



# 2017 Certification and Awards Programme



Version 2.5.8 - May 2017

## Programme Guide

This guide is for the destinations of the future, and for consultants and NGOs interested in the field of sustainable destination management.

Learn how to make sustainable tourism a business opportunity for you.

## Summary

Green Destinations is the world's largest partnership in the field of sustainable tourism: 50 partners in 30 countries, led by the Green Destinations Foundation.

The Green Destinations Partners invite destinations around the world to apply for **global recognition** through the world's leading sustainable destinations awards and certification programme. Green Destinations offers the only destination certification programme that is connected to **visibility in the travel market**.

Two types of recognition exist: full Certification, and pre-certification benchmark Awards:

- **Certification** through the **Green Destinations Standard**, is the ultimate level of global recognition for destination quality and sustainable destination **management**. Destinations that are in full compliance with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Recognised Green Destinations Standard, consisting of 100 policy and management criteria, will become **Green Destinations Certified**.

It can take years before a destination is certified. Therefore, Green Destinations created a pre-certification Award programme

- **Awards** recognize excellence in the primary aspects connected to destination's **quality offer to travellers**. Awards recognise excellence in one or several of the following aspects:
  - Destination management
  - Nature & Scenery
  - Environment & Climate
  - Culture & Tradition
  - Social Well-being, Business & Hospitality.

Through the Green Destinations programme, destinations can apply for the following Awards:

- **QualityTourism Awards**, for any type of touristic destination, or
- **QualityCoast Awards**: similar to QualityTourism, but especially for seaside and waterfront destinations who prefer that title, e.g. QualityCoast Gold Destination. Specific attention is paid to beach and waterfront management and performance.

These Awards programmes use BasiQ Benchmark and four Award levels: Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum.

The highest rated Award winners will be eligible for the annual **Sustainable Destinations Top 100** Awards. Every year there is an international Top 100 Awards ceremony, complemented by national and local Awards ceremonies. In 2016, Awards were presented at Global Green Destinations Day, with 350 participants from 36 countries. Award level validity is evaluated every two (2) years, which often results into a higher Award level.

By working together with specialised strategic advisers and companies providing tools and solutions enhancing sustainability and quality, the Green Destinations programme is designed to strengthen participating destinations, resulting in increasing levels every year, from BasiQ towards Platinum.

## What are the benefits?

Green Destinations Foundation and its Representatives around the world offer an outstanding opportunity for destinations, regions and countries to improve their sustainability, quality, competitiveness, and marketing.

You will benefit from:

- an assessment of strengths and weaknesses based upon a GSTC-Recognised Standard
- an innovative strategic approach and an agenda for improvement for destination management and development
- improved monitoring of sustainability and quality through the GD Assessment & Reporting platform
- free inclusion in the GD Travel Map, a new approach to present your destination and its unique travel offer to the travel market (see Annex 4)
- enrolment in the Sustainable Destinations Top 100 Awards programme
- membership of the Green Destinations Network; your active destination stakeholders can become Green Destinations Ambassadors, an active community of destination professionals
- the most affordable destination-level program available in the marketplace.

## Who can participate?

The programme is open for destinations that have someone in charge of destination management. Destinations participating in Green Destinations' Awards & Certification programme pay an annual fee which depends on the size of the destination (see Annex 1).

## Joint participation by a combination of communities

Adjacent administrative entities that consider themselves as one destination (e.g. neighbouring communities in and around a national park, several similar towns combined in a county) may enquire whether they can participate as one destination. In this case, evidence should be provided showing that the combined destination:

1. is a coherent group of municipalities, together forming a small island or a small region;
2. has a common governance and common policies promoting the sustainable development of the territory;
3. is marketed under a common destination brand or name.

Cities with more than 250,000 inhabitants cannot be considered for inclusion in a combined territory.

## What are the criteria?

The criteria of the **Green Destinations Standard** play a key role in the selection of all awards. The Standard makes sustainable development concrete, objective, and measurable. Destinations can adapt their sustainability management system and implement actions according to the criteria, in order to obtain recognition of their efforts.

Our Standard is compatible with ETIS, ISO 14001, EMAS and the Global Reporting Initiative.

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The standard is [published here](#), and the application procedure is fully operational in our [Assessment and Reporting platform](#).

The Green Destinations Standard consists of 100 policy criteria, covering six main themes:

1. Destination Management
2. Nature & Scenery
3. Environment & Climate
4. Culture & Tradition
5. Social Well-being
6. Business & Hospitality.

The criteria are supported by quantitative indicators.

### From Awards to Certification

An assessment of policy criteria and quantitative indicators determines whether a destination is eligible for an Award (Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum). Destinations that comply with all 100 criteria are eligible for 'certification' (**Green Destinations Certified**): the ultimate level of sustainability recognition. We offer destination certification through select partners (e.g. [in Slovenia](#) through the [National Tourism Board](#)) as the final but challenging goal of our programme, available only to destinations that are fully committed to sustainability.

Therefore, our programme has a step-wise approach from Bronze to Platinum Awards, thereby:

- maximising support to destinations in increasing their sustainable destination management capacity;
- recognising destinations' progress in sustainability management over time; and
- maximising destination marketing opportunities through our Award programme. Our Award levels and the transparent reporting are far more interesting for travellers than certification.

In this way, we offer the most attractive programme for destinations that not only want to improve their management systems and marketing.

### Participation in the programme, option 1: "do-it-yourself"

Applicants for Awards and certification appoint a destination coordinator who registers to the online Assessment & Reporting Platform. The coordinator is expected to make a self-assessment by:

- a. providing evidence of compliance to **criteria**, e.g. *"Facilities are in place for an adequate separation of municipal and industrial waste"*.
- b. providing information for relevant **indicators**, e.g. *"% separated municipal waste"*.

The destination coordinator will receive technical online support by a Green Destinations coach on how to start on the online platform, and will answer any questions about the procedure. The coach will advise when the self-assessment is complete, and when the audit can start.

New destinations are entitled up to 3-months free orientation period on the online platform, before they will be invoiced for their annual membership fee. Invoicing may be done earlier, as soon as the destination requests a more intensive coaching.

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A Green Destinations desk auditor will confirm whether sufficient evidence is provided by the destination, considering 100 criteria and ca. 100 indicators measuring quality and trends. In this way, the appropriate Award level is defined. After the desk assessment, the destination is informed about the result. In the year after this assessment, the destination is visited by an independent auditor, who will check local compliance.

Participating destinations pay an Annual Membership Fee (Annex 1) that covers the cost of the desk audit. Membership fees in principle include a bi-yearly on-site audit, although additional audit costs may apply including but not limited to costs of travel, accommodation and subsistence. On-site audit costs will be estimated and quoted at the start of the certification procedure.

In case the independent on-site auditor identifies inconsistencies in compliance, the destination will be requested to take any corrective measures necessary to ensure compliance within 6 to 12 months, and provide clear proof thereof. In case a second on-site audit is deemed necessary by the certifying body, the cost of this local audit shall be paid by the destination, in addition to the Annual Fee. This fee depends on the size (population) of the applicant destination.

Applicants are advised to have their staff trained in sustainable tourism destination management. Only in this way can the destination staff make progress in terms of capacity building. Also, staff trained in sustainable tourism destination management is a requirement of destination certification.

By working with the online platform (Assessment & Reporting System), destination staff will gain practical experience in various approaches and tools.

### Option 2: Green Destinations Support Service (GDSS)

In this option, the same technical coaching is offered as in option 1 (as part of the annual membership fee), but additionally the destination receives more active assistance in how to perform the self-assessment and in the upload of information and evidence documents. So in case a destination needs external expert support, usually only in the first year, it may request the Green Destinations Support Service (GDSS). A Green Destinations Trainer-Advisor is available to destination coordinators in any required aspect through remote support (Skype, e-mail, telephone), on-site support, or through local stakeholder meetings online training and capacity building activities. GDSS will help the destination coordinator in delivering a destination assessment and be well prepared for an audit.

The support service is entirely flexible in the number of hours and in the period of support. A standard online support package may correspond to ca. 60 hours, during the assessment procedure, usually 4-6 weeks, but if needed up to ca. 12 months. A standard on-site support package may be a seven days training involving the destination coordinator and a small group of stakeholders.

GDSS-fees are additional to the annual membership fee, and the costs vary per country. [Contact Green Destinations for more information.](#)

## You cannot decide? Try our low-cost first steps for starters!

If you are not yet convinced about the benefits of our Awards and Certification programme, you may be interested in our stepwise approach. The first two steps for starters do not require Green Destinations membership, just a one-time fee (see Annex 2).

### Starter Service – Basic Quality Benchmarking

Services and benefits include:

- Access to the online Green Destinations assessment platform.
- Access to Green Destinations indicator database, upload of your data.
- Technical assistance and verification of the 15 criteria of the Quick Scan (these 15 are also used for the nomination of the Sustainable Destinations Top 100).
- “BasiQ Benchmark” certificate specifying basic quality and Quick Scan performance.
- Destination featured on Green Destinations Map and Ratings listings.

### Starter Plus Service – Expert-supported Desk Assessment

Services and benefits include:

BasiQ benefits plus:

- Guidance and tools to help achieve compliance with the Green Destinations Standard.
- Destination Baseline Assessment supported by a Green Destinations coach-advisor.
- Independent evaluation via a desk audit, the results confirmed in a “Green Destinations Verified” certificate.
- Improved visibility and score on the GD Travel Map and in the Sustainable Destinations Top 100.

## Annexes

Annex 1. Annual fees of Awards and Certification programme

Annex 2. First steps for Starters fees

Annex 3. Green Destinations Assessment & Reporting

Annex 4. Exposure via Online Travel Agents

Annex 5. Green Destinations Partners and Representatives

## Further information

QualityCoast: [www.qualitycoast.info](http://www.qualitycoast.info), [secretariat@qualitycoast.info](mailto:secretariat@qualitycoast.info).

Green Destinations: [www.greendestinations.info](http://www.greendestinations.info), [info@greendestinations.info](mailto:info@greendestinations.info).

Leiden, the Netherlands, March 2017

## Annex 1. Annual fees of Awards and Certification programme

**Table 1.** Annual membership fees destinations (not being Marine Protected Areas, Nature or National Parks, etc). All fees are excl. Value Added Tax (VAT).

Number of inhabitants in the destination	Option 1: Annual Membership Fee *	Option 2: Annual Membership Fee plus GD Support Service (GDSS) in year one
Less than 10.000	€ 1.500	€ 1.500 plus GDSS fee**
Less than 50.000	€ 2.000	€ 2.000 plus GDSS fee**
Less than 100.000	€ 2.500	€ 2.500 plus GDSS fee**
Less than 250.000	€ 3.000	€ 3.000 plus GDSS fee**
Less than 500.000	€ 3.500	€ 3.500 plus GDSS fee**
Less than 1.000.000	€ 4.000	€ 4.000 plus GDSS fee**
More than 1.000.000	€ 5.000	€ 5.000 plus GDSS fee**

**Table 2.** Annual membership fees, for Protected Areas (Nature or National Parks, Marine Protected Areas); Resort Stewardship areas (eco-resort destinations with several connected facilities and a natural area for which the resort has a special responsibility and stewardship) and other tourist Attractions (destinations usually having no resident population). All fees are excl. VAT.

Park area in square km	Annual Membership Fee *	Option 2: Annual Membership Fee plus GD Support Service (GDSS) in year one
Less than 10	€ 1.500	€ 1.500 plus GDSS fee**
Less than 250	€ 2.000	€ 2.000 plus GDSS fee**
More than 250	€ 2.500	€ 2.500 plus GDSS fee**

\*) Annual Membership Fee includes access to the GD online platform (Assessment & Reporting System), desk audits for the benchmark Awards; membership of the Green Destinations Community, mailings, marketing benefits a.o. Additional costs may apply to the GD certification procedure including local audit fees, and costs of travel and subsistence of the auditor. Ask your country representative. Currently certification is based upon the GSTC-Recognised Green Destinations Standard. GSTC-requirements in connection to a future GSTC-Approved status of Green Destinations certification may result into higher costs. But also in the future destinations can continue to choose between the current certification and a (possibly more expensive) GSTC-Approved Green Destinations certification.

\*\*\*) Green Destinations Support Service: this service is entirely flexible in the number of hours and in the period of support. Fees vary per country.

## Annex 2. First Steps for Starters fees

**Table 3.** First steps for starters packages, and fees. Starters packages do not require payment of the Green Destinations membership fee, and are one-year agreements. All fees are excl. Value Added Tax (VAT).

Steps for starters package	Fee	Services and benefits
<b>Starter Service: Basic Quality Benchmarking</b>	€ 350	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to online GD sustainability management system.</li> <li>• Access to GD indicator database, upload of your data.</li> <li>• BasiQ Benchmark certificate in case of sufficient performance.</li> <li>• Destination featured on GD Map and Ratings listings.</li> </ul>
<b>Starter Plus Service: Expert supported Baseline Assessment, verified by GD desk auditor</b>	€ 960	<p>BasiQ benefits plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidance and tools to help achieving compliance to the Standard.</li> <li>• Baseline Assessment, support by a GD coach.</li> <li>• Verification (desk audit) by a GD trainer-auditor</li> <li>• “Green Destinations Verified” certificate specifying evaluation results and providing an indication of your potential Award level.</li> <li>• Improved visibility and score on GD Map and Ratings listings</li> </ul>



## Annex 3. Green Destinations Assessment & Reporting

All destinations participating in the Green Destinations Awards programme will benefit from the Green Destinations Standard monitoring & reporting system, which is now applying three groups of criteria and indicators:

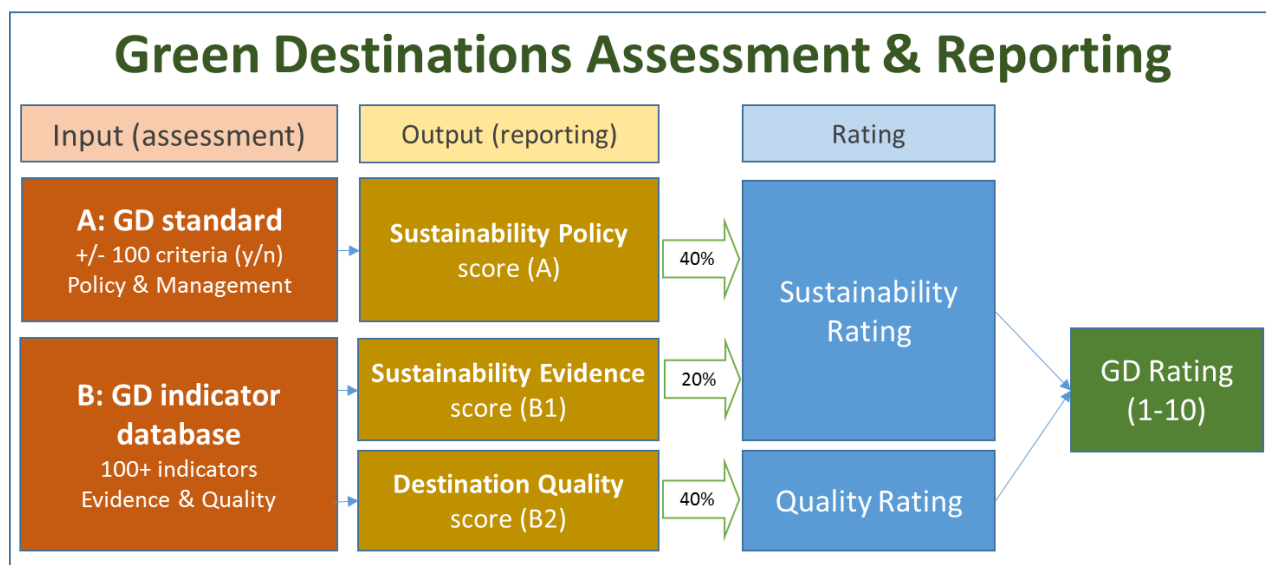
**A. Policy & Management Criteria:** measuring **compliance to the Green Destinations Standard**. Compliance to these criteria can only be assessed by experts, e.g. through an Award assessment, certification process, or regional/country baseline assessment.

**B1. Sustainability Evidence indicators**, identifying trends and effective results of policy performance, or the lack of it. Data are collected from publicly available sources (often GIS data and maps). For each indicator, all data are scaled in a database, from 1 (lowest performance) up to 10 (highest performance).

**B2. Quality indicators**, chosen to translate the complex concept of “destination sustainability” into information that is not only relevant to destination managers, but also to the public: this is the core of the Green Destinations database. Data are collected from publicly available sources and to a limited extent through expert assessment. Quality indicator data is also scaled in the database.

Together they provide the framework for the Green Destinations Reporting system (fig. 1):

- Destination Sustainability is measured through a combination of the criteria based upon GSTC-D (A), and trends indicators (B1).
- Sustainability related “Destination Quality” is measured through the quality indicators (B2).



**Fig. 1. Main elements of the Green Destinations Assessment and Reporting system (GDAR version 1.8) illustrating the structure of assessment and reporting.** Destinations, regions and countries can use GD Standard for interactive assessment and monitoring on all relevant Green Destinations Criteria and indicators.

The Green Destinations Assessment & Reporting system has been developed for two main reasons:

- To assist destinations in identifying and analysing weak elements in their policies, as a basis for an agenda for improvement.
- To inform consumers and the travel industry on any possible evidence related to the sustainability of as many destinations as possible, whether certified or non-certified.

## **Green Destinations Awards & Certification - Programme Guide**

The system enables every destination to show how exactly they “make a difference” when they receive recognition through the Awards programme or become certified. Certification without transparency will not add to the credibility of sustainability claims in general or certification in particular. In combination with the Green Destinations Reporting System, our destination award and certification programme provides transparency on all main issues that consumers associate with sustainability.

For destinations not able or prepared to participate in our independent assessment program, the GD reporting system still enables to report thematic quality and sustainability ratings to our travel business partners.

A Green Destinations database has been created as a destination support system for monitoring and reporting. The database includes data for all countries, regions, provinces and ca. 40.000 smaller administrative entities (responding with potential tourism destinations). The system informs the creation of quality and sustainability maps for destination policy makers and stakeholders. In addition, it enables consumers to compare destinations through indicator performance; this can help consumers in the process of holiday destinations selection, via booking platforms. See figures 2 and 3 in Annex 4 below.

## Annex 4. Green Destinations exposure via Online Travel Agents

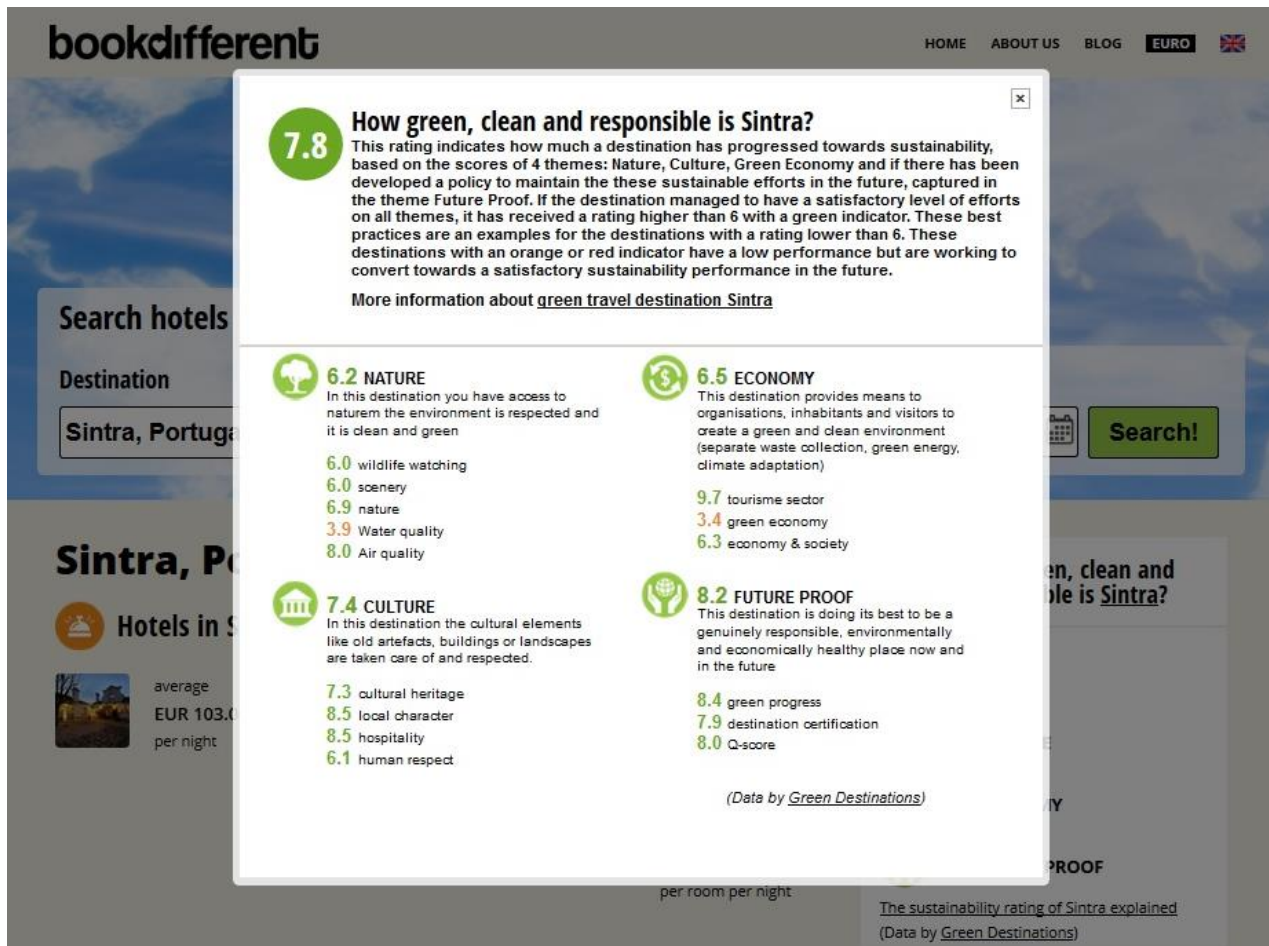
### Promotion through Booking.com affiliate BookDifferent.com

BookDifferent.com promotes “green destinations” through its [Green Travel Destinations map](#) (fig. 2 and 3). In this way, it enables its clients to compare destinations with information from the Green Destinations database. After assessment in our programme, destinations will be better visible on this map with more detailed information than destinations that are not participating in the program.

The screenshot displays the BookDifferent.com search interface and a map of the Lisbon region. The search bar includes fields for 'Destination', 'Check-in date', and 'Check-out date', with a 'Search!' button. Below the search bar, the heading 'How green is your travel destination?' is followed by a paragraph explaining the Green Destination Rating (GDR) tool. The map shows various locations in the Lisbon region, with a detailed pop-up for Sintra. The pop-up displays a total GDR of 7.8 and four sub-categories: Nature (6.2), Culture (7.4), Economy (6.5), and Future Proof (8.2). A legend at the bottom indicates that green pins represent high scores, yellow pins represent medium scores, and red pins represent low scores for sustainability.

**Fig. 2. BookDifferent.com enables its clients to compare destinations with information from the GD database. This screenshot shows the example of the Portuguese Lisbon region, where Cascais, Sintra and the Oeste region (from Torres Vedras and S. Cruz up to Peniche and Nazaré) make a true green belt along the sea.**

[www.bookdifferent.com/en/green-travel-destinations/](http://www.bookdifferent.com/en/green-travel-destinations/)



**Fig. 3. BookDifferent.com adds information from the Green Destinations database and assessments on its hotel booking platform. After assessment, destinations will be better visible. This screenshot shows the example of Sintra (Portugal). [www.bookdifferent.com/en/green-travel-destinations/pt/city/-2176842/](http://www.bookdifferent.com/en/green-travel-destinations/pt/city/-2176842/)**

## NEW: Promotion on the GD Travel Map

Participating destinations will also be featured in the new GD Travel Map initiative and promoted to consumers at no additional cost. This entirely new approach will be launched at ITB Berlin 2018 to present destinations and their quality offer to the travel market. Destinations participating in the Green Destinations programme are offered free inclusion in the GD Travel Map before the official launch.

**We will ask you to appoint a few “Green Destinations Ambassadors” and together with them...**

- we will identify services and businesses that comply with the Green Destinations’ criteria
- we will help you promote and sell services B2B and B2C
- we will share ideas and needs relating to the travel market
- we will feature you and your businesses, and share your Ambassadors’ stories in our social media.

## Annex 5. Green Destinations Partners and Representatives

Green Destinations is represented by Partners and experts working from many countries, thus reducing cost and enhancing expertise and involvement. Our Partners and Representatives are based in:

AFRICA	ASIA - PACIFIC	EUROPE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South Africa</li> <li>• Tanzania</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cambodia</li> <li>• China</li> <li>• India</li> <li>• Indonesia</li> <li>• Iran</li> <li>• Israel</li> <li>• Korea</li> <li>• Lao PDR</li> <li>• Malaysia</li> <li>• Thailand</li> <li>• Turkey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Netherlands</li> <li>• Austria</li> <li>• Estonia</li> <li>• Finland</li> <li>• France</li> <li>• Germany</li> <li>• Greece</li> <li>• Lithuania</li> <li>• Portugal</li> <li>• Serbia</li> <li>• Slovenia</li> <li>• Spain</li> </ul>
THE AMERICAS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Argentina</li> <li>• Brazil</li> <li>• Canada</li> <li>• Caribbean region</li> <li>• Colombia</li> <li>• Chile</li> <li>• USA</li> </ul>		

### Official Representatives of the GD Certification & Awards programme:

<b>Albania:</b>	AXSIOS, contact Dr. Ioannis Pappas: <a href="mailto:yp@axsios.com">yp@axsios.com</a>
<b>Austria:</b>	ÖAR Regionalberatung, contact Karl Reiner: <a href="mailto:reiner@oear.at">reiner@oear.at</a> .
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<b>Croatia:</b>	GoodPlace, contact Mrs. Jana Apih (Slovenia Green, TBC): <a href="mailto:jana@goodplace.si">jana@goodplace.si</a> , and AXSIOS, contact Dr. Ioannis Pappas: <a href="mailto:yp@axsios.com">yp@axsios.com</a>
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<b>Greece, Crete</b> (coastal destinations, QualityCoast):	Mr. Vasilis Zisimopoulos: <a href="mailto:info@costanostrum.org">info@costanostrum.org</a>
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<b>Korea:</b>	for QualityCoast: FEE-Korea.
<b>Kosovo:</b>	AXSIOS, contact Dr. Ioannis Pappas: <a href="mailto:yp@axsios.com">yp@axsios.com</a>
<b>Malta:</b>	EUCC-Malta; and AXSIOS, contact Dr. Ioannis Pappas: <a href="mailto:yp@axsios.com">yp@axsios.com</a>

## Green Destinations Awards & Certification - Programme Guide

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**Portugal:** ABAE, FEE-Portugal (TBC)

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**Slovenia:** Slovenian Tourism Board, contact Mrs. Jana Apih: [jana@goodplace.si](mailto:jana@goodplace.si).

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**Taiwan:** Sustainable Travel Taiwan, contact Mrs. Monique Chen: [smallj3000@googlemail.com](mailto:smallj3000@googlemail.com).

**Turkey:** AXSIOS, contact Dr. Ioannis Pappas: [yp@axsios.com](mailto:yp@axsios.com)

**FOR ANY OTHER COUNTRY:** GD Secretariat, contact Hugo de Jong: [hugo@greendestinations.info](mailto:hugo@greendestinations.info).