

R3.2 CERTIFICATION SCHEME FOR TOURIST GUIDES AND AGENTS

Program: Erasmus+

Key Action: KA220-VET - Cooperation partnerships in vocational
education and training

Project Title: Enhancement and certification of tourist guides and tourist agents' green
and digital marketing skills in developing sustainable alternative thematic tours

Project Acronym: ALTER TOURS

Project Agreement Number: 01CC0B74

Project Start Date: 01/12/2023

Project End Date: 01/12/2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	3
2.	3
3.	3
4.	3
5.	4
6.	4
7.	5
7.1.	5
7.2.	6
8.	7
8.1	7
8.2	8
8.3	9
8.3.1	9
9	9
9.1	9
9.2	10
9.3	10
10	11
11	11
11.1	12
12	12
13	13
14	13

1. Introduction

The Certification Scheme for Certifications of individuals as **ALTER TOURS PRO GUIDE** is intended for the certification of individuals within the tourism sector who will be able to design and deliver sustainable tours and who want to grant an additional qualification through certification.

This Certification Scheme contains principles, requirements, criteria, and the process for the certification of individuals. Any professional that fulfills the criteria described in the current scheme can apply for the certification and after passing the assessment can get certified.

The present Certification Scheme has been developed as an outcome of the **ALTER TOURS** Project for “Enhancement and certification of tourist guides and tourist agents’ green and digital marketing skills in developing sustainable alternative thematic tours”, by Cyprus Certification Company (CCC) with the consultation of the other Consortium partners. This Scheme is the only binding document regarding the certification process of individuals.

2. Terms and Definitions

For the purpose of this Certification Scheme, the terms and definitions applied are presented in ANNEX 1.

3. Normative references

- **CYS EN ISO 17024:2012:** Conformity assessment — General requirements for bodies operating certification of individuals.
- **ALTER TOURS** curriculum and training materials – the frameworks and the training materials that were developed within **ALTER TOURS** project for the training of the individuals.
- Assessment tools – documents developed (e.g. multiple-choice questions, true-false questions etc.), within **ALTER TOURS** project for the assessment of individuals’ knowledge, skills and competences.

4. Scope

This Certification Scheme for the certification for individuals working within the Tourism Sector describes all procedures that apply for obtaining, assessing, granting, maintaining, and withdrawing Certification of professionals in accordance with the

requirements of the Standard CYS EN ISO 17024:2012, requirements defined by CCC's internal procedures and other requirements set by the project.

The Certification Scheme refers to tourist guides and agents who want to demonstrate knowledge and ability on designing and delivering sustainable tours.

More specifically, the Certification Scheme contains guidance and information for applicants, candidates to be certified and certified professionals for the following:

- The application and the process of assessing the individuals for obtaining the certification.
- The criteria to be met for initial certification.
- The criteria for re-certification.
- The obligations of CCC for the Evaluation, Grant, Use, Maintenance, Suspension and Withdrawing of Certification.
- The obligations of certified professionals.

Certification is granted for a period of 5 years, and the recertification process is described within the current Regulation.

5. Description of the Certification

The certified professionals will be able to perform tasks as described in **ALTER TOURS** Curriculum for each competence. They will be able to demonstrate their knowledge and ability as **ALTER TOURS PRO GUIDES**, as described in **ALTER TOURS** project through certification.

The certified **ALTER TOURS PRO GUIDE** will have the knowledge, skills and competence to design and deliver sustainable tours.

6. Impartiality, Independence, and Integrity

Cyprus Certification Company (CCC) ensures impartiality and confidentiality for its customers, at all levels of its operation.

The Independent Certification Council (ICC.), the Certification Committee, its examiners as well as all personnel, are responsible for the management of documents, data and any information that comes to their knowledge or is in their possession during their collaboration with Cyprus Certification Company, as strictly confidential.

Specifically:

Cyprus Certification Company handles all client documents in its possession in absolute confidence. All information and contents of documents and/or electronic data that may come to the knowledge of Cyprus Certification Company and/or its inspectors remain completely confidential.

All Cyprus Certification Company's personnel operate strictly within Cyprus Certification Company's procedures and are bound by a Code of Conduct.

Through a "Risk Analysis - Safeguarding Impartiality" all activities and involvement of Cyprus Certification Company's teachers / educators have been evaluated and conclusions and specific provisions on discretion and confidentiality issues have been drawn.

Client-related information may be shared with other entities, such as the accreditation body, in a way that does not compromise confidentiality. In such cases the client will be notified.

In case of legal disclosure of information to a third party is required, Cyprus Certification Company shall inform the client accordingly.

7. Committees

The Personnel Certification Scheme Committee has been established for the development of this Certification Scheme, which is responsible for developing and maintaining the Scheme.

Also, to ensure CCC's operation in an objective and non-discriminatory manner and in accordance with the relevant requirements of CYS EN ISO 17024:2012, the following Committees have been established:

- Certification Committee
- Independent Certification Council

7.1. Personnel Certification Scheme Committee

The Certification Scheme Committee consists of all members of the Consortium of **ALTER TOURS** Project.

The members of this Committee are responsible for the development, maintenance, and revision of the Certification Scheme as appropriate. They represent fairly and objectively all the interests of the interested parties who in our case are the members of the consortium that are related, involved or benefit from the existence of the Certification Scheme.

7.2. Certification Committee

To ensure an objective and non-discriminatory operation, according to the relevant requirements of CYS EN ISO 17024:2012, a Certification Committee will be established by CCC.

The Certification Committee is responsible for the final approval of the professionals to be certified as **ALTER TOURS PRO GUIDES**. The Certification Committee's main role is to confirm that the assessment procedure, beginning from the application stage to the final stage, has been conducted based on CCC's procedures and the Current Regulation.

The members of this Committee are independent of the training process and the process of evaluating the individuals to be certified as described in Section 8. Any person that has been involved in the training or the assessment of the teachers cannot be nominated as a member of the Certification Committee.

It may also involve individuals with specialization and experience in the areas of activity of CCC and experts for the evaluation of specialized topics.

The impartiality of the Committee in terms of its evaluation and decision-making process must always be safeguarded through its composition.

The members of all Committees must adhere to the principles of confidentiality and to this end they must all sign a Confidentiality Agreement. A confidentiality declaration will be signed by all Committee members.

7.3. Independent Certification Council (ICC)

The Independent Certification Council (ICC) of Cyprus Certification Company was established by a decision of the Board of Directors of Cyprus Certification Company and it operates in accordance with the Operations Regulation of the Independent Certification Council (ICC).

The Independent Certification Council (ICC) notwithstanding the evaluation of the proper administration of the awarded Certificates the examination of objections and appeals against Cyprus Certification Company, also has an advisory role towards the Board of Directors of Cyprus Certification Company on the following topics:

- Policy and Certification Regulations
- Issues of impartiality and objectivity
- Ensuring the uninterrupted access of all interested parties to the services of Cyprus Certification Company

The Independent Certification Council (ICC) ensures impartiality regarding decision-making, through the equivalent representation of the interested parties, in its composition, without any of the parties or interests involved being dominant.

The members of the Independent Certification Council (ICC) have knowledge, experience and broad scientific training in Cyprus Certification Company's sites of activity.

7.4. Impartiality and Confidentiality

The impartiality of the Committees in terms of its evaluation and decision-making process must always be safeguarded through its composition.

The members of all Committees must adhere to the principles of confidentiality and to this end they must all sign a Confidentiality Agreement. A confidentiality declaration (ANNEX 3) will be signed by all Committee members.

8. Assessment and certification process

8.1. Application procedure - Prerequisites for initial Certification

To facilitate the easy and consolidated experience of the examination process, a customized on-line platform will be used.

This platform is a specially customized Learning Management System (hereafter referred as LMS).

To begin the application process, the candidate needs to first create an account in the LMS. The information regarding where and how the account can be created, shall be provided to the applicant with the rest of the information when the activation of the certification scheme and the examination period is published.

By entering the requested information into the system, the applicant will automatically receive an email to activate their account (USER ACTIVATION).

With the effective activation of the account, the applicant will be able to register for the desired examination by completing the relevant application form on the platform (COURSE APPLICATION) under the '**Certification of persons**' section of the platform.

The applicant must provide all personal information during the application process and, by accepting the relevant fields, affirms compliance with this regulation and all pertinent procedures.

In addition, the applicant uploads electronic proof of identity, training proof and profession proof.

The application form includes the following information and data for each applicant:

- Name, surname, father's name (optional), date of birth (optional), address, telephone number, email, tax identification number (optional), special requests and contact details of the candidate (optional) and
- Evidence of pre-requisites as required by the certification scheme

The applicant receives an automated message confirming that their application has been received and that they will be notified as to whether it has been accepted.

If the application is approved, an email is automatically sent to the candidate with the application's status.

Any application for Certification that does not satisfy all prerequisites will be denied. In such event the applicant is notified prior to the examinations that their application has been rejected.

The applicant has the option of submitting new documents through a new application before the exams are held and up until the deadline for submitting applications to be reconsidered for the examination.

After the evaluation of completeness and approval of the application by the Committee, each candidate can find personal information, the unique candidate number, and the exam in which they desire to participate in their personal account.

The applicants are informed that their personal data will be handled in accordance with the relevant legislation and will be kept strictly confidential.

In order to take the Certification exams, all applicants must have completed compulsory education within the project (ALTER TOURS Training Material). Tourist guides need to be licensed by the National Authority of their country and travel agents need to have at least two (2) years of working experience at a travel agency.

8.2. Review of Application

The review and verification of the application is made to ensure that all required information has been submitted by the applicant. The review of the application focuses on the completeness, correctness, and validity of the data / supporting documents in relation to the minimum formal requirements for participation in the assessment procedure.

An application may be rejected if it does not meet all requirements as referred to in paragraph 8.1.

In such cases, the applicant should be informed before conducting the examination. To prevent him / her from being excluded from the exams, the candidate could submit the correct documents.

8.3. Assessment Procedure

The assessment of the candidates will be done for all competences, and will be divided into two parts, the theoretical and the practical one.

The assessment for each competence will be done using assessment tools that will be developed within the project and CCC's internal procedures.

8.3.1. Examination Procedure

The theoretical assessment will include 48 multiple choice questions in total to cover all 12 topics of the training material. The questions will include 4 multiple choice questions per Topic. The multiple-choice questions can be either in the form of True / False Questions or as multiple-choice questions with one correct answer. The duration of the theoretical assessment will be 60 minutes.

The practical assessment will include the planning of a sustainable tour or trip. Candidates will have to design a tour or a trip and will have 20 minutes to present it to the two examiners. The presentation will be in a synchronous electronic format and should include important elements gained from the training.

The examiner must assess whether the presentation includes basic principles for sustainable tours / trips and the way candidates understand the concept of sustainable tourism to include it in their tours/trips.

The checklist for the practical assessment can be found on ANNEX 2.

To successfully pass the exam, the candidates must achieve a total grade of 60% in both written and practical exams.

If one of the candidates does not pass the exam successfully, or part of the exam, then they will have to take the exam or the failed part again. In that case, the candidates will have to submit a new application.

9. Certification Process

After the completion of the assessment process, the Certification Committee shall validate the above and issue a Certificate for individuals as **ALTER TOURS PRO GUIDES**.

9.1. Certificates

The Certificates issued by CCC certify that tourist guides / agents have the requisite knowledge, skills, competences and the ability to design and deliver sustainable tours / trips. The Certificate relates exclusively to the person to whom it was granted and only for the competences covered by the assessment.

A certificate is issued upon the decision of the Certification Committee with a date of issue. Each certificate issued has a unique number and is signed by the Director of Certification.

Certificates shall include at least the following:

1. the name of the successful candidate,
2. the certificate number,
3. the type of certification,
4. scope of certification
5. the date of its issue,
6. the validity of the certification
7. the name of the certification body

All certifications are recorded in the relevant Registry maintained by CCC which is updated systematically.

9.2. Certificate Validity

The certificate that will be issued to each certified person will have a validity of 5 years. After the 5 year period, the professional must retake the exams to hold the certification.

9.3. Recertification Process

If a certified person desires to extend their certification beyond the initial 5 -year period, it is necessary for them to submit a new application to the organization responsible, clearly indicating their intention to continue, no later than three months prior to the certificate's expiration date.

After a positive relevant decision, the certificate will be reissued, retaining the same registration number, date of initial certification, date of re-certification, and a new 5 - year validity period.

Any person who wants to recertify his/her knowledge, skills, and competence as **ALTER TOURS PRO GUIDE** must submit to CCC documents that he /she has delivered sustainable tours to the market or attend a training with a duration of at least 6 hours on sustainability or eco-friendly practices in tourism.

CCC's Certification Committee will assess all submitted documents and after its positive decision, the certificate will be reissued, retaining the same registration number, date of initial certification, date of re-certification, and a new 5 - year validity period.

10. Requirements for Examiners

Examiners shall meet the requirements of the certification body. The selection and approval processes shall ensure that examiners fulfill the examiner's profile as described below.

Examiners are individuals responsible for assessing a learner's achievements and for the grading of an exam. Based on the design of this certification scheme, examiners are responsible for the development of the questions on the written exam and for assessing the practical part of the assessment.

examiners shall have the following minimum competency:

- Holds a degree in any field (at least EQF Level 6) **or/ and**
- Has at least 2 years of working experience in the field of tourism, sustainability or sustainable development
- Be able to apply the examination procedures and documents as developed by **ALTER TOURS Consortium**.
- have knowledge of the Certification Scheme.
- have competence in the field to be examined.
- have been trained in the assessment tools as developed by the project.
- are fluent, both in writing and orally, in the language of the examination.

If an examiner has a potential conflict of interest in the examination of a candidate, CCC shall take the necessary measures to ensure that the confidentiality and impartiality of the examination are not compromised. These measures shall be duly recorded.

The examiners after the "Train the examiners" activity will go through an assessment to assure their ability to apply the examination procedures and to grade the candidates to get certified. The Assessment will include a written assessment with a duration of 60 minutes including questions on the Modules. The assessment test will include 48 multiple choice questions.

All examiners shall be bound by non-disclosure agreements for the entire duration of their engagement and for a period of 5 years after the termination of the engagement.

11. Requirements for other personnel Involved in the Assessment

CCC has a description of the responsibilities and qualifications of all other personnel involved in the assessment process e.g. invigilators, individuals that review the applications. Declarations for confidentiality and impartiality must be signed by all personnel involved at any stage of the assessment.

11.1. Invigilators

As defined within ISO 29996:2021 (Education and learning services — Vocabulary)¹, Invigilator is the authorised person who administers or supervises an assessment, ensuring fair and proper conduct of examinations.

Invigilators shall be involved in the certification mechanism process to ensure that the confidentiality, integrity and impartiality of the examination is not compromised. The invigilators are not required to have specific qualifications. The invigilator may be an administrative staff member of any partner of the ALTER TOURS project.

During the examination, the invigilators will verify the identity of the candidates based on relevant documents, supervise the applicants to ensure compliance with the examination procedure, closely work with individuals responsible for the examination to resolve any issues that may arise during the examination, prevents fraud involving the behaviours and actions of candidates during the examinations and complete the necessary paperwork (if applicable) etc.

If an invigilator has a potential conflict of interest in the examination of a candidate, CCC shall undertake the necessary measures to ensure that the confidentiality and impartiality of the examination are not compromised. These measures shall be duly recorded.

All invigilators shall be bound by non-disclosure agreements for the entire duration of their engagement and for a period of 5 years after the termination of the engagement.

12. Register of Certified Persons (RCP)

CCC maintains a Register of certified individuals as **ALTER TOURS PRO GUIDES**, which includes:

- the name of the certified person.
- ID number.
- the date of application.
- the name of responsible partner that will carry out the examination procedure,
- the examination dates
- the scope of the certification (competences).
- the date of issue.
- validity of the certification.

Details that are included in the register of certified individuals may be notified of any person who has a proven legitimate interest in the **ALTER TOURS** project.

13. Objections, complaints and appeals

An interested party (candidate, examinee, certified professional, employer, third party, etc.) may wish to challenge the results of an examination at any stage of the examination process.

In this case, the interested party has the option of submitting its request digitally to CCC who is responsible for the exams. Within 30 calendar days, the person responsible on behalf of CCC will investigate the request, take corrective action if necessary, and notify the complainant in a digital manner.

The effective resolution of complaints and appeals is an important means of protecting CCC and interested parties from errors, omissions or inappropriate behaviors.

14. Modifications – Revisions of the current Regulation

This Certification Regulation may be revised, in whole or in part, only by the decision of the Scheme Committee.

Any revisions shall be communicated to the certified professional, setting the time / period for their adaptation to the new requirements. In case of disagreement with the above-mentioned changes, the individual may request in writing to terminate the certification.