

BEST PRACTICE HOTEL LUISE

Submitted by : ITKAM



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SECTION 1: BASIC INFORMATION

- Title of the Best Practice: Hotel Luise
- Website of the Practice: <https://hotel-luise.de/>
- Social Media links: <https://www.instagram.com/luise.eco?igsh=NWplb2Z4dzVmYjYh>
- Location: Erlangen, Germany

SECTION 2: PRACTICE OVERVIEW

- Short Description of the Practice

Hotel Luise is an eco-hotel which embeds sustainability and circular economy principles into every aspect of its operations. The property has developed a holistic approach to resource efficiency, aiming to reduce environmental impact while creating added value for guests, staff, and the local community. Among its many initiatives, two standout practices illustrate this philosophy particularly well: the reuse and recycling of obsolete hotel furnishings, and the redistribution of surplus food to staff to prevent waste and support well-being. Both measures demonstrate how operational processes can be reimaged to minimise waste, optimise resource use, and foster social responsibility. These low-cost, high-impact actions serve as tangible examples of how hospitality businesses can integrate circular principles into daily routines, setting a benchmark for sustainable tourism operations.

- Implementation Period: Ongoing (multiple initiatives over recent years)
- Status:

☐ Planned ☐ Pilot phase ☒ Fully implemented ☒ Ongoing and evolving

- **Thematic Areas Addressed:**

☐ Farm to Fork / Sustainable Food Systems

☒ Waste Management

☒ Resource Efficiency

☐ Other: _____

- **Describe how the practice aligns with the selected Thematic Areas.**

Hotel Luise demonstrates resource efficiency by extending the life cycle of hotel items, such as furniture, décor, and fittings, that would otherwise be discarded when worn out or replaced during renovations. Instead of sending these objects to the landfill, the hotel actively repurposes them throughout its premises. Chairs, tables, lamps, textiles, and decorative elements are given a second life through refurbishment and creative redesign in new functional contexts. This approach not only reduces waste generation but also conserves the raw materials, energy, and financial resources that would have been necessary to produce and transport new items. It transforms what might be seen as obsolete into unique, character-rich elements of the guest experience, aligning aesthetics with sustainability.

A second, equally important measure targets food waste reduction: at the end of the day, surplus food from the hotel's kitchen is made available to staff rather than being thrown away. This simple practice ensures that edible food continues to serve its intended purpose of nourishment, while avoiding the environmental footprint associated with wasted food (e.g. methane emissions from decomposition). Beyond the environmental benefit, this initiative fosters a sense of community and mutual care within the workplace. Staff members directly see the value of resources saved and become more engaged in the hotel's sustainability mission.

Both practices embody the principles of circular design: they keep resources in use for as long as possible, minimise single-use waste, and generate both environmental and social value. They also integrate seamlessly into the hotel's operational model, requiring little capital investment but yielding tangible and visible results. For guests, these measures are a part of the authentic story of Hotel Luise, demonstrating how everyday decisions can contribute to a larger sustainability vision.

This approach appeals to eco-conscious travellers. The three-star superior hotel is positioned in the affordable mid-range segment, with its main target group being sustainability-minded guests. This can be deduced from the hotel's transparent communication of its sustainability strategy, which stands out immediately when searching for information about the property.

- **Explain how this activity fits within the tourism sector**

The sustainability practices at Hotel Luise are embedded in day-to-day hotel operations, from housekeeping to kitchen management, making sustainability visible in every guest interaction. Hotel Luise not only repurposes its old furniture but also applies upcycling principles when acquiring new items. For example, the hotel features tables made from old refrigerators, created in collaboration with The Good Plastic Company, as well as lamps crafted from repurposed bottles or fire extinguishers. These repurposed and upcycled furniture and décor give the property a distinctive, authentic character that becomes an integral part of the guest experience, while the hotel's food reuse policies demonstrate a tangible commitment to reducing waste. A key element in communicating this approach is the "Wall of Change", which documents over 230 sustainability measures implemented by the hotel (to be found in the hotel and on its website). This visual installation provides guests with a clear overview of the property's continuous progress, makes its commitment transparent, and inspires both visitors and other hotels to replicate the initiatives. By combining practical actions with visible storytelling, Hotel Luise engages guests on a deeper level, strengthens its brand identity as a responsible tourism business, and serves as a model for integrating circular economy principles into hospitality.

- **What learning value for VET training, curriculum development or capacity-building of professionals does the practice offer?**

The approach offers practical, low-barrier examples that can be integrated into hospitality training programmes. It shows future hoteliers and staff how to embed circular economy principles without major investment, by creatively reusing materials, minimising waste, and turning surplus into a resource. These actions also provide a framework for engaging employees in sustainability goals, building teamwork, and creating added value for guests. As such, they serve as transferable skills and models for hotels, guesthouses, and other tourism businesses aiming to operate more sustainably.

SECTION 3: CHALLENGES AND ALIGNMENT WITH CIRCULAR ECONOMY PRINCIPLES

- **What challenges or barriers were addressed (based on the report findings)?**

- ☒ Waste management and disposal
- ☒ Energy/resource use
- ☐ Infrastructure limitations
- ☐ Seasonality
- ☐ Skills and capacity gaps
- ☒ Low awareness of CE
- ☐ Behavioural resistance
- ☐ Financial or funding constraints
- ☐ Other : _____

- **How were these challenges overcome?**

Hotel Luise has taken a comprehensive and creative approach to embedding circular economy principles into its daily operations. Their strategies have been developed as part of a broader circular hotel concept, rooted in transparency, communication, and measurable impact. Reusing old furniture not only prevents waste but also enhances the property's unique aesthetics. This practice aligns with their "Resource wastage & material use" strategy, which prioritises refurbishing and upcycling over consumption of new materials (<https://hotel-luise.de/en/sustainability/>). Moreover, reducing kitchen waste and fostering a culture of care and resource mindfulness is a key element in the hotel's broader philosophy of waste minimisation.

The physical and virtual Wall of Change displays over 230 individually documented measures detailing the action, implementation period, partners involved, and associated UN SDGs. This active communication measure serves as an emotional, visible invitation to guests and peers to explore and replicate the practices.

Apart from the highlighted measures, Hotel Luise employs ongoing monitoring of energy and water use, timely building upgrades, and partnerships with external energy auditors, to ensure resource efficiency. Breakfast at Hotel Luise consists exclusively of regional, organic and/or Fairtrade products. In addition, great care is taken to minimise packaging, meaning that guests will not find single-use portions or similar items at the buffet. Instead, reusable

containers such as preserving jars are used.

The Hotel's commitment is verified through recognised standards: It has been climate-neutral since 2010 and hold the climate certification by Viabono, an independent body that evaluates companies' sustainability with a focus on the travel industry (<https://meet.bayern/en/expertentalks/hotel-luise/>).

• **Which circular economy strategies does this practice address?**

- ☒ Waste reduction / reuse / recycling
- ☒ Renewable energy / energy efficiency
- ☐ Water conservation
- ☒ Circular product/service design
- ☒ Sustainable food systems / short food chains
- ☒ Eco-certifications or green standards
- ☒ Repair, refurbishment, or reuse of infrastructure/furnishings
- ☐ Digital tools for circularity or sustainability

• **Describe why this practice can be considered as a 'best practice' and how it contributes to one or more circular economy principles:**

The operational measures by Hotel Luise illustrate how hotel settings can adopt circular economy principles with immediacy and authenticity. They are inexpensive, replicable, and deliver visible environmental and social benefits. They also integrate seamlessly into guest experiences and staff culture, enabling a sustainable identity without complex infrastructure.

Additionally, the communication strategy of the hotel, i.e. actively communicating the past and ongoing measures to enhance sustainability, is exemplary. The connection of the Wall of Change measures to the SDGs adds value and an educational aspect about the broader context.

In 2023, the hotel was awarded the EU Ecolabel. The pursuit of this certification compels both the management and staff to engage with advanced sustainability practices, while simultaneously fostering the development of specialised skills and competencies in the field of sustainable hospitality.

• **Describe why this practice can be considered as innovative. What new, creative or underused approach brings added value to circular tourism development?**

Hotel Luise creatively rethinks standard hospitality workflows by integrating measures like furniture upcycling and staff food reuse as core sustainability strategies. Its innovation lies in turning everyday operations into opportunities for circularity, demonstrating that meaningful impact can be achieved through low-cost, human-centred actions. By embedding these practices into daily routines, it fosters lasting behaviour change and showcases how simple, underused approaches can add tangible value to circular tourism development.

SECTION 4: COLLABORATION

Describe any collaboration that were involved in the development of this practice? Did this practice involve local authorities or other groups?

These practices were led internally, with engagement of housekeeping and kitchen teams, supported by leadership commitment to sustainability and guest-facing storytelling tools (e.g. the Wall of Change). Additionally, the hotel actively contributes to education through multiple initiatives. In 2023, it hosted its first VHS (Volkshochschule – German adult education centre) course, "The Wonderful Microforest" at the hotel premises. The aim was to raise public awareness of the concept and inspire individuals to replicate it, with further courses planned in collaboration with VHS Erlangen (<https://www.luise.eco/unkategorisiert/vhs-kurs/>).

Moreover, the hotel regularly collaborates with students, serving as an expert interview partner, a practical case study, or an example in academic work. This ongoing engagement supports knowledge transfer and fosters learning in line with SDG 4 (<https://www.luise.eco/kommunikation/studienarbeiten/>).

SECTION 5: RESULTS AND REPLICABILITY

• What measurable results or outcomes were achieved?

- Climate-positive performance: Hotel Luise emits only about 11.7 kg CO₂ per overnight stay, roughly one-third of the average (35 kg) for a 3-star hotel
- Water and energy savings: The “Circular Hotel Room” integrates NASA-developed shower technology, resulting in 90 % less water use and 80 % less energy consumption
- Circular furnishings: Décor and furniture are upcycled and recyclable (e.g., straw-based ceilings, fishing-net carpets), minimising waste and maximising material reuse
- Zero-waste practices: The hotel uses reusable packaging, recycles in-house, and donates discarded furniture or linens to students or social projects
- Eco-certification success: Awarded the EU Ecolabel in 2023, recognising its high environmental standards

• Why is this practice relevant to the Albanian tourism context?

In Albania, small hotels and guesthouses, especially in rural or heritage areas, could adopt practices like the reuse of furniture and food waste limitation easily. Rustic décor often lies unused, offering opportunities for creative reuse in guest areas. Furthermore, allowing staff to take home leftover food not only supports their welfare but also reduces food waste in a context where disposal infrastructure may be limited. To maximise impact, such practices can be paired with clear communication measures, such as signage, storytelling displays, or social media posts, that explain the sustainability benefits to guests. Sharing these efforts transparently can enhance the visitor experience, foster positive word-of-mouth, and inspire both guests and local communities to replicate similar actions.

• What is the practice’s potential for further expansion? How can it be applied or adapted to other Albanian tourism destinations or businesses?

These practices are highly scalable across guesthouses, family-run B&Bs, eco-lodges, and rural hotels, offering immediate applicability due to low implementation costs and strong cultural alignment.

The practices’ simplicity allows even small businesses with limited resources to adopt them without significant investment.

Only hotels that have implemented advanced sustainability measures are awarded an eco-label. Nevertheless, the very process of working towards certification—even if it is not ultimately achieved—can drive significant improvements and guide staff towards adopting the right mindset.

Furthermore, by tailoring the approach to local traditions and seasonal tourism flows, they can foster a sense of authenticity and connection with guests. In fact, integrating these practices with community-based initiatives, such as collaborations with local artisans, farmers, or environmental groups, can multiply their positive social and environmental impact. Lastly, communicating these efforts through storytelling, online platforms, and in-person guest engagement can enhance brand reputation, attract sustainability-minded travellers, and encourage replication across the wider Albanian tourism sector.

• What advice would you give others looking to implement a similar initiative?

Start small: identify items that can be reused or repurposed, such as décor elements, furniture, or packaging materials, and establish a clear staff policy for the safe reuse of surplus food. Create simple but visible signage to communicate the initiative internally (e.g. in kitchens, staff rooms, or storage areas) and externally to guests, ensuring the message highlights both environmental and community benefits. Try to find associations operating within the field of circular tourism or other local partners to collaborate with. Provide short staff briefings or training sessions in order for everyone to understand the purpose and procedures, and encourage them to share feedback or new ideas for improvement. Lastly, track the outcomes, such as the amount of food saved, items reused, or positive feedback, and share these results online to build appreciation, awareness, and inspiration for others to follow.



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