

RURAL TOURISM QUALITY (RTQ) STATE OF ART – 2008

Introduction

The present review was made under the project QUALITOOL (<http://www.celotajs.lv/cont/prof/proj/Leonardo2008/Leonardo2008.html>) developing a web based quality check and training tool for rural tourism (RT) accommodations, based on the minimum quality standards of EuroGites (www.eurogites.org) , the European federation of Farm and Village Tourism.

The aim of the review is to provide information for assessment of the relevance of the EuroGites minimum quality standards in the present situation. The conclusions of the review will be used to propose updates.

The respondents were asked to describe RT quality schemes in their countries, availability of RT training for providers, and quality issues/problems concluded from the most frequent customer complaints.

The review consists of the:

1. Review summary.
2. Original responses grouped by countries and by questions.

Review respondents – the following rural tourism organizations (project partners and members of EuroGites):

NUMBER	ORGANISATION	COUNTRY
1.	Austrian Farm Holidays Association	Austria
2.	Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism	Bulgaria
3.	Union of Rural Tourism	Czech Republic
4.	ELKANA – The Biological Farming Association	Georgia
5.	GUEST INN	Greece
6.	Association Pour ke Tourisme Rural (APTR)	Luxemburg
7.	Andalusian Rural Accommodation Network (R.A.A.R. Red Andaluza de Alojamiento Rurales)	Spain
8.	Privetur	Portugal
9.	Kmetijsko gozdarska zbornica Slovenije Kmetijsko gozdarski zavod Celje (Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia, Agriculture and Forestry Institute Celje)	Slovenia
10.	Federation of Hungarian Rural and Agrotourism	Hungary
11.	Fédération des gites de Wallonie	Belgium
12.	Latvian Country Tourism Association	Latvia

Contents

Contents.....	2
I. Review summary.....	3
1. Rural tourism quality schemes – bodies responsible for quality standards.....	3
2. Structure, grading levels, symbols, validity of inspection.....	3
3. Financing the quality schemes	4
4. Relation to other existing quality schemes	4
5. Support policies (grants, technical assistance)	4
6. RT provider training for quality - seminars and training literature.....	4
7. Provider motivation for training.	5
8. Customer complaints	5
II. Original responses grouped by countries and by questions.....	6
1. RT quality schemes – bodies responsible for quality standards.....	6
1.1. Overview - situation in the rural tourism quality at the national level in Spain:	8
2. Structure of the quality schemes, grading levels, symbol, validity term of certification	11
2.1. Structure of the criteria and validity term of certification	11
2.2. Grading levels and symbol (e.g. minimum requirements, categories of quality):.....	18
2.3. Compulsory or voluntary scheme:.....	23
3. Financing the quality schemes	24
4. Relation to other existing schemes (based on another scheme, same criteria or parameters,):	26
5. Support policies (grants, technical assistance, ...)	27
6. RT provider training for quality - training seminars and literature.....	28
6.1. Training seminars.....	28
6.2. Training literature:.....	30
7. How RT providers are motivated for training:.....	32
8. RT quality issues/problems.	33

I. Review summary

1. Rural tourism quality schemes – bodies responsible for quality standards.

Rural tourism quality standards are set by the following:

1. State agencies
2. Ministries
3. Public-private organisations
4. Provider associations (local/regional/national)
5. Quality requirements set by the law
6. Federations of provider associations
7. International organizations

In the majority of the respondent countries basic accommodation standards (or minimum requirements) are set by national authorities: ministries, state agencies, etc. , or governed by the law. Mostly they cover technical aspects. The levels of detail in which requirements are set by statutory institutions and by the law, differ very much between countries. In several countries, parallel quality schemes exist – those, set by the state authorities and those adopted by the RT provider organisations on the national, regional level. Actual running of quality schemes – inspections, certifications, etc. is often delegated to public or private organizations, also when the standards themselves are set by ministries or other state institutions. RT provider organizations establish their quality schemes and labels for product improvement and marketing purposes, motivating RT providers to achieve higher quality grading levels and, in some cases, providing consultations.

The level of governance of rural tourism quality standards by the state authorities differ very much between countries. It can be assumed that the quality schemes run by RT organisations will have more flexibility towards international homologation.

2. Structure, grading levels, symbols, validity of inspection

The following main criteria groups exist in all the reviewed quality schemes:

1. Technical facilities
2. Services
3. Hospitality
4. Safety
5. Environment
6. Specialisations

Most systems cover technical and hospitality aspects. They differ in the level of detail in structuring, in the number of criteria and scoring methods for grading levels. RT organizations running their own quality schemes recognize the continuous need to update and improve them. In average, there are 3-4 grading levels. Some quality schemes have additional criteria for specialization, others just give extra scores. For international marketing, at present, it is too difficult to compare the same grading level in different countries (even if the number of levels is the same) as the standards required for each grading level still differ. It does not help international recognition of rural tourism.

Most of the quality schemes use quality symbols that are associatively related to country life and nature. In some cases stars are used, which is misleading for the customer, as stars are recognised symbol in hotel industry and leads the customer to misunderstood expectations regarding standards in rural tourism.

Majority of the schemes described are voluntary. They are compulsory for the members of the respective RT organisations.

The term of validity varies between non-limited to 7 years. The most frequent period is 2-3 years.

3. Financing the quality schemes

Assessment takes place through:

1. Commissions (representatives of RT organisations, municipalities, providers, etc.)
2. Inspections from professionals (e.g., association's staff, independent certification companies)
3. Self assessment by providers (not for the highest grades)

Inspections are financed in the following ways:

1. By RT providers (directly or through membership fees)
2. Partly by the providers and partly subsidised.
3. By RT organisations (using projet funding or other sources)
4. By local or national authorities

Where inspection costs are covered directly by providers and are not included in the membership fees, they range between 42,- EUR to 1000,- EUR. Often the costs are included in the application fee or membership fees of a RT organisation.

4. Relation to other existing quality schemes

Most of the quality schemes are original/nationally or regionally specific. International quality labels as ECEAT and EU Green Flower ecolabel are mentioned as examples as well as methodology of ISO 9000; ISO 14001. Gites de France quality scheme is the only national quality scheme, used as an example. In Spanish "Olive" system the grading levels are recognised as equivalent or superior to grading levels of quality schemes in other countries (UK, France, Austria, Germany). The Latvian „Butterfly" system also relies on the examples of the UK, France, Austria, Germany.

5. Support policies (grants, technical assistance)

Technical assistance, consultations are available to RT providers in most countries as funded by regiona/national funding schemes and EU funds. RT providers use the opportunities of EU funding support directly.

6. RT provider training for quality - seminars and training literature

Mainly the seminars are organised in the following way:

1. Regular seminars by RT organisations, partly subsidised.
2. Training establishments with programmes in tourism.
3. Seminars by different organisations, local and regional authorities, depending on funding availability (national, EU funding).

In most cases, there is no regular funding for seminars.

The following forms of training literature exist:

1. Training materials written by practitioners, RT organizations.
2. Training materuials by academic staff.
3. Translated training literature – without localisation.
4. Accessible on the web site.

Availability of training aids and reference literature differs very much between countries. There is a lack of efficient, practical, time-saving training aids for rural tourism providers.

7. Provider motivation for training.

In average, RT providers are motivated for training where they see direct link between training and increase of business.

1. Self-motivation of providers – willingnes to learn, improve skills, Exchange experience.
2. Link with quality grading.
3. Financial motivation – free seminars.
4. Improved quality through training – more satisfied guests.

8. Customer complaints

Customer feedback is not available to organisations in all countries. However, it is important to find drawbacks and make attempts to prevent the typical problems, incorporating the respective issues in training.

1. Misleading information/incorrect presentation of the product.
2. Poor technical condition of the facilities (worn-out furniture, bathroom equipment, etc.)
3. Room and bed sizes.
4. Lack of sufficient kitchen equipment
5. Problems with technical functionality of heating, lighting, water supply, etc.
6. Poor maintenance of outdoor areas.
7. Lack of local information (things to see and doo in the surroundings)
8. Poor signposting
9. Communication problems – languages, insufficient understanding of guests' needs.
10. Unclear information, prices, booking and cancellation.

II. Original responses grouped by countries and by questions.

1. RT quality schemes - bodies responsible for quality standards

Country	Organisation/quality scheme	Comments
Austria	Austrian Farm Holidays Association	
Bulgaria	1. Tourism State Agency	
	2. BAAT - Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism	
	3. Authentic Bulgaria Association	
	4. Ministry of Environment and waters	
Czech Republic	1. Ministry of Regional Development of Czech Republic.	Accommodation facilities marked by the certification symbol fulfill the requirements of the "Recommended Standards" issued by the Ministry of Regional Development of Czech Republic.
	2. Union of Rural Tourism	The Union certifies small camps, self-catering cottages, summer flats, apartments and small family guesthouses (B&B) in the countryside.
	ECEAT - mark for facilities, which fulfil the international ecological standards.	
	Projekt "Cyklisté vítáni" (Project "Welcome cyclists") - national system of quality in tourism services for cyclists.	
	Klub českých turistů (Czech tourist club) - certifies guest-houses (higher number of beds), categories: * or **.	
	Kempy a chatové osady (Camps and cottage settlements - it is'n exact translation) - certify bigger camps, categories * ** *** **** *. Association of hotels and restaurants (Asociace hotelů a restaurací) - certifies hotels, hotels garni, boarding houses and motels.	
	NGO ELKANA	
Georgia	NGO ELKANA	
Greece	Guest inn Network	The ministry of tourism (EOT) is responsible for the permit and for all controls most in technical, equipment and security level. The Agrotouristiki SA organization

		(created by the state). Associations (national and locals) delegate their representatives to inform the ministry of tourism about the problems of the sector.
Luxemburg	Ministry of Tourism, Rural Tourism and Ministry of Agriculture	
Spain	1. Spanish Tourism Quality System (SCTE) ICTE: Institute for Spanish Tourism Quality - Certification Entity created especially for tourism businesses.	ICTE is a private, independent, nonprofit body, recognized throughout the national level at level of the Administration and with important financial backing of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism.
	2. "Ears" Quality Classification System ASETUR: Spanish Rural Tourism Association	Asetur is a private, independent, nonprofit federation in which most of regional associations are represented
	1. "Olives" Quality Classification System RAAR: Andalusian Rural Accommodation Network (Red Andaluza de Alojamientos Rurales)	RAAR is a Regional provider / entrepreneur association in Andalusia (Spain) private, independent, nonprofit association of nearly 300 rural accommodation owners of Andalusia and 3 regional associations. Created in 1991. Activities: lobbying, training, marketing, technical assistance, project work, sales. RAAR was the first to implement a Quality Classification System for Rural Tourism in Spain (1996).
	2. Andalusian Nature Park brand (marca parque natural de Andalucía) - ecolabel Ministry of the Environment Junta de Andalucía (Andalusian regional Government)	Responsible of Environmental policies in the region Joint venture with Andanatura foundation (consulting agency)
Portugal	The Law	The minimum quality criteria to RT are set by the law (area of a single and a double room, number of rooms allowed in the diferent kind of accommodation - Turismo de Habitação, Turismo Rural. Agro-Turismo, Casa de Campo, Turismo de Aldeia e Hotel Rural – existence or not of private bathroom, breakfast ingredients, free use of water and energie,etc).
Slovenia	Ministry of Economy of Slovenia	
Hungary	Federation of Hungarian Rural and Agrotourism	The Federation represents the economic and legal rights of the hosts, cooperates with other organizations, which deal with tourism to support and foster rural and agrotourism. The main target is to improve living conditions of the rural population.
Belgium (region)	1. The ministry of tourism	The ministry of tourism is controlling the quality control of any type of accomodation (b&b, guest-houses, holidaycottages, these 3 forming the rural section,

Wallonie)		rooms,hotels,campings, holiday villages etc.). The Ministry issues authorisations to operate for rural tourism businesses.
	2. Accueil champêtre – RT provider organisation in farm sector.	The provider organisations award labels according to criteria on the top of the technical requirements set by the Ministry. The purpose of labelling is to guarantee the customer compliance with more subjective criteria, such as friendly welcome, decoration, cleanliness, information and guidance about what to do and what to see around, use of local products, and also compliance with legal rules.
	3. Fédération des Gîtes de Wallonie – RT provider organisation in non-farming sector.	
Latvia	Latvian Country Tourism association.	

1.1. Overview - situation in the rural tourism quality at the national level in Spain:

The current status of implementation of models of quality management in rural tourism in Spain can be described as chaotic, because there is so far no successful implementation of a common reference for the entire country.

There is a high quality system for lodgings at the national level („Q” – too complex and expensive for the majority of rural accommodation); some systems at the regional level, some regions that have incorporated in their regulations for lodgings certain standards with different nomenclatures (Extremadura, Castilla La Mancha, Andalusia and the latest Country Basque); also certification from Europe (mainly eco-labels) have been adopted by some individual rural tourism establishments.

There are also some multi-sector certifications of quality have been promoted by some autonomous communities (brand Natural Park, EuroParc) and some regional development groups.

The fact that no system of quality certification or specific lodgings have achieved acceptable levels of implementation in the whole of the Spanish countryside is due to several factors:

- **Lack of training and awareness by employers and owners on the importance of quality in rural tourism:**

Many owners of rural tourism entrepreneurs have been encouraged by the institutions in the heat of subsidies and high expectations about the future of the sector, launching technical / equipment facilities without prior knowledge of important issues such as management, promotion and adaptation of their accommodation to needs and tastes of their customers. Thus there is an important educational gap in the vast majority of entrepreneurs and owners of rural tourism, especially regarding the concept of quality applied to rural tourism. Most owners and entrepreneurs act simply on intuition or inertia in the implementation of quality management models and their institutions, without regard to a specific methodology or taking into account the experience or evaluation of quality parameters by customers of rural tourism.

- **Lack of consensus in the development and harmonization of initiatives for the implementation of quality systems in the rural tourism sector**

- **Lack of common standards on quality in the national territory:**

From public sphere:

The competence of tourism policies was transferred to the Spanish Autonomous Communities (regional governments) over the past 20 years. This has resulted in uncontrolled and un-coordinated development policies (there are now identified 39 different regulations for rural tourism establishments throughout Spain, with an estimated 72+ denominations). Although partly justified by specific architectural and socio-regional characteristics, it has generated considerable confusion among consumers who do not know or understand the differences between accommodations that a priori have similar characteristics in terms of equipment and management model, but are named differently according to different regions.

Moreover, the Ministry of Industry Trade and Tourism has promoted a system of independent national quality (mark "Q" for quality), which initially was intended to facilitate the identification by domestic and foreign tourists alike of those establishments that satisfy certain quality criteria. The system (System for the Spanish Tourism Quality - SCTE hereafter) covers all productive sectors of Spanish tourism with sector-specific criteria and evaluation schemes. This system is managed by a public-private entity (Institute for Spanish Tourist Quality-ICTE), which among other tasks defined and maintained quality standards and regulates the procedure for obtaining the certification of quality and the use of Brand ("Q" for quality).

The development of the requirements has undergone continuous changes, since its initial set of criteria was based on a model for (city) hotels, and had to gradually adapt to the reality of rural tourism. Nowadays, although it is considered one of the most complete quality system that exist, its level of complexity, in terms of procedures, barriers to entry (exclusion criteria), plus cost of certification and use of the brand, it is still not feasible for the large part of entrepreneurs and owners of rural tourism accommodation.

Additionally, government at regional or province level, as well as entities related to them (rural development groups) have also started to develop their own quality systems or local brands. They are usually multi-sectorial, and linked to a specific geographical space (natural areas, regions, etc.) or aspect (environment). Examples in the case of Andalusia: the brand „Marca Parque Natural” for any service or activity in Nature Parks and their area of influence; or the territorial quality mark 'Poniente Granadino "

- Some autonomous communities have made and are making efforts to promote the implementation of certifications that they consider „officially recognized”, such as the Q-quality, international standards ISO 14001 EMAS - 9000 or Marca Parque Natural. On that purpose, they support free advice / consultancy service to the owners of accommodation by quality consultants, or partially subsidize the costs of certification of these labels.
- Quality systems set up by the authorities themselves, as is the case of "Q" mark of quality or Marca Parque Natural receive also strong budgetary support through public policy promotion such as own website, promotional materials (brochures, guides, dvds , etc.), with free presence at promotional events and advertising campaigns stand himself in the media (press, radio, TV).

But despite this institutional support, socio-economic reality of many owners and their lack of training and sensibilization described above largely determines their low participation in these initiatives. Their impact is therefore still insufficient.

- **From the private entrepreneurship sphere:**

Some associations of owners of rural tourism establishments have defined their own systems and quality marks. The pioneer in the national territory was the Andalusian Rural Accommodation Network, which launched its system of quality certification ("olive") in 1996.

Since 2007, the Spanish Association of Rural Tourism that integrates most of the existing regional associations and federations in Spain has launched an initiative for the implementation of a system similar in concept, criteria and nomenclature to the one developed and applied in France by Gites de France („Ears” in five levels)

Other provincial associations have established quality awards, such Turim (Málaga)

There are also quality brands and logos promoted by private companies, usually internet portals, brokers (tour operators, travel agencies specialized), voluntary marketing clubs (Rusticae), or publishing houses (as the country guides Aguilar, Michelin Guide). Through individually defined and controlled criteria, they intended to provide greater reliability, credibility or a better position to promote the associated services (examples: setting recommended by TopRural; select hotels, recommended by the country establishment Aguilar, etc). In these cases, unlike the systems that include criteria and classifications promoted by private associations under published standards, rules or procedures that must be met for these labels are often not clear or public. These systems are therefore normally based on valuations made by in-house technical staff or clients („mysterious customers”), or the reputation of the website or company that creates the labels or marks of quality. In any case, in the end their success will depend on their capacity to adequately reflect and satisfy customer demand, need, and expectations.

As can be seen, there is a high diversity of systems and distinctive quality brands, lacking harmonization amongst them since these systems and quality brands operate independently, without connection or coordination (except the intention of RAAR Olives to integrate criteria and parameters of different systems wherever possible). This situation hinders the recognition of these certificates by rural tourists, who do not know how the different ES labels and systems stand compared with other brands of quality associated with rural tourism that they know from Western Europe.

Inadequate disclosure and promotion of the quality of rural tourism:

Independently of the improvement of internal management systems that produce quality in the Spanish territory, there is a high level of misinformation and lack of visibility. This results in many potential customers being unaware of the quality of accommodation available, or this quality is not transmitted with sufficient perception of guarantee.

The promotion of the different quality labels is unstable, discontinuous, sometimes erratic, and is not accompanied by a common communication campaign that explains their value. As a result, the market penetration of these systems is clearly insufficient. This in turn discourages many

entrepreneurs and owners to continue being certified by them, as they do not see a direct return in terms of occupancy and turnover.

WEB 2.0 Outbreak of philosophy as a concept associated with the quality

In recent years, most web portals have started to evaluate and categorize the affiliated establishments according to a ranking provided by the customers (eg TopRural, tryadvisor, BOOKING.COM, etc). Establishments are classified according to the valuation by customers who experienced their services and installations, and evaluate them on return. This represents a revolution and rupture with traditional patterns of external certifications by supposedly independent auditors, transferring the entire role of evaluation to the users who can define and value according to their own quality parameters. This method seems to achieve high acceptance and confidence by the consumers (according to most recent surveys, already 75% of them check the opinions of other visitors before booking). While equally or more effective on purpose of promotion than many of the traditional classification or certification systems, for the evaluated service it is practically free of cost.

Although the reliability of the opinions expressed in these websites is widely discussed, the very significant increase in visits to them is evident. At least, the management and evaluation of the views of clients provides an added value in making purchasing decision for customers, and complements the role and effectiveness of traditional labels.

2. Structure of the quality schemes, grading levels, symbol, validity term of certification

2.1. Structure of the criteria and validity term of certification

Country	Criteria	Validity period of certification/quality assessment
Austria	1. Farm-quality / facility-quality (rooms, house, sanitary, etc.) 2. Service-quality (information, breakfast, activities, etc.) Total: 120 detail-criteria (valued with 1-5 points according to significance)	Maximum 4 years
Bulgaria	1. Tourism State Agency 1.General conditions and safety (14 criteria) 2. Interior equipment (15 criteria) 3. Services (11 criteria) 4. Professional and language education	1. Tourism State Agency Non-limited at present, but according to expected changes in the Tourism law, there is suggestion for periodic (5 years)

	<p>The criteria cover the following aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety • Hygiene and sanitary conditions • Comfort of guest rooms and areas of common use • Local suppliers • Traditional interior • Hospitable attitude and personal contact • Additional travel and leisure services 	
	<p>2. BAAT - Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comfort criteria – 23 2. Energy efficiency – 13 3. Water savings – 6 4. Garbage management – 9 5. Organic products – 7 6. Economic effect – 9 7. Nature protection – 10 	<p>Three years</p>
	<p>3. Authentic Bulgaria Association</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Customer Service <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Contact & Booking 1.2. Greeting & Support services 1.3. Guest care & satisfaction 2. Facilities & Amenities <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1. Facilities and setting 2.2. Equipment management 2.3. Design & atmosphere 3. Staff Management & Development <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1. Recruitment & training 3.2. Communication & recognition 4. Environmental Management 	<p>Individually defined</p>

	<p>5. Cultural Conciderations 5.1. General 5.2. Activities 5.3. Food & Beverage 5.4. Cultural sensitivity</p> <p>6. Safety Management 6.1. Occupational welfare 6.2. Accident & injury management</p> <p>7. Business and marketing 7.1. Business and Operations Marketing 7.2. Operational Management 7.3. Financial and overall perform</p>	
	<p>4. Ministry of Environment and Waters</p> <p>1. Energy efficiency, water savings and filtration, garbage reduction and recycling 2. Expenditure statistics, information for tourists, additional services, nature protection.</p>	5 years
Czech Republic	Technical aspects and equipment of accommodation	
Georgia		1 year Guesthouse facilities are checked according to check list/classification criteria based on standard document.
Greece	<p>1. No. of rooms 2. Presence of owners, direct contacts with guests. 3. Amenities (room and bed size, style) 4. Architecture 5. Environment</p>	2 years
Luxemburg	<p>1. Technical aspects 2. Services</p>	18-24 months if no complaints received or new constructions or services have been made.

	3. Location with surroundings	
Spain	<p>1. Spanish Tourism Quality System (SCTE)</p> <p>1.Management 2.Infrastructure and Facilities 3.Welcome and reception 4.Cleaning and maintenance 5.Safety and Environment 6.Marketing</p> <p>115 quality items (at least 50 compulsory criteria needed for the certification)</p>	<p>Every 4 years</p> <p>Sequence of quality assessment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General rules affecting safety issues, hygiene, etc.; 2. Tourist compulsory rules 3. Self evaluation based on a common methodology but adapted to the characteristics of each sub-sector and product 4. Improvement plan 5. Audit and Certification by external accredited certification company 6. Continuous Improvement 7. Improving competitiveness 8. Improved profitability 9. Improved customer satisfaction 10. Warranty Service
	<p>2. “Ears” Quality Classification System</p> <p>1.Environment - Location 2.Shell - Facilities (kitchen, day rooms, rooms and toilets 3.Overall design –Decoration 4.Equipment. 5.Home - Services</p> <p>51 quality criteria</p>	<p>1-5 years</p> <p>Principles of quality assessment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self evaluation 2. Tourist compulsory rules 3. Improving competitiveness 4. Improved customer satisfaction 5. Warranty Service <p>Audit by technician of ASETUR and assignation of 1-5 ears</p>
	<p>1. “Olives” Quality Classification System</p> <p>1.Environment - Location 2.Shell - Facilities (kitchen, day rooms, rooms and toilets 3.Overall design –Decoration 4. Equipment. 5.Home - Services</p>	<p>2 years</p> <p>Principles of quality assessment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. International transparency 2. “Max-max” method for criteria specifications 3. Leads to quasi-compliance with all reference norms 4. Homologation in general lines with most EU systems 5. Combines general standard requirements and Rural

	51 quality criteria	<p>Tourism-specific criteria</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Product approach for all rural accommodation services (B&B, pensions, hotels, self-catering, ...) 7. Tourist compulsory rules 8. Improving competitiveness 9. Improved customer satisfaction 10. Warranty Service
	<p>Andalusian Nature Park brand (marca parque natural de Andalucía) - ecolabel</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcome and reception 2. Cleaning and maintenance 3. Safety and Environment 	<p>3 years</p> <p>Principles of quality assessment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General rules affecting environment, safety issues, hygiene,, etc.; 2. Tourist compulsory rules 3. Evaluation based on a common methodology but adapted to the characteristics of each sub-sector and product 4. Continuous Improvement 5. Warranty Service
Portugal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technical facilities 2. Meals 3. Resource consumption <p>The national quality rule for tourism is under a process of discussion.</p>	
Slovenia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Ministry 1. Common characteristics of the farm 2. Outside door appearance of the farm 3. Air condition and heating 4. Lounges for guests 5. Welcome reception of the guests 6. Possibility of safe custody facility 7. Surface of the room or the apartment 8. Equipment of the rooms or the apartment 	Maximum 4 years

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Lounge or living room 10. The size of the bed 11. Toilets 12. Telephone, TV 13. Additional services 14. Dining area 15. Kitchen 16. Menu 17. Drinks <p>There are compulsory and non compulsory criteria, their scores define the grading levels.</p>	
	<p>1. Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia. Specialisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ecological tourist farm Ecological tourist farms offer the guests a healthy environment and homegrown organic food, which is certified by an authorized monitoring organization. 2. Tourist farm with a healthy lifestyle offer These farms offer holidays for fans of a healthy lifestyle with opportunities to spend leisure time actively in unspoiled nature excellently combined with healthy food. 3. Family-friendly tourist farm These farms offer family holidays in an authentic farm setting. Great attention is devoted to entertaining children, and they pride themselves their attractive facilities especially for children (room furnishings, play areas, healthy food). Special attention is devoted to including parents in all activities. 4. Tourist farm with program for children unaccompanied by parents 	<p>Specialization of farm tourism. There are 30 farms in Slovenia that have decided to develop a specialized offer to fulfill holiday wishes and help customers to choose a suitable farm holiday. Experts from individual fields have outlined obligatory and selected conditions that farms must meet to employ the symbol of a specialized offer. From 2007 on, the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia grants the use of these symbols.</p>

	<p>These farms offer entertaining and active holidays for children without accompanying parents, most frequently with their own guardians. Some farms offer a safe and diverse comprehensive program of activities themselves. Their farm stay programs include getting to know nature, working on the farm, and play activities under the careful supervision of child care workers or other professionally qualified staff.</p> <p>5. Bicycle-friendly tourist farm These farms offer numerous opportunities for bicycling in the area, information about bicycle trails and their features, and information about points of interest reachable by bicycle. Bicycle storage is available at the farms and bicycles can be rented if you do not bring your own.</p> <p>6. Winegrowing tourist farm Winegrowing tourist farms, usually located along tourist wine roads, are friendly places that spoil their guests with excellent wines and tasty kitchen delicacies. Guests can learn about work in the vineyards and wine cellars at first hand. These farms are attractive not just for wine connoisseurs since their hospitality and hominess will charm everyone.</p> <p>7. invalid-friendly tourist farm These farms are equipped so that guests in wheelchairs can move freely around the farm unassisted and have accommodations and facilities appropriately furnished to meet their needs.</p>	
Hungary	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Surroundings, environment. 2. Professional skills of the hosts 3. Aesthetics, hygiene, cleanness of the accommodation 4. Waste management (e.g. selective collection) 5. Equipments of kitchen, bathroom, toilet 6. Parking place and garden for rest 7. Guest-rooms <p>Criteria groups for specialization (under elaboration)</p>	3 years for the 4th grading level no limited for lower grading levels if no changes in the offer

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Farm for disabled people 2. Baby and child friend farm 3. Ecofarm 4. Recreation for wine-grower 5. Rural catering farm 6. Active farm (sport, touring, bicycle...) 7. Traditional farm 	
Belgium (region Wallonie)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Ministry of tourism. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Security. 2. Sanitary. 3. Comfort 	5 years.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Fédération des Gîtes de Wallonie Criteria contents: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Friendly welcome. 2. Decoration, cleanliness 3. Local information 3. Compliance with legal rules. 	7 years or upon request of upgrading.
Latvia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Equipment standard 2. Surroundings 3. Leisure choice and services 4. Personal ambience and treat 5. Safety and security 	3 years

2.2. Grading levels and symbol (e.g. minimum requirements, categories of quality):

Country	Grading levels	Symbol
Austria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2 flowers (min points) 3 flowers (shower/toilet in unit/appartement + points) 4 flowers (shower/toilet in unit/appartement + 80% of points in every category) 	Flowers (daisies) 
Bulgaria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tourism State Agency 1 - 3 (3 is highest)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stars ****

	2. BAAT	2. -
	3. Authentic Bulgaria Association Bronze, Silver, Gold	3. Rose, incl. Rose of Distinction for Ambience, Cuisine, Activities, Customer Service
	4. Ministry of Environment and Waters	4. Green Flower
Czech Republic	* simple accommodation (min. compulsory compliance) ** general standard *** very well equipped accommodation **** high quality accommodation small camps * ** *** self catering * ** *** B&B * ** *** ****	The Union's certification symbol and the relevant number of "*" stars in paper certificate
Georgia	4 levels, minimum requirements + 3 categories of quality.	The sun
Greece	4 levels	Sunflower
Luxemburg	0 - 4 grain ears	Field grain ear
Spain	1. Spanish Tourism Quality System (SCTE) one-level quality label = Q	1. Q
	2. "Ears" Quality Classification System Categories of quality = 5 1 ear: Classification of departure for those accommodations that meet the standards of its region. 2 ears: Accommodations some comfort: TV, kitchenware, oven, washing machine, kitchenware and bath and bed as customer demand. General qualities. Furniture enough. 3 ears: Accommodation with all the above plus garden, terrace, garden, fireplace, comfortable furniture. 4 ears: Accommodation with striking views, garden care, flowering ground, large interior spaces, ambient lighting, decoration, furniture consistent with the ability. 5 ears: Accommodation with magnificent views, house, decorating and custom furniture and sufficient in terms of capacity, high-quality kitchenware and enough custom, quality materials used.	2. Ear

	<p>3. "Olives" Quality Classification System</p> <p>Levels of quality = 3</p> <p>1 olive: Exceeds the Andalusian Government's statutory minimum requirements for Rural Tourism (Decree 20/2002), and has been approved by RAAR inspectors.</p> <p>2 olives: The lodging is well equipped in terms of comfort and decoration, at a level clearly above the obligatory requirements. Most rooms in B&B have private bathroom. Perfect for comfortable shortbreaks and for holidays..</p> <p>3 olives: The lodging has an excellent level of comfort and facilities, including leisure and recreational activities. All rooms at B&B with ensuite bathroom. The choice of fittings and decoration is tasteful and in the traditional style. Ideal for truly comfortable holidays.</p>	<p>1. Olive</p>
	<p>4. Andalusian Nature Park brand (marca parque natural de Andalucía) - ecolabel</p> <p>one-level quality label = MARCA PARQUE NATURAL</p>	<p>Andalusian Nature Park brand</p> <p>1. LOGO (TEXT "MARCA PARQUE NATURAL")</p>
Portugal	<p>One-level for rural accommodations, with some differences by types of accommodation.</p> <p>Rural hotels are classified under the same rules as city hotels (star system).</p>	
Slovenia	<p>For farm tourism:</p> <p>1 apple simply furnished rooms with common washroom and toilet</p> <p>2 apples good offer, simply furnished rooms (at least half with private washroom and toilet)</p> <p>3 apples very good offer, well-furnished rooms (majority with private washroom and toilet)</p> <p>4 apples outstanding offer, large and comfortable well-furnished rooms (all with private</p>	<p>Apple</p>

	washroom and toilet), wide offer of meals, diverse additional facilities and programs (tennis courts, swimming pool, riding, etc.)	
	<p>For accommodations, not registered as farm tourism:</p> <p>1 star room with hot and cold water, common washroom and toilet / apartment with private washroom and toilet, kitchenette, and dining niche</p> <p>2 stars room with private washroom and toilet / well-furnished apartment with private washroom and toilet, kitchenette, and dining niche</p> <p>3 stars well-furnished comfortable room with private washroom and toilet, breakfast included / very well furnished and comfortable apartment with private washroom and toilet, telephone, and colour television</p> <p>4 stars excellently furnished apartment with kitchen, dining area, satellite television, and telephone</p>	Stars
Hungary	<p>1 sunflower Very simple accommodation or camping without facilities. Parking facilities available.</p> <p>2 sunflower Humbler accommodation with shared bathroom, toilet, dining room and kitchen, with parking facilities.</p> <p>3 sunflower Guests have a separate bathroom and toilet, with shared dining room, kitchen and lounge, rest-garden and parking.</p> <p>4 sunflower</p>	

	Separate accommodation with own bathroom and toilet, with comfortable room, dining and lounge area, kitchen and rest-garden, with parking facilities.	
Wallonie	Levels and minimum requirements are fixed by law (responsibility of the Ministry of Tourism) 1-level label Specific requirements for specialisation: 2. Riding 3. Fishing 4. Panda 5. Disabled-and baby friendly accomodations	
Latvia	<p>COUNTRY HOMES</p> <p>Minimum facilities Basic facilities and amenities, electrical power, drainage. Rooms are not large, with simple furnishings and furniture – beds, chairs and coat hangers. Washing facilities in a bathhouse or in an outbuilding. Dry toilet in the house or in an outhouse.</p> <p>Modest Washing and WC facilities in the house, usually shared with the host family or with other guests. The rooms are larger and better furnished than in the previous category. There is an open area for recreation by the house.</p> <p>Good Living room can be shared with the hosts. Washing and WC facilities can be shared by all guests, or facilities for private use next to bedroom. Cozy interior. Surroundings well kept, with garden furniture, a picnic spot or similar. Good quality holiday activity facilities and equipment.</p> <p>Very good Separate entrance. All rooms – bedrooms, a living room, a bathroom – spacious and well appointed. En-suite bathroom and WC facilities. TV and audio equipment in bedrooms or in a living room. Good choice and quality of activity facilities. Spacious and well kept open areas for recreation.</p> <p>SELF-CATERING</p> <p>Minimum facilities</p>	<p>Butterfly</p> 

	<p>Basic facilities and amenities, electrical power, drainage. Rooms are not large, with simple furnishings and furniture – beds, chairs and coat hangers. A kitchen or kitchenette in the cottage or in another building, in shared use with other guests. Washing facilities in a bathhouse or in an outbuilding. Dry toilet in the house or in an outhouse.</p> <p>Modest The cottage contains bedrooms and washing facilities. A kitchen may be in the cottage, combined with a living room or in another building, in shared use with other guests. Kitchen equipment includes electric or gas cooker, a fridge, inventory for preparation and serving food. The rooms are larger and better furnished than in the previous category. There is an open area for recreation by the house. Information available on things to see and do in the vicinity.</p> <p>Good The cottage contains bedrooms, a living room with a TV and audio equipment. Kitchen furnishings and equipment are better than in the previous category. Rooms are spacious and convenient. Cozy interior. Surroundings well kept, with garden furniture, a picnic spot or similar. Good quality holiday activity facilities and equipment.</p> <p>Very good All rooms – bedrooms, a living room, a bathroom – spacious and well appointed. Good quality furniture and furnishings. En-suite bathroom and WC facilities. TV and audio equipment in bedrooms or in a living room. Good choice and quality of activity facilities and equipment. Spacious and well kept open areas for recreation.</p>	
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2.3. Compulsory or voluntary scheme:

Country	Voluntary/compulsory scheme
Austria	Compulsory within the organization (membership in organization is voluntary)
Bulgaria	1. Tourism State Agency Compulsory
	1. BAAT - Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism Voluntary
	2. Authentic Bulgaria Association

	Voluntary
	3. Ministry of Environment and Waters Voluntary
CZ	voluntary
Georgia	voluntary
Greece	The Guest Inn network is a voluntary scheme as well as all the other associations and local label agreements.
Luxemburg	Compulsory for Rural Tourism organisation members.
Spain	1. Spanish Tourism Quality System (SCTE) Voluntary - 212 out of more than 13000 rural accommodations participate so far
	1. "Ears" Quality Classification System Voluntary - about 300 classified at the date of the present review.
	3. "Olives" Quality Classification System http://raar.es/eng/menu/calidad_en.html Voluntary until 2003; from 2004 onwards, condition to benefit from promotional activities.
	1. Andalusian Nature Park brand Voluntary
Portugal	Compulsory by law
Slovenia	1. The Ministry of Tourism compulsory Chamber voluntary
Hungary	If providers intend to participate in rural tourism tenders, it is a requirement that they are members of the Federation.
Wallonie	Provider's authorization by the Min of Tourism: compulsory
	Association label : voluntary
Latvia	voluntary

3. Financing the quality schemes

Country	Inspection and assessment fee	Comments
Austria	EUR 55,- inspection and assessment	Appr. 50% of the total cost. 50% - subsidy.
Bulgaria	EUR 10,- inspection EUR 90,- assessment	1. Tourism State Agency
	EUR 100,- inspection and assessment	2. BAAT - Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism

	included	3. Authentic Bulgaria Association 4. EUR 132,- application and annual fee
	included	5. Ministry of Environment and Waters EUR 232,- application and annual fee
CZ	???	Fully financed by the provider (members of the organisation have lower prices)
Georgia	Free	Currently quality assessment is made by ELKANA inspection team within the rural tourism development project (funded by SDC).
Greece	free	The state inspections are free of charge and they are organized directly from the national or local authorities. The quality inspections concern only technical and security questions.
	included	The Guest Inn inspections are free of charge (they are included to the annual fee charges).
Luxemburg	included	The financing is included in the membership fee.
Spain	1. Affiliation EUR 90,- 2. Standards and procedures documents EUR 70,- 3. Self-evaluation EUR 70 4. Certification approx. 1000 EUR 5. Total: 1230 euros	1. Spanish Tourism Quality System (SCTE)
	EUR 90,- to 180,- (depending on rural accommodation capacity).	2. "Ears" Quality Classification System
	EUR 80,- to 150,- EUR (depending on rural accommodation capacity).	3. "Olives" Quality Classification System
	Affiliation EUR 90,- Certification approx. EUR 225,- Total: EUR 315,-	4. Andalusian Nature Park brand
Portugal	Free	Inspections are financed by the state. Providers pay for inspection visit if decided to change the accommodation type.
Slovenia	Average EUR 150,-	

Hungary	???	The quality assessment is mainly financed by the commission of the qualification which is paid by the hosts.
Wallonie	Free	3. Ministry of Tourism inspection and assessments
	Included in membership fees	4. Association inspections
	???	Feasibility study of new projects: financed by the applicant
Latvia	EUR 42,- to 86,- (depending on the membership status)	LLTA Lauku celotajs

4. Relation to other existing schemes (based on another scheme, same criteria or parameters,):

Country	Organisation/relation to other schemes
Austria	
Bulgaria	1. Tourism State Agency National categorization system
	2. BAAT - Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism ECEAT quality label
	3. Authentic Bulgaria Association
	4. Ministry of Environment and Waters EU Green Flower
Czech Republic	-
Georgia	-
Greece	-
Luxemburg	-
Spain	1. Spanish Tourism Quality System (SCTE) Compatible at level of methodology with ISO 9000; ISO 14001
	2. "Ears" Quality Classification System Based on the Gites de France quality scheme, with some modifications
	3. "Olives" Quality Classification System This system aims to maintain maximum compatibility in criteria and parameters with other systems, in order to generate synergies with them and allow for international transparency. One olive level: Exceeds the Andalusian Government's statutory minimum requirements for Rural Tourism (Decree 20/2002) Two olives level: It is equivalent or superior to

	<p>Technical criteria of the Spanish Q-system; Q-certified accommodations are automatically accredited 2 Olives without further inspection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/>UK : 2 Stars/Keys. <input type="checkbox"/>France: 2 ears <input type="checkbox"/>Austria: 2 Flowers <input type="checkbox"/>Germany: 2 Stars (DTV). <p>Three olives is equivalent to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/>"Higher" level of Andalusian statutory standards <input type="checkbox"/>UK: 3 Stars/Keys. <input type="checkbox"/>Francia: 3 Ears. <input type="checkbox"/>Austria: 3 Flowers. <input type="checkbox"/>Germany: 3 stars (DTV / DeHoGa) or DLG-Gütesiegel
	<p>4. Andalusian Nature Park brand No relation to other existing quality schemes</p>
Portugal	-
Slovenia	-
Hungary	-
Belgium (region Wallonie)	
Latvia	Restructured under LdV Project in 2002, criteria clusters according to Eurogites standards.

5. Support policies (grants, technical assistance,)

Country	Support forms
Austria	
Bulgaria	1. State Tourism Agency EU grants
	2. BAAT - Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism Project financing
	3. Authentic Bulgaria Association -
	4. Ministry of Environment and Waters
Czech Republic	-

Georgia	-
Greece	Most of the RT providers get EU funds. Mainly under the Leader programme, but also funds for the mountain areas, for women to create local associations of handcrafts, production of local specialties, accommodation etc.
Luxemburg	-
Spain	1. Spanish Tourism Quality System (SCTE) Some regional governments run support schemes to incentive adhesion of providers to the system – either with subvention of preparatory + audit costs (60-75% in the case of Andalusia), or with specific technical assistance to a limited number of establishments for free.
	2. “Ears” Quality Classification System Free technical assistance (on-line service)
	3. “Olives” Quality Classification System Free technical assistance (on-line service); specific visits and assessment is available depending on funding sources (irregular)
	4. Andalusian Nature Park brand Free consulting provided by Consejería de Medio ambiente (regional government). Grants up to 60% for first certification provided by Consejería de Turismo, Comercio y Deporte (regional government)
Portugal	Consultations during the inspection visits
Slovenia	Free technical assistance for all the farms on this topic is provided through Agriculture Advisory Service and through technical assistance of the Association of tourist farms of Slovenia.
Hungary	III. European Congress of Rural Tourism in Eger, organized by the Hungarian Federation and Eurogites, financed by the Federation and members. Study tours once a year for the members of the organization. Language and vocational training regularly for RT providers in counties is organized by the county rural tourism organizations cooperating with the Federation, which are mainly financed by tenders.
Belgium (region Wallonie)	
Latvia	Project financing

6. RT provider training for quality - training seminars and literature

6.1. Training seminars

Country	Training availability
Austria	Regular seminars organized by the training institutes of the chambers of agriculture (LFI) on various aspects of quality. Fee by the participants, app. 50 % subsidy.

Bulgaria	Training is organized under projects for tourist development; executed by TIME foundation, BAAT, Rhodopi project GEF UNDP, Regional Environment Centre for Central and East Europe, other consulting agencies. There is a lack of specialised education centre, but there are some rural and ecotourism specialities in regional universities, business centres and high schools.
Czech Republic	Seminars organised by the Union of Rural Touris according to grant availability.
Georgia	Seminars and study material are organized by training department of <i>Elkana</i> and financed by rural tourism development project or other stakeholders (CHF/USAID, ACH, Eurasia, department of tourism and resort of Georgia) Elkana is a member of RTI-TN and attends trainings, seminars organized by professional trainers and updates study materials regularly.
Greece	Seminars are mostly provided by the local or regional authorities. Local or regional authorities are: 1. the “Local Development companies” they mostly manage and distribute the LEADER EU fund 2. the “Prefectures” in regional base Both of them are have cooperation with private companies or with AGROTOURISTIKI SA (a half private/half public organization) that proposes “Seminar and Training” sections. All seminars are free of charge for the RT providers and they are financed either from the state-region and sometimes with the co-financing of EU funds. The subjects are various, but the themes do not focus on quality.
Luxemburg	Seminars are organized on a very irregular basis and if so, they are financed by RT.
Spain	In general there are only a few seminars related with Quality that focus specifically on RT providers common profile. Here two examples: - “Rural Tourism and Quality Systems” : e-learning 50 hours organized by COINNOVA http://www.coinnova.com/ , not regular, financed by Consejería de Turismo, Comercio y Deporte Junta Andalucía (Regional Government) - “The concept of Sustainable Tourism in Rural Environment”: short intensive seminar (16 hours two days) organized by raar. http://www.raar.es/formacion/ not regular, financed by Consejería de Empleo Junta Andalucía (Regional Government)
Portugal	No regular seminars are provided. Privetur send practical information to its members and it is a compulsory requirement that they the providers have some awareness of quality issues and hospitality.
Slovenia	The Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia and 8 regional Institutes organize different seminars related to quality. Sometimes also professionals from the Ministry of Economy participate. There are several possibilities for financing these seminars: different projects, municipalities` budgets, accommodation providers.
Hungary	
Belgium (region Wallonie)	Seminars are organized on specific topics, some regularly, others according to the needs. Financed by the association, but sometimes a participation fee is asked.

Latvia	Training financed through projects or partly by participation fees.
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6.2. Training literature:

Country	Training literature
Austria	Individual by the trainer(s). List of criteria (quality assessment) by the organization.
Bulgaria	USAID free booklets – Marketing and Customer care - http://baatbg.org/welcome.php?subPage=46 ; 3 000 copies of Manual for starting a family business were finished in 2004, Odysseia-in Publish house, member of BAAT, GTZ Training publications are financed through project grant schemes in most cases and sometimes self-paid by BAAT, TIME Foundation, Authentic Bulgaria Association, Denkstadt.
Czech Republic	A book "Guests come to us" has been published.
Georgia	There is a lack of Training educational materials (textbooks, brochures, films) in rural tourism in Georgia. All study materials used at ELKANA training are designed by experts with practical background and published by Elkana. They are: 1. "Catering services in guesthouses"; 2. Rural Tourism; 3. Home made Wine-making; 4. Guesthouse standards and other handouts.
Greece	Agrotouristiki SA has published 2 editions concerning the creation of a RT accommodation and/or other business in rural areas. Consultations are available from private companies, however, the costs are too high for small businesses.
Luxemburg	The committee of RT compiles training literature for handouts.
Spain	<p>Manual de calidad para hoteles (Quality procedures manual for hotels) http://www.librosdeturismo.com/manual-de-calidad-para-hoteles-p-62.html AUTHOR Alberto Martínez Villa ISBN 978-84-96491-61-8 YEAR 2008 PAGES 170 EDITED BY: SÍNTESIS</p> <p>Gestión de la calidad de los procesos turísticos (Quality management of touristic procedures) http://www.librosdeturismo.com/gestion-de-la-calidad-de-los-procesos-turisticos-p-59.html</p>

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Calidad turística en la pequeña y mediana empresa (Touristic Quality in small companies)

<http://www.librosdeturismo.com/calidad-turistica-en-la-pequena-y-mediana-empresa-p-61.html>

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Certificación y modelos de calidad en hostelería y restauración

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	<p>Consultations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support program for “Awareness rising regarding Quality in tourism” by the Andalusian government, this program funds up to 60% of cost for seminars, technical assistance and assessment, training, etc. related with Quality. • Complete subvention of a limited number of certifications, in order to increase the number of rural accommodations certified by the “Q” system (see above figures for ES – only 1’6% of the total participates so far in this scheme) • Rural Development Groups within the EAFRD sometimes provide limited consultancy or assistance, but recently rather tend to implement own local brands and support those
Portugal	Few titles of translated literature available and the practical information materials by Privetur.
Slovenia	<p>The training literature generally based on the criteria lists (evaluation lists) of the Ministry of Economy and criteria lists (evaluation lists) for specialized offer, Power point presentation include a lot of photographs.</p> <p>The advisors for supplementary activities, who are employed by Institutes for Agriculture and Forestry provide information on this topic to the farmers. The Agriculture Advisory Service is partly financed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia, therefore consultations on this topic are free of charge. Consultations from specialized experts with license from the Ministry of economy are also possible, but they have to be paid by the provider, 40 EUR per hour.</p>
Hungary	<p>Willkommen in Ungarn, written by Ilcsik Lászlóné, Kissné Várkonyi Marietta distributed by Budapest Business School</p> <p>Basics of hygiene in RT, written by Dr. Miklay Frigyesné, distributed by our Federation</p> <p>Guest-reception in RT, written by Nagy Katalin, Bolgár László, Zagyva István, Lanszki Elfrun distributed by Rural Tourism Association of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County</p>
Belgium (region Wallonie)	Written and distributed by the association
Latvia	A number of titles on starting a rural tourism business to marketing, product development, taxes, price setting, etc. As well as training videos, reviews of RT and other reference amterials published in the training web site: http://www.macies.celotajs.lv/

7. How RT providers are motivated for training:

Country	Provider motivation
Austria	Min. training per year is compulsory (part of categorization) + positive motivation via content / interest of providers. Training fee is attractive / affordable by means of subsidies. No further financial incentive. No free trainings.
Bulgaria	There aren’t many hosts who implement strategic management and can afford and appreciate consultation services. More are interested in financed education seminars but without a solid feedback. Successful entrepreneurs find their inspiration when

	travelling. Internet might also be e possibility.
Czech Republic	-
Georgia	Mainly trainings are funded by projects, providers do not have to cover the costs.
Greece	RT providers, in general, are not highly motivated for training.
Luxemburg	There are no measures to motivate RT providers for training.
Spain	Interested if this involves access to better economic results (marketing, new technologies), but not so much concerning about quality systems. There is yet little acceptance of the convenience or practical relevance of obtaining a quality label or certification, as markets do not yet seem to be very attentive to these when deciding where to book. Some certifications (Marca Parque Natural) have comparatively good acceptance by providers, mostly because they are highly subsidized and once approved, establishments receive very strong free promotional support that compensates the cost.
Portugal	The main motivation is to make the providers understand that quality will bring more clients and more satisfied clients.
Slovenia	RT providers are generally very interested for training – if possible free trainings – lectures, workshops, which are not to long.
Hungary	RT providers are motivated for training through guest-demands and free reductions
Belgium Wallonie)	(region To be part of an association well famed for its high level of quality. Improve their skills and discover new means of developping their business.
Latvia	Attendance of seminars is taken into account for grading levels. Provider motivation for training is a possibility to learn practical things, meet with other providers and exchange experience.

8. RT quality issues/problems.

Country	Description of complaints
Austria	“Experiencing the farm” is the most critical point. Guests (families with children) often have an ideal picture of a “living farm”, often based on children’s books. Frequently the reality does not meet with these expectations. The organisation views as its task to shape realistic – however still attractive – customer expectations and train the farmers to communicate the “farming experience”
Bulgaria	<p>1.1. Equipment (e.g., room and bed sizes, technical condition, showers, WCs, etc.):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Numbers and keys for every room ▪ Usually providers find the bathroom as the hardest part to accomplish in an accommodation. Newly built establishments well performed the issue; it is sometimes normal two or three room to share one bathroom and WC.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Water is not always heated when checking-in ▪ Single use packages ▪ Local municipality commissions tend to be unprofessional and miss some issues when inspecting. ▪ A problem might be a lack of easy-reachable emergency package ▪ Lack of efficient heating and cooling ▪ Lack of night lamps ▪ Lack of smoking areas or ashtrays ▪ Too much plastic – artificial plants, trashbins and other low-quality equipment ▪ Lack of informators at the common WC doors ▪ Happily, there are new and renewing accommodation projects implementing diversity of technologies for ecologically sound functionality. <p>1.2. Surroundings (yards, gardens, pathways, outdoor recreation areas, etc.): Problems might be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bad maintenance ▪ Dirtiness ▪ Not enough lights ▪ Slippery paths ▪ Broken (including by tourists) stuff ▪ Traffic nearby ▪ Building construction in the vicinity ▪ Unsecured or lack of parking place ▪ Poor road condition and difficult access ▪ Lack of signification for the accommodation at the site (key crossroads) <p>1.3. Services at the accommodation and in surroundings (<15 km) – activity and leisure facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not enough information or possibilities for tourist services as tourguide, infocentre, renting equipment ... ▪ Bad tourist infrastructure and route/landmark signification ▪ Lack of maps ▪ Information materials are rarely existing <p>1.4. Intangible / “Experience” factors - Personal attention, privacy, and ambience (communication between hosts/service staff and customers):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Language misunderstanding
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not good understanding for customer needs and expectations ▪ Rarely, bad attitude, including tourists and locals. ▪ Conflict with other guests is possible <p>1.5. Security (insurances, prices, booking and cancellation, correct information, safety, health and hygiene issues):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Omission of tourist fee payment to the municipality ▪ There are some examples of overbooking and service refusal, but usually neighbouring houses are arranged. <p>1.6. Other: Illusionary presentation of places in internet which does not correspond to the reality.</p>
Czech Republic	The Union of Rural Tourism has no regular feedback on customer complaints. RT providers aren't motivated to certify their operations. The Union of Rural Tourism certifies only properties classified as "private accommodations", and not those approved as boarding houses. New "national" conception of quality standards and certify is under preparation.
Georgia	There is no any hotel or guesthouses standard in Georgia except Elkana standards, which was registered in January 2008. So far 5 guesthouses are categorized and they comply to criteria "standard" and "1 sun". No customer surveys or monitoring have been made yet in order to clarify customer complaints relating to clusters of quality criteria, this information will be available in 2009 after tourist season.
Greece	<p>1. Equipment (e.g., room and bed sizes, technical condition, showers, WCs, etc.): Some complains about room size and kitchen (or kitchenette) equipment.</p> <p>2. Surroundings (yards, gardens, pathways, outdoor recreation areas, etc.): Yard or garden are under construction while visitors are there. Most common are the problems concerning the bad condition of the pathways, the surrounding areas, the garbage and the road signs. In fact, in most of really rural areas, all road signs are only in Greek.</p> <p>3. Services at the accommodation and in the surroundings (<15 km) – activity and leisure facilities: Not enough information in guest houses about meal availability and if breakfast is included in the price. Some properties offer lots of local information, at others guests have to investigate themselves. In some places they are well organized and guests can participate. In some others, guests must discover by themselves.</p> <p>4. Intangible / "Experience" factors - Personal attention, privacy, and ambience (communication between hosts/service staff and customers): There are no problems with hospitality. Language skills could be improved, however, RT providers in Greece are open for</p>

	<p>communication and this good will may compensate for some lack of language skills.</p> <p>5. Security (insurances, prices, booking and cancellation, correct information, safety, health and hygiene issues): Delayed replies to e-mail enquiries. Outdated information or misleading description of the holiday site (room and facilities' description, distances, provided services).</p>
Luxemburg	<p>Quality complaints are definitely quite rare for Rural Tourism members that have the RT sign. A problem is the strong decline the last years in RT members as the young do not want to continue in the steps of the parents and do additional work besides of their normal 8 hr jobs and it is not obvious to find people to join the RT comitee.</p>
Spain	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Equipment (e.g., room and bed sizes, technical condition, showers, WCs, etc.): Heating, air conditioning, amount and size of bathrooms (small), facilities for self-cooking, comfort of furniture and beds 2. Surroundings (yards, gardens, pathways, outdoor recreation areas, etc.): Outdoor recreation areas, (not ready for children, seniors or handicapped people); sometimes, state of conservation of immediate surroundings (unattractive views, ruins) 3. Services at the accommodation and in surroundings (<15 km) – activity and leisure facilities: Few activity and leisure facilities, few activity providers (or badly documented / offered). 4. Intangible / “Experience” factors - Personal attention, privacy, and ambience (communication between hosts/service staff and customers): Lack of Personal attention, bad communication between hosts/service staff and customers 5. Security (insurances, prices, booking and cancellation, correct information, safety, health and hygiene issues): Unclear information, prices, booking and cancellation
Portugal	<p>Privetur has not received customer complaints. Providers must have a book for cutomer references. In case of complaints, they have to inform the association, sending a copy of the complaint, and the Association may producê a written opinion on the complaint.</p>
Slovenia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Equipment (e.g., room and bed sizes, technical condition, showers, WCs, etc.): Room and bathroom sizes – too small, not enough shelves in the bathroom; some guest have complaint that the category of the farm isn't adequate – to many apples for the farms' offer because they experienced higher quality services on another farm which has the same number of apples. 2. Surroundings (yards, gardens, pathways, outdoor recreation areas, etc.):

	<p>Too old and not enough equipment - playgrounds for children are missing.</p> <p>3. Services at the accommodation and in surroundings (< 15 km) – activity and leisure facilities: There were only few complaints at this point. In general tourists want as many as possible leisure facilities in the nearest surrounding.</p> <p>4. Intangible / “Experience” factors - Personal attention, privacy, and ambience (communication between hosts/service staff and customers): There were only few complaints at this point: the owner was not available through the telephone before the reservation, problems with communication in foreign languages – Italian, French.</p> <p>5. Security (insurances, prices, booking and cancellation, correct information, safety, health and hygiene issues): There were only few complaints at this point: unsafe areas were not marked in order to protect children.</p>
Hungary	
Belgium Wallonie)	(region <p>Cleanliness</p> <p>Worn-out equipment</p> <p>waranty refund or charges calculation</p> <p>waranty refund or charges calculation</p> <p>As indicator we have approximatively 30 complaints/year for +/- rentals a year.</p>
Latvia	<p>Technical issues – poor maintenance levels of the facilities.</p> <p>Poor service – not understanding the customer needs, unfriendly attitude.</p> <p>Inadequate price levels.</p>