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## Economic Commission for Europe

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Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business

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**Recommendations and standards:**

**Other deliverables for noting**

### Green Paper on Sustainable Tourism (Experience Programs)

#### *Summary*

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals specifically target sustainable tourism and the promotion of local culture and products in its target 8.9. This Green Paper aims to contribute directly to this target and sets the stage for future related work. It outlines the possibilities of experience programs and how these can positively impact local economies.

Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/11 is submitted to the twenty-fifth UN/CEFACT Plenary for noting.

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## I. Introduction

### A. New trends in tourism and the subject of this project

1. The purpose of this Green Paper Project was to examine a recent global trend in tourism, called Sustainable Tourism (Experience Programs) (EPs), and to consider next steps in facilitating the trade of EPs globally. In this paper, as far as the standardization processes are concerned, conventional tours are considered in the same category as EPs, as it is anticipated that even conventional tours could benefit from careful consideration of the ‘New perspectives’ in tourism, shown in Figure 1.

2. New EP tourism trends are mainly driven by regional businesses that emphasize the ‘New perspectives’ shown in Figure 1.

<i>EP</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>New perspectives</i>
<b>Conventional tours</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sightseeing tours</li> <li>• Optional tours (optional add-ons to basic tour packages)</li> <li>• Tours based on eco or green tourism</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To vitalize regions</li> <li>• To sustain environments</li> </ul>
<b>New trends in tourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture tours</li> <li>• Industry tours</li> <li>• Health-related tours</li> <li>• Sports tours</li> <li>• Social tours</li> <li>• Any kind of activity tours</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To improve Quality of Life (QOL)</li> </ul>

Figure 1: EP comparison of conventional tours and new trends in tourism

### B. The EP Green Paper Project

3. EPs, specifically focused on local areas or regions within countries, are a growing global trend. Tourists (domestic or international) tend to visit regions not only to see them, but also to experience the nature, events and activities of that region and to engage with the people and local culture in a meaningful way. As this trend continues, EPs will improve: becoming more unique, specialized and increasingly popular with global consumers. What EPs are, and the purpose of this project will be discussed in detail in chapters II and III.

### C. Uses cases of EPs

4. A great number of EP use cases were collected and studied for this project. It was observed that EPs have many challenges but are worthy of being studied further to facilitate global e-trade.

#### **D. Regional vitalization**

5. Participation is not restricted to travel-related companies; local businesses in any domain could potentially participate in the business of EPs, which could help to vitalize regions.

#### **E. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**

6. EPs should be developed and operated in full consideration of the items described in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

#### **F. Quality of Life**

7. New trends in tourism could improve not only the experience of visitors, but also the Quality of Life (QOL) of regional inhabitants. This is an important concept for EPs promoting themselves globally.

#### **G. New perspectives of EPs**

8. Regional EPs are also considered under the ‘New Perspectives’ shown in Figure 1. Even conventional tours, sightseeing or optional ones, should also respect these new perspectives, where appropriate.

## **II. What is happening globally to vitalize regions and why this project is needed**

9. The growing global trend of regional EP tours was discussed at length, and an attempt to define it follows. It is clear that some sort of standardization to facilitate trade in EPs is needed.

#### **A. New trends in tours**

10. Travellers tend to visit not only major sightseeing destinations but also local regions in order to experience the unique nature, culture and communities of those regions. Europe is well known for its variety of experience programs of this kind. In recent years the importance of thinking of these programs from the perspective of regional vitalization, environmental sustainability, and the promotion of QOL for visitors and residents has become clear. More recently, the benefits of this perspective have been gaining global recognition.

#### **B. Naming of this new trend**

11. The naming of this trend was discussed at length. The final agreement was to term it “Sustainable Tourism (Experience Programs)”, or EPs.

**C. Case studies and categorizations**

12. A decision was made to collect as many EP use cases as possible in order to discover regional trends. They are provided as an informal document (Use cases of EPs). In reviewing and discussing these, it was determined that it was almost impossible, and relatively meaningless, to differentiate conventional tours from new trend tours. Conventional tours can themselves help to vitalize regions, sustain environments and enhance QOL to a certain extent. It was therefore agreed to consider all tours as EPs in this Green Paper Project. Each of the EPs were categorized by a theme (or themes), and within themes there are specific activities.

**D. Local businesses and the vitalization of regions**

13. When travellers visit specific regions, local businesses start to serve them. These regions may have much to offer potential visitors, such as their local culture, fairs and festivals, heritage sites and institutions, historic monuments, arts, nature and wildlife, green spaces, and opportunities for visitors to participate in activities (e.g. community-based tourism such as rural or tribal tourism, service tourism, etc.). When these features are recognized by the outside world, local communities and businesses are encouraged to sustain these environments because they realize their value. They might also be incentivized to observe the practices outlined in the United Nations SDGs. Hence, EPs could potentially have the power to vitalize (or revitalize) regions, in both urban and rural communities.

**E. Categorization by originators of EPs**

14. The following Figure 2 illustrates categories of EP originators. In a standardized system there could be four main categories. The collected use cases were categorized in the relevant category.

<p><b>(A) Local governments or DMOs</b> (destination management organizations)</p> <p><a href="https://www.maharashtratourism.gov.in/">https://www.maharashtratourism.gov.in/</a>  <a href="http://rtdc.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in/">http://rtdc.tourism.rajasthan.gov.in/</a>  <a href="https://www.gujarattourism.com/">https://www.gujarattourism.com/</a>  <a href="http://www.grassroutes.co.in/">www.grassroutes.co.in/</a></p>	<p><b>(B) Local businesses in various domains</b></p> <p>Case 1: Masutomi wellness program, Japan                  Case 7: Lancerhof ‘Tegernsee’ Luxury medical spa, Germany</p>
<p><b>(C) Travel related companies</b></p> <p>Case 2: Service tourism, India                  Case 3: Rural tours, India                  Case 4: Buddhist culture tour, Bangladesh                  Case 5: Cox’s Bazar tour, Bangladesh                  Case 6: Wildlife cruise, Bangladesh                  Case 8: Aboriginal tourism, Taiwan Province of China                  Case 9: Dark sky tourism, Taiwan Province of China                  Case 10: Sulfuric fire fishing, Taiwan Province of China</p>	<p><b>(D) Online Travel Agents or consolidators</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.airbnb.co.in/s/experiences?refinement_paths%5B%5D=%2Fexperiences">https://www.airbnb.co.in/s/experiences?refinement_paths%5B%5D=%2Fexperiences</a>  <a href="https://www.yatra.com/activities">https://www.yatra.com/activities</a>  <a href="http://www.zubilant.co.in/1/tours/Experiential-Tours">http://www.zubilant.co.in/1/tours/Experiential-Tours</a></p>

Figure 2: Categories of EP originators

## F. Category (A) and efforts to create EPs

15. Category (A) is for new EP originators working with local governments or DMOs. New originators need to be trained in the creation and operation of EPs. Their process has been studied and is summarized in Figure 3.

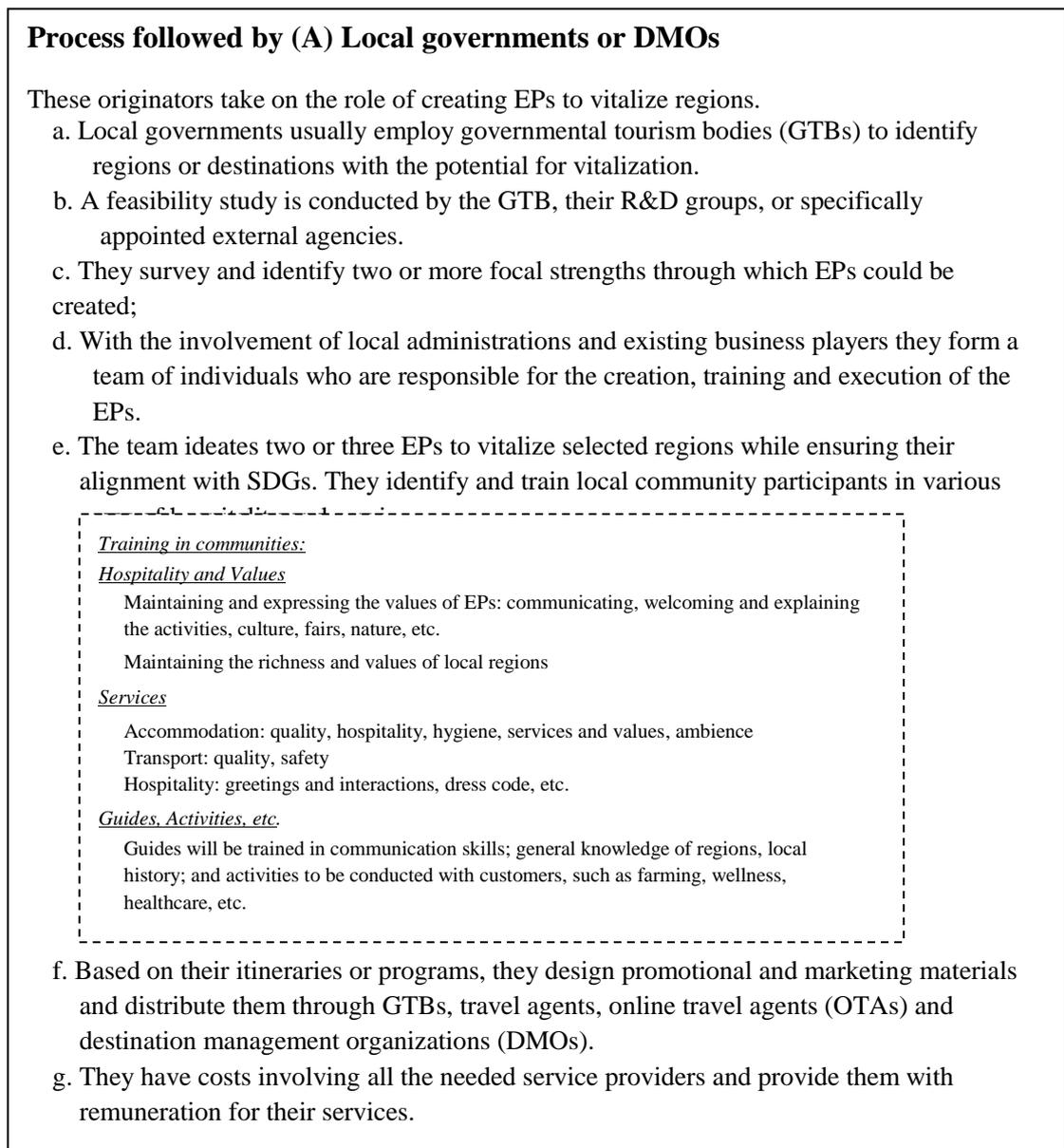


Figure 3: EPs creating process by (A) Local governments or DMOs

**G. Figure 4 and figure 5**

16. Figure 4 depicts how EPs created by Category (A) originators reach customers. Figure 5 depicts this process for Category (B) originators. Participants in this second category are also new originators. This category is expected to grow, so use cases in this category should be carefully studied.

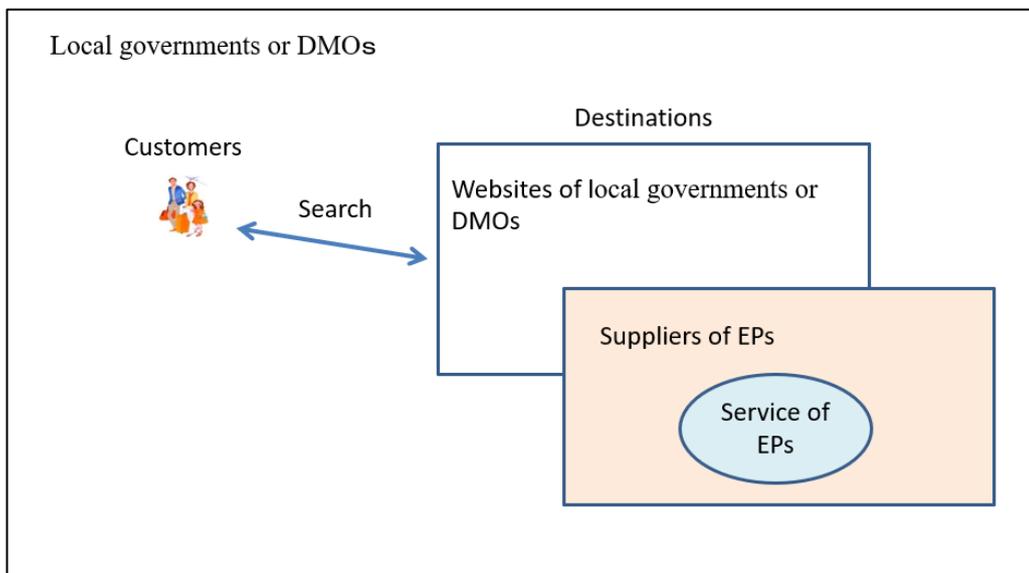


Figure 4: EPs provided by (A) Local governments or DMOs

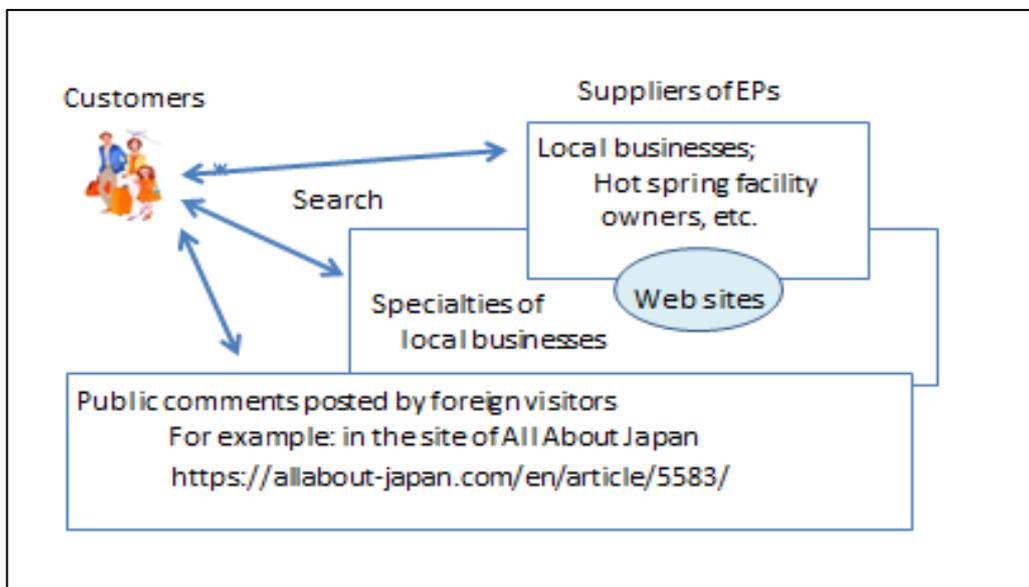


Figure 5: EPs provided by (B) Local businesses

**H. Category (C) and (D)**

17. Category (C) mainly includes originators that create and operate conventional tours. Category (D) represents online travel agents (OTAs), also known as consolidators. They usually handle hotel, and airline reservations etc., but may also provide customers with

activities or optional tours globally as their new travel products. The distribution capabilities of these agents could be applicable to the distribution of EPs, and this should be seriously investigated.

### I. Categorization of health-related tours

18. Health-related tours are ‘New-trend tours’ created and operated by those in Category (B). There are a large variety of these types of tours and they are highly expected to increase in the future. These could be categorized by their features, as shown in the following Figure 6. Category (I) is for purely medical tours. Category (II), (III) and (IV) will be for health-related tours, with varying weight on wellness from heavy to light. These tours will be further studied.

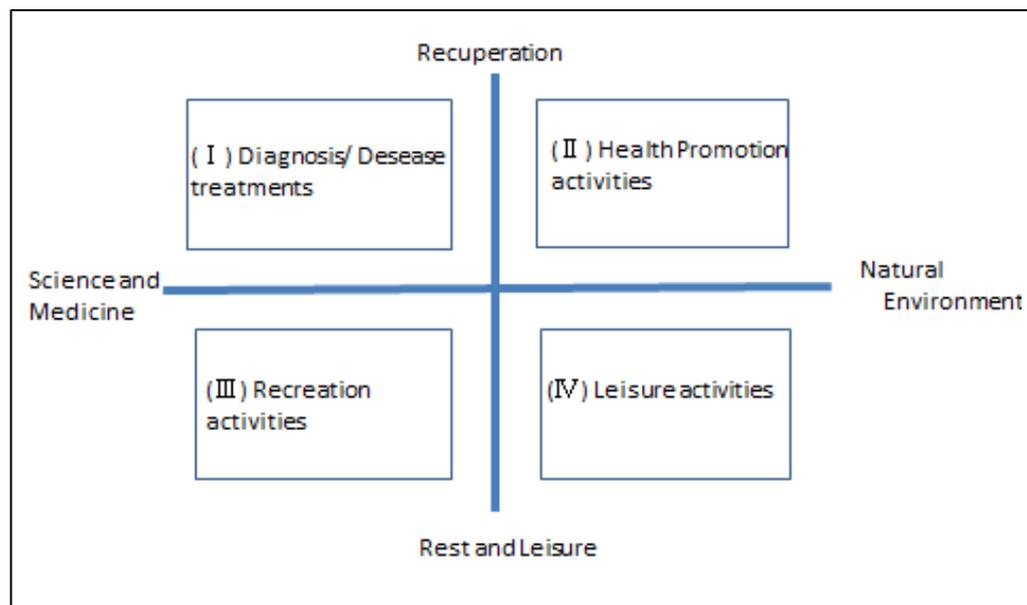


Figure 6: Health-related EPs categorized by their features

### J. The rationale for this Green Paper Project

19. Given the many benefits, EPs should be fostered in local regions, and made accessible to global customers. There is a high expectation from both local businesses and global customers that electronic trade of these EPs be quick and easy, and that that this process be standardized and facilitated as soon as possible—especially where there exist little appropriate means for them now.

## III. What the characteristics of Experience Programs are and what could be expected of them

20. The following are the summarized characteristics of EPs.

- EPs and regional vitalization and sustainability: EPs are local products experienced by global customers which could potentially contribute to regional vitalization. They could promote sustainability and responsibility at a regional level by offering local stays which include activities like farming, fishing, arts, handicrafts, and rural life

experiences while avoiding the environmental and cultural imbalance caused by overexposure of tourism;

- EPs and local communities: operators and other EP-related businesses employ many local people in the community, which in turn stimulates the local economy;
- The diversity of EPs: EPs are diverse (cultural, medical, sports, nature, arts, community-based etc.) and there is, therefore, a large variety of information to be communicated and shared between participants (originators, operators, participating businesses, customers, etc.).

21. The following points describe what could be expected of EPs.

- Start-up of businesses: there may be opportunities for local people to develop entrepreneurship skills and start new businesses in the region;
- People could earn a living: locals could make a living by participating in the services of EPs while at the same time sustain local nature, culture and heritage;
- Authentic experiences: travellers could gain authentic, local experiences;
- Promotion of Quality of Life (QOL): EPs could help promote the QOL of both visitors (who experience the variety of EPs in the region), and the inhabitants of regions (who earn a living by working in EP-related businesses).

#### **IV. Challenges to the facilitation of trade of Experience Programs**

22. The following are some of the many challenges to consider when facilitating the global trade of EPs.

##### **A. Diversity of businesses and related information**

23. Communicating and trading in EPs involves a variety of information, and it will be necessary to study how to handle it. EPs are diversely themed (e.g. nature, culture, business, lives of people, etc.). The providers may not only be those in the travel industry; they may take the form of any type of business in region (Figure 7: 'Emerging businesses & EPs'). There is a need to streamline this information, to create a lexicon to facilitate the trade of EPs. Figure 8 depicts the diversity of information.

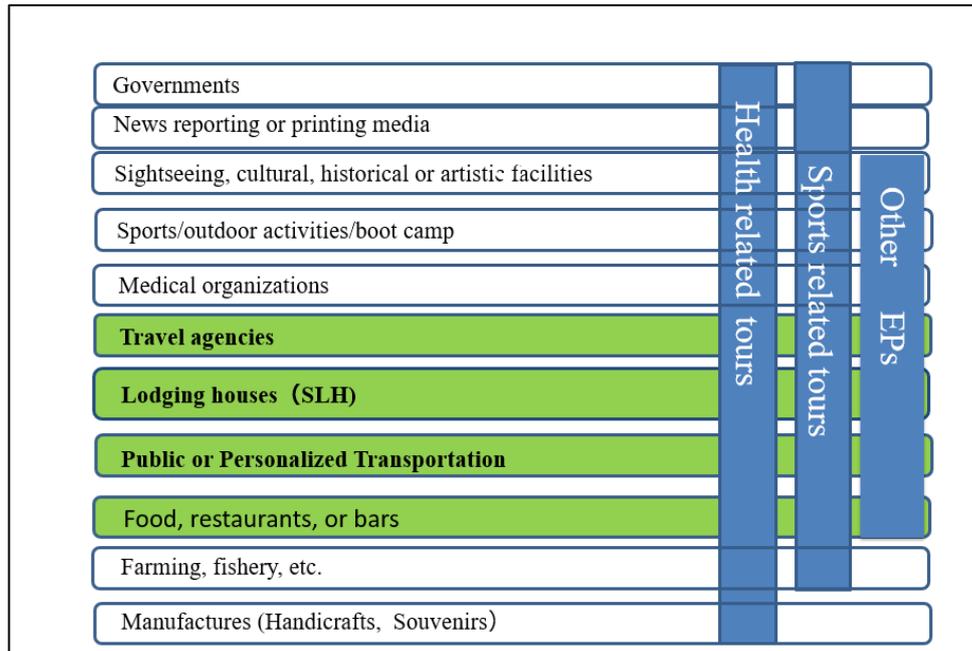


Figure 7: Emerging Businesses & EPs

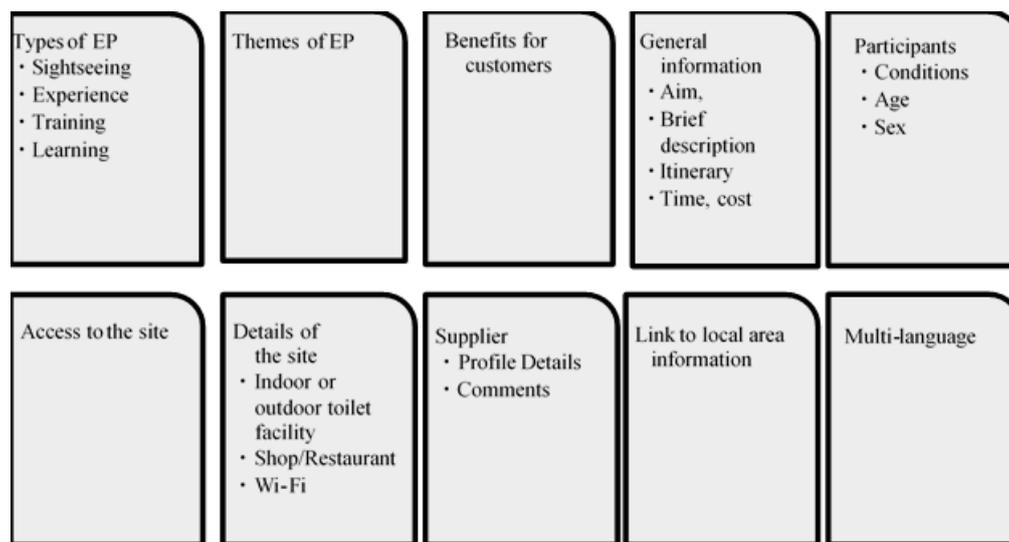


Figure 8: Data diversity and some examples of data taken from the use cases

**B. Small number of EPs in a region**

24. Regionally, there are usually a small number of EPs in each category, and there might be multiple categories available. But local businesses and customers would expect facilitation for these efforts as well.

### **C. Profitability**

25. There are potentially many EPs in a region and they could be profitable. Even though they may initially get little return on investment, start-ups do try to distribute these globally. Economically efficient ways of distribution would assist these efforts.

### **D. Settlement among businesses**

26. Businesses involved in EPs usually need to collaborate with many other businesses. When this happens, there is a need to settle payment among them. Usually this amount is small. Settling such small amounts between businesses is difficult as these are often done via bank transfers which have an administrative and possibly a financial impact.

### **E. Sustainability of environments**

27. Potential customers are often mindful of the importance of environmental sustainability. Businesses should keep this fact in mind.

### **F. No working computer systems and lack of experts**

28. In many regions, EP operators are not yet equipped with functional or appropriate computer systems. EP experts in business and information technologies (IT) are desperately needed. Without such experts it is very difficult to create, sell, operate or settle EPs throughout the world. There should be some appropriate collaboration within regions or with other organizations to improve the situation.

### **G. Networking and technology foresight**

29. Technologies progress rapidly and ideally these EP business and IT experts will have the knowledge to anticipate the coming technologies and advanced networking most appropriate for use.

### **H. Global business collaboration**

30. Regionally, businesses have been cooperating with each other, but regional EPs need to collaborate with international businesses in order to reach global customers.

## **V. Green Paper Project: next steps**

### **A. A standardization process will be proposed**

31. There are currently no EPs standards available for businesses and consumers to use, so it will be necessary to develop them in order to facilitate international trade in this area. A project proposal to develop standards on EPs will soon be submitted.

## B. Expected completion time of standardization process

32. A request to complete the standardization process as early as possible has been made (owing to the business need). The preferred target date for completion is roughly the end of 2019.

## C. Consideration of advanced technologies

33. New technologies like Blockchain need to be seriously considered in the accommodation of trade in EPs.

## D. Direct networking

34. It may be better for e-trade to be completed directly, and in real time between relevant suppliers and customers without any organizations between them. Suppliers could then receive direct feedback from customers. This information exchange is Peer to Peer (P2P), much like that expected in blockchain; this must be considered when developing relevant standards.

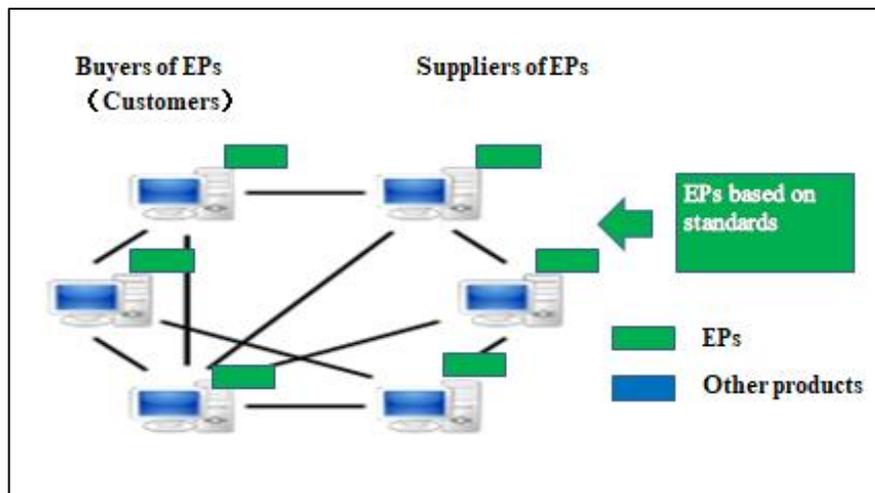


Figure 9: Peer to Peer network exchange of data

## VI. How to collaborate with global experts in business and technology when developing standards

35. It is important to work in collaboration with as many global experts in business and technology as possible when developing standards to facilitate global e-trade of EPs.

36. The following suggestions are offered for reaching more international experts:

- Encourage United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) experts: it is desirable to find business and technical experts within UN/CEFACT. They could offer better knowledge of EPs. To reach UN/CEFACT experts, the following ways could be useful:
  - Communicate with the heads of delegation (HODs) of UN/CEFACT, or specifically interested persons;

- Publish the project on the UN/CEFACT website;
- Publish the needs of the project in an appropriate media or news release.
- International collaborative work: experts could work cooperatively to develop standards through social media, cloud-based applications or related platforms, in lieu of face-to-face meetings. The following channels could be further applicable:
  - Facebook professional discussion group
  - On-line discussion group
- Participation in social events to reach experts and to make UN/CEFACT activities known: it would be beneficial to participate in appropriate social events to advertise UN/CEFACT activities and to emphasize the value of global standards for the e-trade of EPs;
- Cooperation with international organizations: it would be beneficial collaborate with international organizations such as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and other appropriate organizations to improve e-trade of EPs globally. Through such cooperation more experts could be found to develop standards on EPs.

## **VII. Conclusion**

### **A. Emerging tourism and the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

37. There has been much discussion during the course of this Green Paper Project since its proposal in October 2017. Concepts such as the potential of tourism to vitalize regions, foster sustainability and improve the QOL of their visitors and inhabitants were identified through this discussion. This specific type of tourism was named ‘Sustainable Tourism (Experience Programs)’, or EPs. The Project began in close proximity to the publication of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and it was determined that the fundamental concepts of SDGs could harmonize well with those of EPs.

### **B. Standardization process**

38. A decision was made to begin the standardization process to facilitate e-trade of EPs globally, as businesses have been requesting this begin as early as possible.

### **C. Expected completion time**

39. The completion time for the development of standards for EPs would ideally be set for the end of 2019, owing to the needs of business.

### **D. Study of new technologies**

40. UN/CEFACT has published the Blockchain White Paper. It may be appropriate to consider the use of new technologies and P2P networking for EPs.

**E. Global cooperation with organizations and related experts is expected**

41. The development of standards should be completed cooperatively with other, related organizations and a variety of experts on EPs.

**F. Thank you to the members of Green Paper Project**

42. At the completion of this paper, acknowledgment must be made to all members of Green Paper Project who have contributed so greatly to its completion. The coordinator and the chair would like to express sincere gratitude to them all.

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