

# **First European Conference on sustainable Island development**

1997

## **TOWARDS A NEW TOURIST CULTURE IN ISLANDS**

### **A. Basis for action**

- European island resorts have developed very rapidly in a short period of time. They currently receive more than 40 million tourists a year.
- Tourism is one of the mainstays of the economies of 70% of European islands. In a third of these, it accounts for more than 50% of G.D.P.
- Environmental degradation can be highly detrimental to tourist products, forcing them to pay the price of all products that are no longer competitive. This is something island economies and territories could not bear.
- Tourism on many islands is highly seasonal, which means they need solutions and products that maintain employment and economic activity in the low season.
- A lack of integration of the tourist industry in the natural, cultural and human environment can easily upset the fragile balance that characterises island tourist resorts, making them economically and ecologically vulnerable.
- The area of conserving, protecting and promoting the natural and cultural heritage of the islands is ideal ground for an alliance between tourism and sustainable development. Maintaining resources will guarantee greater diversity of economic activity and tourist products, helping them, therefore, to become more competitive and profitable.
- A balance between the development of tourism and the capacity of existing infrastructures, facilities and services must be ensured, in order to prevent irreversible territorial distortions and environmental impacts.
- It is essential to opt for an integrated approach to environmental care in the tourist industry. An immediate objective of the islands is to adopt environmental criteria in the Management of Tourism Quality.
- Special attention must be paid to areas that have become deteriorated by obsolete or inappropriate tourist actions, because of the negative consequences they have on how quality is perceived in tourist resorts.
- Qualifying and integrating facilities and services, using criteria of environmental integration and recovering local culture, represents one of the main technical and managerial challenges for the current tourist industry.

### **B. Priorities**

- Develop reinforcement actions to improve the common image of European island holiday destinations.
- Foster agreement between all the players involved in the planning of tourism: the tourist industry, public institutions, local population and NGOs.
- Develop specific planning tools for developing sustainable tourism.

- Define and implement specific indicators for island tourism schemes.
- Promote the creation of eco-tourism quality labels by the islands themselves.
- Develop island networks and routes, with joint promotion and management systems between different island regions of Europe.
- Promote a local Agenda 21 among the local authorities and people of tourist resorts.
- Promote responsible codes of conduct and good practise guides aimed at both the tourist industry and at tourists themselves.
- Develop co-operation projects based on the enormous potential of the new telecommunications systems and information technology.