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**Report of the International Workshop:  
“Presentation of Viabono for Central and  
Eastern Europe”**



**1-4 September 2004 and 23-26 October 2004,  
International Academy for Nature Conservation, Isle of  
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## INTRODUCTION

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In Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), as nearly everywhere in the world, the tourism industry is recognized as one of the most potential industries, which may support the conservation of nature and the protection of environment and, at the same time, ensure benefits also to local populations. In different CEE countries, different approaches to sustainable tourism development exist, i.e. eco-labelling schemes for tourism products.

After ten years of discussion, the German umbrella brand “*Viabono*” for sustainable tourism products was established in Germany 2001. Since then the number of licensees and consumers taking advantage of Viabono has been increasing continuously.

The quality label Viabono provides an integrative approach to combine environmentally friendly travels with high quality for the consumer. Its broad applicability for protected natural areas, communities, camp sites, hotels and restaurants and destinations alike makes Viabono applicable for a wide range of facilities in the tourism sector.

Comprehensive information on Viabono was provided to the participants in advance to the workshop on the implementation process of Viabono as an example for a functioning eco-label and to initiate discussions on similar eco-labels in the respective countries. This background information contained the implications, scope and the development process of Viabono. However, the eco-labelling situation in Central and Eastern Europe should not be compared with Viabono. The aim is rather to estimate at which stage the countries are now and what specific regional circumstances there are.

Based on the experience gained during this process, the German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and the German Agency for Nature Conservation invited governmental and non-governmental representatives from Latvia, Estonia, Poland and Slovakia, who are responsible for rural, economic and tourism development, to take part in the workshop “*Presentation of Viabono for Central and Eastern European countries*” to exchange experiences and discuss opinions on how to implement sustainable tourism and connect it to tourism business sector products. This workshop was organized in two parts, one being held from 1-4 September 2004 for the participants from Latvia and Estonia; the other one taking place from 23-26 October 2004 for the Slovak and Polish representatives.

The main goal of this workshop was to provide and distribute information about Viabono and to initiate a discussion process among decision-makers and representatives of selected environmental organizations about the situation regarding eco-labels in the respective countries and the potentials for the establishment of such a label.

## **1 FROM ENVIRONMENTAL LABELLING TO ENVIRONMENTAL BRANDING - PREPARING THE GROUND FOR VIABONO**

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At the end of the 1980s - at the high point of controversial discussions about tourism and its link to environmental concerns - it was realized that environmental destinations in tourism at regional levels were heavily on the increase. This was welcomed in the sense of environmental protection, but from other points of view there was a risk of lacking clarity for travellers, as there was a large variety of environmental labels being introduced on the market.

### **VISION AND GOALS OF VIABONO**

The result of this confusing variety was a call for an environmental label, which would be valid as a badge of environmental achievement across all sectors of tourism. A specific concept was therefore developed, discussed by involved parties and represented politically.

This way, a newly-created concept from the Department of the Environment, the development of an "Environmental Umbrella Brand", was presented. This concept plainly deviated from all ideas, suggestions, concepts and changes put forward until that time, because the basic conditions had altered with the years. A greater variety of environmentally-oriented and sustainable tourism suppliers and products had come into the marketplace, and a great deal of information on examples of good practice was available on the different sectors of tourism.

Consumer behaviour had also changed, and environmental protection claims alone were no longer a special reason for informed consumers to make a purchase decision. It was seen as a better chance to reach environmental consciousness through a label, which kept the environmental angle in the background at first sight and concentrated more on the holiday requirements of the travellers. In this sense, the major focus of the marketing and promotion was not on environmental protection and "eco"-holidays, which often had a rather negative image due to the misleading opinion of being expensive and restrictive, but quality. This marketing strategy creates a positive image while still being environmentally friendly.

In 1999, after about 10 years of discussion, the Federal Ministry of the Environment - together with the tourism-, municipal- and environmental- organisations - took the initiative to set up a new universal environmental symbol for tourism. The result was the *Viabono* brand, which was unveiled publicly in October 2001 as the first universal tourism brand for environmentally-oriented services in different segments of the travel market.

Viabono should not only be a form of guidance for consumers who are seeking out environmentally-friendly offers; it actually aims to bring new consumers into the market of environmentally-friendly travel through a new marketing approach.

### **BRANDING INSTEAD OF A LABEL OF QUALITY**

A quality label first and foremost promises that technical criteria will be met. But this is almost meaningless regarding travel decisions.

Although Viabono is an environmental umbrella brand, the words "environmental protection" are not be found at first sight in the motto "Enjoy travelling naturally" or in the brochures or on the website. The foremost things are quality, comfort, new experiences and enjoyment. Viabono allies with the wishes and needs of the consumers. Nevertheless, the brand offers a quality promise with an environmental agenda, that meets set criteria and which travellers can analyse if they so desire. Viabono shows that individual wishes and environmental claims go together well.

### **COMPONENTS AND CRITERIA OF THE VIABONO SYSTEM**

"Enjoying naturally" has a lot to do with unspoiled nature and environment. The philosophy of the Viabono partner must accord with this. Anyone who runs an environmentally-oriented business, is careful with use of resources, sees organic productions and products as an important

part of basis of their cuisine, and informs and motivates their co-workers and guests, takes part in the Viabono philosophy.

### ***Hotels/Restaurants***

The hotel and restaurant trade is by far the strongest pillar of Viabono. Around 70% of all license holders fit into this category. By making their commitment to the environment, they have put their own businesses in a position of real competitive advantage.

Viabono has, with its partners, taken the missing step towards achieving a quantifiable advantage and competitiveness. Viabono hotels therefore offer the guest high quality products as a direct result of their commitment to the environment and nature. In this context, Viabono offers include the following aspects:

- Assurance of high quality
- Efficient use of this added value
- Specific marketing to address potential guests and information disseminators, e.g. media and other opinion-makers
- Creation of tailor-made, market-ready offers, e.g. flat rates
- Passing on of enquiries and bookings to Viabono hotels
- Joint marketing and promotion to bring together license holders and create valuable suggestions, for improved marketing activities

### ***Nature parks***

An important goal of a nature park is to offer "sustainable" leisure and tourism, which can be ensured through co-operation between the tourist organisations and the park authorities. Nature parks offer an opportunity for sustainable tourism development in the region, on one hand by the infrastructure arrangements and on the other hand by carrying out the marketing of attractive offers for trips based on experiencing nature under the positively-perceived "nature park" description.

Moreover it is necessary that tourism development in the region is closely linked to the nature park, in order to guarantee the long-term sustainability of nature and the landscape as an asset for tourism, and to guarantee the profile of the nature park for travel offers. Thus a close co-operation between tourist organizations and nature park authorities is important to integrate regional development and the sustainability of nature and landscape.

The name "Nature Park" and the status of a protected area go together with commitment to nature and the environment. But similarly as with ecologically-audited and certified tourist businesses, the status of a "Nature Park" does not deliver any advantage in the highly competitive travel market.

Nature parks which put their guests in harmony with the environment and enable them to contribute to the maintenance of natural beauty spots also fit into the concept of Viabono.

## 2 COUNTRY PERSPECTIVES: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE SITUATION REGARDING ECO-LABELS IN THE PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

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### 2.1 Latvia

#### A) DECISION-MAKING

The necessity of eco-tourism development has been recognized at the national level and concerns various **coordinating bodies**. The Ministry of Economy, has emphasised eco-tourism as one of the primary tourism development directions and is the main state institution responsible for development of the state tourism development policy.

The Latvian Tourism Development Agency (LTDA), which is supervised by the Ministry of Economy, is responsible for implementation of the tourism policy, mainly for developing the Latvian tourism product range and popularising Latvian tourism possibilities.

The State Tourism Policy is being implemented by both municipalities and non-governmental organisations.

The Latvian Tourism Consultative Board coordinates tourism-related interests and activities of the ministries, municipalities, tourism providers and non-governmental organizations who are involved in realizing the tourism policy.

Other state institutions, such as ministries, Institute of Latvia, Latvian Development Agency, Centre for Protection of Consumers' Rights, participate in the process of developing a tourism state policy and its implementation within their competence.

Tourism development in Latvia is steered by the following **legislation and regulations**: The tourism industry policy in Latvia is based on the Tourism Law (1998), which is the legal basis for tourism development in Latvia.

Priorities of further legislation activities in tourism arise from the Tourism Development Conception of Latvia (1997) and the Latvian Tourism Development National Programme for 2001-2010, which aims at defining the strategic development directions for establishing and developing the competitive tourism sectors in Latvia. Further, tourism development is built on the documents and guidelines developed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe as well as international tourism organizations, international conventions and other documents.

In 2002, the amendments to the Tourism Law provided for the reorganization of the Latvian Tourism Development Agency have been adopted according to the Law on Public Agencies and for a complete implementation of the EU Directive on travels, recreation services and tourism trips.

The Law on “Protection of Cultural Monuments” (1992) provides for the system of measures which ensure the conservation of the cultural and historical heritage.

**Strategies, policies and plans** are mainly represented by two major institutions. By request of the MEPRD, the Eco-tourism Union of Latvia has developed “The Eco-tourism Development Strategy” (EtDS) for Latvia (2001). The Strategy generally includes statements relating to the country as a whole; nevertheless, international experiences and innovations of eco-tourism offered by local inhabitants as well as local eco-tourism strategies for each definite territory are going to be developed, taking into consideration its specific resources and infrastructure.

Basic approaches of the State Culture Policy (1996) are very similar to those basic approaches of eco-tourism which relate to protection of the nature landscape, homesteads, fishers' villages, cultural landscapes, holy places, manor houses and other historically and educationally valuable objects.

Tourism Associations actively participate in developing and realizing the tourism industry policy at the national, regional and local level. These **major groups involvements** further authorise the representatives for the Latvian Tourism Consultative Board and represent the sectors of Latvian tourism industry in similar international associations. Regional tourism associations have begun to develop and actively popularise tourism products. The associations are further taking an active part in development of Latvian tourism development national program. In 2000, the NGO “Eco-tourism Union of Latvia” (EcUL) was established, which on the national level represents the eco-tourism industry and activities related to it.

## B) STATUS

The people in Latvia have begun to think about and discuss eco-tourism related issues and its planning and development comparatively recently. Nevertheless, eco-tourism principles and practices had also taken place previously to those principals now defined, but at a rather small scale.

The turn towards countryside tourism development has been registered in recent years; this can play a considerable role in the development of the countryside economy and regional development in the future. In 1994, already 20 households were members of the Latvian Country Tourism Association “Lauku ceļotājs” (see below). The higher the demand for countryside vacation gets, the more households offer their territory for vacation or to protected territories in Latvia. In 2003, 572.700 ha or about 9% of the territory of Latvia were given the legal status of the specially protected territory. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the proportion of protected territories has increased by 1/3.

In correspondence with the eco-tourism principles defined for Latvia, six main strategic key tasks and **challenges** are defined in the Tourism Development Conception of Latvia (TDLC). A number of their subtasks can be directly or indirectly referred to eco-tourism:

- Planning and development of the tourism industry according to the global sustainable development and strategy principles adopted in Rio 1992, to ensure sound implementation of sustainable development;
- Forming the image of Latvia as a hospitable, tourist-friendly, attractive and unique as well as a safe country;
- Increasing the quality of Latvian tourism products: producing clear and pictorial forms, and continuously developing and improving them, especially basing on strategic advantages such as local productions;
- Creating a joint tourism product with Lithuania and Estonia as well as to participate in the creation of a joint Baltic Sea region tourism product;
- Developing a tourism information data base and an information network.

The NGO “Eco-tourism Union of Latvia” (EcUL) has defined the following principles which make the basis of the activity and aim of this non-governmental organization:

- Conservation of the Latvia’s nature and cultural and historical heritage
- Environmental education
- Increasing of the rural inhabitants’ prosperity level

Despite the good basis, a **problem** that has been identified is the fact that the TDCL principles and its corresponding tasks (as well as their implementation criteria) are not clearly pointing out the priority of eco-tourism principles or their dominance over other principles.

Several measures are being undertaken in Latvia with regard to **capacity-building, training, education and awareness-raising**. The marketing specialist of the project the “Green Certificate” Līga Zelmene - Laizāne in 2002 participated in the seminar organized by the “European Centre for Ecological and Agricultural Tourism (ECEAT) International” in the Czech Republic,

where the participants discussed the regulations for accepting of the new member states in the "ECEAT international".

In 1996, the Study Centre of Environmental Sciences and Management of the University of Latvia has drawn up the "Environmental Education Conception Project" and proposals for the implementation of environmental education into the professional education system, as well as the description of the vocational training specialty "The Environment Protection Technician". This environmental education is specialized on the creation of a Network of Environment Guides.

One of the first "eco-tourist groups" providing **information** on sustainable tourism is the Group for Maintenance of Historical Sights and Objects "Optimistu pulks" ("Group of Optimists"). The *Optimists* gather information and maintain the sites of ancient Latvian settlements striving to preserve the verbal information and facilitate the accessibility of those sites.

International activities of regional organizations have recently taken place in Latvia, one of such event being the International Conference on Eco-culture tourism support in the Baltic Sea region organized by the Talsi Environment Protection Club in 1998 and supported by a number of institutions of the Northern countries. The representatives shared their experiences in eco-tourism organization and environment legislation.

Latvia has implemented economic incentives for building and commercial activities of the low-power hydro power plants, wind-driven electric power plants as well as cogeneration plants to make use of modern **research and technologies**. In 2001, four wind-driven electric power plants and 103 small hydroelectric power stations were operating in Latvia.

Applying renewable energy resources that are produced since 2001 today cover 66.3% of the total volume of electricity produced in Latvia. 33.7% were produced by the thermoelectric power plants using petrified fuel and peat.

Laws and regulations for environmental friendly technologies in the tourism sector are not known (own comment).

The state can facilitate the realization of the eco-tourism development strategy by tax allowances for registered eco-tourism establishments, by subsidies or by cancellation of credit interests of the companies preparing a tourism product. In order to prevent an uncontrollable situation, the Latvian Eco-tourism Union organises the issuing of licenses to eco-tourism establishments. The same refers to assessments of municipality development plans or entrepreneurs' business plans for receiving **financial** support.

After Latvia entered the EU, the potential effectiveness of the tourism industry activities have been increased by possibilities given by structural funds of the EU.

### c) COOPERATION

Latvia has concluded 9 collateral contracts of intergovernmental cooperation with other states in the field of tourism. Cooperation in tourism is included also in other contracts, for example in a cooperation agreement of the Latvian and the Dutch Government (1990), as well as between Latvia and Flanders (1997) and its work plan for the years 2000 – 2001. In 2001, a number of international development projects have been already launched in the context of both contracts. In the same year of 2001, the trilateral Baltic States intergovernmental agreement in the field of tourism was being developed.

Cooperation of parliaments: In addition to the resolutions on "Tourism Development in the Baltic States" and "Youth Tourism Development in the Baltic States and in the Baltic Sea Region" adopted by the Baltic Assembly (BA) in 2000, the BA in 2001 adopted the resolution on "Sea Tourism Development in Latvia".

Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region was formed in 2001 through the *Baltic 21 TOUTF*, which coordinates the implementation of the sustainable tourism development strategy in the Baltic Sea region and the activities of HELCOM (Baltic Sea Environment Protection Commission).

Interdepartmental Cooperation became realized in 2001 through the Agreement on cooperation in tourism, concluded between the MEPRD and the Regional Development Ministry of the Czech Republic.

One of the main factors for successful tourism development in Latvia is the cooperation of the public and private sectors which is being successfully realized by the Latvian Tourism Consultative Board and the separate working groups.

#### D) ECO-LABELS

The Association **Lauku ceļotājs** was formed in 1993. Its current members are the owners/operators of 250 rest and recreation facilities in the countryside. The Association's goal is a common development of tourism in the Latvian countryside in order to create modern rest and recreation facilities in a natural countryside environment. "Lauku ceļotājs" promotes country holidays in Latvia among domestic and foreign tourists.

The employees regularly inspect the vacation properties and therefore know the hosts well and are able to provide well-founded information about the conditions at each rest and recreation facility. Membership in "Lauku celotajs" indicates high quality because the Association has high entry qualification criteria.

The **Quality Certificate** is issued by "Lauku celotajs" to establishments who have been accommodating guests for more than one year and about whom especially good testimonials have been received. The Association also issues the "Green Certificate" (see below) to establishments whose operations conserve the environment and nature.

To improve environmental awareness and business skills of rural tourism providers and to inform the society about rural tourism development and its importance, the Association organizes seminars and conferences and publishes training materials.

The **Green Certificate** is an eco-label affirming environmental quality in vacation properties which save natural resources and use them rationally, offer environmental friendly tourist activities, healthy, locally produced food and extensive information on the local natural, cultural and historical attractions. The Association "Lauku ceļotājs" initiated an eco-labelling of the vacation properties in order to:

- encourage rural tourism providers to reconstruct, build and furnish vacation properties following local traditions, preserving landscape and using environment friendly building materials of local origin;
- direct the development of rural tourism to ensure preservation of biological diversity;
- convince rural tourism providers that sustainable tourism development creates conditions for strong economical advancement.

## 2.2 Estonia

#### A) DECISION-MAKING:

The Ministry of Economy and the Estonian Tourist Board are the main **coordinating bodies** and responsible for decision-making in the field of sustainable tourism. Local authorities and Tourist Information Offices of the Estonian Tourist Board are responsible at the local level.

**Legislation and regulations** relating to sustainable tourism includes the Act on Sustainable Development, the Planning and Building Act, the Republic of Estonia Land Reform Act, the Water Act, the Act on the Protection of Marine and Freshwater Coast, Shores and Banks, the Act on Protected Natural Objects, and the Law of Property. A separate Tourism Law, which directly addresses sustainable development in tourism, is currently being developed.

The established standards and guidelines for sustainable tourism are the following: national minimum standards for accommodation establishments (mandatory), the Green Label Project on the island Hiiumaa (guidelines, voluntary), and the Blue Flag Project for small ports. During the next years, the Estonian Tourist Board, in cooperation with the industry, its representative organisations and the Estonian Eco-tourism Association, are planning to work out and launch sustainable tourism guidelines for hotels and criteria for tour operators in developing eco-tourism products. Both industry and consumers have reacted positively to these codes and guidelines.

Sustainable tourism is included in a number of **strategies, policies and plans**; among those, it is one main principles of the National Tourism Master plan for 1995-2000. Presently, several strategic plans covering sustainable tourism development are being developed: the National Tourism Development Plan to the year 2010 with an Operational Plan for 1999-2003; the Environmental Action Plan to the year 2010, where one of the proposed activities is to work out a National Strategy for Recreational Areas and Eco-tourism, and a Biological Diversity Strategy. Eco-tourism and nature-based tourism is a part of the National Tourism Strategy and Plan. The specific strategy and plans for these areas are planned to be worked out during the next years. Based on the Agenda 21 for Tourism in the Baltic Sea Region, monitoring procedures are going to be worked out in the upcoming years. Monitoring procedures in the national parks, nature parks and nature reservation areas presently exist. A control system and penalties are regulated by law.

**Major groups involvement** is mainly based on the Estonian Eco-tourism Association (ESTECAS), which was established in 1996. ESTECAS' activities to promote eco-tourism development in Estonia include organising workshops and seminars at the local level, organising annual conferences on eco- or nature tourism and promoting eco-tourism through media.

Non-governmental organisations (e.g. Estonian Association of Travel Agencies, Estonian Hotel and Restaurant Association, Estonian Eco-tourism Association, Association of Estonian Guides), local authorities, and county governments are also involved in the decision-making process. Additionally, the European Cyclist Federation Estonian Branch and the Estonian Ramblers' Association are actively involved organisations.

## **B) STATUS**

Tourism is one of the most important sectors of the Estonian economy and its further development is encouraged.

Statistics indicate that the number of international visitors is estimated to reach three million in 1998 (of which 850 thousand will be overnight stays) which, for the third consecutive year, exceeds the highest figure of visitors so far, dating back to the early 1990s. The revenue from international tourism is expected to be nearly USD 690 million. The medium-term objective of the Government's tourism strategy is to increase foreign exchange earnings from tourism to US\$ 1.5 billion by 2005, increasing the level of value-added by tourism to the GDP while at the same time stimulating balanced regional development.

Until today, there have been no major negative environmental and cultural impacts from tourism. The development and establishment of a cooperation network and new institutions (e.g. Tourist Information Offices, local tourist organizations) have had a positive effect on sustainable tourism development.

**Challenges** are seen in constraints to pursuing sustainable tourism, which include a lack of education and training programmes on sustainable tourism, lack of information exchange among stakeholders, insufficient capacity at the national level to coordinate activities and a lack of funding.

No special programmes have been identified in Estonia in the field of **capacity-building, education, training and awareness-raising**. Under the EU-PHARE National Tourism Development Programme in 1993-1998, some courses on sustainable tourism have been organised. Partners responsible for carrying out awareness campaigns are local and regional tourism authorities. Tourist Information Offices and Visitor Centres in the national parks, nature parks and nature reservation areas are influencing tourist behaviour routes through information leaflets and signs. Other efforts to use tourist centres or literature to promote sustainable tourism include the Estonian Tourist Board's newsletters, the internet web site of the Estonian Eco-tourism Association, and published articles in local media by Tourist Information Offices. In general, marketing of tourism is specifically geared towards attracting environmentally-conscious tourists.

**Information** is available to assist both decision-makers and the tourism industry from visitor surveys and statistics, national and cultural resource inventories, and tourism development plans. Natural resources and ecosystem characteristics in tourist areas have been inventoried under the development of county development plans, development plans for national parks, nature parks and nature reservation areas. The relevant development plans are available to the public (printed materials).

Based on the report of Agenda 21 for Baltic Sea Region Tourism, the development of indicators is planned for the upcoming years.

Environmental management systems in the field of **research and technologies** are not applied in hotels and other tourist establishments.

Fixed costs (e.g. administrative costs, salaries for public personnel, operational costs in national nature areas) are covered by the state budget. Development activities (e.g. strategic plans, investments for product development) are **financed** by the State budget, the Environmental Fund and external assistance (e.g. Phare, bilateral projects).

## C) COOPERATION

Estonia cooperates with ten Baltic Sea countries through the Baltic Tourism Commission. Main outputs include Agenda 21 for Baltic Sea Tourism Region, international seminars and conferences.

Cooperation also takes place between the Estonian Eco-tourism Association and the Swedish Eco-tourism Association. Main outputs are the creation of an eco-tourism network, product and market development projects, and conferences.

At the regional level, there are four to five bigger bilateral or international projects for the development of sustainable tourism (e.g. B7, the Blue Corridor, the Tourism Development Programme for South Estonia and North Latvia, Sustainable Tourism Development in West Estonia and Southern part of Finland).

## D) ECO-LABELS

The **Green Key** is a diploma awarded to hotels, motels, guesthouses, youth hostels, holiday homes and apartments.

A separate set of criteria is under development for accommodation establishments as bed & breakfast, holiday villages and campsites.

The Green Key is awarded for a period of 12 months, after which it must be renewed. It is supported by the Estonian Tourist Board, the Estonian Hotel and Restaurant Association, the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications and the Estonian Ecotourism Association.

The **Hiiumaa Green Label** marks an accommodation or catering enterprise that is managing on a sustainable way i.e. doing its best not to add to the load of Hiiumaa`s clean nature. A service enterprise marked with the Green Label undertakes to fulfil the self-taken duties of sustainable management and asks the guests of Hiiumaa to do the same. Choosing a service enterprise prefer the one with the Green Label.

**The Natural Way** is a product label for tourism products which are ecologically oriented and follow the principles for eco-tourism. The products which are labelled are mostly packages, consisting of different offers and services, and are evaluated as a whole.

A network of rural tourism companies and farms has been created and adopted the principles described below. These principles are valid for all tours that have “The Natural Way” label. The label identifies six different guideline categories:

1. Connection to the specificity of the region
2. Connection to local economy
3. Following the limits of carrying capacity
4. Competence of local guides
5. Environmental protection
6. Responsible information to the traveler

Different from other licensing forms, certification schemes or other kinds of regulation, Estonia - the Natural Way is an eco-labeling system, which tourism companies may join voluntarily.

The **“Ecolabel Commission”** is obliged to analyse the background of the applying tourism company and has right to make additional inquiries to the company. The Commission decides the attribution of the user`s right and informs the tourism company about the decision of approval or denial within one month after the application date. The Ecolabel Commission consists of representatives of the following associations:

- Estonian Ecotourism Association,
- Estonian Rural Tourism Association,
- Association Kodukant,
- Estonian Fund for Nature,
- Union of Protected Areas of Estonia,
- Estonian Association of Travel Agencies,
- Estonian Tourism Board,
- Foundation South-Estonian Tourism

The label is valid for two years, then it has to be renewed. The Commission also has the right to dissolve the contract, if the criteria are not fulfilled.

## 2.3 Slovakia

### A) DECISION-MAKING

There is no tourism management and overall planning at the national and regional level in general. The main **coordinating body** for tourism is the Ministry of Economy. Its responsibilities in field of tourism are mainly to set up basics of the state policy in the field of tourism, e.g. to secure statistical investigations. The Ministry for Environment actually does not have any responsibilities for tourism; the same applies to the state subordinate administrations.

There is no Tourism law in Slovakia yet. Several **legislation and regulation** measures cover the issue partly. The new Law on the Nature and Landscape protection no 543/2002 considers all directives of the EU for nature, including a new system of the management within and outside of protected areas as well as compensation tools for nature management. The Law further regulates measures for tourist development inside of the protected areas and targeted habitats. The Law on Forests, No. 100/1977 on management in forests and state administration in for-

estry adjusts the allowed and prohibited activities in each nature protection degree. The Governmental Prescription on Property Detriment, No. 24/2002 lies down that the state has to reimburse the property detriment caused by the nature protection.

The territorial system of ecological stability (USES) justifies nature protection and identifies the elements of ecological stability in the landscape. The Landscape-ecological plan (KEP) identifies the optimal spatial disposition and functional use of the land. The Acting Law No. 419/2001 includes the categorisation of tourism facilities.

Tourism in Slovakia is underlined in the following national **strategies, policies and plans**:

The National Development Plan (NDP) sets up the middle term goals (until 2006) and priorities of regional development. It consists of 4 the Sectional Operational Programmes (SOP). Tourism development is part of the SOP Industry and Services, but this topic is also included into the SOP Agriculture and Region Development.

The National Strategy of the Sustainable Development has been prepared under auspices of the Ministry of Environment by a broad team of experts. It determines the framework of development of Slovakia from the sustainability point of view. The National Strategy sets up tourism as one of the main economic industries in Slovakia and determines how to develop it on a sustainable basis.

The National Biodiversity Strategy of Slovakia in its goal determines how the strategy would have influence for tourism and how could be implemented in Slovakia. It sets up the “basic directions” of tourism development respecting the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

However, an overall strategy of tourism development in relation to the protection of biological diversity is missing. Moreover, linkages between the National Strategy for Sustainable Development and the plans and action programmes at the national or regional level are not known.

In 2000, the Slovak government has adopted the National Programme for Tourism Development. The programme sets up goals and measures for tourism development. A new programme for tourism development is planned to be elaborated by the end of 2004.

**Major groups involvement** mainly include the Slovak Agency for Tourism (SACR), which belongs to the institutions dealing with tourism in general. Founded by the Ministry of Economy, its mission mainly concerns foreign marketing of Slovakia as a tourist target. Almost all travel agencies and tour-operators try to enrich their offer with some aspects of ecological and sustainable tourism, but in practice only a few of them fulfil the principles.

The most efficient of all existing **programmes and projects** is emphasised by the Association of hotels and restaurants in the Slovak Republic, who realises the initiative “The Green Management programme”. It is an initiative taken under the auspices of Charles, The Prince of Wales, with the aim to promote environmental performance in the hotel industry through minimising energy and waste, using technologies that reduce the negative impact on the environment, and reducing emissions. The protection of the environment is secured by the hotel through a motivated member of the staff and effective help of a guest.

## **B) STATUS**

There are many traditional products that have been preserved in Slovakia. The character of these local products depends on the historical and cultural development of the regions. Each region has typical traditional clothing, habits and food. In rural areas, primarily traditional products from wood, straw, osier, clay, metal, leather, natural fibres, horn, and glass are made. In some regions, mining and metallurgy productions are dominating. The **problem** is that these products are not promoted sufficiently.

**Capacity-building, training, education and awareness-raising** are at a rather low level in Slovakia. There is no special school in the Slovak Republic that provides special education in

eco-tourism. Ecological training can be found at primary and secondary schools. Eco-tourism is missing in curricula at universities, which are dealing with tourism. Further education in tourism is provided by various institutions, but no one specialises in ecotourism. Educational possibilities in ecotourism can be found in different educational projects, for example the Forest pedagogy.

**Information:** There is no ecotourism product/service at full size in Slovakia, but some of them could partly fulfil the principles of ecotourism, among them the nongovernmental organisation Vydra in Cierny Balog The consortium “MY3” in the Polana Mountains provides the Wayfaring in the Hills, which offers a stay or trip inwrought with extraordinary experiences or adventures while horse riding, cycling or simply on foot, closely bound with the Hills surroundings. Another attraction in the region of Cierny Balog is the Forestry Open-Air Museum, which has the length of 3 km. During the 36 stops, the visitors can learn about the history and present management of forestry in Slovakia.

The Slovak status of **research and technology** regarding the sustainable use of resources and modern technologies is developed only in some sectors. For an example see the “Green Management Programme”

Two governmental programmes in the responsibility of the Ministry of Economy provide the **financial** support for tourism, which is generally without conditions or criteria for sustainable development or nature protection: the EU PHARE Tourism Grant Scheme and the Programme of soft loans. After Slovakia has entered the EU, there is a possibility to obtain grants from structural funds.

#### c) COOPERATION

To support the sales of local products, the organisation “Centre of Folk Art Work” (ULUV) has been established. It is financed by the Slovak Ministry of Culture. Its activities are mainly aimed at the production of folk art products both in cooperation with producers and in own craft workshops, sale of folk art products and courses and exhibitions. Its products are available all over the country.

The Eco-museum (Museum of agricultural techniques, folks house, meal and wine tasting) offers attractions for visitors all year round.

#### d) ECO-LABELS

There is no valid certification in the sphere of ecotourism/sustainable tourism. The main activity of the **Slovak association for sustainable tourism (SAST)**, which was founded in October 2002, is to support the management of cultural and historical heritage and to contribute to the sustainable tourism development. SAST is preparing its own certification based on and derived from international ECEAT criteria, which will be implemented and controlled on national level and it will forego the homogenous common certification which will be valid in all EU countries.

There is also an initiative, which is called **The Green Management** and it is realised under auspices of The Association of Hotels and Restaurants.

The **Slovak Association of Rural and Agro Tourism** has also dispensing mark of quality to the facilities in the rural tourism and agro tourism.

## 2.4 Poland

### A) DECISION-MAKING:

The **coordinating bodies**, who are responsible for tourism development, at the national level primarily include the „Office of Physical Culture and Tourism” and the Department of Social Affairs and Education of the Ministry of Agriculture and Country Development. At the regional and local levels, tourism development is being coordinated by the Provincial Administration Offices in the Department of Physical Culture and the Department of Tourism.

Tourism development in Poland is included in **legislation and regulations** mainly in two National Acts: The Act on Natural Protection, which mainly concerns spatial planning, including green open spaces within built-up areas, which are designed for, among others, recreation purposes, and the Act on Spatial Management.

There are several **strategies, policies and plans** that are concerned with tourism development. However, Poland has not formulated a National Strategy on Sustainable Development. The Master Plan for Tourism in country and forest areas was elaborated within the EU PHARE – TOURIN II Programme.

The Office of Physical Culture and Tourism elaborated policies and strategies for tourism development in the following documents:

- The Basic Programme for Tourist Economy Development of 1994 describes guidelines for environmental-friendly tourism, adjustment at tourism use to nature and landscape assets and their protection;
- Tourism and tourism management development in the State Spatial Management Policy outlines spatial management related to environmentally friendly domestic tourism, domestic tourism products and tourism-related infrastructure.
- The Development Strategy of Domestic Tourism Products concerns the development of several trade mark products, such as business tourism, active and sports tourism, urban and culture tourism, agro-tourism and transit and cross-border tourism.

Main goals of tourism management development are to strengthen local economies of municipalities and regions in order to improve the economic status of the society and to support activities aiming at sustainable economic development.

The promotion of tourism development as an opportunity for unemployment reduction is another special field that is being addressed by the municipalities and regions. The creation of new jobs should lead to increasing motivation to start professional work in tourism and thus strengthen its development.

Further aspects of the development of tourism management refer to infrastructure improvements, such as economic mobilisation and infrastructure changes in the regions.

**Major groups involvement** in tourism development include a number of organisations, who hold a stake in relevant decision-making processes in the tourism sector, such as the Governmental Institute of Tourism, regional tourist federations, the Polish Federation of Agro-Tourist Hosting Farms as well as professional hotel schools in the educational sector and local Agro-Tourist Associations, e.g.: Agro-tourist Association "Chata" in the Beskid Mountain Region

The “Green Lungs of Poland” Programme is one of the main **programmes and projects** in Poland who are dealing with sustainable tourism.

The State Programme for Domestic Tourism Product Development particularly concerns the development of active tourism and tourism in rural and forest areas and is executed by the Tourist Development Fund.

The promotion programme covers the following:

- International Tourist Trade;
- Regional Tourist Trade;

- Publications, brochures, films ;
- Agro-tourist Associations (e.g.: Regional Tourist Federations; 30 Federations already existing are associated with Polish Federation of Agro-Tourist Hosting Farms);
- Eco-Agro-Tourism Programme (EAT), executed by ECEAT in Poland, and sponsored by EEC and Dutch Government; the programme covers Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary

## B) STATUS

Poland is located on the 8<sup>th</sup> position of the WTO list of the most visited countries of the world, with 18.8 million visitors who have stayed over night in Poland in 1998. Since 1990, the number of tourists from abroad has increased significantly.

The main **challenges** to pursue sustainable development are resulting from several obstacles. The number of eco-tourist centres is largely insufficient and the intensive, and often unstructured, development of eco-tourism in some areas may cause their destruction. One of the biggest **problems** identified is the lack of interest in tourism development to support the economy from Polish banks and other financing institutes. Investments which are being supported financially often focus on unsustainable forms of tourism; there is a general lack of preference credits for nature-based tourism investments in the country. This fact is resulting from and also contributing to the low awareness of eco-tourism and sustainable tourism development in general, equally among national, regional and local authorities as well as among the local population. Another significant problem is the lack of cooperation between social groups and between the relevant stakeholders from the different involved sectors.

**Capacity-building, education, training and awareness-raising** is being undertaken in Poland through a number of programmes. The Office of Physical Culture and Tourism, cooperating with the Ministry of the Environment, organises the Programme of Ecological Education, which is reflected in tourist-hotel professional schools programmes and courses for tourist guides. The Office of Physical Culture and Tourism also organises professional conferences for the tourist sector and teaches local administration bodies and educational personnel.

Since 1992, the Provincial Advisory Centres for Agriculture have been organising training programmes concerning agro-tourism. These programmes are held on agro-tourism and economy, marketing, promotion, advertising, law, financial resources, customer service, environmental protection, sanitation, nutrition and field trips.

In 1997, a Strategy for Training of Country Public Accommodation Base Service was elaborated within the EU PHARE – TOURIN II Programme.

Professional training for nature-based tourism is also organised by Agro-Tourism Associations, Major Agriculture Fund, FAPA and postgraduate academic centres.

The Central Statistical Office of Poland provides **information** concerning tourism and educational activities in National Parks.

Environmentally oriented **research and technologies** are not integrated into tourism development. Especially in rural areas, the regional infrastructure is not developed sufficiently. The only approach until today is being undertaken by the programme “ISPA”, which is launched to facilitate the execution of joint projects between several municipalities.

Nature-based tourism development and promotion is supported through different **financing** measures. Budgetary means from the Agriculture Restructuring and Modernisation Agency (ARiMR) mainly subsidise investments of credit interests. Other budgets are available at the Ministry of Agriculture and Country Development, Regional Authorities, Agriculture Departments and Tourism Departments as well as municipalities.

Foreign credits include funds from the Polish Regional Development Agency, the Polish-American Enterprise Fund as well as several funds from the European Union.

**c) COOPERATION**

Cooperation is an issue which, as mentioned above, is lacking significantly in Poland, especially in the context of tourism development and environmental protection.

**d) ECO-LABELS**

***Ekoland***, the association of organic producers, is involved with lobbying in the realm of political legislation regarding organic farming and the resulting products. It is one of the organisations which have its own sign to directly label certain products. Ekoland was founded by about one hundred farmers and a few university scholars who were taken by the concept of alternative agriculture as presented at five seminars between 1984 and 1989. Ecological farms are checked yearly.

### 3 WORKSHOP COMPONENTS

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#### 4.1 Day I

During the first part of the workshop, the German umbrella brand Viabono was introduced and three presentations held on this topic. The first presentation dealt with the “*History of Viabono*” and the long development process until its final implementation in 2001, followed by an introduction of the “*Criteria of Viabono for Hotels, Pensions, Camping Grounds, Destinations, Nature Parks and Tour Operators*”, which stressed the integrative approach of Viabono and its broad applicability. The third presentation provided information concerning “*The License System and Marketing of Viabono*” with special emphasis on image orientation towards quality and services and requirements for licensees. During the first workshop in September, the brand was presented and introduced by Ms. Katharina Müller; in the second workshop, this was carried out by Mr. Stephan Krug, the director of Viabono.

The second component of the first day was committed to the country experiences in eco-labelling that have been made by each of the participating countries. The aim was to gather an overview on the current situation in all four countries regarding eco-labels, including existing labels, certification criteria, problems and gaps as well as future needs and prospects. This was further divided into governmental and NGO perspectives. This section was carried out slightly different in the two workshops.

#### WS I

During the first meeting with participants from Latvia and Estonia, this part was fulfilled by selected referees. Two representatives from each country presented the situation, one introducing the governmental side and one reflecting the situation from the NGO perspective.

- From Latvia, the “*Government Perspective*” was being undertaken by Ms. Rasa Atauga from the Latvian Environmental Agency, the “*NGO-Perspective*” was presented by Ms. Agnese Jakovica from the Association “*Lauku Celotajs*”. These presentations were then discussed in the plenary and certain similarities and differences were identified.
- The equivalent presentations to present the current situation on Estonia were prepared by Mr. Mart Reimann from the Estonian Ecotourism Association and Ms. Kristine Hindriks from the Estonian Ministry of Agriculture.

#### WS II

- In the second meeting for the Polish and Slovak participants, the presentations of the country perspectives were carried out in a different manner. [BE1] Taking into account the experiences from the first workshop, it was decided to remain in a plenary discussion for this section and not have individual presentations, in order to provide a more practical approach to the topic. The Polish and Slovak participants discussed their national situation in turns and could thereby provide a full picture on the current situation.

The final theoretical component of both workshops consisted of a presentation of “*Other Networking Initiatives in Europe*”, by Ms. Stefanie Höhn to provide the participants with information on selected well-known eco-labelling systems. This presentation helped to maintain an objective view on eco-labels, as the participants were enabled to create their own opinion on Viabono in comparison with other leading eco-labels and certification schemes at the European level.

A “wrap-up of the day” summarized the contents from the first day. Mr. Michael Meyer gave a brief overview on the specific situations in each of the participating countries regarding eco-labels and the different approaches that are existent at the local, regional and national level. Individual approaches and existing eco-labels, labelled eco-products, etc. were taken into account in each country profile. This compilation of information provided the basis for the second workshop day, which was aimed at more practical group working sessions.

## 4.2 Day II

The agenda for the second day was oriented towards practical approaches and small working groups.

### WS I

- In the first meeting, Ms. Anna Ivanyi from Hungary, who has been involved in the implementation process, presented the approach to introduce Viabono to Hungary: *“Viabono – The case of Hungary”*. This presentation provided a more practical view on the issue to the participants. They were shown the challenges and problems the process has had to deal with until today as well as possible solutions for these problems.
- This example of the exemplary implementation of Viabono to another country led to the working group session, which was the main focal point of the second day. In order to gain a deeper insight into Viabono establishments with the Viabono brand, several participants stated their wish to visit an on-site example of a Viabono facility or the opportunity to speak to a Viabono licensee.
- The participants formed two groups, divided by country, and discussed further procedures for the implementation of an eco-label in their country. Main emphasis was hereby placed to the necessary preconditions for the establishment, which largely relies on the current national situation, and the possible instruments and ways and means of such a process. Due to the relatively small number of participants, the groups discussed this topic at a rather free scope.
- The results of the two working groups were then presented in a plenary session. Each group reflected their discussions and presented the results and options for their respective countries to the group. The plenary then discussed the general possibilities and challenges in Latvia and Estonia, but also in a broader context of the Baltic Sea Region, which would also include Lithuania.

### WS II

- As Ms. Ivanyi could not participate in the second workshop, the same presentation of the implementation of Viabono in Hungary *“Viabono – The case of Hungary”*, as it was conducted by Ms. Ivanyi in the first workshop, was carried out by Mr. Michael Meyer, who initiated and supported the process in Hungary.
- The experiences of the first workshop showed a significant interest in more practical information on Viabono. Due to this reason, Ms. Birgit Zandke-Schaffhäuser, a Viabono partner from the National Park “Königsstuhl”, which is located on Rügen close to the isle of Vilm, was invited for the second meeting and presented her experiences with Viabono and the certification procedure in her presentation: *“Practical example of Viabono: National Park Königsstuhl”*.
- Due to the strong interest of the workshop participants, an additional part had been added to the agenda of the second workshop in form of a short excursion, which was conducted to the National Park Visitor Centre and the adjacent Viabono Restaurant, as an on-site visit of a Viabono-certified facility. Ms. Zandke-Schaffhäuser guided the workshop group through the National Park “Königsforst” and introduced the Visitor Centre of the National Park and the adjacent restaurant, which is a Viabono licensee. Although the Visitor Centre is not part of the Viabono brand, it profits from the restaurant and continues to put the philosophy of Viabono into practice.
- These two practical approaches initiated the working group discussions, which were, as it was the case in the first workshop, divided by country. The group sessions already were initiated to start during the field excursion in form of comparisons between this visited establishment and existing examples in Slovakia and Poland.

- The working groups continued after the group's return to Vilm in the afternoon. The main topics that were discussed in the groups mainly dealt with the potentials and opportunities to implement an integrated eco-label in the involved countries. The bigger number of participants in this second meeting led to the need to provide a set of key questions for discussion to the two working groups as a leading thread:
  - a) If there is a demand for it, what are the preconditions to establish an umbrella eco-label for sustainable tourism in your country?
    - Quality management?
    - Tourism services and infrastructure?
  - b) What should be the starting point for the establishment:
    - Bottom up?
    - Top down?
  - c) What activities would you identify in order to implement such an umbrella-label?
  - d) What stakeholders should lead and should be involved in such an establishment process?
  - e) What time schedule would you set for your country for the establishment of an equivalent eco-label?

Concluding the workshop was a plenary discussion, where the individual group results were presented and discussed in turn. The participants described possible procedures according to the given key questions for discussion. The results were presented on a flip-chart in order to make them visible for the plenary. After both groups provided their results to the group, the continuing discussion also included further recommendations for the countries and prospects for the future. Hereby the participants discussed obstacles and opportunities also in between the countries.

## **4 RESULTS: POTENTIALS FOR USING THE GERMAN ROOF BRAND IN THE COUNTRIES PARTICIPATING IN THE WORKSHOP**

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As indicated above, a set of key questions had been developed for the second meeting to ensure better efficiency of the working groups. The number of participants from Latvia and Estonia was smaller in comparison to the participants from Slovakia and Poland; therefore at the first workshop meeting it was not necessary to lead the group with these questions.

The results of the first workshop meeting have been sorted accordingly to the key questions from the second workshop and integrated into the individual topics for better comparison and overview.

### **4.1 Necessary preconditions to facilitate the establishment of an umbrella eco-label**

In general, all participants of the workshop agreed that without the basic preconditions, it will not be possible to establish an environmental eco-label in the countries. Taking into account the wide range of criteria of the Viabono scheme, the participants stated that a one-to-one transfer of the criteria to other countries would, at this point, not be possible. The national and regional circumstances of the countries differ significantly from those in Germany, therefore appropriate criteria would need to be adjusted to the regional circumstances. However, Viabono was generally seen as a good idea.

The regional differences between the participating countries are reflected in the definition of necessary preconditions that should be met before an equivalent eco-label can be established. In considering the individual requirements of their countries, the results therefore need to be seen in this context.

The **Latvian** participants found that in their country, the necessary preconditions are not given at the present time. The criteria do not apply to the full extent to the national conditions, therefore it was agreed to test the complete set of criteria in a first step to see if and which parts are theoretically applicable in Latvia. According to the results of such a test, further steps can be considered.

The situation in **Estonia** was seen to be similar. The most important precondition that was seen here was the necessity to guarantee the demand for such an eco-label on the consumer's side. This is to be measured by undertaking a research on consumer demand in the country. In general, there was positive feedback concerning the Viabono brand scheme.

The **Slovak** representatives have, according to their current national situation, defined a set of preconditions that need to be ensured as preliminary requirements for the establishment of an eco-label. These identified requirements can be divided into three main groups:

- (i) First, the potentials need to be analysed, including offers of natural and cultural heritage. It was realised that there is a sufficient number of facilities that offer this potential for tourism and therefore for eco-labels. An issue raised concerns the “Green Programme”, which is based on a very similar set of criteria in Slovakia and could be taken into account in future planning and development aims. The “Concept of Tourism Development”, which was adopted by the Slovak government in autumn 2004, will provide the official measure about quality labelling and thus forms another offer-related precondition.
- (ii) The second group identifies those necessary preconditions which are still missing. Among those, especially
  - the lack of an institutional framework
  - lack of quality services
  - low cooperation among stakeholders
  - low environmental awareness and

- missing financial allocations due to preference of other priorities have been stated as necessities which are not established at present. The working group therefore stressed the necessity to reshape these conditions before further steps can be undertaken.
- (iii) The third precondition identified by the participants concerned supporting requirements, especially human resources, NGOs and other initiatives as well as existing examples on the implementation of an appropriate eco-label, such as Viabono or other eco-labels in Europe. These supporting preconditions can help to prepare the ground for the establishment of an integrated eco-label which has a broad application range, as it is the case with Viabono.

The preconditions that have been identified as necessary for **Poland** largely concern financial aspects and awareness on the benefits of such an eco-label.

Financial support is hereby seen as the starting point. Mentioning the fact that governmental agencies in Poland receive financial support from the government, the participants suggested to provide part of these funds for an eco-label.

In order to get this financial support, it is also recognised a necessary precondition to raise awareness of the need for an eco-label at the governmental level. Awareness is also an important prerequisite on the business and the customers side.

In order to provide this knowledge for the potential stakeholders and all those involved, more information on eco-labels is needed in advance, on which can be built. This also includes existing systems of quality management, which is directly linked to eco-labelling and which is still at a rather low level.

#### **4.2 Selection of a starting point by using the Bottom-up or Top-down method**

The participants have decided on the approach which appears most suitable for the current national situations. Depending on this, both methods are seen to be functional. Especially the establishment of a working group for lobbying and raising of environmental awareness is seen as an important tool to start the process.

The **Latvian** participants have not agreed on one certain approach or starting point. The decision should be left with the stakeholders. The different options to start the implementation process depend on the side, from which the initiative will be taken: the state, the tourist board, NGOs or entrepreneurs. The participants found the “pioneer function” not to be very effective, as at the most the so-called “green mass” would be reached. Therefore the question of the initiator is aimed to be used to start the discussion in the country and get potential stakeholders from all sectors interested and involved.

The top-down method has been selected as a starting point for **Estonia**. This workshop could be used for political decision-makers. In writing a memorandum on the workshop and distributing it to governmental decision-makers and authorities, the participants aim to convince the political level on the importance to establish a national eco-label. In a second step, personal talks are anticipated to be undertaken with these authorities. Especially direct discussions on the advantages of a national eco-label on the basis of the Viabono scheme is seen as an important aspect and should be encouraged.

The chosen approach of the **Slovak** and **Polish** participants is very similar. The two groups have agreed that both approaches are necessary in order to reach efficient results in the process. The only difference in the countries’ approaches lies in the timely division. The Slovak working group aims at using the bottom-up approach first and then moving towards the top-down method, while the Polish group seeks to use both approaches simultaneously. Apart from this, their approaches are mostly alike.

The **Slovak** group has planned to meet shortly after the workshop and start to initiate public discussions on the issue. Thereby several tools will be used, such as workshops for associations, hotels, etc. in order to provide examples and arguments of Viabono as a functioning eco-label. This public discussion is also aimed to reach governmental authorities. The result of these discussions should be the creation of a working group at the ministerial level. This working group then should create a campaign with a strong lobby, which also addresses governmental authorities. This way, the bottom-up approach provides the link to the top-down method.

The reason for the chosen starting point is the fact that in Slovakia, no governmental institution will start a process by itself. The creation of an environment at the bottom is necessary for a powerful working group at the top; therefore the bottom-up method is needed to start the process and get the governmental level involved. An important aspect in this context is seen to be a quick start without long theoretical processes, through e.g. the development of a road map, the creation of an overview of existing legislation or the preparation of fast measures. Such measures can help to achieve the anticipated results, as concrete examples and facts can put more pressure on decision-makers and serve as a convincing tool. In addition, several activities should be initialised by the working group or related establishments.

The approach both from top and bottom in **Poland** is seen to be effective in terms of the reliability of bottom-up measures, while a more effective implementation can only be achieved with the support of governmental authorities. The creation of initiatives and a lobby group for the whole idea has been stated as an important starting point.

As it is the case with the ideas from the Slovak participants, approaches from the bottom are seen as an essential point by the Polish working group, in order to support the reliability of the whole issue, while the implementation needs support from the governmental side.

#### 4.3 Identification of activities

The activities identified during the workshop cover a broad range of options. Main emphasis has been placed on two activities:

- the exemplary testing of Viabono in a chosen location or destination and
- the comparison of Viabono with other existing eco-labels.

The first of the above mentioned activities will be undertaken in **Latvia**. Viabono is seen as a useful instrument for the promotion of domestic tourism, therefore, in a first step, an assessment should be undertaken, which identifies the needs of potential stakeholders and strategies which are needed. In a second step, the costs for potential projects need to be evaluated and appropriate projects planned. Following the cost estimation, Viabono can be tested in a chosen facility or destination as a search for a win-win situation and its effectiveness measured for further proceedings.

Especially on the financial side, several activities can be done. Structural funds can, e.g., be used in both countries to carry the idea of an umbrella eco-label forward. Latvia has already decided on the use of these funds to push the tourism industry forward.

The comparison with existing eco-labels, standards and criteria, and including the comparison of the Viabono concept with the *European Flower*, which has labelled establishments in **Estonia**, is seen as the primary action to be taken. As the European Flower is existent in Estonia, the aim is to use Viabono to compare the criteria, effectiveness, etc. The Viabono concept can also be used to encourage marketing and advertisements for Estonian products to German tourists as another activity.

An additional activity which is supposed to be undertaken is the implementation of an exemplary test of the Viabono label on an enterprise to see its effectiveness.

Both working groups, are planning a second meeting on this topic in the near future. To provide for better effectiveness, this next meeting should take place in Estonia or Latvia, in order to

reach a broader audience and allow more stakeholders to take part in the meeting. Further, the next meeting will be held in form of an intensive three-day workshop where practical results are aimed to be elaborated, including joint cooperation efforts for an eco-label for both countries. This should also include Lithuania and support the establishment of a “Baltic Sea Label” at a more regional scale.

The survey of existing labels and certification systems throughout Europe has been recognised as a necessary activity by the **Slovak** participants. The anticipated result behind such an analysis is an assessment of the best solution regarding eco-labelling for Slovakia, based on examples for more efficient evaluation. After this analysis has been undertaken, the next activity planned is the decision whether to implement an own labelling system or to apply an existing one. An important aspect is the application of such a system not only for clients but also for tourism providers, therefore the focus should not only lie on marketing aspects. Further points that should be taken into account in choosing an appropriate system are the financial aspect and environmental concerns.

Building on these activities, a draft proposal will be elaborated on the implementation of the chosen eco-label and public discussions initiated to adjust the proposed system to the current national and regional circumstances and to keep it on a realistic level. Experiences in Slovakia have shown that expectations on the success should not be raised too high.

The final activity of this process then consists of the adoption of the final eco-labelling system and start its implementation.

The **Polish** working group has agreed on the establishment of a working group for the creation and adjustment of a set of criteria which are especially suitable for Poland. The criteria that will be elaborated and decided on will serve the improvement of cultural and social issues; they can also be based on existing labels.

An important aspect here is the media, which can play an active role in promoting the concept of an eco-label and making it broadly known in the public. As the application process would be a long-term process, it would be suitable for financial support to enhance its application process.

In order to test the brand, main emphasis will then be placed on the implementation of a pilot project. This should be undertaken in a region of Poland which is well-known nationwide to provide effective results that ensure the success of the eco-label and to prove that the concept is suitable for Poland.

#### **4.4 Identification of stakeholders who should lead and be involved in the establishment process**

The identification of stakeholders who should be leading the development and implementation process for the establishment of an eco-label need to be seen in context with the second discussion aspect concerning a top-down or bottom-up starting point. The identification of certain stakeholder groups divided by “leading” and “involved” is in close connection with the measures defined above.

The **Latvian** working group takes into account the involvement of all potential stakeholders who would be involved in the development, establishment and use of an eco-label. As the group has not decided on a certain approach, the potential stakeholders are not divided into leading or involved. However, they include political decision-makers and authorities of other eco-labels, as well as tourism service providers, NGOs, local populations and the customers.

One aspect that has been mentioned is the possible integration of Lithuania to get the “Baltic States” as a more suitable regional scale; this would also include stakeholders from Lithuania. It needs to be seen, though, if it would be possible to include Lithuania at this early stage, as they are not on the same level of development as Latvia or Estonia.

For **Estonian** implementation procedures, it is necessary to include mainly political decision-makers into the process as the leading group as well as representatives of the European Union, as a number of funds and support is generated through the EU, which makes the application process easier to facilitate. In a second step, those stakeholders who should generally be involved in the process and are important for the actual implementation process also concern the local population and tourists. Special emphasis from the consumer's side should be placed on German tourists, whose number is increasing and who are generally more familiar with Viabono.

The leading group of stakeholders that has been defined by the **Slovak** participants consists of those who should be involved in the working group, which is aimed to be established. These stakeholders therefore include representatives from four political sectors, i.e. the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Regional Development and the Ministry of Economy. Further, this leading working group should include two NGOs. It has been seen as an important aspect to involve the “Union of Hotels and Restaurants” into the process from the beginning, as especially Hotels and Restaurants form a potentially high target group for eco-labels. Additionally, the Union has a relatively high influence throughout Slovakia. The second leading NGO-partner will be represented by the “Slovak Association for Sustainable Tourism (SAST)”. An important remark at this point is that the Ministry of Agriculture and both NGOs were represented at the workshop.

Of those stakeholders who should generally be involved in the process, the following have been identified:

- Branch organisations who are active in the hospitality industry such as hotel- and guest house owners and all stakeholders who are involved in tourism-related businesses.
- Private companies and sponsors, if existent
- Municipalities and regions
- NGOs who are dealing with environmental and cultural heritage protection
- Authorities concerned with hygienic issues (water, sanitary, etc.)

In choosing the stakeholders, the fact that a limited number often leads to more efficient results, will be taken into account.

What will be needed is a public discussion process, especially in the field of awareness and knowledge on the issue. Therefore those NGOs will be selected to participate, who are experienced in public discussions and lobby work.

The **Polish** participants agreed on the following stakeholders to form the leading group:

- Polish Trust organisations
- Polish Tourist board
- Agency for tourism development
- Chamber of local and regional products
- ECEAT

As the implementation process is planned to be undertaken from both the top and the bottom level, the stakeholders identified also consist of both groups. They will undertake different actions but at the same time be working for one common objective.

The second stakeholder group consisting of those who are generally involved in the whole process includes local and regional self-governments, protected areas administrations, environmental NGOs, Hotel Associations and the PTTK. An additional important stakeholder group is the media, which should spread information in specific (sectored), e.g. regarding tourism development in general (nationwide), e.g. via press media.

#### **4.5 Set-up of an appropriate time schedule for the establishment of an umbrella eco-label, according to the country-specific situations**

Generally, this aspect was kept relatively open during the workshop discussions. During the first meeting, the focus was placed towards further preliminary steps, not on concrete plans for action. Therefore the *Latvian* and *Estonian* working groups did not agree on a certain time schedule for a possible implementation scheme of Viabono.

The *Slovak* participants have estimated a general time frame. Overall, the process should be permanent as for awareness purposes and the fact that the implementation of an eco-label is a long-term process that requires time. Concrete action could be undertaken in three steps. The first phase would serve as the starting point and focus on intensive discussions and awareness-raising. In a second step, a proposal can be developed, which, in a third phase, could lead to the final implementation, which will depend on the capacity.

The *Polish* working group calculated with a 2-4 year time frame to implement the concept; however, this estimation is set very broadly. Detailed planning would be needed to verify or adjust the given time scale.

## **5 FUTURE OUTLOOK**

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In order to follow the proceedings of the workshop results in the four participating countries, a proposal has been raised by several participants to conduct a second meeting, possibly in form of a workshop, to discuss the further development with a broader range of stakeholders. Another proposal was to organise such a meeting in the respective country. The advantage of conducting the meeting “on the site” is the good accessibility of the meeting for a larger number of participants.

## **ANNEX I VIABONO BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

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### **1. From Environmental Labelling to Environmental Branding**

#### **PREPARING THE GROUND FOR VIABONO -**

The controversy about tourism in environmental discussions in Germany reached a high point in the middle 1980s. Organisations critical of tourism condemned so-called "mass tourism" which showed a social and cultural disregard for the destinations, above all in areas of excessive growth of tourism in the Mediterranean and also overseas. The discussion, which began from the angle of social criticism, was widened and progressed through studies and publications in the field of the ongoing involvement of nature and environment protecting organisations in the environmental dimension. At the beginning, the emphasis was very heavily on the environmental problems created in the very sensitive mountain regions of the Alps by winter sports tourism. Above all, the main target at the beginning was the damage done to nature and the landscape through leisure activities.

The German tourism industry reacted in a highly sensitive way. So an environmental working group was set up by the German Travel Agents' Association, the largest German organisation, and an environmental spokesperson was appointed. It was realised that suitable countermeasures had to be taken. The label of "environmentally-friendly tourism" for the information of environmentally aware consumers was therefore being used at that time not just by nature and environment protecting organisations but also amongst the ranks of the tourism industry. It was no surprise therefore that the first regional symbol of this sort, the "Silver Thistle", originated in the Austrian Kleinwalsertal at this time. It was developed and marketed by the local restaurateurs and hoteliers themselves.

At the end of the 1980s the umbrella organisations of the German nature- and environmental-protection bodies, the German League for Nature and Environment, defined tourism as the central theme of its future work and started an appropriate nationwide co-operative project. It was soon realised that environmental designations in tourism at regional levels were heavily on the increase. This was certainly to be welcomed in the sense of environmental protection, but from other points of view there was a risk of lack of clarity for travellers because of the wide variety of labels being introduced.

Also it was not guaranteed that there would be a comparable quality in the claims made under the incoming variety of regional labels. Consideration had to be made of "fare dodgers" and "black sheep" who might have used the growing sensitivity of consumers to environmental questions and their lack of information about existing environmental labels to their own advantage.

For this reason the German League for Nature and Environment gave its support for a national, integrated, overall, standard, and above all quality labelling of environmental achievement in tourism early in the discussion process and in the face of politics.

There was a call for an environmental label, which would be valid as a badge of environmental achievement across all sectors of tourism. A specific concept was therefore developed, discussed by involved parties and represented politically. With the support of the tourism representatives in the lower house of the German parliament and the Federal Ministry of the Environment the German League for Nature and Environment finally established the "Ecological Tourism in Europe" association (ETE) in 1991 with 10 other organisations concerned with nature- and environmental- protection, leisure, youth and tourism, as well as alternative transport. The job of the ETE is to create a joint lobby for socially and environmentally acceptable tourism, as well as putting into practice the environmental associations' concept of a label for environmental achievement in tourism, the "Green Suitcase". This designation was then to be developed for

hotels, tour operators and tourist resorts. Voluntary environmental claims from suppliers were also to be encouraged, for example energy- and water- saving measures, use of environmentally-friendly furnishing materials, the offer of healthy foodstuffs, environmentally-friendly means of transport, etc. which were to be recognised by the awarding of "Green Suitcases".

However, the trade associations of the tourism industry, the responsible politicians and the nature- and environmental- groups were at the end of the day unable to come to an agreement with each other.

That is to say, an integrated base, e.g. alongside the environmental criteria and the questions of social acceptability, to consider the effect of tourism on the inhabitants at the destination points, the style and manner of involvement with those on the receiving end, or also the social standards of those involved in tourism. The time was not yet ripe for this.

The greatest difficulties however arose on other points. The discussion gained momentum on those issues which increasingly pushed the desired measurable high quality aspect of such environmental labels in the direction of "labels of quality", as they are normally used in Germany as a general quality symbol for merchandise. It was also decided at this stage that the "Blue Angel", a governmental symbol for products with special environmental features, belonged to the same category. Indeed technically measurable criteria and parameters possible for products could also be applied to services. Finally the initiative of the environmental groups also fell through because of the demands of excessive claims and the E.T.E.'s "Green Suitcase" concept was not put into action.

Subsequently all the protagonists in the question of environmental labelling for tourism were more firmly entrenched than ever against each other. The trend therefore went towards so-called "good practice", to find examples and to publicise them. The German Hotel- and Restaurant- Association organised a competition for the "Most Environmentally-Friendly Hotel and Restaurant" over several years and regularly honoured the best applicants. Also the German Foreign Travel Association (today the German Tourism Association), as a representative of holiday locations, led a nationwide competition for environmentally-friendly travel destinations, by means of which further experiences were supposed to be gathered towards the goal of an environmental symbol.

ETE led a further offensive in the next few years on the importance of a single overarching label. It was effective in overcoming the "adjourned match" and temporary blockade between tourism- and environmental- organisations.

A central expert conference in 1998 (in the meantime there were 44 tourism-related environmental labelling initiatives in German-speaking countries alone) on the theme of environmental labels decided that, at any rate, a new constructive step forward for an environmental label should best be pushed towards general acceptance from the side of the Federal Ministry of the Environment and should be given a proper chance. The Ministry of the Environment, together with the National Department of the Environment, took up this "application" and called together suppliers to the tourist industry, nature- and environmental- associations, consumer organisations and public authorities for a new and final round of agreements.

During two two-day workshops, all the unresolved questions and problems of the different organisations and institutions regarding the ongoing issue of environmental labelling and the taking of sides which had occurred were discussed in detail and extended. The aim was to work through and sound out a possible framework for a new, generally-accepted solution, without pressurising or compelling anyone.

At the same time, a newly-created concept from the Department of the Environment, the development of an "Environmental Umbrella Brand", was put before the participants. This concept

plainly deviated from all the ideas, suggestions, concepts and changes put forward up until that time. This was because the basic conditions had altered with the passing of the years. A greater variety of environmentally-oriented and sustainable tourism suppliers and products had come into the marketplace, and a great deal of information on examples of good practice was available on the different sectors of tourism. Consumer behaviour had changed too, and environmental protection claims alone were no longer a special reason for informed consumers to make a purchase decision. There was a better chance of this from a label, which kept the environmental angle somewhat in the background and concentrated more on the holiday requirements of the travellers.

The communication of this new concept succeeded, and further work on the "environmental umbrella brand", which later acquired the name "Viabono", was finally agreed. A decisive factor in this agreement and also in the following phase was undoubtedly the setting-up of a "neutral" moderating team with good preparation and follow-up; also the will and the understanding between all participants, to make absolutely all important decisions together in consensus, in order that all organisations would be involved and none excluded, was the guarantee for this success.

## **2. Vision and Goals of Viabono**

### **VIABONO – A BRAND LAYS DOWN RULES FOR ENVIRONMENTALLY-ORIENTED TRAVEL**

The Federal Ministry of the Environment took the initiative once more in 1999 after about 10 years of discussion, to set up a universal environmental symbol for tourism together with the tourism-, municipal- and environmental- organisations. The result is the Viabono brand, which was unveiled publicly in October 2001 as the first universal touristic brand for environmentally-oriented services in different segments of the travel market.

### **GUIDANCE FOR TRAVELLERS**

In 1999 travellers were faced with 46 environmental labels in tourism – mainly in Germany and Austria and in the Hotel and Restaurant categories. This profusion of labels was more likely to confuse the consumer than to provide him or her with the necessary information. Such an expansion in the area of environmental symbols did more harm than good in the end, because with every new symbol the credibility of these labels was diminished in the eyes of the consumer.

Viabono should not however only be a form of guidance for consumers, and particularly those who are seeking out environmentally-friendly offers. Viabono actually aims to bring new consumers into the market of environmentally-friendly travel through a new marketing approach.

### **CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS OF HOLIDAYS**

In spite of this and other activities, it was yet not successful in bringing environmentally-friendly travel out of its position as a niche market. Why is this? The answer to this question lies in amongst other things a research project carried out by the Federal Ministry of the Environment, which had the aim of developing communication concepts for long-term consumer behaviour. The basis for this was an empirical research project composed of group discussions in the first phase and exploration of specific topics in the second. The most significant findings were as follows:

- The environment has as good as no presence in connection with holiday trips;
- A healthy environment and unspoilt nature are taken as a matter of course for holidays;
- The holidaymaker does not take the theme of environmental protection seriously until after damage has occurred;
- The theme of environmental protection is always connected with the fear of restrictions and obligations when it comes to holidays;

- Other people are seen as responsible for environmental protection – either the travel agent or the people who live in the place.

Above all it is the fear that environmentally-friendly travelling is connected with a loss of individual freedom, fun and enjoyment, which makes it so difficult to influence consumer behaviour.

#### **BRANDING INSTEAD OF A LABEL OF QUALITY**

For many years the aim of creating an environmental label of quality for touristic products was given up in the light of the above findings. A quality label first and foremost promises that technical criteria will be met. But this is almost meaningless as regards travel decisions. And we can see the truth of this: which of us wishes to spend our holiday being instructed with a pointed finger, told how to behave and what the "ecologically correct" decision for a place to stay or a destination should be? For most people, their holiday counts as some of the "best days of the year". The expectations bound up with this are tied up with the anticipation of restful, enjoyable days full of new experiences. Naturally it is of less interest whether for example the chosen hotel has a heat conservation system or whether the furnishings in a tourist destination include energy-saving lamps. And a label of quality is not very attractive to suppliers of tourist services either, if there are no enquiries about products so designated and the introduction of a quality label does not therefore offer any competitive advantage.

The brand concept has to deal with both these issues. Although Viabono is an environmental umbrella brand, the words "environmental protection" are not to be found at first sight in the motto "Enjoy travelling naturally" or in the brochures or on the website. The foremost things are quality, comfort, new experiences and enjoyment. Viabono allies with the wishes and needs which all of us have if we want to have a good holiday. Nonetheless the brand offers a quality promise with an environmental agenda, that meets set criteria and which travellers can analyse if they so desire. Viabono shows that individual wishes and environmental claims go together well.

#### **NATIONAL GOVERNMENTAL STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

Tourism is arranged like hardly any other brand of business as regards unspoilt nature and the environment. Environmental problems are increasingly being taken seriously by travellers and are influencing the decision of where to go to a large extent. Conversely, nature- and countryside- experiences are some of the most important holiday themes. Tourism therefore can be commonly described as the key player for sustainable development.

Some statistics and facts about tourism show that the need to be a key player is not a self-starter: in spite of reduced numbers after 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001, tourism counts as one of the most dynamically-growing industries worldwide. The World Tourism Organisation estimates a growth rate of +12%. This statistic – even if it does not reach this level – makes it clear that tourism is a very meaningful factor in the equation. In Germany today it contributes 8% of the gross national product. The number of jobs it contributes is about 2.8 million.

The other side of the coin can be seen from the environmental pressure tied up with tourism, especially through holiday traffic and particularly the greenhouse gas emissions caused by air traffic. About 74.6 million tonnes of German emissions were caused by trips of more than 3 nights' duration at home or abroad. To compare: the chemical industry emitted 37 million tonnes in 1998, and the combined service industry sector 112 million tonnes.

The effects of tourism on the loss of biological diversity are however often harder to recognise and to quantify, because tourism is not the only influence in many cases. But where the connection is clearly seen, the consequences are grave. An example: in 1992 the European Union for Coastal Conservation published statistics for the changes and loss of dune lands. According to these statistics, between 1900 and 1990 about 15-20% of dunes on the German north- and east- coasts were lost. In the Mediterranean it was between 40% and 80%.

Tourism itself is essentially affected by both environmental problems – climate change and loss of biodiversity. For example the warming caused by climate change has had the effect that of the 76 Alpine glaciers 68 have already lost 30% of their area and 50% of their volume. As a result the snowfall which is so important for winter sports tourism has been raised to ever higher altitudes. That is not only disastrous for the environment, because the skiing infrastructure is moving to ever greater altitudes and more sensitive areas; the effects on business are also notable.

The research company Urlaub und Reisen e.V. regularly carries out trend analyses. For the period 2000 to 2010 it is expected that the number of holiday trips in Germany with more than 3 overnight stays will grow by about +27%. For domestic tourism below average growth of +10.5% is expected, whilst holiday trips to the Mediterranean are expected to increase by +32% and long haul trips about +86%.

#### **STRENGTHENING DOMESTIC TOURISM**

Environmental policy must draw its conclusions from the above-named dates and facts. Should the trends described above continue, this means that the greenhouse effect increased by tourism – above all with regard to long haul trips – will be dramatically heightened. The pressure on the Mediterranean coasts will strongly increase.

These trends represent a great challenge for environmental policy. From the viewpoint of environmental policy we must have a strong interest in strengthening German and European tourism. For this reason we have created a quality concept with the Viabono umbrella brand, which brings a competitive advantage to those who participate and provides impetus for businesses and workplaces. In short, economical, social and ecological interests come together here in an ideal way.

The Federal Ministry of the Environment has however not only called for the development of the Viabono umbrella brand, it has also supported its marketing. A national marketing platform was set up with Viabono, which exclusively serves the domestic tourism industry. Today, although the brand is in its early stages, license holders are already receiving approximately 700 concrete booking enquiries about Viabono per month. The success of the brand will depend in the mid- and long- term on whether the offer of a marketing platform across Germany is successful in being suitably applied through a genuinely across-the-board offer and also across the different segments of the tourist industry.

#### **VIABONO IS ALSO A QUALITY PROMISE**

The collaboration of Viabono with the National Park of Wattenmeer Schleswig-Holstein is also (like the labelling from the consumer initiative) a piece of evidence for the argument that the criteria are also applicable to high quality claims. These criteria were developed and adopted with the consensus of the tourism-, municipal- and environmental- organisations. The Federal Ministry of the Environment saw this process through with the Federal Agency for Environment and the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation. The criteria form the basis for the issuing of licenses. A condition of the Federal Ministry of the Environment was that the awarding of these licenses should not become another state responsibility. Therefore a limited company was set up for this operation. The management of the limited company is carried out by the Viabono-bearers' Association.

### **3. From Idea to Reality: Viabono in the Marketplace**

After an unfruitful discussion which lasted more than a decade over a universal and comprehensive environmental label of quality for tourism, the different tourism-, environmental- and municipal- organisations with the support of the Federal Ministry of the Environment had covered the discussion from end to end. That is literally the case. Quality labels are an analytical approach, often an intellectual creation. The concept of a quality label with a rational emphasis,

that guarantees definite environmentally-friendly qualities, was given up and replaced with a brand concept based on feelings. The most important difference to a quality label is the emotional message with which a brand can be loaded. In this way the brand can be firmly established in the world of consumer feelings - grounded in them, so to speak. The main goals of the brand are, to market trips in harmony with nature as pleasurable and full of experiences, and to give a traceable competitive advantage to environmentally-oriented tourism suppliers in Germany. Viabono stands for: natural journeys, quality, naturalness and enjoyment at the holiday location, in hotels and restaurants, and communicates the positive feeling of acting in harmony with the environment.

#### **THE LONG ROAD TO AGREEMENT**

It was however a long and difficult road: from the first workshop in autumn 1999 in Bartholomä in the Swabian Alps up until the introduction of the brand rights of Viabono, the establishing of Viabono Ltd for the Travel and Tourism Fair 2001 and the establishing of the Viabono-bearers' Association in spring 2002. In spite of the different starting positions of the roughly 20 organisations taking part, a group-dynamic process was successfully set up in a number of sessions, and developed the concept for the environmental umbrella brand Viabono in intensive and difficult discussions. After that it did not look the same as it did at the start. Even during the discussion process the project was threatened repeatedly with failure. Nevertheless it continued to progress, to take into consideration important objections and to work out solutions. Not the least of this was the fact that the name of the umbrella brand was argued about for a long time, which is hardly conceivable now that Viabono it is introduced and stands as a brand for natural travels and is accepted as a fact.

#### **A WAY OUT OF CONFUSION ABOUT QUALITY LABELS**

The first efforts aimed to develop environmental quality labels for tourism and to position them in the marketplace. These praiseworthy initiatives achieved worthwhile groundwork. Today the diversity of quality labels creates more confusion than clarity. All the same, "best practice" examples were put forward, in order to set up benchmarks for the respective suppliers, which they could use for guidance in the layout of their offers. These measures have not substantially changed in terms of development of travelling behaviour up to today. Referring to the total volume of trips undertaken they have so far never achieved anything meaningful to the market. In particular their confusing diversity and their limited range of communication have hindered this, as has maybe the perception of environmental protection as an ideology of bans and restrictions. Environmentally-friendly trips, hotels and restaurants were something for a particularly-motivated minority. The majority would also presumably have liked to be environmentally-friendly but were not in a position to put their needs into practice in the marketplace. With the development of an umbrella brand for environmentally-friendly tourism there was for the first time a way which offered the chance to fill this gap.

#### **ATTRACTIVE BRAND DEVELOPMENT**

At the centre of brand concepts there is on the one hand a quality- and performance- promise, which is communicated to the consumer through the brand. On the other hand the brand should communicate positive messages, which address the emotions and thus firmly fix the brand in the world of consumer feelings. Above all the intangible values, which are bound up in a brand, promise the consumer a new experience. While the consumer uses the branded product, he confers an impression on his consciousness. In this way the basis for an emphatic communication is achieved, which should influence consumer decision-making in a concrete way.

The goal of Viabono Ltd is to promote and enrich the environmental umbrella brand Viabono with emotional values. Thus it needs to build a relevant tourism offer and a communication strategy with the consumer without coming across as raising an admonitory hand. Tourism suppliers can only be won over to the environmental umbrella brand Viabono if they are shown that they will get a clear competitive edge over their competitors. This will come about partly because environmentally-oriented tourist offers are also efficient from the business point of view,

and partly because a larger number of consumers will be reached by the umbrella brand Viabono because of the marketing activities involved. This offer will be made known to consumers through a broad selection of communication measures. Above all the image of the Viabono environmental umbrella brand, which makes an especially good impression through the slogan "Enjoy travelling naturally" will be communicated. The concrete Viabono offers communicate to the consumer an informative and emotional brand image, which the consumer for his own part will transfer onto new Viabono offers. The credibility and communication channels of the different participating tourist-, environmental protection- and municipal- organisations which carry Viabono, will all in any case assist the brand.

#### **SYMBOL-BEARERS' ASSOCIATION AS GUARANTOR**

More than 20 organisations with the financial support of the Federal Ministry of the Environment and scientific assistance of the Alpine Research Institute of Garmisch-Partenkirchen have developed the Viabono umbrella brand in a joint effort lasting over two years. With the establishment of the "Viabono-bearers' Association" 14 organisations have taken over the responsibility for the umbrella brand. From this year they hold all the capital interests of Viabono Ltd, which is responsible for the operational business. Alongside the members of the bearers' association there is a variety of associations, organisations and firms, who support the work of the bearers' association and along with its members form a communication network with a million outlets for the promotion of the Viabono umbrella brand.

The Viabono-bearers' Association is the guarantor of the umbrella brand and the custodian of the Viabono idea: environmentally-friendly travel on all levels and in all regions. To bring this to fruition, it needs not just beautiful brochures, attractive pictures and text, but also to clearly lay down what is meant by environmentally correct or environmentally-friendly in the various tourism sectors. Therefore with the assistance of the Alpine Research Institute, as a first step a list of criteria was compiled for hotels, restaurants, campsites and tourist communities by the relevant involved associations. In the meantime the standards for holiday homes and nature parks are also being categorised. A further development of the list of criteria is being dealt with at present.

#### **A LIMITED COMPANY FOR BRAND CARE AND MARKETING**

The job of Viabono Ltd based in Bergisch Gladbach is the operational business of promoting and using the Viabono environmental umbrella brand. This means winning over on the one hand the tourism suppliers and on the other hand the consumers. The suppliers obtain from Viabono Ltd license agreements for the presentation of their productions under the Viabono label. Aside from this Viabono is responsible for the care of the brand, by strengthening awareness levels and image, investigating customer complaints and checking that the criteria are being met by the different suppliers at regular intervals. The quality promises made to the customer must be absolutely upheld if the credibility – the main capital of the umbrella brand – is not to be damaged.

#### **THE TRAVEL PORTAL FOR NATURE LOVERS**

The definite base point for the two-pronged communication strategy is the internet portal [www.viabono.de](http://www.viabono.de), which is positioned as "Travel Portal for Nature Lovers". Informative and emotionally appealing content can be loaded and updated cost-effectively and quickly. Thus the necessary acceptance and promotion of the umbrella brand Viabono can be achieved in a short time, and offer the chance to influence the consumer's travel decision-making process. The aim is the creation of a lasting connection between the consumer and the brand. Hence a variety of tourist offers connected with or relevant to environment- and nature- protection which promise the consumer additional emotional advantages, whether these are nature experiences in large protected areas or nature parks, culinary experiences with regional products or high-value Wellness or Healthcare benefits in the accommodation and catering.

## **DEMANDS ON TOURISM SUPPLIERS**

Details for suppliers who just fulfil tourism offers in order to become partners of the Viabono umbrella brand and to be able to advertise themselves as such, can be found on the Viabono homepage. These refer to the demanding criteria. They build on the experiences of the environmental- and consumer- organisations as well as those of municipal management and the tourism industry. They have been tried out in practice and cover a wide spectrum of themes.

"Enjoying naturally" has a lot to do with unspoilt nature and environment. The philosophy of the Viabono partner must accord with this. Anyone who runs an environmentally-oriented business, is careful with use of resources, sees organic produce as an important part of basis of their cuisine, and informs and motivates their co-workers and guests, takes part in the Viabono philosophy. The Viabono suppliers are united by the view that their guests should get more natural pleasure, if this naturalness based on harmony with the environment flourishes in the direct surroundings of the guests. Above all, without the guest being admonished and lectured with up-raised finger, modern resource- and environmental- management should be taking place in the background. Therefore the "Accommodation/Catering" and "Community" lists of criteria were organised along the following themes:

### *Rubbish*

Where possible, throwing things away should be avoided, and where it cannot be avoided the amount should be kept to a minimum. The aim is to raise the level of recycling and the re-use of materials such as glass or paper. It is not just the environment which profits from reducing the use of materials, but also businesses and the community, if solutions are found to reduce costs, because less extraneous material is needed.

### *Energy and Climate*

Energy-saving and climate protection are at the forefront. Fossil fuels are limited and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have a considerable damaging effect on the climate. Energy-saving, which reduces climate damage through better technology and by the use of renewable energy sources, that is the goal. "First class climate – for guests and the environment" goes the motto.

### *Water*

Rising water and drainage prices mean that water is one of our most precious resources. Water is the number one stuff of life. Ever more technical investment is required to get drinking water. But it is comparatively easy to save water, reduce drainage and reduce pressure on water supplies by the use of environmentally-sustainable means. It makes ecological and commercial sense.

### *Transport*

The main damage to the environment from travel comes from the journey there and back. In addition there is also damage caused by trips taken by the guests at the destination. However it is possible to travel in an environmentally-friendly way and to behave in an environmentally-friendly way at the holiday location. The goal here is that tourism suppliers should help to reduce the damage done by traffic through service and offers. In this way the guests can experience the nature of the regions from another viewpoint too.

### *Noise*

Noise is subjectively felt to be the number one enemy of the environment, because the ear is man's most sensitive organ of sense. Viabono takes this into account. Measures for avoidance and reduction of noise are necessary. The guests should be able to enjoy themselves in peace and as far as possible avoid the stress created by noise.

### *Well-being of Guests*

Anyone who enjoys travelling naturally, feels good. The well-being and health of the guest are a central concern of Viabono. Measures for a good atmosphere in the accommodation are part of

this, just as it individual service tailored to the wishes of the guest. Avoiding a conflict between smokers and non-smokers is a self-evident part of the Viabono suppliers' office as is a special diabetic- and hypoallergenic- service.

#### *Information*

One can't get excited about what one doesn't know about. Only an adequate environmental awareness offers the chance of influencing the behaviour of guests. And for this, information, motivation and further education in environmental protection play a leading role. Together we can do more. The aim is therefore to win over guests and co-workers in a fun way, direct business and the community towards natural and enjoyable travelling, and to confirm this direction.

#### *Nature and Landscape*

Unspoilt nature and cared-for, many-changing cultured landscapes are the main assets of most German travel destinations. The absolutely critical thing therefore is to protect and maintain these tourist attractions.

#### *Settlements and Architecture*

Sustainable building and furnishing is a highly influential part of reduction of the use of resources. The structures used will be set up for many years through the community's building programme, concrete construction and furnishing as well as equipment. It is therefore especially important that these should be environmentally sustainable. In this way long-term sustainable development has a good chance.

#### *Regional Supply Chains*

This is all about measures for the increase of regional net products and the shortening of the supply chain. Regional supply chains leads to more prosperity in a region. But it also relieves the strain on nature and the environment through shorter journeys. Thus our Viabono suppliers can improve the quality of their products and services.

#### *Management*

What good is a one-off action, if everyone then falls back into their old ways? The continued reduction of negative effects of municipal or commercial processes on nature and the environment is therefore an urgent concern. With Viabono suppliers there is always someone who has a special responsibility for nature and environmental matters, so that Viabono customers can also enjoy their trips naturally in the future.

## **4. Components and Criteria of the Viabono system**

### **Viabono and Destinations**

#### **THE FASCINATION OF NATURE**

Some of the some 6000 German holiday locations adhere to the "Nature" myth. They deliberately address outdoor fans, lovers of clean air and clear water, gourmets of healthy cuisine, those who love beautiful landscapes, and those who are physically aware – let us simply call them "nature hedonists." These communities take up attractive nature tourism offers and often commit themselves at the same time to the furtherance of their life- and working- principles. Up until 1996 those most committed could prove themselves in the "National Competition for Environmentally-friendly Tourism Locations". The German Tourist Board (DTV) and the Federal Ministry for the Environment (BMU) wanted to show by this laudable initiative, what can be achieved and to give the winners a competitive advantage. With its commitment to the environmental umbrella brand "Viabono" the DTV went one critical step further. Creative and aggressive marketing of the "most natural" holiday destinations – which have met the hard but achievable criteria – has been declaiming the name since 2001.

**NATURE AS A TOURISM ASSET**

With Viabono, holiday locations can cleverly use their nature tourism assets, and preserve it for the future too, but not at all costs.

**BÜSUM AND NORDSTRAND – PARAGONS OF VIRTUE**

Klaus Müller, the environmental Minister for Schleswig-Holstein, solemnly declared the North Sea districts of Büsum and Nordstrand "National Park districts" on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2003. At the same time, both of them received their Viabono licenses and became "paragons" of German nature tourism.

Information for guests regarding the Wattenmeer National Park will be written as large as possible in Büsum: on a permanent basis, weekly in summer, it can be taken as read that information will be given in the Büsum spa town newspaper about the flora and fauna of the national park and guided tours of the mudflats through the protected area. Büsum also meets further Viabono criteria, in the area of transport: traffic calming measures have been introduced, car-parks have been situated in outside areas, interior pathways have been clearly designated and tied into a nationwide bike- and experience-trail- network. In short, Büsum makes stress-free and enjoyable holidaying possible for people and nature.

**HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP**

Spa town manageress Heike Geils sums up the motivation of St. Andreasberg to become a Viabono Well-being site as follows: "Because the hill town of St. Andreasberg has specialized in peaceful tourism and is situated directly in the Harz National Park, our tourism offer will have a special interest for guests to whom the brand "Viabono – enjoy traveling naturally" also appeals."  
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The gratifying echo of the Viabono vision in the area of "experiencing nature" and the compatibility for its suppliers prove Heike Geils right. And the Viabono internet portal ([www.viabono.de](http://www.viabono.de)), on which all the Viabono "Well-being sites" are represented, echoes its great popularity. In July 2003 alone, 200.000 page impressions were recorded on the website.

**WHAT MUST ONE DO, TO BECOME A VIABONO LICENSE HOLDER?**

The following sections will run through examples of criteria from the list of 40 questions for local authorities. It is divided into 11 sections as well as questions of what it absolutely required and what is optional. Two thirds of the main points must be met for a Viabono license.

<p><i>"Transport"</i></p>	<p>"Does your community have a public transport system suitable for the needs of tourists, which helps the guest by fulfilling his transport needs?"</p> <p>Possible answers: extensive public transport network to trip destinations; integration of public transport system with other types of transport, bicycle carriage on buses and railways, travel times appropriate for tourists.</p>
<p><i>"Well-being"</i></p>	<p>"Are you doing anything to counteract specifically visitor-related conflicts between users of different types of transport and/or users of sports equipment as well as conflicts with nature- and environmental- protection?"</p> <p>Possible answers: reduce conflicts between smokers and non-smokers; avoid conflicts between users of different forms of transport.</p>

<i>"Regional Supply Chain"</i>	<p>"Is the community endeavoring to encourage and support traditional environmentally-friendly handicrafts and sustainable use of the land?"</p> <p>Possible answers: given as examples through opportunities for guests to join in handicrafts or demonstrations of traditional crafts in "living" workshops.</p>
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## 5. Viabono and Hotels/Camping

### FROM COMMITMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENT....

The hotel and restaurant trade is by far the strongest pillar of Viabono. Around 70% of all license holders come into this category of business. This is not surprising since environmental- and quality- management have their longest tradition on the commercial level. Since the environmental competition of the German Hotel and Restaurant Association many hotels and restaurants have seen their opportunity: they analyse strengths and weaknesses of their own businesses, gauge the economic potential and thus relieve the burden on the environment and on themselves. By making their commitment to the environment they have put their own businesses in a position of real competitive advantage. A label from the German Hotel and Restaurant Association or the Bavarian environmental competition or a consistent eco-audit alone does not mean a competitive advantage. Hardly any guests choose a place just on account of that. Similarly, numerous environmental quality labels and prizes don't do the holder much good. Environmental orientation does not per se mean any substantial advantage in the marketplace. This painful realization has come to light from surveys commissioned by the Department of the Environment.

### ...TO COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Viabono has, with its partners, taken the missing step towards achieving a quantifiable competitive advantage. Not least because the German Hotel and Restaurant Association set up the Viabono umbrella brand and actively helped design it from the beginning. From the commitment of the travel industry to environment and quality the customer must perceive a direct benefit, which in terms of Viabono means "Enjoyment of Nature." The customer allows himself to be influenced by this when making his travel decision.

Peter Schmid, President of the Baden-Württemberg Hotel and Restaurant Association and a hotelier in Bad Urach, makes this point about it: "Cost reduction through rationalization is important, but it can't be the only strategy. I consider it extremely important that restaurant owners consistently take up new marketing opportunities. These include a precise definition of the target market, a clear concept and making the relevant impression in marketing." And for exactly this reason Peter Schmid was one of the first Viabono license holders.

### QUANTIFIABLE ADDED VALUE

Viabono hotels therefore offer the guest quantifiable added value as a direct result of their commitment to the environment and nature. The job of the umbrella brand is this:

- First of all to assure quality (see "examples of criteria");
- To bring out this added value efficiently;
- To specifically address potential guests and disseminators of information – such as the media and other opinion-formers;
- To create tailor-made, ie. market-ready, offers – for instance by means of flat rates;
- To pass on enquiries and bookings to Viabono hotels, and finally
- To bring together license holders in promotions, to make valuable suggestions, to make their marketing activities even more successful.

**EXAMPLES OF CRITERIA**

The following sections will run through examples of criteria from the list of 40 questions for hotels and restaurants. It is divided into 11 sections as well as questions of what it absolutely required and what is optional. Two thirds of the main points must be met for a Viabono license.

<i>"Regional Supply Chain"</i>	(Required) question: "Regional business traffic leads to more prosperity in the region. It also reduces the burden on the environment through shorter routes. Do you obtain your fresh goods mainly from the region and/or recognized ecological suppliers?"
<i>"Transport"</i>	(Required) question: Do you support the arrivals and departures of your guests with forms of public transport?  Possible answers: for example through having your own in-house transfer service, competitively priced trips or through information and advertising for public transport.
<i>"Architecture"</i>	(Optional) question: Is environmental sustainability in interior décor, eg. furnishings, being monitored, and will it be in future?  Possible answers: Yes, through the use of environmentally- and health- sustainable building materials, paints and varnishes, environmentally-sustainable furniture or floors made of domestically produced woods.

**6. Open space: Campsites for Nature Lovers**

According to the National Department of Statistics, there were 2,820 campsites for holiday camping in Germany in December 2001. 21 million overnight stays were registered by holiday campers. According to the calculations of the German Commercial Science Institute for Tourism at the University of Munich, holiday campers alone accounted for 56 million overnight stays and 1.5 billion euros of gross turnover. The umbrella brand Viabono uses this potential and the "close to nature" image of a camping holiday, to attract campers too with its "Travel portal for nature lovers". The most important marketing partner in this is the ADAC Camping and Caravanning Team.

**PHILOSOPHY FOR LIFE**

"We campsite owners offer the best possible holiday close to nature. Between Viabono and us a very high standard is achieved. In our campsite we have already put a lot into practice, which is ideally connected to the Viabono philosophy. The partnership with Viabono is therefore a clear winner for our targeted offer, awareness and the success of our campsite," enthuse Birgit and Leo Ingenlath from the Kerstgenhof Camping Park in Sonsbeck-Labbeck.

Camping businesses have brought the Viabono philosophy to life in an exemplary fashion. Thus Kerstgenhof promotes environmentally-correct transport for its guests, by renting out bicycles, putting out public transport timetables, offering some trips of its own, tours on foot, with bicycles and/or public transport, and putting bicycle repair kits, bicycle route maps and touring suggestions at their guests' disposal.

**SAVE MONEY IN A KIDS' PARADISE**

The model business makes considerable cost savings by reduced water and drainage usage. The Ingenlaths use rain-, lake-, river-, or dwell- water to irrigate their parks. Hardly noticed by the guests, all the washbasins and showers in the toilet block and most of the WCs use water-saving measures such as ball-cocks, flow restrictors or flush stoppers.

Child- and family- friendliness and nature education presented in a fun way also play a major part: the highlights are a natural water-and-sand play area for children, petting zoo on the farm, opportunities to get to know agriculture "live in the cowshed" with the cow herd or nighttime woodland walks.

**EXAMPLES OF CRITERIA**

The following sections will run through examples of criteria from the list of 40 questions for local campsites. It is divided into 11 sections as well as questions of what it absolutely required and what is optional. Two thirds of the main points must be met for a Viabono license.

<i>"Noise"</i>	(Required) question: "Which of the following noise-reduction or noise avoidance measures have you adopted?"  Possible answers: for example, side roads with traffic-calming measures and the division of pitches with the aim of minimizing the annoyance caused by car traffic.
<i>"Well-being"</i>	Possible answers: examples of fitness- and Wellness- offers; nappy-changing rooms; special offers for rainy days.  (Optional) question: "What special service are your guests entitled to?"
<i>"Nature and landscape"</i>	(Required) question: "What have you done to blend your campsite into the existing landscape better, visually and ecologically?"  Possible answers: for example making the pitches green by locating plants there, planting along walls and putting pathways in places that fit the landscape.

**7. Nature Parks with Viabono Licenses**

**NATURE PARKS – OFFERS FOR NATURE-SUSTAINABLE TRIPS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

In Germany today there are 93 nature parks. Together they cover an area of 8,500,000 hectares and incorporate 24% of the land. In terms of their central task, to make possible the maintenance, development and sustainable scale of values of the special cultural landscape together with people, nature parks have, in a very meaningful way, won.

An important goal of a nature park is to offer "sustainable" leisure and tourism. Cautious guidelines in accompaniment with groundbreaking informational material are to this end taking care that unique habitats are protected and can develop undisturbed. It has proved that attractive and educational offers often do more to help nature protection than emphasizing prohibitions. Thus for example the Uckermark Lakes Nature Park has developed a nature-sustainable waterways system for canoeists and kayakers and set it up in the lakes and rivers of the northern Uckermark.

**CO-OPERATION BETWEEN TOURISM ORGANISATIONS AND NATURE PARKS**

In some nature parks there is already co-operation between the tourist organizations and the park authorities. This should be encouraged in as many nature parks as possible, and is an essential precondition for the further development of attractive tourism offers in nature parks. Nature parks offer an opportunity for sustainable tourism development in the region, on the one hand by the infrastructural arrangements designated as important and on the other hand by carrying out the marketing of attractive offers for trips based on experiencing nature under the positively-perceived "nature park" description. On the other hand it is necessary that the tourism development of the region is closely suited to the nature park, in order to guarantee the long-term sustainability of nature and the landscape as an asset for tourism, and to guarantee the profile of the nature park for travel offers. Thus a close co-operation between tourist organizations and nature park authorities offers excellent chances of integrating the development of the region and the sustainability of nature and the landscape.

Nature parks with a Viabono license? At first glance it looks like saying the same thing twice over. Just the name "Nature Park" and the status of a protected area go with commitment to nature and the environment. Of course nature parks must as a rule be committed to sustainable tourism, however usage by people is definitely to the forefront – in contrast to National Parks. So there is plenty of scope for commitment to the environment. And: similarly as with ecologically-audited and certified tourist businesses, the status of "Nature Park" does not deliver any advantage in the highly competitive travel market.

**ENORMOUS LEVELS OF ENQUIRY**

According to travel analyses of 2003, "experiencing nature" is now (as before) one of the most important reasons to travel for Germans. In 2002 almost 80% of those asked rated it as especially important or important. Almost 26% claimed that their main holiday was a "nature holiday" and for over 45% "visiting natural attractions" was a frequent or very frequent part of their holiday programme over the previous 3 years. Nature parks are popular destinations even for short distance leisure trips or short breaks. The potential of communicating the "Joy of Nature" park is also extremely great. Nature parks which put the guest in harmony with the environment and enable him to contribute to the maintenance of natural beauty spots, are also a superb fit with Viabono.

**VIABONO OPENS UP BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPES**

VDN, the Association of German Nature Parks, sees things this way according to Manager Ulrich Köster: "In nature parks, visitors can discover the loveliest German landscapes for themselves, and can experience nature and culture through special offers, for example guided walking tours. Viabono helps the nature parks in this way, to offer guests who are looking for nature experiences and relaxation these special offers in a credible and competent way."

**EXAMPLES OF CRITERIA**

The following sections will run through examples of criteria from the list of 40 questions for nature parks. It is divided into 11 sections as well as questions of what it absolutely required and what is optional. Two thirds of the main points must be met for a Viabono license.

<p><i>"Transport"</i></p>	<p>(Required) question: "Is at least a central tourism area within the nature park accessible for visitors during the tourist season from the nearest intercity/intercity express station? What other additional measures have been taken?"</p> <p>Possible answers: examples of a shuttle service for guests, shared taxis or financial support for a private pick-up service for the hotel/restaurant.</p>
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<i>"Regional Supply Chain"</i>	<p>(Required) question: "With what further measures are the local agricultural- and forestry- concerns and possibly fisheries going to be supported?"</p> <p>Possible answers: for example through farmers'-, regional- or ecological- markets or tours, tasting of regional products or farm shops.</p>
<i>"Back-to-nature relaxation"</i>	<p>(Required) question: "Walking and cycling are certainly amongst the most popular activities of visitors to a nature park. How have you developed the relevant offers and infrastructure in your nature park?"</p> <p>Possible answers: network of marked pathways through the nature park and regular upkeep of the same; permanent signposting; special cycle route maps; themed trails; cycle rental; hiker- and cyclist-friendly accommodation.</p>

## ANNEX II VIABONO PRESENTATION

✓

# Viabono

Enjoy travelling naturally



✓

**More than 40 different environmental labels provide no guidance for the traveller.**




✓



The multioptional guest

topography: sea or mountains

Where: At home/abroad Which region?

activity or passivity

nature or culture

acomodation

all inclusive or individual

„Does nobody see me?”



✓

**Motives for travel for Germans**

Concerning my holiday, it is very important for me (%):

DIFF. 2002

1	<b>Recreation, no stress</b>	58	0
2	Being free, having time	53	0
3	Getting away from everyday life	52	-1
4	Regaining strength	52	+1
5	Sun, warmth, nice weather	47	+1
6	<b>Healthy climate</b>	42	0
7	Having time for each other	41	-1
8	Fun, enjoyment	38	0
9	<b>Experiencing nature</b>	37	+2
10	Relaxing, being lazy	33	0
13	<b>Getting out of the polluted environment</b>	28	0

Source: Travelanalyse 2002-2003



✓

**Reason to travel: Nature**

	travellers 2002 n=6.003 %
Reason to travel „Experiencing nature” very important	37,4
Reason to travel „Experiencing nature” important	40,5
Holiday programme during the last 3 years „visiting natural attractions” very frequent	14,1
Holiday programme during the last 3 years „visiting natural attractions” frequent	31,3
Sort of travel „nature holiday” primarily	6,7
Sort of travel „nature holiday” multiple answers	25,8

Source: F.I.R. (2002) - Travelanalyse 2002



✓

**The guest .....**

does **not** ask about



- ☒ heat recovery devices in the town hall,
- ☒ waste disposal on a campsite,
- ☒ flush control devices on WC's in the spa hotel,
- ☒ disposal of fats and edible oils in hotels
- ☒ etc.



### What is different about Viabono?

THE natural „well-being brand“ with added quality and enjoyment.

**base: A demanding application pack with 40 questions**

1. a strict orientation to the travellers' wishes
2. Bundling of selected travel offers under one umbrella

Viabono

### The Viabono bearers association

- founded in 2002 by 12 members
- full holder of Viabono Ltd.
- today 17 members, such as
  - environmental associations e.g. E.T.E or German Nature protection ring,
  - Tourism suppliers associations e.g. German Hotel and Restaurant Association
  - local government institutions
  - Outdoor sports organisations e.g. Biking or Canoeing Tourist Association

Viabono

### The bearers' association

<b>environmental associations</b> 	<b>tourism suppliers associations</b> 
<b>local government institutions</b> 	<b>consumer councils and others</b> 

Viabono

### Organisation chart Viabono

Viabono Ltd  
 flexibility, market-orientation

Viabono

### Development of licensees

Category	official launch	Travel and Tourism Fair 2002	beginning 2003	today
hotels	~10	~15	~40	~140
restaurants	0	0	~5	~10
campsites	0	0	~5	~10
holiday apartments	0	0	~5	~10
nature parks	0	0	~5	~10
tourism villages	0	0	~5	~10
youth hostels	0	0	~5	~10

09/2004

Viabono

### What do I have to fulfill ?

- The admission criteria -

Viabono

✓ **Basic Principles**



- Development in co-operation with lobby groups and tourism suppliers
- Goal: a catalogue of 40 questions
- Assessment: Mandatory questions plus optional questions

Viabono

✓ **Range of contents :**



- ✓ Waste
- ✓ Energy,
- ✓ Water,
- ✓ Noise,
- ✓ Well-being of guests
- ✓ Information,
- ✓ Mobility
- Architecture/Settlements
- ✓ Nature & Landscape,
- ✓ Use of local goods and services
- ✓ Environmental management,

Viabono

✓ **Careful use of resources**

**Waste**  
 Waste should be avoided or kept to a minimum. The aim is to raise the level of recycling and the re-use of materials such as glass or paper.

**Energy and Climate**  
 Energy-saving to reduce climate damage through better technology and by the use of renewable energy sources.  
 → "First class climate - for guests and the environment".

**Water**  
 Ever more technical investment is required to get drinking water. But it is comparatively easy to save water, so the use of environmentally-sustainable means makes ecological and commercial sense.

Viabono

✓ **Well being and service to the guest**

**Noise**  
 The guests should be able to enjoy themselves in peace and as far as possible avoid the stress created by noise.

**Well-being of Guests**  
 The well-being and health of the guest include measures for a good atmosphere in the accommodation and individual services. Avoiding conflicts between smokers and non-smokers and special diabetic- and hypoallergenic- service.

**Information**  
 Aim: to win over guests and co-workers in a fun way, to direct business and the community towards natural and enjoyable travelling.

Viabono

✓ **Transport**  
 Reduce the damage done by traffic through offers like pick-up service at the railway station or luggage-transport for bikers and hikers.

**Nature and Landscape**  
 Measures must be taken to protect the natural environment because it is the foundation for tourism.

**Settlements and Architecture**  
 Sustainable building and furnishing is a highly influential part of reduction of the use of resources. The structures used will be set up for many years through the community's building programme, concrete construction and furnishing as well as equipment.

Viabono

✓ **Regional Supply Networks**  
 Increase of regional net products and the shortening of the supply chain for more prosperity in a region and relieve of the strain on nature and the environment through shorter journeys.

**Eco-Management**  
 The continued reduction of negative effects of municipal or commercial processes on nature and the environment is an urgent concern. Viabono suppliers have a special responsibility for nature and environmental matters, so Viabono customers can also enjoy their trips naturally in the future.

Viabono

✓ **Example: Shower**

a reduction from 33 Liters to 7 Liter means for 1 shower:

5 Min. shower time x 33 L = 175 L per day x 365 days = 63.875 L

5 Min. shower time x 7 L = 35 L per day x 365 days = 25.550 L

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**savings = 38.325 L**

for a Hotel with 50 showers = 1.916.250 L



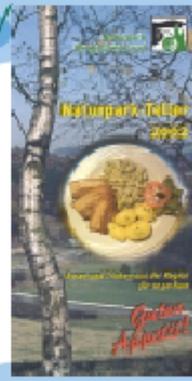


✓

**Successful Marketing**  
for ecological products



✓



**An ad for an regional and ecological meal**  
Do you like it?



✓

**Image is everything...**



0,1€/l      0,50€/l      2€/l



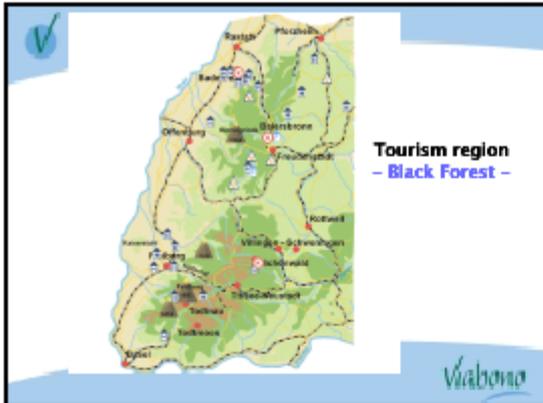
✓



**Viabono - destinations**

Click on a region





**in addition to the Internet:**  
 -Der Reiseguide für Naturgenießer -  
 „travel guide for nature hedonists”

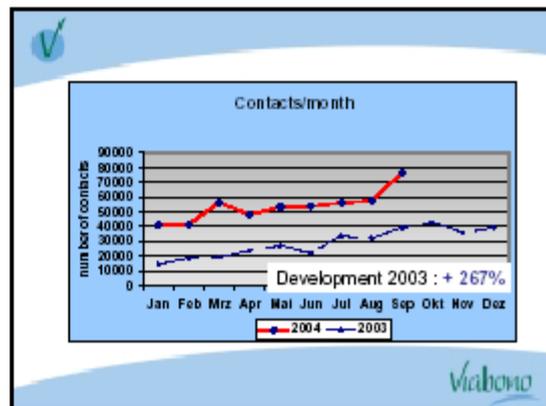
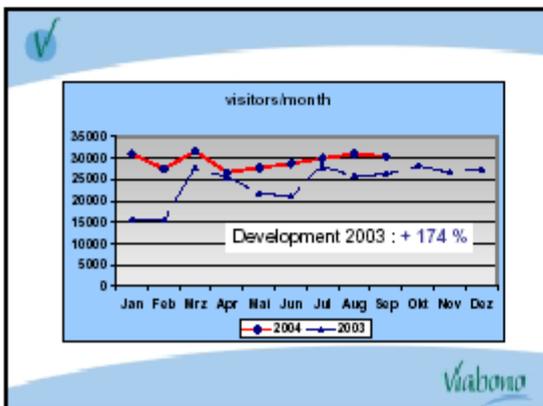
**Wellness Nature Families Romantic Cuisine Culture**

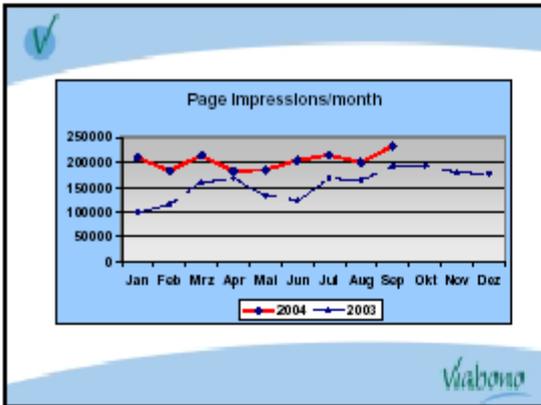
**Der Reise-Guide für Naturgenießer**

**Contains:**

- a short introduction to Viabono
- offers for six target groups
- a list of the Viabono Partners
- travel packages in different product lines

**Figures & Facts**





What does it cost?  
 - The license fees -

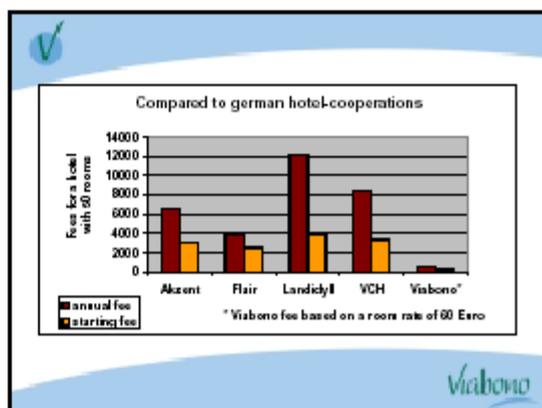
- License fees**
- choice between:
    - 1) Basis Paket = internet presentations incl. online-booking possibility
    - 2) Premium Paket = + package presentations incl. their online-booking possibility
  - depends on size and average room rate of licensee
  - fixed fees for nature parks and restaurants

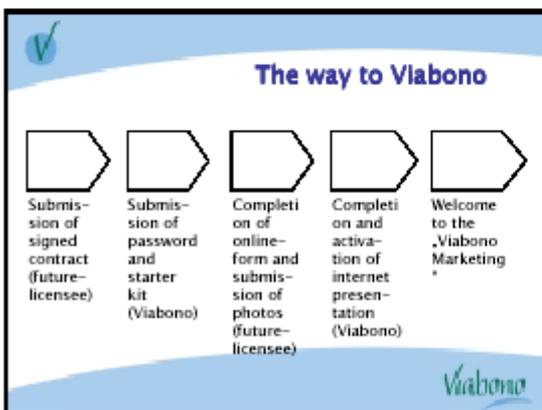
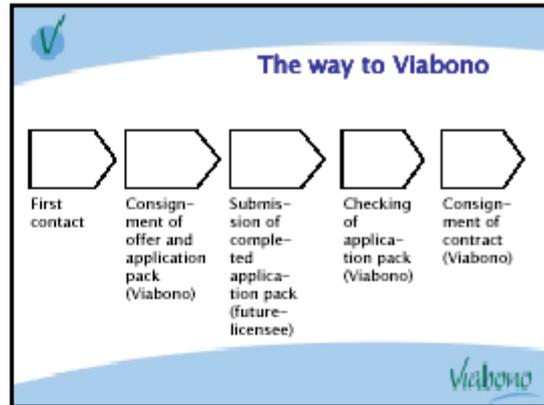
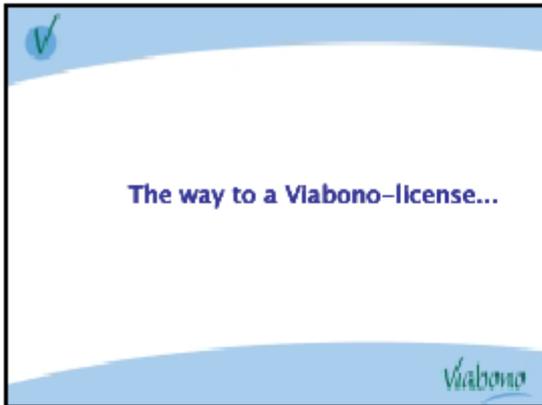
**License fees**

	Starting fee		Marketing fee/year		
	1-year contract	3-year contract	base	BASIS-Paket Supplier presentation incl. online-booking	PREMIUM-Paket presentation and their online-booking
Hotel	250,00 €	-	average room rate in single	7 (hotel < 50 beds) 8 (hotel > 50 beds)	Plus 2 m
Restaurant	150,00 €	-		99,- €	Plus 49,- Euro
Apartment	150,00 €	-	Price per day for 2 people	4 days (1-2 App.) 5 days (= 3 App.)	Plus 1 day
Camping	200,00 €	-	Comparison price out of the Camping	10 ONS (all year) 8 ONS (seasonal)	Plus 2 ONS
Youth hostel	100,00 €	-		99,- € (< 100 beds) 149,- € (> 100 beds)	Plus 49,- Euro
Destination	500,00 €	-		minimum 250,- Euro + 1,- Euro per maximum 1250,- Euro falls away if 10% of the suppliers	

**License fees: examples**

	Basis Paket fee/year	Premium Paket fee/year
hotel 50 beds Ø room rate € 40,-	€ 280,-	€ 360,-
campsite opened the whole year Ø price ONS € 18,-	€ 180,-	€ 216,-
holiday apartment 2 apartments Ø price ONS € 50	€ 200,-	€ 250,-
community 100.000 ONS/year		€ 350,-





## ANNEX III WORKSHOP AGENDA

### Agenda of the 1<sup>st</sup> Viabono Workshop, 1-4 September 2004

Day 1	September 1, 2004
	Arrival at Lauterbach/Mole (Rügen)
18.15	Ferry boat to Island Vilm
18.30	Dinner
20.30	Informal getting-together

Day II	September 2, 2004
8.00	Breakfast
9.00	Opening of the Workshop <i>Gisela Stolpe, Head of INA Vilm</i> <i>Barbara Engels, Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (Bonn)</i>
9.10	Introduction <i>Michael Meyer, Ecological Tourism in Europe</i>
10.00	History of Viabono – Learning from the past <i>Katharina Müller, Viabono GmbH</i>
10.30	Coffee Break
10.45	The criteria of Viabono for hotels, pensions, camping grounds, destinations, Nature Parks, Tour Operators <i>Katharina Müller, Viabono GmbH</i>
11.20	Discussion
11.40	The license system and marketing <i>Katharina Müller, Viabono GmbH</i>
12.10	Discussion
12.30	Lunch
14.00	Country experience in eco-labeling Government perspective – Latvia <i>Rasa Atauga, Latvian Environmental Agency</i>
14.30	Discussion
14.45	Country experience in eco-labeling NGO perspective – Latvia <i>Agnese Jakovica, Lauku Celotajs</i>
15.15	Discussion
15.30	Coffee Break
16.00	Country experience in eco-labeling Government perspective – Estonia <i>Kristine Hindriks, Estonian Ministry of Agriculture</i>
16.30	Discussion
16.45	Country experience in eco-labeling NGO perspective – Estonia <i>Mart Reimann, Estonian Ecotourism Association</i>
17.15	Discussion
17.30	Wrap-up of the day
18.30	Dinner

Day III	September 3, 2004
8.00	Breakfast
9.00	Other networking initiatives in Europe: VISIT, ECEAT, PAN Parks; European Charter <i>Stefanie Höhn, Ecological Tourism in Europe</i>
10.00	Discussion
10.30	Viabono – The case of Hungary

	<i>Anna Ivanyi, CEEWEB - Hungary</i>
10.50	Discussion
11.00	Coffee Break
11.15	Working Groups “Potentials for using the German umbrella brand” a) Government b) NGO
12.30	Lunch
14.00	Excursion on the Island of Vilm
16.00	Coffee Break
16.15	Working Groups “Potentials for using the German umbrella brand” (cont.) a) Government b) NGO
17.00	Reporting back to plenary
17.30	Discussion
18.30	Conclusions
19.00	Dinner
20.00	Closing of the Workshop

<b>Day IV</b>	<b>September 4, 2004</b>
7.00	Breakfast
7.25 or 7.55	Departure with ferry from Island Vilm

### **Agenda of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Viabono Workshop, 23-26 October 2004**

<b>Day 1</b>	<b>October 23, 2004</b>
	Arrival at Lauterbach/Mole (Rügen)
18.15	Ferry boat to Island Vilm
18.30	Dinner
20.30	Informal getting-together

<b>Day II</b>	<b>October 24, 2004</b>
8.00	Breakfast
9.00	Opening of the Workshop <i>Beate Job-Hoben, Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (Bonn)</i>
9.10	Introduction <i>Michael Meyer, Ecological Tourism in Europe</i>
9.30	History of Viabono – Learning from the past <i>Stephan Krug, Viabono GmbH</i>
10.00	The criteria of Viabono for hotels, pensions, camping grounds, destinations, Nature Parks, Tour Operators <i>Stephan Krug, Viabono GmbH</i>
10.30	Coffee Break
11.00	The license system and marketing <i>Stephan Krug, Viabono GmbH</i>
11.30	Discussion
12.00	Other networking initiatives in Europe: VISIT, ECEAT, PAN Parks; European Charter <i>Stefanie Höhn, Ecological Tourism in Europe</i>
12.30	Lunch
14.00	Gathering country experiences in eco-labeling - Poland
15.30	Coffee Break
16.00	Gathering country experiences in eco-labeling - Slovakia
17.30	Wrap-up of the day
18.30	Dinner

<b>Day III</b>	<b>October 25, 2004</b>
8.00	Breakfast
9.00	Practical example of Viabono: National Park Königsstuhl <i>Birgit Zandke-Schaffhäuser, National Park Center</i>
9.30	Discussion
10.00	Viabono – The case of Hungary <i>Anna Ivanyi, CEEWEB - Hungary</i>
10.20	Discussion
10.30	Coffee Break
11.00	Working Groups “Potentials for using the German roof brand” - Poland - Slovakia
12.30	Lunch
13:30	Excursion on the Island of Vilm
15.30	Coffee Break
16.00	Working Groups “Potentials for using the German roof brand” (cont.) - Poland - Slovakia
17.30	Reporting back to plenary
18.00	Discussion
18.30	Conclusions
19.00	Dinner
20.00	Closing of the Workshop
<b>Day IV</b>	<b>October 26, 2004</b>
7.00	Breakfast
7.25 or 7.55	Departure with ferry from Island Vilm

## ANNEX IV LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

### Workshop I: 1-4 September 2004

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## **ANNEX V    WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS**

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### **Workshop I: 1-4 September 2004**



Back from left: Mart Reimann (EE), Sanita Rancane (LV), Michael Meyer (D), Peep Tobreluts (EE),  
Middle from left: Katharina Müller (D), Barbara Engels (D), Kristine Hindriks (EE), Rasa Atauga (LV),  
Janis Zandbergs (LV)  
Front from left: Stefanie Höhn (D), Anna Ivanyi (HU), Agnese Jakovica (LV)

### **Workshop II: 25 October 2004**



Back from left: Viera Paucirova (SK), Jano Rohac (SK), Michaela Chalupova (SK), Zbyszko Pisarski (PL), Dariusz Piechowski (PL), Martina Tuptova (SK), Stephan Krug (D), Christa Morawa (D), Beate Job-Hoben (D), Agnieszka Lopata (PL), Marian Sturcel (SK)  
Front from left: Zuzana Okanikova (SK), Zuzana Sediva (SK), Artur Wiatr (PL), Petra Molnarova (SK), Michael Meyer (D), Stefanie Höhn (D), Krzysztof Wolfram (PL), Birgit Zandke-Schaffhäuser (D), Piotr Dabrowski (PL)

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[BE1]Diesen Satz verstehe ich inhaltlich nicht. Weglassen, oder umformulieren.