

Contribution of Ecological Tourism in Europe (ETE) on **“Tourism in Mountain Areas”** to the 64th session of the United Nations General Assembly:

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries with an annual average growth rate about 5%, and numbers of international travel might nearly double until 2020. Having experienced a growth of 25 % between 1995 and 2005, tourism today accounts for 10 % of the world's economic activity.

However, tourism can be a threat for mountain areas and its people. Natural habitats are being destroyed to build hotels and other tourism infrastructure. Tourists need large amounts of space and resources, often in pristine mountain. For instance, mountains in the Slovak Republic are under threat by large scale tourism investments. Current situation is unbalanced, short-term private interests are preferred against long-term public interests. State administration is yet not a strong leader for sustainable mountain development.

On the other hand, tourism is one of potential long-term sources of income and creates positive effects that can be channelled towards both conservation and benefit sharing. ETE implements with its partners projects to mitigate the negative impacts and develop tourism in a positive way.

Since 1992, after Rio, still only few initiatives show that tourism can stimulate sustainable development and support the conservation of biodiversity in mountain areas. To ensure this, ETE's projects engage in the careful planning and efficient management of tourism - to safeguard the natural beauties of mountain areas so that locals and visitors will be able to enjoy it also in the future.

Efforts and concerted actions are needed in order to sustainably develop mountain areas. Projects of ETE and others are just a minor positive impact achieving the Millennium Development Goals. However, there is a “light at the end of the tunnel” if governments, wisely turn to facilitating and balancing conservation and tourism development in the mountains.

More information about the project can be found at www.tourism4nature.org.

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Sustainable Use of Biodiversity – Sustainable tourism opportunities in mountain protected areas: Experiences from the Carpathians

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL FOR MOUNTAINS

Summer School course:

“Developing economic opportunities for mountain areas”

Gressoney la Trinité (Valle d’Aosta Region, Italy), Alagna Valsesia (Piedmont
Region, Italy), Polo Universitario di Grugliasco (Turin, Italy)

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Ecological Tourism in Europe – ETE
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ETE

ECOLOGICAL
TOURISM IN EUROPE



I Introduction to Sustainable Tourism

1. Impacts of Tourism
2. Natural and Cultural Heritage as a Basis for Tourism
3. Principles of Sustainable Tourism
4. Approaches towards Sustainability in Tourism

1. Impacts of tourism

Tourism can be a lucrative source of revenue for a destination, but it can also have major negative impacts on it. These impacts are not only physical, but also cultural. The impacts vary according to the number and the nature of tourists as well as the characteristics of the site at which tourism activities take place. These negative impacts can only be managed effectively if they have been identified, measured and evaluated.

Environmental impacts on ecosystems

Whenever the negative impacts on the natural environment are dealt with, it should be considered that these impacts rarely effect only one entity, but that the ecological impacts of tourism usually effect ecosystems as a whole. The impacts on the natural environment do not only effect pristine nature areas, but also cultivated land, which is an important part of the natural and cultural heritage of a region and ecologically valuable because it's the habitat of many species.

Environmental impacts of tourism occur at the local, regional and global level. Climate change and the depletion of the ozone layer are two mayor effects of the increasing global traffic and industrial development, in which tourism plays an important role. Environmental impacts that primarily have effects on the local and regional level also effect the environment globally in the long run. Basically, loss of biological diversity is a major consequence of these impacts.

Negative socio-cultural impacts

Tourism aids change and development and thus has major effects on the cultural development of a society. The reaction of societies towards tourism is diverse: some reject changes, others involcrate them into their traditions and some will abandon their cultural roots altogether. While cultural change is an unavoidable, natural part of human culture, the sudden and forced changes that tourism often brings can cause the complete breakdown of a society and may consequentially cause the loss of entire cultural tradition.

Socio-cultural impacts of tourism are often hard to identify or to measure and a subject of personal value judgements. Generally spoken, tourism brings about changes in value systems and behaviour of the people and cause changes in the structure of communities, family relationships, collective traditional life styles, ceremonies and morality. The ambiguity of socio-cultural impacts is due to the fact that tourism may have impacts that are beneficial for one group of a society, but which are negative for another.



Negative socio-economic impacts

The tourism industry generates substantial economic benefits to both host countries and tourists' home countries. Economic improvement is the primary motivation to promote a region as a tourism destination, because tourism can cause massive economic development. But it also has hidden costs with unfavourable economic effects. Rich countries usually profit more from tourism than poorer countries. Least developed countries are at least able to realize the benefits of tourism. Large-scale transfer of tourism revenues out of the host country and the exclusion of local businesses and products reduce the revenues of tourism which could otherwise benefit the local population.

Positive socio-economic impacts

The main positive socio-economic impact of tourism is that it generates income for the host economy as well as foreign exchange earnings. Furthermore, tourism stimulates investment in the regions economy and infrastructure, which leads to the generation of employment and, again, to an increase in income for the local population. Employment may be created directly in the tourism industry through hotels, restaurants, nightclubs, taxis, souvenir sales and other tourism related services, or indirectly through the supply of goods and services needed by tourism-related business. Tourism development often implicates infrastructure improvements such as better water and sewage systems, roads, electricity, telephone and public transport networks, thus improving the quality of life for residents.

Positive impacts on the natural environment

Tourism income not only improves the economic situation of a destination, but can foster environmental protection. Direct financial contribution to conservation is generated through entrance fees for protected areas, grants with which tour operators and other tourism providers support conservation measures, taxes which the government partly uses for financing environmental protection. Tourists appreciate a healthy and beautiful natural environment and reject destinations where the pollution and destruction of the natural environment takes place. Tourism can therefore raise the awareness of the local population concerning environmental problems and enhance the motivation for conservation activities or promote the improvement of conservation management.

Another positive impact of tourism on the natural environment of a destination is that it provides an alternative to unsustainable economic activities, e.g. deforestation of the rainforest, intensified agricultural practices and highly polluting industries.

Positive socio-cultural impacts

- Tourism as a force for peace

One motive for travelling is the desire to interact with people and to get to know foreign cultures. Cultural exchange supports understanding between peoples and cultures, can lead to the reduction of prejudices and thus contribute to the decrease of tension between societies.

- Revaluation of local culture and tradition

The experience of locals with tourists that appreciate local cultures, show interest and valuation of traditions and cultures goods and enjoy being with locals can increase the sense of regional identity and pride. The tourists' demand for the original and authentic elements of the destination's culture can cause a renaissance of indigenous cultures, cultural arts and crafts and the rejuvenation of events and festivals that are getting forgotten due to modern development and adaptation to western lifestyles.



- Strengthening of local communities

The economic revenues of tourism can facilitate the reduction of emigration through the creation of jobs and improving the local population's income. Tourism, when managed sustainably, can bring the idea of new strategies and concepts of community administration and regional planning to a region. The participative approach of sustainable tourism can encourage the civic involvement and increase the pride of the local population. Tourism can also increase the chances of education and job training because it demands qualified staff for tourism businesses.

2. Natural and cultural heritage as a basis for tourism

Generally, the heritage of a region consists of its physical natural and cultural environment, its natural phenomena and its cultural traditions and immaterial cultural goods. Heritage is always affiliated with a region and/or a society (or a part of a society) and it is based on the region's history. It has its origin in the past; it has been passed over from one generation to the next and maintained until the present. Cultural heritage is directly related to the region's and society's history and also natural heritage has its roots in the past. Nature as it looks at present has been formed by former vegetation and wildlife and underwent constant development and changing through geological and hydrological processes, evolution and human influence.

In any case, it is most important to keep in mind that sustainable tourism is taking its sources from the region's own attractions and past – not from something brought in from abroad, like e.g. a fully air conditioned tropical greenhouse-landscape in a northern region or an indoor ski park in a region where there is never enough natural snow for skiing.

The natural and cultural heritage of a region is the main motivation for a tourist's visit, this is especially the case for cultural or nature tourism, or provides at least an important complementary offer for other types of tourism, e.g. congress tourism, recreation and sports tourism. The outstanding natural and cultural features of a region are those which make a place "special" – and worth a visit.

Natural heritage

Natural heritage consists not only of flora and fauna, but also of every other part of the natural environment, e.g. the inorganic nature such as rocks, geologic formations, rivers, lakes, mountains as well as the relation between these natural components as ecosystems. The main components of the natural heritage are vegetation and wildlife, geology, hydrology and natural phenomena. Also 'events', such as climate, volcanic or astrological incidents, the course of the year, evolution and the changes in the ecosystems are part of natural heritage. Besides their importance as tourism attractions each component of the natural heritage may be the topic for educational and scientific interest.

Cultural heritage

Cultural heritage comprises all existing cultural phenomena from material goods to immaterial goods. This includes immobile historical monuments (historical buildings, gardens, parks, industrial facilities, traffic related monuments etc.), movable historical monuments (paintings and sculptures, religious artwork, historical handicrafts, crafts equipment, agricultural and industrial tools and machines; historical documents and objects), verbal and customs culture such as festivals, rites, costumes, legends, behavior and habits, music, dances and culinary culture. As the name already implies, cultural



heritage is based on the past and it forms a part of tradition. However, contemporary culture like music, theatre; literature or fine arts and the like belong to cultural heritage as well.

Landscape

Landscape describes a region's shape and characteristics. It is primarily a part of the natural heritage as it is largely formed by geological, hydrological and botanical features, but it is also strongly influenced by mankind and the society's economic activities. The landscape is essentially contributing to the visitor's impressions of and feelings about a region. Landscape is usually not seen as a specific subject of interest – normally single features such as rock formations, geological phenomena or vegetation, e.g. forests or meadows are what attract the visitor. It is, however, experiencing these features in the context of the whole landscape of the area that makes visiting them special. Many tourist activities are based on the experience of landscape, like all kind of nature tourism, and nature oriented physical activities as hiking, biking, swimming, etc.

Protection of heritage

The natural and cultural heritage is often vulnerable to the impacts of modern development, consumer lifestyles and globalization. In addition, the use of heritage in tourism, in particular in excessive or poorly managed forms of tourism, as well as the development of infrastructure related to tourism may directly threaten the integrity of the heritage. The ecological setting, culture or lifestyles of a community may also be degraded because of the visitor's influence on the place. The lack of environmental awareness from part of both, local people and visitors, their cultural insensitivity, an improper management and/or insufficient legal framework and law enforcement can lead to the deterioration of physical and immaterial natural and cultural goods. Therefore, to provide the basis for tourism development not only in the present, but also for future generations, natural and cultural heritage must be protected. Considering protection and making use of tourism development as a means of conservation is a basic principle of sustainable tourism development.

3. Principles of sustainable tourism

The importance of sustainable tourism is derived from the importance of sustainable development. Tourism is one of the worlds biggest industries. Since the 1980s the number of international travellers has increased almost three fold, from approximately 240 million in 1980 to roughly 700 million. This figure is expected to double again by 2020. The limits of the natural, social and cultural resource base, which constitute the fundamentals of tourism, will be unable to cope with the continuing tourism growth unless we do something about it. The central challenge for the tourism industry, its businesses and destinations, is: how can the tourism activity, and the growth expected over the next two decades, be managed in such a way as to ensure that it respects the limits of its resource base, and of those resources' capacity to regenerate, whilst being commercially successful? Sustainable tourism attempts to solve this problem.

"Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future, It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support system."

World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) – <http://www.world-tourism.org/sustainable/doc/a21-def.pdf>



Sustainable tourism development should be ecologically sustainable (long term), economically viable, as well as ethically and socially equitable. Sustainable tourism should integrate the natural, cultural and human environment; it must respect the fragile environmental balance that characterises many tourism destinations, particularly in environmentally sensitive areas. It has a long term perspective.

Sustainable tourism management

The challenges of key importance for the development and implementation of sustainable tourism exist worldwide. The specific nature and intensity of these challenges, however, vary from place to place. Moreover, particular geographical areas, such as the Mediterranean and the Alps have their own specific problems and challenges.

The following principles should underlie any approach to sustainable tourism (this saves confusion with the variation in different definitions) and they relate to how sustainable tourism might be achieved and what its implications could be.

Sustainable tourism management is an approach which:

- Minimizes the negative environmental, social and cultural impacts of tourism
- Generates economic profit from tourism for local people and improves their quality of life, their working environment and their access to technology and information.
- Allows local people and other stakeholders to participate in decision making processes involving tourism development which could effect them.
- Informs all stakeholders of tourism development which could effect them.
- Contributes to natural and cultural preservation and conservation and promotes the importance of and protects biodiversity.
- Provides tourists with more meaningful tourism experiences, e.g. meeting, cooperating, communicating and working with local inhabitants etc. bringing the tourist closer to the culture of the destination.
- Enables visitors to observe and understand environmental and cultural relationships and contexts.
- Is sensitive to local people, as well as other stakeholders, their needs, rights and aspirations.
- Sees policy, planning and management as extremely important to combat the problems caused by non sustainable tourism.
- Emphasises that there are limits to tourism development.
- can be very frustrating because there are limits to how much can be achieved in the short and medium term. It is a slow process of development.
- Generally involves frequent conflicts between stakeholders over resources, implementation etc. Compromises may be necessary.

4. Approaches towards sustainability in tourism

Various bad occurrences related to tourism as well as the sudden increase in mass tourism in the 1960s triggered a lot of tourism critique and led consequently to the introduction of the phenomenon sustainable tourism or, as it was more commonly known at that time, «green» (gentle) tourism into the debate. It is also a phenomena that has developed out of the growth of the concept of sustainable development.



International action in this area, however, did not really take off until the early 1990s. After initial scepticism, however, tourism has been officially recognised as an important issue in international environmental politics, both in relation to the Convention on Biological Diversity and to Agenda 21.

Important international conferences and agreements

- The establishment of the “**International Guidelines for Biological Diversity and Tourism Development**” in 2004. These fulfil the concept of sustainable tourism and should be considered by all relevant bodies as the tool for future planning and management of tourism. The guidelines focus on tourism which takes place on vulnerable ecosystems and in protected areas. They can, however, be applied to all forms of tourism in any geographical region. The CBD Guidelines were established recognising the fact that sustainable tourism should involve key stakeholders in tourism, conservation, economy and politics in the region and should be completed through a participatory process, which should primarily include the local population.
- **The Quebec Declaration**, within the framework of the **International Year of Ecotourism 2002**, was implemented by the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), as a contribution to bring the different views of NGOs and the tourism industry into line in accordance with sustainable tourism.
- **The Commission for Sustainable Development** adopted Decision 7/3 on tourism and sustainable development at its 7th session in New York in 1999. This decision includes the adoption of an international work programme on sustainable tourism development and an invitation to the CBD to “*further consider, in the context of the process of the exchange of experience, existing knowledge and best practice on sustainable tourism development with a view to contributing to international guidelines for activities related to sustainable tourism development...*”.



II Integrated Management Approaches

The experience of a model project on the implementation of the CBD guidelines

5. The Project “Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity through sound tourism development in Biosphere Reserves in Central and Eastern Europe”
6. Participatory Tourism Management Planning
7. Stakeholder Involvement

5. The Project “Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity through sound tourism development in Biosphere Reserves in Central and Eastern Europe

The project aimed at strengthening the protection of globally significant mountain ecosystems in the three Biosphere Reserves Babia Gora (Poland), Aggtelek (Hungary) and Šumava (Czech Republic) through the development of new tools and innovative management systems with a special focus on tourism-related uses of the natural and cultural heritage of these important sites.

The project is a model case for the implementation of the CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development. As such, the project demonstrates in which way local development related to tourism can contribute to the Biosphere Reserves' goal of sustainability. Various new approaches have been tested that represent incentives for sustainable economic activities in the field of tourism. The ecological, economic and social impacts of tourism-related activities were monitored by newly developed indicators.

In the process of the project, partnerships with governmental authorities, the private sector and NGOs have been built. The efforts made in the frame of the project to improve recognition and support of the governments for the Biosphere Reserves has resulted in a consultation process on local and national level about the future enhancement of the Biosphere Reserves as testing sites for sustainable tourism development within the three countries and beyond.

While Ecological Tourism in Europe (ETE, Bonn/Germany) has been coordinating the project's implementation, the activities are being implemented by the three Biosphere Reserves in partnership with regional NGOs working in the field of ecology, environmental conservation and tourism development. The national parks within the Biosphere Reserves contributed with their staff's expertise on environmental issues, regional spatial management and regional tourism development. All activities have been carried out together with local, regional and national partners and stakeholders of biodiversity conservation and tourism development, including the cross-border protected area partners and the surrounding local communities.

In all three Biosphere Reserves the core activity was the development of a tourism management plan together with the key stakeholders. This process has been accompanied by awareness raising and capacity building programmes, model initiatives of sustainable tourism development and the



elaboration and testing of indicators, guidelines and manuals for sustainable tourism development. The activities were complemented by various scientific studies in the field of ecosystem services and tourism. Of especial importance is the study on the institutional and management framework of the three Biosphere Reserve.

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Duration: April 2005 – May 2008

Project Partners: Ecological Tourism in Europe (ETE) (Lead partner)
 Institute of Systems Biology and Ecology – Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (České Budějovice/Czech Republic) – www.usbe.cas.cz
 Ecological Institute for Sustainable Development (Miskolc/Hungary) – www.ecolinst.hu
 Friends of Babia Gora Association (Zubrzyca Górna/Poland)
 Aggtelek National Park and Biosphere Reserve (Hungary) – www.anp.hu
 Babia Góra National Park and Biosphere Reserve (Poland) – www.bgpn.pl
 Šumava National Park and Biosphere Reserve (Czech Republic) – www.npsumava.cz
 CEEweb for Biodiversity – www.ceeweb.org

Project Sites:





The Approach & Guiding Principles

CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development

The project is conceived as a model project for the implementation of the Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development to the Convention on Biological Diversity – CBD (adopted in 2004). It started an initiative for tourism development that takes into account the importance of nature conservation, the economic feasibility of tourism activities and the socio-cultural responsibility of tourism stakeholders. This initiative was embedded in a comprehensive program of actions which core element was the development of tourism management plans. Thus, the starting point of the initiative was not a single issues or an individual measure but the development of an overall perspective for tourism in the area.

International Cooperation

International cooperation was one vital element of the project, as it ensures the necessary exchange of information, best practices and lessons learnt among experts and decision-makers from different countries. In the scope of the project, crossborder cooperation was particularly essential in order to achieve an integrated tourism management of the protected areas on both sides of the border – and thus the protection of transboundary ecological corridors and biological diversity.

The Carpathian Convention

The project partners were engaged in and contributed to the implementation of the Carpathian Convention. They were involved in the European Carpathian Project of the INTERREG IIIB/CADSES programme to which 19 partners, mostly from the Carpathian countries, contributed with their experience in sustainable regional development. These experiences were integrated into a background document on 'Sustainable Tourism Opportunities in the Carpathians' , and the tourism protocol and strategy that have been elaborated for the Convention.

Outcomes of the project

- **New tourism management plans** for the three regions provide a vision of sustainable tourism development and define goals, measures, responsibilities of tourism management and monitoring of tourism impacts.
- In all three regions, initiatives to **establish a regional tourism organisation (DMO)** have been started. These organisations will be a driving force for the future tourism management und development.
- A wide range of **tourism stakeholders** and the local population have been involved in project activities. The project raised their awareness about the importance of biodiversity conservation related to tourism activities. It made them understood how sustainable tourism development can look like and how they can participate in bringing forward tourism development and nature conservation in their regions.
- **New methodologies, guidelines, study results and model products** provide best-practice examples and the background for fostering sustainability in tourism and enhancing biodiversity conservation.

★ **Read more about the project and its outcomes at www.tourism4nature.org**



6. Participatory Tourism Management Planning

Tourism management means to assess the impacts of existing and future tourism development and to monitor the impacts of tourism activities. Monitoring must be based on clear indicators, analysis of carrying capacity, limits of acceptable change and established mechanisms which are activated in case of unfavourable development.

Tourism management is also a proactive approach to the regulation and the development of tourism in a specific region. It is based on a plan adopted by regional/local authorities and stakeholders. The main dimensions of tourism management are visions, common rules, control and active development strategies.

Visions are decisions that are made on the general perspective of the development of tourism in the region.

Zoning means that the given area is divided into clearly designated zones listing the types of tourism activities and infrastructure that would be acceptable and should be developed.

Legislation and guidelines provide regulations of tourism activities and infrastructure / facilities according to the vision and the zoning established. Some of the rules may be set in form of laws and others as voluntary guidelines or recommendations, e.g. setting standards and/or criteria for tourism like the environmental quality and land-use criteria in and around tourism sites and the environmental and cultural sustainability guidelines for new and existing tourism development. Existing laws must be reviewed to resolve any inconsistencies between policy objectives and legislation.

Approval, licensing and control of tourism activities and infrastructure serve to implement the regulations. Various measures can be established, e.g. the approval or licensing of new tourism infrastructure and tourism activities. Existing tourism facilities and activities must be monitored to control if they comply with the regulations.

Tourism development: Within the tourism management, regulation and control are only one part. Stakeholders and authorities can also take an active part in tourism development by starting initiatives in tourism product development, marketing and improvement of services.

Support of tourism development initiatives: Tourism management can also support private sector tourism development initiatives by creating incentives, implementing assistance programs and establishing a network for the tourism sector. The proactive, positive approach of tourism development can often support or even replace the enforcement of regulations by creating best practice examples, honey pots for the desired type and dimension of tourism development and discourage or squeeze out of unfavourable activities.

The use of economic instruments, including tiered user fees, bonds, taxes or levies is part of the proactive approach of tourism management.

The Tourism Management Plan

A tourism management plan is a written, approved document, which describes the possible threats and opportunities of tourism development. Based on detailed information about the environmental, social, cultural, political and legal aspects of the area, it produces a vision for tourism development. This vision covers a certain period of time, which should be stated in the document, and describes the work which has to be completed to make the vision a reality. It also establishes control measures to monitor tourism activities.



A tourism management plan

- is a tool which helps to achieve results more efficiently and in a more cost effective way.
- shows work priorities and highlights the worst problems caused by tourism development and ways to solve these problems.
- clearly identifies what needs to be done and who is responsible for carrying out the tasks identified.
- helps to plan the tasks which should be completed by protected area managers, local authorities and tourism operators.
- ensures continuous and consistent tourism management and informs future managers of what has been done, as well as why, when and how it was done.
- communicates the goals of sustainable tourism management to all relevant stakeholders and to a wider public right from the beginning of the planning process. This assures their support and involvement in the process and can in turn help to identify possible conflicts at an early stage.
- explains regulations, restrictions and control measures to people visiting the area as well as to individuals offering tourism facilities.

Steps of tourism management planning

The management planning process is a logical process divided into different, consecutive stages. At the beginning, the background of the planning process, the composition of the project team and the structure of the planning process should be clarified. The second stage identifies the key stakeholders who will participate in the planning process and establishes their working arrangements. In stage 3 the baseline information needed to make decisions about the prospective tourism development, has to be compiled. This information acts as a basis for the development of the region's tourism management vision. To make this vision reality, the main goals and objectives have to be agreed upon and a work plan should be produced stating how these goals and objectives will be achieved. To make sure that the tourism management plan will monitor and manage potential impacts carefully, impact management strategies should be elaborated. To find out whether the goals of the management plan are being fulfilled and whether the stakeholders are being involved appropriately, a feedback and review process needs to be designed. The last step is the approval of the plan by the stakeholders and relevant authorities and institutions.

★ Methodology guide “Sustainable Tourism Management Planning in Biosphere Reserves”

Download at www.tourism4nature.org

6. Stakeholder Involvement

Stakeholders in sustainable tourism management planning are all the individuals who are interested in and/or affected by tourism development and biodiversity conservation. They should participate in the planning process from the early stage. Sustainable tourism development emphasises in particular the importance of considering and respecting the wishes and needs of the local population of the tourism destination. Tourism development is usually not a primary subject of public administration, and therefore can only be managed effectively if all the stakeholders participate in the decision-making process.



The tourism sector includes a great variety of products and services and influences the local economy as well as the culture and living-conditions of the tourism destination. This means that there is a wide range of people involved in tourism, such as local tourism service providers, retailers, hoteliers, etc. Furthermore, the whole local population is affected by tourism development.

Stakeholders in tourism management planning:

- Neighbours and residents (local communities)
- Farmers, foresters, hunters and fishermen
- Tourism providers such as hoteliers, restaurant owners, tourist guides, etc.
- Tours operators and tourism agencies
- Local business men, e.g. retailers
- Local authorities: local municipalities, local administration
- Local NGOs
- Educational institutions (schools, universities, etc.), research centres
- Visitors
- Media

Participation includes a range of elements such as providing information, facilitating consultation and initiating cooperation in decision-making. Communication with stakeholders is obviously one essential precondition for their involvement. Furthermore, capacity building measures that enable stakeholders to communicate, to receive and to process information and finally to make their choice based on the rationalised consideration and appreciation of values is another precondition that needs to be considered when starting the process of involvement.

Communication and involvement tools

To start with the communication and involvement process, measures should be carefully planned and agreed upon by the experts working in the body responsible for the planning process. Commonly, measures are developed in the scope of a communication and involvement plan (CIP).

To make it easier to select the appropriate tools for the different stages of involvement and the different objectives within the communication process, the tools are classified into four categories regarding the direction of the communication and the purpose of the tool:

OUTPUT	INPUT	OUTREACH	INVOLVEMENT
➤ to inform stakeholders about a project or a planning process	➤ to receive their feedback and opinion	➤ to arouse their interest and motivate them to actively participate in the project	➤ to enable active participation in elaboration and decision-making

Of course, some of the tools and techniques described are related to more than one of these categories. The classification should only point out the main focus of the respective tools.



OUTPUT TOOLS

- Print products
 - Brochures and Leaflets
 - Posters
 - Fact sheets
 - Monographs
- Internet-based information
 - Websites
 - Mailing Lists
 - Newsletters
 - E-Forums
- Media relations
 - Relationship with Local Media
 - Press Releases
 - Media Events
 - Newspaper Ads
 - Newspaper Supplements
- Public Information Display and on-site Information
 - Information Repositories
 - Infield Notification and information
 - Visitor Information Centre
 - Guided Tours
- Meetings, Events and Personal Contacts
 - Public Meetings
 - Public Availability Sessions
 - Local Events

INPUT TOOLS

- Written and web-based forms
 - Email
 - FAQ programme
 - Public comment period
 - Public input
 - Surveys
 - Polls
- Meetings and Personal Contacts
 - Public meetings
 - Field trips
 - Individual consultations

OUTREACH TOOLS

- Posters and public displays
- Exhibitions
- Special theme days
- Community Events
- Education Outreach activities
- Toll-free Hotline
- Public Television/Public Access Television Shows
- Video Productions

INVOLVEMENT TOOLS

- Planning events
 - Public forum
 - Public meetings
 - Planning days / Planning weekend
 - Activity week
 - Workshops
- Project Centre
- Incentives
 - Award Scheme
 - Competition
- Look & Decide Tools
 - Interactive Displays
 - Choice catalogue
 - Design Games
 - Mapping & Models
 - Participatory editing
 - Prioritising
- Group activities
 - Community profiling
 - Photo surveys
 - Reconnaissance trips
 - Simulation
 - Assistance teams
 - Task force
 - Focus groups
 - Design workshop
 - Community Groups
- Technical Assistance
 - Funds and Trusts
 - Grant schemes



III Methods & Tools for Biodiversity Conservation and Tourism Development

8. Impact Assessment and Management
9. Monitoring and Indicators
10. Visitor Management and Tourism Infrastructure

8. Impact Assessment and Management

To be able to manage tourism in a protected area, it is necessary to reveal the impacts (negative and positive ones) of tourism, a process called impact assessment. Based on the results of the impact assessment, management strategies can be developed to avoid or mitigate current or foreseen negative impacts and to enhance and make full use of the positive impacts.

Tourism impact assessment means to review and evaluate the impacts of tourism infrastructure such as accommodation, transport and other tourism facilities and of tourism activities such as hiking, camping, swimming, biking, etc. Commonly known approaches of impact assessment are EIA = Environmental Impact Assessment, SIA = Social Impact Assessment and SEA = Strategic Environmental Assessment. These approaches focus on different parts of the environment (ecology, society and economy). It is important to note that the assessment of tourism impacts in a protected area should be designed as an integrated approach that considers all three dimensions.

In many cases, impact assessment is used as a part of the planning process that means prior to the implementation of a project (e. g. the building of a tourism resort). Nevertheless, it can and should also be used to evaluate the impacts of existing tourism infrastructure and activities.

The impact assessment should be conducted according to the national goals and the goals of the PA related to tourism and biodiversity. Stakeholders and the general public should be consulted during the impact assessment process to consider the interests and needs of the people living in the area who might be affected by tourism activities.

It is important to note that the process of impact assessment might need some time and financial as well as personnel resources. Various techniques provide for a systematic approach identifying key issues, setting priorities and elaborate clear criteria to ensure the feasibility of the assessment.

Management of impacts

In the process of developing a sustainable tourism product one should always pay regard to the vulnerability of natural and cultural resources to human pressures, i.e. the effect the future tourism will have on the broad environment. Tourism in protected areas, based on natural and cultural heritage, can by its very nature be even more disturbing than other forms of tourism. Therefore it is obvious that the number of visitors and the tourism-related uses in a protected area theoretically should be limited. However, determining concrete numbers that define these limits is difficult.

If the number of visiting guests is too low, the economic return may be as well, so that afforded investments can't be taken. If the number is too high, however, implementing tourism will end up in



destroying those sights and values the tourists are attracted to. That is why it is particularly important to assess vulnerability at the very beginning so that the tourism can be developed in a sustainable manner.

Very important questions in this context are: How much people do the locals want them to visit per year, when do they feel disturbed in their private sphere? How much guests are manageable in terms of infrastructure, for example the public traffic, the waste disposal, or – depending on the region – also for the drinking water disposal? Regarding a protected area it is obvious that it has to be controlled how many tourists are allowed to enter the place without disturbing or destroying the life of flora and fauna – without extravagating the carrying capacity.

In addition to the identification of the Carrying Capacity, a broad variety of useful methods, including Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC), Visitor Experience Resource Protection (VERP), Visitor Impact Management (VIM) and Tourism Optimization Management Model (TOMM) can be of help when aiming at a balanced tourism development that benefits both, people and nature in and adjacent to protected areas.

9. Monitoring and Indicators

In order to be able to know the success or failure – and thus the need for improvement – of the applied management and related measures, a monitoring process is necessary. Thus, monitoring means constantly checking if the implementation of the goals, objectives and the work program of the tourism management plan is carried out properly and whether they have the intended effects. Monitoring and its results should help to form decisions about how the plan should be managed in the future. The monitoring process consists of three consecutive steps: data collection, evaluation and reporting. As evaluation and reporting are depending on the data collected, the in-depth compilation of valid data forms the basis of a good monitoring system. In order to be effective, monitoring must be based on clear indicators, analysis of carrying capacity, limits of acceptable change and other established mechanisms which are activated in case of unfavourable development. In order to guarantee the good quality of data, a standardised data collection process should be established, including a determined set of indicators, which will also be used in the phase of evaluation. This will allow for a reporting system that is able to consider also changes occurring gradually in the course of time. If the monitoring shows difficulties or gaps, an evaluation of causes and influential factors is conducted to help identifying and selecting effective management responses. Another important factor in at this stage of monitoring is again the involvement of local stakeholders and communities. As stakeholders live and work in the region, their insights are particularly valuable for the monitoring process.

Criteria and indicators

Criteria express the goals we want to achieve by sustainable tourism development. They describe a state and/or the improvement of certain features of a region, a tourism product or tourism development in general. If these criteria are fulfilled or true, it can be stated that tourism was developed and/or takes places in a sustainable way.

To measure if a criterion is fulfilled, certain indicators can be used. Indicators are characteristics or figures that demonstrate the state or the change of the state of a criterion. Each criterion must have at least one, better several indicators which can be measured in a scientifically valid and preferably objective way. To adjust the importance of single indicators for one criterion, they can be weighted to



different degrees to evaluate the state or the improvement of a criterion in an adequate way. When describing indicators, not only the characteristic or figure itself, but also the method of its measurement should be described, so that it is clear how to collect the data for the evaluation of tourism or tourism development in the right way.

It is very important to note, that the figures measured by the indicators need to be subject to qualified and adequate interpretation by independent experts. As the framework of tourism and the economic and social conditions vary decisively from one region to another, bare figures merely provide sufficient evidence to draw valuable conclusions whether a criterion is fulfilled or not.

It is also important to realize that while the presented list of criteria for sustainable tourism in principle is applicable to every region and every kind of tourism all over the world, the set of indicators belonging to each criterion should be selected and adjusted according to the special conditions of the area where the sustainability of tourism is evaluated.

10. Visitor Management and Tourism Infrastructure

Visitor management and tourism management are very closely linked with each other. However, it is important to clearly distinguish between these two steps within the context of tourism development.

Tourism Management covers the management of tourism development and related activities regarding their impacts on ecology, economy and society in the respective (protected) area. The tourism management process includes the conduction of a situation analysis, including the application of visitor impact management frameworks, such as Carrying Capacity or LAC, as well as related strategy development, the development of a management plan and its consequent implementation. Thus, it lies within the responsibility of tourism management to set rules regarding visitor numbers, the extent of tourism activities and the overall type of tourism to be developed in the protected area.

Visitor management is one component of tourism management. Whereas tourism management tackles the regional level, dealing with developments and activities within the whole area, visitor management mainly focuses on the specific habitat level. For effective decision-making, visitor management needs exact data on the level of use (of respective resources), the status of the habitats and the man-made impacts of visitor presence.

Visitor management deals with the assessment of direct negative, human-induced, impacts of the visitors' presence (and related activities) on habitats, species and natural resources (e.g. related erosion). Based on the result of the assessment, visitor management further determines measures to keep the identified impacts at a minimum level or to generally avoid them in the future. Measures that belong to visitor management are for example the design of trail networks, the hardening of surfaces, the prohibition of fireplaces and campgrounds or the measures for visitor education for proper behaviour within the protected area.

It is important to understand that visitor management is specifically targeted towards the visitor itself and those impacts caused by humans. In order to fulfil this purpose, visitor management includes technical management decisions (e.g. where to build a new trail) as well as value judgements (e.g. decisions to limit use).

Tourism infrastructure planning and management

Generally, when talking about the tourism infrastructure for visitors in protected areas (e.g. trails, visitor centres, resting places, parking lots, camp grounds, view points etc.) particular precaution is



necessary due to the high vulnerability of the natural values. In the following, the sustainability principles for two typical examples for visitor infrastructure in protected areas are presented.

Trails

To provide trails for hikers, cyclists, horse-riders, skiers, climbers and other types of visitors is a key issue of protected area management. Trails and the whole network of trails in a protected area need to be carefully planned and monitored in order to achieve two goals:

- a) To keep the negative impacts of the trails and the visitors' activities on and along these trails to a minimum (acceptable) level.
- b) To provide the visitors with an adequate infrastructure (the trails and related facilities) that allow for a meaningful nature experience according to the expectations of the different visitor groups mentioned above.

In general, a protected area will provide two types of trails: normal trails that basically enable visitors to get around/to get to places of interest, and interpretative trails. The latter are an important opportunity to communicate with the visitor and, to a certain extent, to influence his experience and behaviour. Interpretative trails have many different purposes including information, education, recreation, safety and conservation of natural and cultural resources. Modern interpretative trails do not only provide information, but follow the concept of actively involving the observer in an interactive process of learning about and experiencing nature. Interpretative trails are characterized by their structured sequence of interpretative features. Modern interpretative trails in protected areas aim to inform the user about the ecosystem(s) the trail is located in. They are a means to communicate natural and cultural values and to raise the visitors' awareness for environmental conservation issues.

Campgrounds

Campground owners can contribute decisively to the environmental performance of the campground by obtaining some basic rules. However, aiming at a really sustainable camping site, it is also necessary to establish rules of behaviour and to communicate them to the visitors, the staff of the campground and the local people in the vicinity.

Some basic demands campgrounds (not only) in protected areas should meet:

- Reduce and recycle waste (solid waste and sewage)
- Efficient use of water and energy
- Nature-oriented design of the campground, using local materials for construction
- Use of traditional colouring and local raw material (felt, wood) in yurt camp construction
- Processing and selling of local food and beverages
- Avoidance of negative impacts due to transport (e.g. offer local transport; shuttle services for guest coming by trains)
- Use of environmentally-friendly detergents
- Cooperate with the protected area management for informing tourists about adequate recreation opportunities and proper behaviour in the area



VI Practice of Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism model products and incentives for the tourism business

11. Sustainable Tourism Product Development

12. Incentives for Sustainable Tourism

11. Sustainable Tourism Product Development

Tourism can be described as the activity of people traveling to a place which is not their home, staying at this place for a certain amount of time, exercising different activities at the place (leisure, business or other purposes) while these purposes are not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited, and traveling back home. Tourism is thus different from travel, which means the dislocation of somebody from one place to the other, because tourism involves, apart from the journey itself, the stay and the activities during this stay as main elements.

As tourism comprises of a specific sequence of certain recurring, consecutive elements, it is being described as a chain. The basic elements of this chain are the journey to and from the chosen destination and the stay at the destination. Additionally, the preparation phase (selection of the destination, booking and packing) and the wrap-up of the stay at home are considered as parts of the chain as they always take place in one or other form.

The tourism product is defined as the combination of goods and services such as transport, accommodation, food and drinks, guiding services, provision of material and infrastructure for activities etc. that are necessary to enable the tourists to have a complex experience which starts at them leaving their home and ends at their return.

The tourism chain and related product items

Stage	Client's activity	Means (product items)	Provider
1. Preparation	Generating interest	Marketing, information, advert.	Travel agencies, destination managements.
	Product check-out and reservation	Marketing, advert, information and communication channels.	Travel agencies, destination managements, providers of various services.
	Preparation of equipment and gear	Purchase, repairs, rental.	E.g. salesmen of equipment for sport, hiking and traveling, bookshops, photo-shops, equipment rentals and repairs, etc.
2. Journey	Transport from home to a tourist destination	Car, bus, train, ship, plane, bicycle, on foot.	Transport companies, car and bike rentals, traffic infrastructure operators (train stations, airports, etc.)



3. Stay	Accommodation	Hotels, guest houses, hostels, camps and other facilities.	Operators of facilities.
	Taking meals	Restaurants, own preparation, etc.	Operators of facilities, shopkeepers.
	Free-time activities	Hiking, sport, relaxing, etc.	Guides, instructors, sellers of equipment, operators of playgrounds and other centers, etc.
	Learning activities	Visiting museums and castles, sightseeing in towns and their vicinities, and the like. Visiting protected territories and the like.	Managers of facilities and territories, tour-guides, bookshops, etc.
	Cultural activities	Concerts, festivals, custom presentations and the like.	Managers of facilities, music bands and theatre troupes, and the like.
	Working activities	Meetings, seminars, exhibitions, fairs, conferences, presentations, excursions, etc.	Providers of facilities, interpreters.
	Shopping and local service	Purchase of souvenirs and local products. Purchase of other necessities (photo-video, magazines, etc.). Banks, money exchange, car repairs, health care and the like. Transportation services.	Craftsmen, producers and sellers of souvenirs and local products. Shops in the locality. Bank and exchange service providers, car repair owners, health care facilities, and the like. Transportation companies, taxi, car and bike rentals.
	Other activities.	Spa service, educational activities and the like.	Operators of facilities, providers of services, and others.
4. Journey back home	Transport from tourist destination home.	Car, bus, train, ship, plane, bicycle, on foot.	Transport companies, car and bike rentals, traffic infrastructure operators (train stations, airports, etc.)
5. Activities after returning home	Equipment – maintenance and repair works.	Washing, cleaning, etc. Repairing items, and the like.	Laundries, car/bike repairs, craftsmen and the like.
	Recording and sharing of memories.	Making photographs, writing articles or web-pages, participating in discussion and other meetings, etc.	Photo-labs, providers of information and communication technologies, operators of facilities.

Basic steps of product development and people involved

The complexity of the tourism product and its relation to the destination, but also to the place of origin of the customer as well as to the business at interregional level, e.g. the transport industry, requires the consideration of a range of diverse aspects when developing a tourism product. It further means that, in many cases, a range of cooperating entrepreneurs need to be involved in the development of the product.

In principle, three basic producers can be identified:



- Individual service providers (e.g. hotels, restaurants, tour guiding) coordinate their products and each of them tries to sell their own service, which is supplemented by the service of other partners. They generate profit mainly by selling the primary service that they provide.
- Travel agencies and tour-operators sell a tourism product which is a combination of services from other providers, mainly providers and organizers of itineraries, lodging and catering. The tour operator then sells this product under its own name (or in co-operation with vendors). The income of the travel agency/tour operator is generated from percentages received from providers of individual primary services or by increasing the total price of individual products, or by the combination of both methods.
- Destination management organizations (DMOs) (e.g. tourism association, tourist information centers, tourism department of the local administration), similarly to a tour operator, create products from services of other providers. They do not, however, sell this product but provide it for vendors. The profit is generated from the percentages received from the vendor (who generates his income based on percentages received from primary service providers) and/or from percentage gained from the income of primary service providers.

Basic elements of tourism product development

Considering the potential for tourism, the attractions and possible facilities and services that can be offered

The identification and evaluation of the (potential) tourism attractions a region has to offer (based on the natural and cultural heritage as described in chapter 1) as well as the review of the existing infrastructure and services and the assessment of the possibilities for developing and constructing tourism infrastructure and services is the first essential step for developing a tourism product.

Considering potential markets and target groups

To identify which type of tourism product can be sold and to which customer is an important element of product development and marketing. Without knowledge about the future customer, products cannot be fitted to the needs and interests of the future visitors. To be successful at the market, product design (offer) and visitor preferences (demand) need to be adjusted.

Developing and/or packaging the tourism product

Once the potential attractions and the opportunities for product development are identified and the market and target groups are analysed, the developers need to decide on the design of the product and start then with its development. Depending on the field of work of the developer (if single entrepreneur or DMO), particular elements of the product need to be combined and packages created. Producing a facility or offering some service is one only aspect of product development. Planning, conceptualizing, branding and packaging this product are as well essential. The complexity of the tourism chain also means that a large number of players are involved in the various tourism activities. It even signifies that, if tourism is to be effectively developed and managed, it presupposes a fundamental understanding of the complexity and characteristics of the global tourism system. Especially when developing sustainable tourism, all dimensions of the tourism sector and the sectors related to it (see chapter 2.2.3) need to be considered to make sure that tourism benefits the regional development.



Marketing of the product

Marketing can be defined as the whole process from tourism potential assessment over product development up to advertising and purchasing of the product, thus including all elements described so far. However, in a narrower sense, marketing comprises of the activities related to bringing the product to the market and that are prerequisite for the purchase. These activities are mainly the product design, the communication (advertising), the distribution and the pricing.

The sustainable tourism product

The strategy of drawing certain benefits from tourism – mainly of an economic nature – implies taking advantage of free-market mechanisms for ecological and social purposes, and this in turn indicates to accept the logic of a system mainly driven by private enterprise, in which competitiveness and operational profitability are both, the core purpose and at the same time the prerequisite for its very ability to function. People wanting to develop sustainable tourism or to make tourism in a region more sustainable, therefore need to accept that they are acting against the background of market mechanisms and profit-driven entrepreneurship. Especially those who have their main focus of work on non-profit activities, such as protected area managers, government institutions or NGOs, and that want to actively participate in the development of tourism tend to neglect the economic aspects – that the main purpose of the tourism sector is to sell a product – and for this reason often fail to achieve economic sustainability of their tourism projects.

To obtain the maximum benefits from tourism for the sustainable development of a region, it is necessary to evaluate and adjust all elements of the tourism product regarding sustainability aspects. This exercise can be realized at the level of the individual elements of the tourism chain, such as transport or accommodation, but also regarding the integrated product and its placement in the regional economy and supply chain.

At both of these two levels, the product has to fulfill the principles of economic, environmental as well as social and ethical sustainability. That means that in the developing process the balance act of the following aspects has to be considered:

- Conservation, thus preserving biodiversity and natural resources, but also strengthening the understanding and the acceptance of how important preserving the environment is, among both, residents and customers
- In this context local participation plays an important role. The inhabitants should be able to benefit from tourism by improved living standards, local empowerment, poverty reduction and (in best case) positive cultural exchanges.
- Finally, sustainability for tourism business means heading for long-term profitability through tempered price policies (customer and investment) as well as attractive and diverse products.



Examples from the Project:



Establishment of a living museum on pastoralism

Babia Góra Biosphere Reserve

The disappearance of pastoralism in the last decades caused the loss of meadows in the Babia Góra region due to forest succession on the abandoned areas, and in consequence, important habitats and plant communities were lost. To prove that even today the old-fashioned and traditional way of breeding sheep is still an effective economic activity and that it is possible to use traditional ways of land use to support the conservation of biodiversity, a living museum of pastoralism was established in the frame of the activity.

With support of the regional union of sheep breeders a traditional shepherd hut was built on a meadow near the main road. A shepherd family started to graze sheep and produce cheese according to the EU standards in 2007. A flock of 300 sheep was pastured and the entire process of cheese production was being presented to visitors who could learn about the pasturing history in the area, observe the shepherd's activities, taste and buy the cheese.

The experience of the first season of operating of the hut showed that the activity is economically viable and will not need subsidies to be continued in the next years. The shepherd's hut demonstrates the successful combination of traditional economic activities with modern tourism purposes that at the same time contributes directly to the conservation of biodiversity in the Biosphere Reserve.



The Gömör Torna Festival

Aggtelek Biosphere Reserve

The Gömör Torna Festival takes place every year in the second half of July in the region of the Aggtelek Biosphere Reserve and its neighbouring region in Slovakia, the Slovak Karst Biosphere Reserve. The wide spread programme consists of music performances, theatre, excursions and lively fairs in many villages, including nearly a hundred programmes and activities at almost forty locations.

The festival aims at the complex and comprehensive interpretation of the natural and cultural assets of the region. It increases the awareness of locals and visitors about the importance of biodiversity conservation and supports efforts to sustain the local folk traditions. The tasks of this project activity were to promote sustainable forms of tourism within the frame of the festival, to foster and extend the partnership network and the number of participating sites, to enhance the cross border nature of the event, to improve communication, PR and marketing and to increase overnight stays and the number of visitors in the region.

The Aggtelek National Park together with its partners supported the development of the festival into a well-known trans-boundary event.



Training and promotion of local tourist guides

Šumava Biosphere Reserve

58 people from the region participated in two training series for tourist guides organised by the National Park. The trainings extended the participant's knowledge about the Šumava mountains, the region's nature, culture and history and also about nature protection. In practical field trainings and excursions the participants learned how to guide a group and how to explain things in a way that everybody can understand and enjoy.

Walking with these guides, visitors discover cultural monuments and natural beauties on the traces of history, listen to bohemian ghost stories or learn how the river Vltava has been used to wash dirt to gold. Tours are offered for hikers, bikers and cross-country skiers and are arranged either individually with a single guide or booked with the help of the national park.

The national park supports the promotion of the guides' services by publishing a leaflet and providing contact dates.

12. Incentives for Sustainable Tourism

One option how to achieve sustainable practices in tourism businesses is to administer economic instruments that motivate private enterprises to change their operations towards more sustainability. Economic instruments that count on the voluntary participation and engagement of businesses by providing financial benefits to those that participate in a program or engage in making their business more sustainable are called incentives. Other economic instruments, mainly executed by governments, are taxes, e.g. specific eco-taxes for tourism businesses, or charges levied from tourists or businesses using specific resources, e.g. of a protected area.

The use of incentives for sustainable tourism

In sustainable tourism, the aim of incentives is to influence the practice of tourism activities or tourism development to make them more sustainable via changing the behavior or the business practice of tourism providers. The expected outcome of incentives is the reduction of adverse tourism impacts, may they relate to the environment, culture, society or economy of a tourism destination. The issuer of incentives can be governmental bodies, local communities, international institutions, NGOs, private initiatives and also the private tourism sector, e.g. tourism associations or tourism agencies.

The beneficiary of the incentives or the participants in an incentive program will be above all the tourism enterprises from local businesses of accommodation, catering, transport and other tourism related services, furthermore local and national travel agents and tour operators up to internationally operating ones. There are also incentives that address the tourists. An incentive scheme could offer the reduction of the tourist tax or a better value for those tourists that chose environmental friendly behavior, e.g. using public transport instead of their own car or taking back their garbage themselves.



Capacity building

The use of incentives should not be administered without a broader approach that provides for an enabling framework. Incentives have to be prepared and accompanied by awareness raising and educational activities in order to obtain the private tourism businesses' interest and enable them to participate in a meaningful way. Especially when addressing small and medium local tourism providers, their capacities of understanding the systems, estimating the cost and benefits and taking the necessary steps to change their operations should be carefully evaluated and technical assistance and capacity building should be provided wherever needed. While this will increase the costs of establishing the incentive instrument it will surely pay off regarding the success and rate of participation of businesses.

Adequate framework and transparency

Another important aspect is the legal and administrative framework in which the incentives are being administered. Legal regulations and requirements need to be evaluated regarding their appropriateness to provide the necessary background for the establishment of an incentive. As incentives are about financial benefits that are transferred in one way or the other towards private businesses it is important to ensure a transparent and objective execution that justifies the allocation of funds and avoids adverse impacts such as the susceptibility to corruption.

Monitoring and evaluation of results

For all of the introduced incentives it is important to monitor and evaluate the success of their implementation but also the real impacts the action has on the environmental and cultural integrity of a destination. A certification scheme could be successful in certifying a great number of businesses but might not change the environmental impacts of the tourism in an area in a sufficient way to justify the costs and efforts needed to establish the certification system.

On the other hand it should be clear that incentives can in most cases only be a first step or a component of a sustainable tourism development program. Incentives alone will not solve all environmental and sociocultural issues of tourism. The monitoring and evaluation system therefore needs to set clear, realistic and meaningful indicators but these indicators should not be too demanding and exceed of what an incentive can realistically achieve. The main emphasis of the use of incentives is to induce a change, an improvement towards more sustainability compared to a status quo at a given point in time.

Different incentives

Contests and awards

Contest and awards are a relatively easy way to stimulate sustainability in tourism. The concept of an award is that an independent institution gives a prize to a tourism business or a specific tourism product (e.g. a holiday package) that is selected because of its outstanding sustainability performance. A contest invites tourism businesses to enter a competition on the best sustainability performance. As many awards do not select the awarded businesses from the whole range of tourism enterprises but issue a call for applications and then select among the applicants, contest and awards are quite similar.

Some awards in tourism focus only on ecological aspects or social aspects or only on one specific aspect within environmental or sociocultural issues (e.g. energy saving). The selection of the criteria of an award or contest will depend on the intended impact and expected outcomes. If the task is to raise awareness about sustainability in tourism in general, the award or contest can be based on a range of



quite general sustainability criteria. If the tool is used rather to foster certain aspects such as consumption of natural resources or social equity, more specific criteria will be selected.

Certification and labeling

Certification is a procedure that assesses, monitors and gives written assurance that a business, product, process, service or management system meets or exceeds a set of baseline criteria or is committed to work towards more sustainability. Certification is always voluntary, meaning that no business can be forced to join it. In contrast to certification, obligatory standards are called regulations and are imposed by governments. Within the many existing different types of certification and ecolabels, the credible ones have the following common aspects:

- A logo is awarded that is communicated to the consumers and enables them to recognize those businesses or products and services that meet certain sustainability criteria from those that do not.
- The compliance with local regulations is required as a minimum standard. This might sound self-evident, but especially in areas where regulations are poorly developed or inadequately enforced, a certification scheme can encourage local businesses to work with regional authorities to improve the regulations or their enforcement.
- The certified companies are required to publish a statement of commitment to sustainable development.
- The scheme encompasses a set of defined standards/criteria or an environmental management system (or both) which must be met or exceeded by the certified businesses.
- The scheme includes the assessment and auditing of the certified companies and a verification system guaranteeing that standards are met.
- The scheme administers periodic follow up audits to renew the certification; and it fosters continual improvement;
- Certification requires the transparency of criteria and evaluation;
- The scheme is based on a participatory approach involving tourism stakeholders to define the standards and the design of the scheme.
- In many cases, a fee structure is set up to provide basic funding of the operation of the system.

Trademarks / umbrella brands

The main difference between a sustainable tourism trademark and sustainable tourism certification is that the institution responsible for the trademark is a profit-oriented enterprise that markets the products of its members / licensees. A sustainable tourism trademark unites sustainable tourism providers under one umbrella brand and thus uses the advantages of cooperative marketing and a joint booking system, benefiting from economies of scale, the professional expertise generated by a cooperation of many businesses and the competitive advantages of a larger business at the market. Sustainable tourism trademarks can include different types of tourism services or they can concentrate on one type, e.g. lodging. They provide a cooperate identity, including a logo, for all the licensees. Furthermore, the trademark guarantees the quality and compliance of the products and services of its members and communicates this guarantee to the consumers.



Grants

Grant schemes used to foster sustainable tourism development are a form of direct investment assistance that is tied to conditions related to sustainability aspects of tourism providers. A funding body, e.g. the national government, a local authority, an international donor organization, an NGOs, a business association or a consortium of institutions, provides a program giving grants in form of a donation, a loan (possibly interest-free) or other financial support to businesses that invest in the improvement of their sustainability performance. These can be the installation of new technical equipment, e.g. solar panels, but also measures that improve the management, built capacities or enhance the range of sustainable products and services offered to the customers.

Promotional activities

Marketing and promotion are crucial for the success of any business. While this is well understood for the tourism industry as a whole, sustainable tourism projects tend to neglect the importance of marketing or allocate insufficient funds for it. The idea that a sustainable tourism product or ecotourism product should sell itself just because it has an outstanding environmental performance is very common but wrong. Just like any other product it needs a business plan, a marketing strategy and promotion to be successful at the market.

For small local tourism providers it is often difficult to engage in marketing due to the lack of awareness, expertise, funds and access to distribution channels. Therefore, one important support that may be offered to such enterprises is to develop a program of marketing and promotion that is executed either free of charge or at a low price that is affordable for small local businesses. To use this as a tool for fostering sustainable tourism, the organization offering this marketing program will of course select only those providers that are committed to sustainability.



Examples from the Project:



Rehabilitation programmes for traditionally managed areas

Aggtelek Biosphere Reserve

The programme aimed at raising awareness on the close connection between traditional landscape management practice and nature conservation, on the need to preserve local knowledge threatened by oblivion and on values represented by vineyard hills and on their utilisation for tourism purposes.

Seven model areas were selected that are habitats of old fruit varieties representing a high genetic value, as well as of protected plant and animal species. 33,27 ha of traditional orchards have been re-established in the vicinity of 5 settlements. Researchers identified altogether 41 fruit varieties in the southern part of Aggtelek National Park. Following fencing and cleaning the area, 110 specimens of 38 local varieties have been planted in a fruit variety collection.

In order to revive traditions of fruit processing and to promote the traditional orchard management, a fruitdryer has been erected in Perkupa and a nature trail introducing the values of this landscape type has been established between Színpetri and Tornakápolna.



Šumava Original Product – Certification of sustainable products and services

Šumava Biosphere Reserve

In cooperation with local stakeholders and the Regional Environmental Centre (REC) the certification and labelling system for local products related to tourism "Šumava Original Product" was developed and promoted and the system was enhanced by establishing the certification of tourism services.

The original products are hand made and produced in a traditional way from local materials. The range of products includes handicrafts such as candles, woodworks or decorated glassware, which are typical regional souvenirs. Home made pastries, appetizing honey, meat and milk from organic farming or spring water from the region – products that are signed with the label Šumava Original Product guarantee environmentally friendly production and sound use of natural resources.

Until end of 2007, 25 products were certified. The criteria for the certification of local services were finalised and services will be certified in 2008. The system and the certified products are being promoted through a wide range of activities and materials – e.g. the two web sites www.domaci-vyrobky.cz and www.regionalni-znacky.cz, the regional bulletin, leaflets, presentation at fairs etc.



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