by ISTO's members and partners.

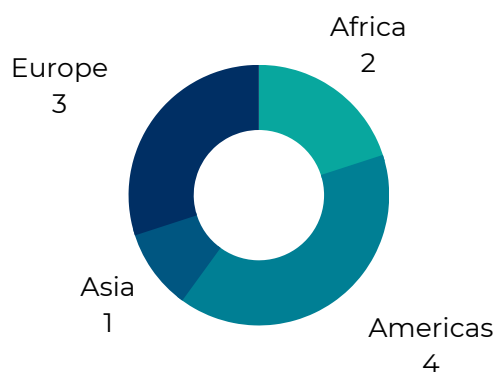# Overview of the data collection

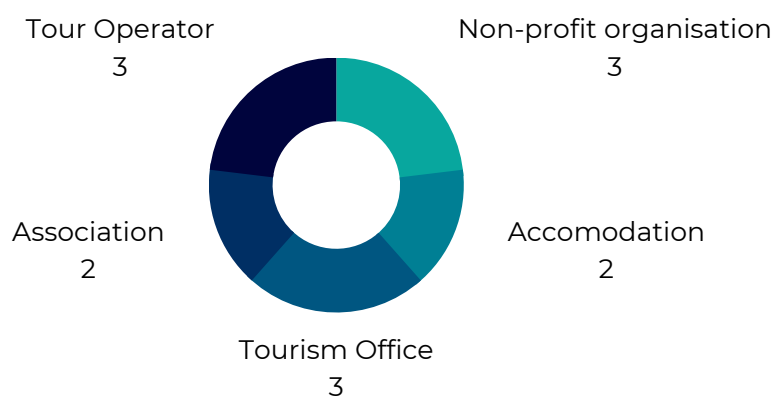## Geographical distribution of participating organisations

Region from where the data where collected

Africa
2

Europe
3

Asia
1

Americas
4

Types of organisations

Tour Operator
3

Non-profit organisation
3

Association
2

Accomodation
2

Tourism Office
3

Overall results

This section is dedicated to the average results obtained by all participants in the Self-Check tool. The Self-Check tool, used to improve the organisations' social and environmental responsibility and sustainability, reached a response rate of 95% of the total measured criteria. The participants accumulated an overall implementation rate of 55.1% of already implemented and effective measures.

The total rate of measures in implementation for all participants averages 20% with many measures currently in planning or being implemented. Presented below are the measures still in implementation for each category.

55 %

Measures in implementation

The results show that on average 20% of the measures were not applied. Regarding the results provided by TourCert, ISTO made the distinction between measures that have not been implemented yet but may become so (12%) and measures that the participating organisations consider to be not applicable (8%). These results are illustrated in the graph "Measures not applied" hereunder.

20 %
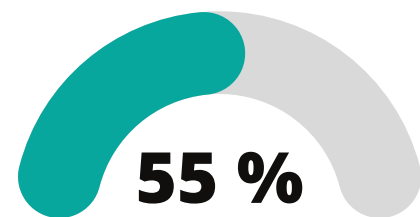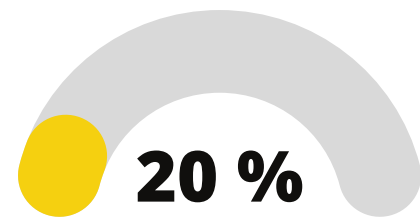
Measures not applied

Results per category

Sustainable Management

This category includes questions related to the organisation's sustainability philosophy, the contact person(s) for sustainability issues and questions about continuous improvements made by the organisation.

This graphical representation shows the share of "Sustainable Management" measures according to their status of implementation, as follows: 58% implemented, 20% in the process of implementation, 16% not implemented and 6% not applicable.
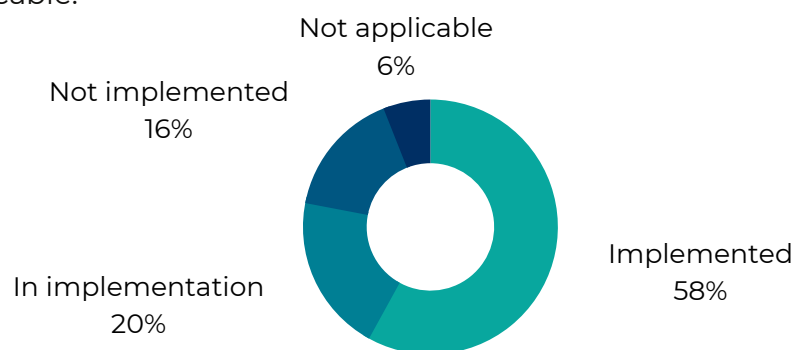
Sustainable Human Resources Management

This category includes questions concerning the satisfaction and well-being of employees in the organisation with issues related to inclusiveness, gender equality, safety in the workplace and accessibility to training.
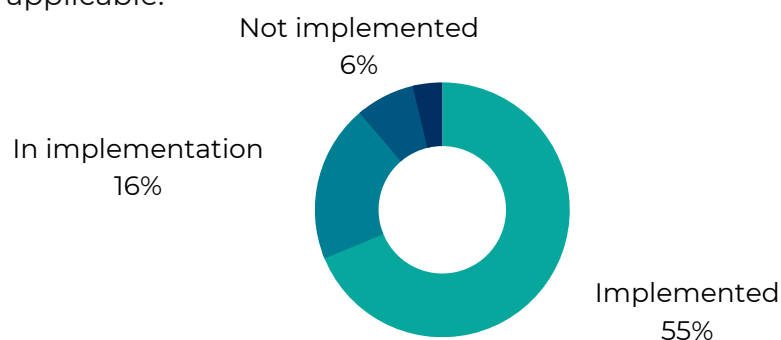
This graphical representation shows the share of "Sustainable Human Resources Management" measures according to their status of implementation, as follows: 55% implemented, 16% in the process of implementation, 6% not implemented and 3% not applicable.

Eco-Friendly Mobility

This category includes questions about green mobility concerning the organisations' physical accessibility by low-emission or non-polluting means of transportation or participation in regional initiatives on environmentally-friendly mobility.

This graphical representation shows the share of "Eco-Friendly Mobility" measures according to their status of implementation, as follows: 28% implemented, 14% in the process of implementation, 19% not implemented and 34% not applicable.

Not applicable
34%

Implemented
28%

In implementation
14%

Not implemented
19%
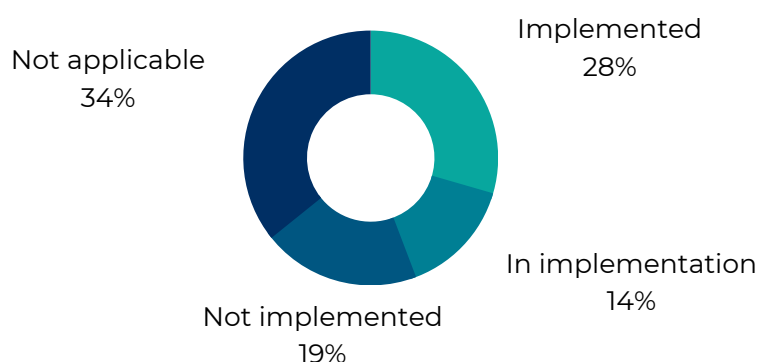
Organic, Regional & Fair Purchasing

This category includes questions on the purchase and use of environmentally-friendly materials, the decision to work with local suppliers and partners and the use of reusable rather than single-use products.

This graphical representation shows the share of "Organic, Regional & Fair Purchasing" measures according to their status of implementation, as follows: 63% implemented, 19% in the process of implementation, 11% not implemented and 6% not applicable.

Not implemented
11%

In implementation
19%
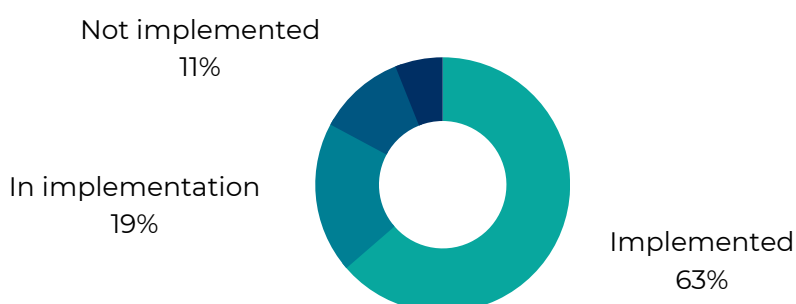
Implemented
63%

Sustainable Resources Management

This category includes questions regarding the use of paper and printed products as well as energy efficiency, such as the use of green energy or the implementation of initiatives to reduce energy consumption.
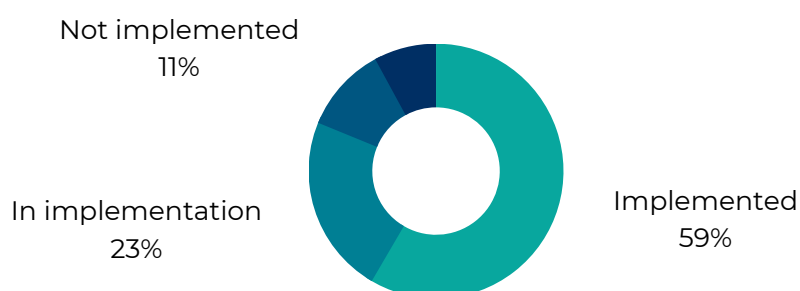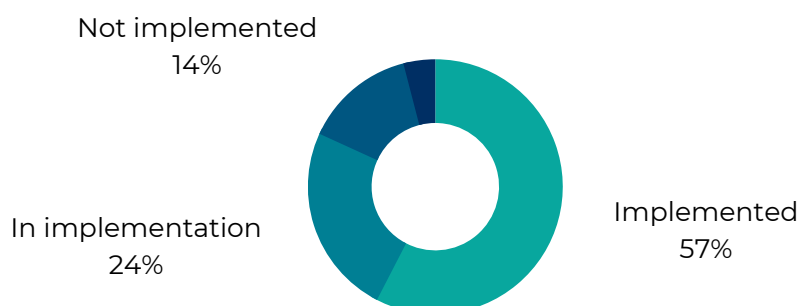
This graphical representation shows the share of "Sustainable Resources Management" measures according to their status of implementation, as follows: 59% implemented, 23% in the process of implementation, 11% not implemented and 8% not applicable.

Not implemented
11%

In implementation
23%

Implemented
59%

Prevention of Waste and Pollution

This category includes questions on the prevention of waste and pollution through waste separation measures, the purchase of products with less packaging or products made up of the least polluting substances possible, and questions on how the organisation communicates and raises awareness about these issues among its guests.

This graphical representation shows the share of "Prevention of Waste and Pollution" measures according to their status of implementation, as follows: 57% implemented, 24% in the process of implementation, 14% not implemented and 4% not applicable.

Not implemented
14%

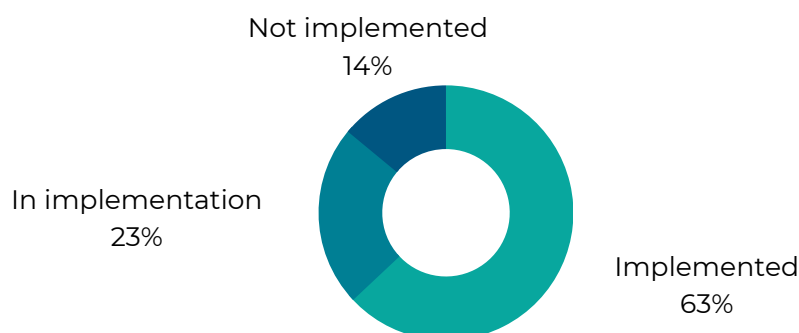In implementation
24%

Implemented
57%

Effective Communication

This category includes questions on effective communication on sustainability within the organisation as well as with the organisation's partners through regular statements, initiatives and events on this topic.

This graphical representation shows the share of "Successful Communication" measures according to their status of implementation, as follows: 63% implemented, 23% in the process of implementation, 14% not implemented and, therefore, 0% not applicable.

Not implemented
14%

In implementation
23%

Implemented
63%

Hereunder is a graph summarising the results for each category measured by the Self-Check tool in relation to their implementation status.

Implemented   In implementation   Not implemented

Sustainable management
Sustainable human resources management
Eco-friendly mobility
Organic, regional & fair purchasing
Sustainable resource management
Prevention of waste pollution
Successful communication
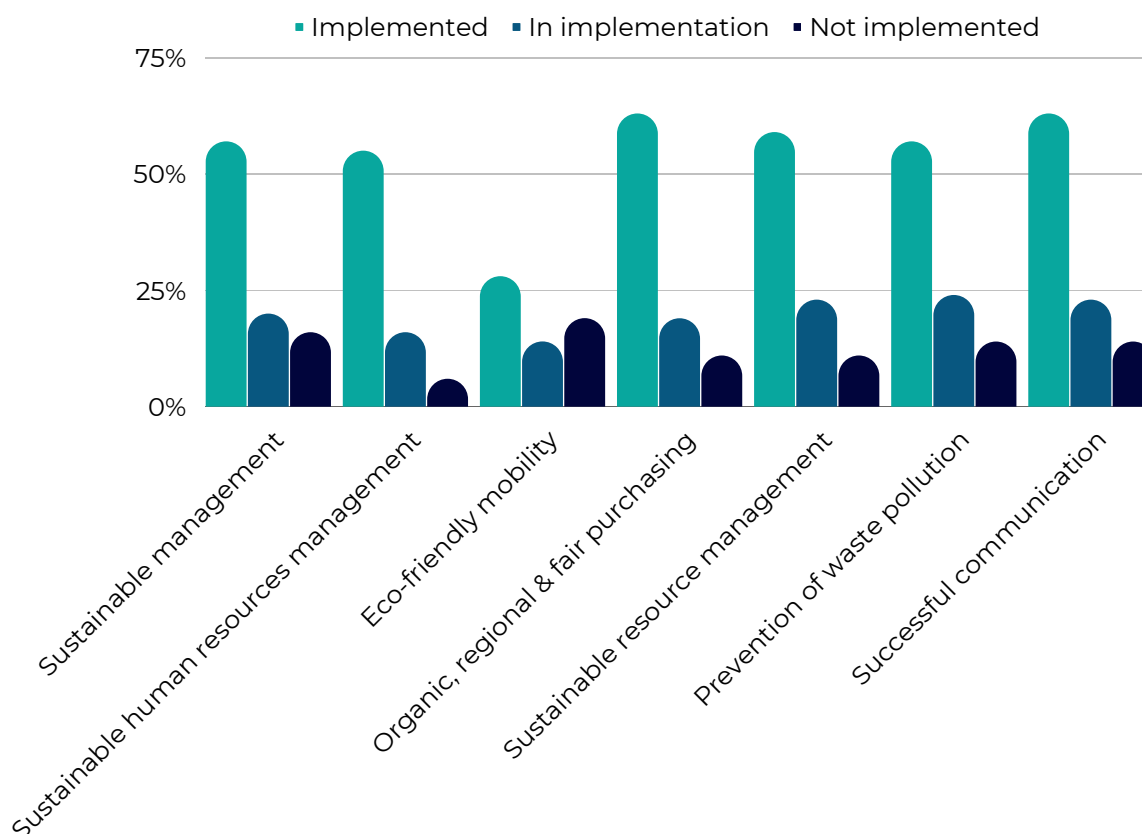
Regarding the Self-check tool detailed results, on the one hand, the categories "Organic, Regional & Fair Purchasing" and "Effective Communication" show the highest implementation rates with 63% each. On the other hand, the results for the "Eco-friendly Mobility" category show the lowest implementation percentage with only 28%, which is by far the lowest rate since the other categories show rates fluctuating around 57%.

63 %

actions implemented

Effective communication & Sustainable and ecological mobility

As to the measures in implementation, TourCert considers that numerous measures are currently in planning or being implemented with relatively balanced rates ranging from 14% of measures in implementation for the Eco-friendly Mobility category to 24% of measures in implementation for the Prevention of Waste and Pollution category.

34 %

not applicable actions

Sustainable and ecological mobility
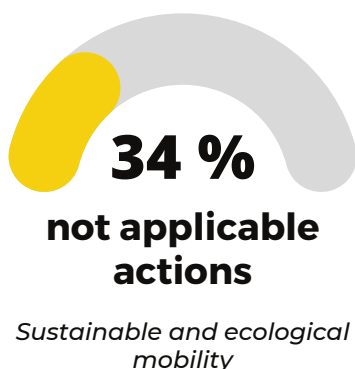
The final results show that 19% of the mobility criteria are not implemented and multiple sustainable management measures are not implemented with 16%. Only 6% of the Human Resources Sustainable Management measures are not implemented but this result might be distorted by the fact that the total response rate to this criteria was only 80%.

The last analysed component corresponds to measures that are not applicable by the organisation for various reasons which were not mentioned by the respondents in the Self-assessment tool. Nevertheless, we notice that the Eco-friendly Mobility category shows the highest percentage of non-applicable measures with a rate of 34%. This high rate could be explained in part by the great difficulty encountered by the organisations in obtaining eco-friendly mobility means or the absence of it, notably due to their geographical location or the lack of eco-friendly mobility-oriented public investments.

In opposition, the results show that all (100%) the measures in the Successful Communication category are applicable in spite of the different types of organisations and locations. We can therefore deduce that these measures are easier to implement and require less resources, whether internal or external.

100 %
applicable actions
Effective communication

Conclusion results

In conclusion, the results obtained by the Self-Check tool application among tourism organisations highlight several key findings:

Surveyed organisations have, on average, a good level of implementation of the total number of measures aimed at improving the sustainability and social responsibility of organisations. However, these results should be qualified as the organisations that used the TourCert self-assessment tool are mindful of what sustainability is and they are probably already engaged in a transition towards sustainable and responsible tourism.

Among the actions measured by the TourCert Self-Check tool, a significant number are already being implemented, which demonstrates the commitment of these tourism organisations to achieve sustainable and responsible management.

Nevertheless, there is still a significant number of measures that are not implemented yet or that are in the process of being implemented. Therefore, this tool could be used to highlight the areas the organisations need to focus their effort on in order to be more sustainable and socially responsible.

Regarding the measures considered as not applicable by the organisations, the Self-Check tool does not analyse the reasons for it. Nevertheless, the results show that the average rate is relatively low, except for the Eco-friendly Mobility category.

What to do now?

This pilot project devised by TourCert and ISTO aims to develop new projects and initiatives related to sustainable, fair and solidarity-based tourism. If you wish to learn more about the Self-Check tool or TourCert, you can get directly in touch with them or through ISTO using the following contact details:

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http://isto.international

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https://tourcert.org/

If you are interested in sustainability in tourism, corporate social responsibility, social tourism or other tourism-related topics, you can access the ISTO eLibrary, which contains more than 850 tourism-related resources fully available to ISTO members. In addition to the eLibrary, ISTO regularly publishes news and newsletters about the various projects and events ISTO and its members are involved in. The eLibrary resources are mostly available in 3 languages, which are : English, French and Spanish. However, the eLibrary also contains resources in other languages.
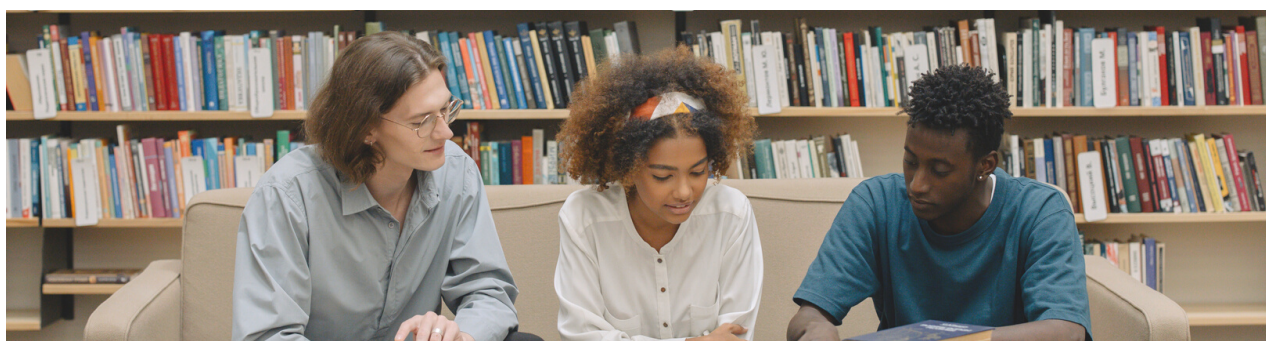
If you are still not a member of ISTO and you wish to join our international network, you can sign up through our website: https://isto.international/join-us/ and the "join us" section.

Resources

Sustainability in tourism resources

- 11th UNWTO Committee on Tourism and Sustainability (CST) - Public Meeting video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUPjaUaQFT4 (Anglais)
- Sustainable Development of Tourism - A Compilation of Good Practices. https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284403721 (Anglais, français, espagnol)
- Sustainable Tourism for Development Guidebook - Enhancing capacities for Sustainable Tourism for development in developing countries https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284415496 (Anglais)
- World Travel & Tourism Council, Sustainable Growth https://wttc.org/initiatives/sustainable-growth (Anglais)
- Sustainability reporting in Travel & Tourism (WTTC) https://wttc.org/Portals/0/Documents/Reports/2017/ESGs%20-%20Sustainability%20Reporting%20in%20Travel%20and%20Tourism%20-%202017.pdf?ver=2021-02-26-192647-677 (Anglais)
- The Handbook on encouraging sustainable tourism practices https://etc-corporate.org/reports/handbook-on-encouraging-sustainable-tourism-practices/ (Anglais)
- Sustainable Tourism Implementation Toolkit https://etc-corporate.org/reports/sustainable-tourism-implementation-toolkit/ (Anglais)
- Sustainable Tourism Programme Annual Magazine for 2015: Setting the foundations for collective impact (UNWTO) https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/epdf/10.18111/9789284419197 (Anglais)
- Sustainable Travel International : Sustainable Destinations Development https://sustainabletravel.org/our-work/sustainable-destination-development/ (Anglais)
- ¿Qué es el turismo sostenible? Un modelo respetuoso con el planeta https://www.bbva.com/es/sostenibilidad/que-es-el-turismo-sostenible/ (Espagnol)

Resources

Corporate Social responsibility resources

- What is corporate social responsibility (CSR) ? https://www.unido.org/our-focus/advancing-economic-competitiveness/competitive-trade-capacities-and-corporate-responsibility/corporate-social-responsibility-market-integration/what-csr (Anglais)
- Corporate Social Responsibility and Tourism - Dagmar Lund-Durlacher https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-662-47470-9_4 (Anglais)
- The OECD Guidelines and Other Corporate Responsibility Instruments https://www.oecd.org/corporate/mne/WP-2001_5.pdf (Anglais)
- Public Policy for Corporate Social Responsibility https://web.worldbank.org/archive/website01006/WEB/IMAGES/PUBLICPO.PDF (Anglais)
- Practical overview of the linkages between ISO 26000:2010, Guidance on social responsibility, and OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (2011) https://www.iso.org/files/live/sites/isoorg/files/store/en/PUB100418.pdf (Anglais)
- Corporate Social Responsibility and Human Rights https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/publications/corporate-social-responsibility-human-rights (Anglais)

REPORT SELF CHECK TOOL

Pilot self-assessment tool on social responsibility and sustainability

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