



20 YEARS OF BLUE FLAG





About **BLUE FLAG**

The Blue Flag Programme, this year celebrating its 20th Anniversary, is an exclusive, voluntary eco-label for beaches and marinas. The programme is run by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE).

The Blue Flag is awarded to beaches and marinas that meet a specific set of criteria concerning environmental information & education, water quality, safety & services, and environmental management. It has become a symbol of quality recognized by tourists and tour operators around the world. The programme is designed to raise environmental awareness and increase good environmental practices among tourists, local populations and beach and marina management and staff.

As of 2007 there were over 3200 sites awarded with the Blue Flag in 37 countries including countries in Europe, countries in the Caribbean, Morocco, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa. Current information about participating countries and awarded sites can be found on the website www.blueflag.org.

The Blue Flag can be found flying above a great variety of locations: warm Caribbean coasts, Mediterranean destinations, quiet Baltic Sea coves and along the open oceans. The Blue Flag Programme in each participating country each have their own stories to tell. On the following pages you will find some information on the history of the programme and some reports from a few of our partner organisations.

Message

from the United Nations Environment Programme

Tourism is one of the world's largest industries and one that heavily depends on the natural resource base. Attractive coastal landscapes such as sandy beaches, dune areas, estuaries, and coastal lakes are preferred sites for tourism development. The tourism industry makes significant contributions to the economies of many developing nations particularly to foreign exchange earnings, employment, and GDP.

However, uncontrolled and ill planned tourism significantly degrades the environment. The last 10 years have seen incredible changes in the way environmental matters have been addressed. During this time, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has tried to respond effectively to the needs of the tourism industry. It has done this by developing technical knowledge and making it available through its network as well as creating solid partnerships that could create a replication effect. UNEP firmly believes that only through partnership between the various players we can reverse the current trends of environmental degradation and in particular the loss of biodiversity.

As a valued UNEP partner, with whom we have cooperated for many years, Blue Flag has implemented on the ground the principle of continuous improvement. It has done this by constantly seeking new ways of involving local communities, workers, destinations and associated businesses in environmental protection. Today, Blue Flag is a recognised eco label that is implemented in more than 37 countries and covers over 3200 beaches and marinas. Thus, Blue Flag serves as a world-wide example of the role that organisations can play, working together to build a common conscience, and providing guidance towards sustainable tourism development.



Arab Höballah

Chief

Sustainable Consumption and Production branch

UNEP - DTIE

Message

from the United Nations World Tourism Organisation

Over the last decade and in line with other United Nations agencies, the World Tourism Organisation's mission (UNWTO) has significantly shifted towards ensuring a sustainable development of tourism, in all types of destinations. The work of its Sustainable Development of Tourism Department covers many fields, including policies and guidelines, certification systems, indicators of sustainability, climate change issues, sustainable tourism at specific destinations, including coasts and islands, and last but not least, the achievement of the first Millennium Development Goal: poverty alleviation.

In this context, and with beach and marine-based tourism maintaining its predominant size over other forms of tourism, UNWTO has been supporting the Blue Flag initiative since the early 1990's, recognising that it has been so far the only eco-label in the tourism sector that has achieved a critical mass, with over 3200 beaches and marinas certified in 37 countries, while at the same time being financially independent and sustainable.

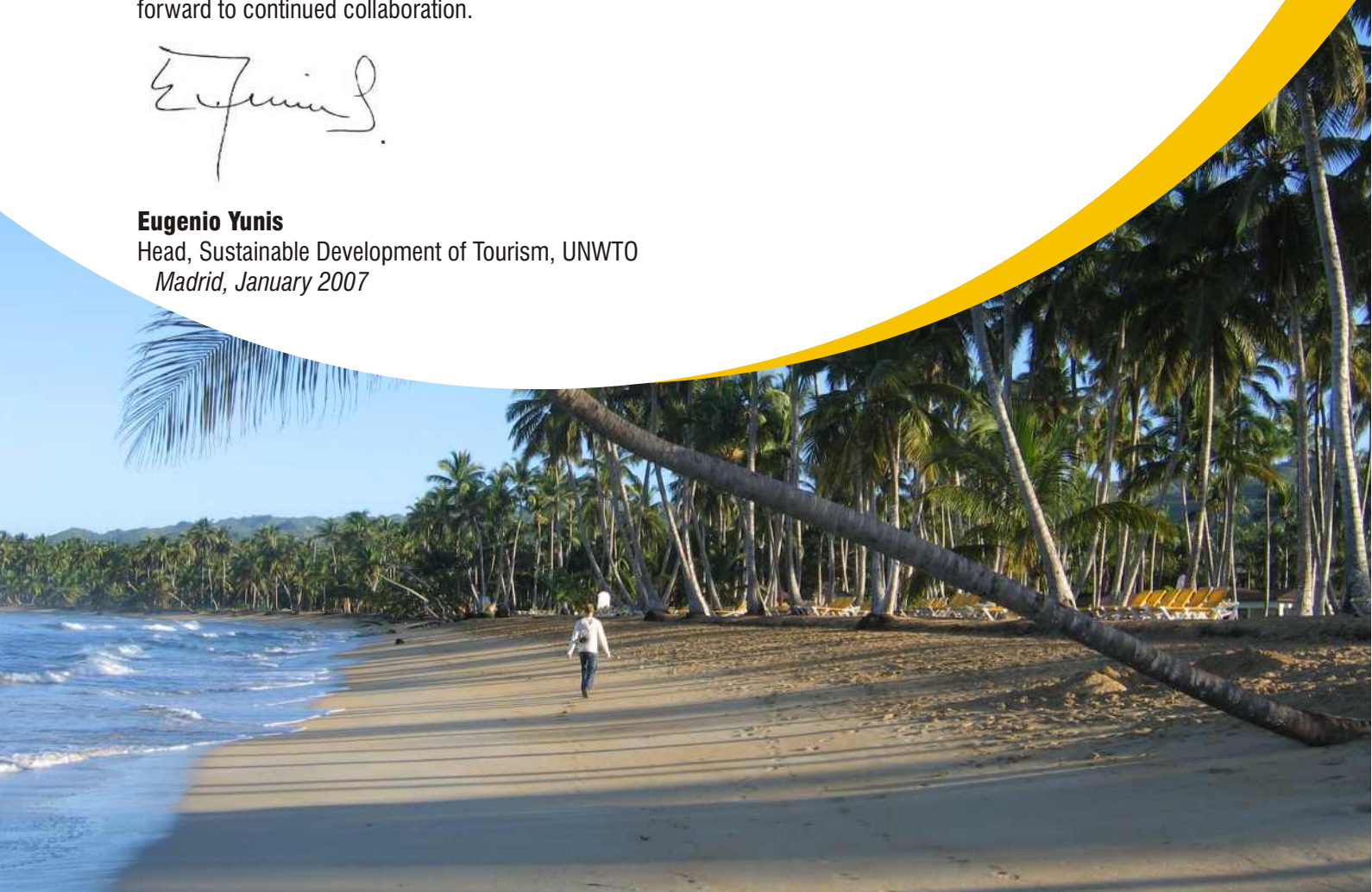
In 1996, UNWTO, jointly with the Foundation for Environmental Education and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) produced and published, *"Awards for improving the coastal environment: the example of the Blue Flag"*; this publication was followed by a number of other activities in an effort to spread the Blue Flag Programme beyond Europe, an aim that has already been achieved. In addition, the World Tourism Organisation is an active member of the Blue Flag International Jury and has supported in other ways the expansion of the label throughout the world.

The Blue Flag brings a reliable guarantee to tourists and tour operators regarding the environmental quality of beaches and marinas. Furthermore, it has served to encourage local authorities and other tourism stakeholders to constantly enhance the environmental quality of their bathing waters and other tourism facilities, and of their destinations as a whole. We are pleased to congratulate FEE on the 20th Anniversary of the Blue Flag, and we look forward to continued collaboration.



Eugenio Yunis

Head, Sustainable Development of Tourism, UNWTO
Madrid, January 2007





BLUE FLAG celebrates 20 YEARS

At 20 years of age, the Blue Flag Programme is likely the oldest living and thriving eco-label of its kind. The success of the programme is credited to those dedicated individuals, from the local to the international level, who believed in the programme's message and potential enough to put their energy into making it a reality. After 20 years, the good effects of the Blue Flag Programme can be seen at beaches and marinas around the world.

How It Began

The Blue Flag Programme started in Europe in 1987 with the purpose of encouraging beaches to comply with the EU Bathing Water Directive 76/160/EEC. From this starting point, the programme has grown and developed.

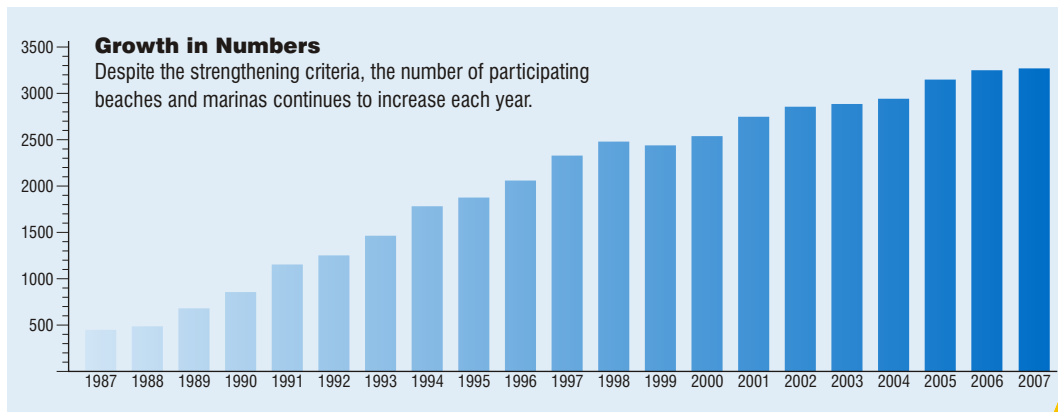
The idea was originally born in France in 1985 where the first French coastal municipalities were awarded the Blue Flag on the basis of criteria covering sewage treatment and bathing water quality. 1987 was the "European Year of the Environment". The Foundation for Environmental Education (at that time known as FEEE) presented the concept of the Blue Flag to the Commission and they agreed to help launch the Blue Flag Programme as one of several other activities that year. The original French concept of the Blue Flag was developed to include other issues such as waste management and coastal planning and protection. Marinas also became eligible for the programme. In 1987, 244 beaches and 208 marinas from 10 countries were awarded the Blue Flag.

Since then, the criteria have become more holistic and encompassing, changing with current research and technology and addressing a much wider range of issues than when it started. The criteria have also become more stringent and have taken on an international perspective. The programme has also developed geographically, moving outside of Europe first in 2001 to South Africa, and since then spreading to countries in the Caribbean, Oceania and North and South America.

CREATING AN *international standard*

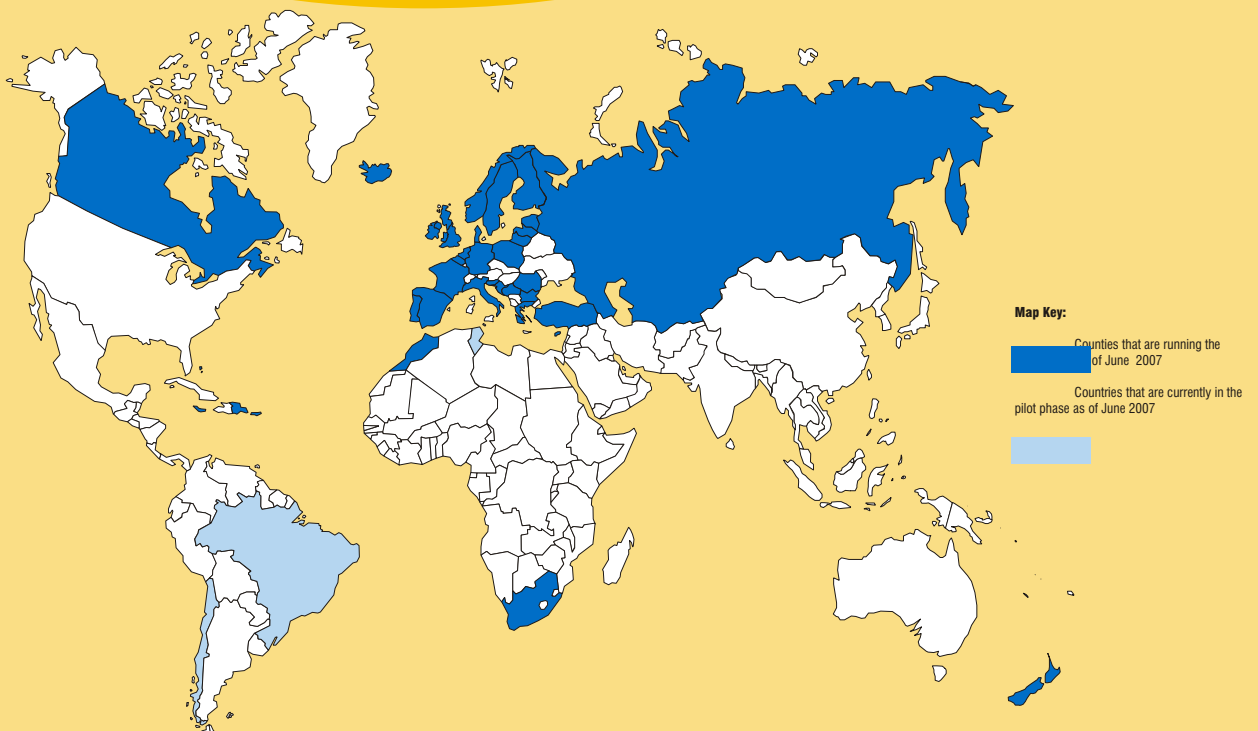
One of the strengths of the programme today is that it is international and the criteria set an international standard to be followed by all participants. Creating and maintaining international standards has taken much effort.

As the programme spread to more European countries after 1987, each country developed their own version of the Blue Flag beach criteria. It was later decided that consolidation was needed and in 1992 the beach criteria were merged into one European version.



In 2001 when the programme spread outside of Europe to South Africa, another version of the beach criteria was formed for that region to fit their specific conditions. Then yet another version was formed for the Caribbean and then for Canada. In 2006, the beach criteria from all countries were again consolidated into one international version. Today, all participating countries follow the same International Blue Flag criteria for both beaches and marinas, with some regional variations.

The international criteria today set the minimum allowed standard for the programme. At the national level, it is possible to make the criteria more demanding. It is often these developments at the national level that are later adopted at the international level, during periodic criteria revisions, thus sustaining continual improvement.



Blue Flag Ireland

Known and Respected

The Blue Flag Programme has been operating in Ireland since 1988 and has seen substantial growth during this time from 21 Blue Flags in 1988 to 84 flags in 2007. The programme typically generates a lot of publicity, particularly during the National Awards Ceremonies in early June each year. This interest is due to the fact that the Blue Flag is a well-respected and recognised eco-label with the Irish public.

The Blue Flags are almost always presented by the Minister for the Environment at the National Award ceremony. The Blue Flag Programme is funded by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in Ireland and is seen as a very important component

in coastal zone management for the country. Last year Irish Blue Flag

beaches were included in the UK's Marine Conservation Society's Good Beach guide (www.mcsuk.org), obviously creating more good publicity.

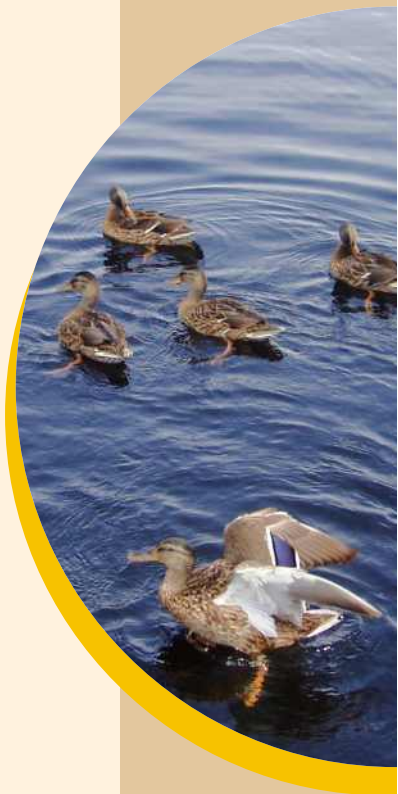
The Blue Flag Programme in Ireland also liaises and where possible integrates with other FEE programmes such as Eco-Schools (Green-Schools). Green-Schools that carry out one of their action days on a Blue Flag beach receive a Blue Flag certificate. This of course promotes both programmes.

The Individual Blue Flag for boat owners has recently been promoted at boat shows. The Irish Blue Flag Programme now has over 80 boat owners registered and willing to commit to an environmental code of conduct while on the water, including the Sea Scouts in Bray and Sligo and many boat owners from inland and coastal waters.

During the 20th Anniversary Year of the International Blue Flag the Irish Blue Flag Programme hopes to maintain the high standards at Irish Blue Flag beaches and marinas and also to continue to increase Blue Flag numbers in Ireland.

Blue Flag in Ireland is run by An Taisce www.antaisce.org

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Blue Flag Finland

Using Blue Flag criteria to promote Environmental Law

Finland has taken the Blue Flag criteria a step further, demanding toilet water pump-out facilities at their marinas, as part of the solution for solving the eutrophication problem of the Baltic Sea.

The Baltic Sea and especially the Gulf of Finland are not healthy. Eutrophication of the Baltic Sea is visible for everyone, appearing during late summer as massive algae blooms. The deterioration of water quality and the death of large areas of sea-bottom flora and fauna are serious problems that affect the quality of life of people living around the Baltic Sea on many levels.

The Baltic Sea is an inland sea, heavily impacted by the surrounding population. There is very little water exchange with the Atlantic and low circulation along the coasts and archipelagos. The only way to improve the condition of the Baltic Sea is to put a stop to all anthropogenic sources of nutrients. This was the motivation behind recommendation 19/9 of the Helsinki convention (HELCOM), to prohibit toilet waste water discharges directly into the water, not only from big ships, but also from leisure crafts.

The Blue Flag Programme in Finland wanted Blue Flag

marinas to contribute to this effort. As early as 1996, Blue Flag Finland instated an obligatory criterion to have toilet water pump-out facilities in all Finnish Blue Flag marinas, since it became a law that all boats must have a toilet system in place. By providing pump-out facilities, the Blue Flag marinas have helped motivate boat owners to make the necessary changes in their boat's toilet systems and marinas to invest in the waste water pump-out equipment.

Today, Finland is further along than any other country around the Baltic Sea in complying with this important HELCOM recommendation. The initiative and example of the Blue Flag marinas has to be acknowledged in this connection. Besides the positive influence on stakeholders, the Blue Flag criteria have been a great tool in raising the standards of Finnish marinas over the years and keeping them up to date with the speed of today's environmental and technical developments.

*Blue Flag in Finland is run by the Keep the Archipelago Tidy Association
www.pidasaaristosiiistina.fi*

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Blue Flag Italy

The Importance of Contact with Municipalities

FEE Italy has found that close contact with the municipalities is vitally important for successfully administering the Blue Flag Programme there. To help motivate close cooperation and contact with the municipalities, FEE Italia holds yearly meetings with municipal Mayors and those responsible for technical aspects. There are many good reasons for closely involving the municipalities since they play an integral role in most aspects of the programme.

Bathing water quality is directly dependent on the adequacy of the waste water treatment plants in the area. One of the main criteria of the programme in Italy is to demand the use of suitable waste water treatment facilities. They must be the right size with the capacity to effectively purify waste water, especially during the summer season when use is highest due to tourism.

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For FEE Italia it is also important to refer to municipalities concerning recycling. Recycling is required on Blue Flag beaches. It is imperative that the recyclable materials collected by individual operators is then correctly collected and transported to different facilities to be recycled and re-used.

FEE Italia also believes that environmental education and information is better spread by the municipalities. Municipalities can harmonise the different initiatives in their territory so as to reach everywhere. Municipalities can also arrange space in their Tourist Offices to inform about local natural and sensitive areas and initiatives being offered. The municipalities can also best determine which environmental initiatives will best balance the negative effects of tourism in their location: for example, promoting the use of sustainable transport, arranging decentralised parking, running a shuttle bus service to the beach, pedestrian areas, or cycling paths.

Finally, for FEE Italia, the Blue Flag is the acknowledgement of the capacity of municipalities to face and resolve the different callings of their territory, strengthening the protection of it in order to avoid threats from local economical development.

Blue Flag in Italy is run by FEE Italia www.feeitalia.org



Blue Flag Morocco

A Beach Accessible for All

The beach of Achakar on the Atlantic Ocean in the north of Morocco has always been a beautiful beach, located in a wonderful natural area, but this beach had not been accessible for disabled visitors due to the steep terrain.

As part of the Blue Flag Programme, this beach was equipped with removable wooden ramps. The wooden ramps were designed to reach from the cliffs above the beach, down to the sand. They also provide access to the sanitary facilities, with a toilet designed for the use of disabled visitors. The ramps allow for all visitors to enjoy the beauty of this beach.

A local association in partnership with the Moroccan Red Cross also offers many free services to the disabled visitors, including assistance for access, assistance for swimming, and environmental activities.



...beaches with social benefits...

Benefits for the Beach and the City

As part of the Blue Flag Programme, the beach of Essaouira invested in new equipment, and decided to focus on creating a park for children on the beach. This development is beneficial for the beach and also for the city.

The park helps to meet some of the needs of the city regarding leisure activities for children, by providing them with a place to go. It also contributes to the employment situation of the city by creating five new permanent jobs.

For the parents of beach visitors, it is of course an excellent added value. The kids can spend their time and energy playing in the park, while giving parents some quiet time for relaxing on the beach.

Essaouira has also developed an excellent environmental education centre. It is managed by local associations and offers many different activities on the beach.

Blue Flag in Morocco is run by Fondation Mohammed VI pour la Protection de l'Environnement www.fm6e.org



Blue Flag Slovenia

Working towards a Paperless Programme

FEE, as an environmental education organisation, tries to promote environmentally friendly behaviour and sustainable development throughout its programmes. For this reason, the Blue Flag Programme in Slovenia has started to develop the Blue Flag e-application system, since behind the beaches and marinas flying the flags, lie many hours of work in the office. They aim to reduce the use of paper and ink, and to promote paperless communication within the Blue Flag Programme that could be used worldwide.

Using an e-application would be helpful both for the people filling in the questionnaires, and the people gathering and analyzing the data. An automated procedure would of course also help reduce programme costs, assure better archiving of data, and possibly even simplify the whole application procedure for all participants.

As a result of all this, the National Blue Flag Coordinators would have more time to deal with other key issues since the automated process would also provide the possibility for automatically generated reports and analyses, export of data and interchange of data with the International Blue Flag database.

The key issue for creating a good automated e-application system is first to prepare an electronic questionnaire, defining imperative and guideline values and other measurable limits to optimise the automation process. Some of the necessary features would include: authentication and verification of users, the possibility to attach files, e-mail reminders, easy editing from year to year without disrupting the archives, and an automatic analysing and reporting system for the National Jury and for the International Blue Flag Coordination, providing also the possibility to export data into Excel.

*Blue Flag in Slovenia is run by Doves - FEE Slovenia www.drustvo-doves.siltalia
www.feeitalia.org*

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BLUE FLAG

Thank You!

The Blue Flag Programme proudly celebrates 20 years of successful work with beaches and marinas around the world, and we look forward to many more years of development and the addition of new organisations, partners and participants into our international family.

The International Blue Flag Programme is very thankful of the support we have received from our international partners and sponsors. Their support, assistance, and expertise have helped to make this programme an international success. We look forward to many more years of cooperation and the spread of Blue Flag's good practices around the world.

International Partners



United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
www.unepie.org



United National World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO)
www.world-tourism.org



International Council of Marina Industry Associations (ICOMIA)
www.icomia.org



International Lifesaving Federation (ILS)
www.ilsf.org



The European Union
europa.eu.int



Reef Check
www.reefcheck.org



EUC - the Coastal Union
www.eucc.net

International Sponsors



Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE)

FEE is a non-profit non-governmental organisation with member organisations in 48 countries as of June 2007. FEE aims to promote sustainable development through environmental education. The education can be in the form of formal school education, training of staff and general awareness raising.

Please read more about FEE and FEE's other programmes at www.fee-international.org



BeachTech
www.beach-tech.com



Beach Trotters
www.beach-trotters.com



Blue Beach SafeBox Services
www.bluebeachsafebox.com



Boxen Media
www.boxenmedia.com



First Choice Holidays and Flights Ltd.
www.firstchoice.co.uk



Shipmate
www.shipmate.nl



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