

Mediterranean Action Plan

TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Recommendations and Proposals for Action formulated by
the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD)
and adopted by the Eleventh Ordinary Meeting of the
Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Malta, 1999)
Athens, Sophia Antipolis, 1999

This document presents the recommendations and proposals for actions adopted by the Eleventh Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Malta, 27-30 October 1999) on Tourism and Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean.

These recommendations and proposals for action are the result of the works undertaken since 1997 by the Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD) on this theme.

The co-tasks managers (Spain, Chambers Group for the Development of Greek Islands-EOAEN, Egypt) and the working group, with the scientific support of the Blue Plan Regional Activity Center (Sophia-Antipolis, France) and assistance from the Priority Action Programme Regional Activity Centre (Split, Croatia), have organised experts meetings (Monaco, 1997; Sophia-Antipolis, 1998; Split, 1999) as well as a regional seminar, financially supported and organised by Turkey (17-19 September 1998, Antalya, Turkey). Conclusions of the groupe have been discussed during the fourth and fifth Meetings of the MCSD (Monaco, October 1998; Roma, July 1999).

FOREWORD

The Mediterranean Commission for Sustainable Development (MCSD) was created in 1996 by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention. The MCSD is a consultative body, devised as a forum for dialogue, communications and proposals for the Contracting Parties for defining a regional strategy for sustainable development in the Mediterranean.

The MCSD brings together, on an equal footing, representatives from twenty riparian States around the Mediterranean and the European Community, representatives from local authorities, from socio-economic actors, and from nongovernment organisations which are qualified from an environmental and sustainable development viewpoint.

Tourism, which is both an economic asset, an environmental challenge and a social stake, has been considered as a major issue in the Mediterranean bearing in mind its current and future impact. Current recommendations and proposals for action seem vital to the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, because they allow significant progress to be envisaged towards an improved reconciliation between development and the environment in this field.

Their efficient application relies on the mobilisation of States and other actors involved in order to create approaches to development and protection which draw on various past experience, so as to harmonise interests which are all too often in opposition if not downright conflicting.

The Mediterranean Action Plan, with the contribution of its Regional Activity Centres, and especially the Blue Plan (Sophia-Antipolis, France) and the Priority Action Programme (Split, Croatia), will strive to assist in making this programme a success, particularly through the increased use of regional co-operation.

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A MAJOR POLITICAL QUESTION-MARK FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

As the world's primary tourist destination with over 150 million international and domestic visitors a year, the coastal regions of the Mediterranean will continue to record considerable tourist

development over the coming decades (with possibly as much as double the number of tourists by 2025).

As a vector of deep-running changes more often than not irreversible, much more than other activities, tourism begs the general question of societies' ability to control development, provide long-term protection for their environment and promote balanced national planning.

The Mediterranean experience indeed shows that controlling tourist development is especially hard in a very attractive region with considerable geographic constraints. It also shows a wide variety of situations with 3 general kinds of areas:

- already “mature” destinations that can report on their positive and/or negative experiences,
- more recent destinations in full growth that must endeavour not to repeat the problems encountered elsewhere,
- coastal or inland areas with real developmental possibilities but which are at present little or not developed and that might even invent new forms of development.

Tourism in the Mediterranean region is therefore of capital importance in its present and future impact on societies, economies and the region's environment. Its ways of developing must absolutely evolve to better take environmental, social and economic aspects into consideration.

MOBILISATION ON A MEDITERRANEAN AND WORLD-WIDE SCALE

A question-mark at the heart of sustainable development, tourism has recently given rise to numerous initiatives and conferences on both the Mediterranean and world-wide levels, in particular:

- The Lanzarote International Conference on Sustainable Tourism (1995), the United Nations Conference for Sustainable Development in small island developing States (Barbados, 1995), the Lanzarote Conference on Sustainable Tourism in the Islands (October, 1998) and the recent debates in the context of the United Nations' 7th commission for Sustainable Development.
- The Conferences in Hyères les Palmiers (and the Euro-Mediterranean declaration on tourism, 1993), Casablanca (and the charter of Mediterranean Tourism, September, 1995), Calvia (and the Calvia Statement, April, 1997) and the work by MAP on tourism (work by the BP/RAC and the PAP/RAC and the section on tourism on the Med Agenda 21 – Tunis, 1995).
- Initiatives by Mediterranean NGOs, especially the International Congress on “Sustainable Tourism in the Mediterranean: Participation by Civil Society” (Sant-Felice de Guixols, October, 1998).

THE MCSD'S CONTRIBUTION

The MCSD wished to contribute to this necessary thought-process with the goal of developing overview and real proposals for the contracting parties to the Barcelona Convention.

The work carried out, highlighted by the Antalya workshop in Turkey (17 to 19 September, 1998), endeavoured to mobilise the main players involved (States and international organisations, tourist professionals and experts, NGOs, local authorities...), to focus on the question of the relationship between tourism, the environment and sustainable development in the region and to gather a certain number of local case studies (23 case studies were documented by the countries).

Work by the MCSD brought to light three main proposal lines (controlling impact on the environment, promoting tourism in better harmony with sustainable development and developing Mediterranean co-operation) and a proposal for an action plan.

1. CONTROLLING TOURISM'S TERRITORIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Although tourism depends on quality environment and countryside, it is all too often a factor in their deterioration, especially on coasts. Thus the quality of the Mediterranean coasts—one of the Mediterranean's most precious assets—must absolutely be better preserved in the tourist destination areas. To this end the following guidelines have been proposed:

Anticipate and reduce the negative impact of developments, urbanisation and tourist infrastructures on coastlines

The handsomest locations on the Mediterranean coastline are the prime sites desired by domestic and international tourism. Uncontrolled development of infrastructures and tourist-related urbanisation (especially yacht harbours, tourist accommodation and second homes) can lead to irreversible deterioration of ecosystems (sand dunes, wetlands and so forth) and coastal landscapes. These sometimes very rapid developments are hard to control especially because of the many players involved, the lack of shared common vision and the non-enforcement, even the non-existence, of development regulations.

This is how many mature destination areas have seen their environment damaged, which in some cases has led to serious economic and/or environmental crises.

What is at stake for the Mediterranean is to rehabilitate the damaged mature tourist destinations as far as possible and, above all, avoid such degradation in the areas now undergoing growth or not yet developed.

Recommendations

The Mediterranean states and local authorities are urged to:

- acquire the instruments needed to evaluate the environmental impact of tourist programmes and large-scale projects,
- carry out evaluations of destination sites' carrying capacity and taking steps necessary for ensuring that the offer be limited to the carrying capacities thus defined,
- strengthen or establish legislative tools, regulations and property management leading to controlling tourist urbanisation and protecting the most precious natural sites. Among other things this means:
 - providing coastal zones subjected to strong tourist developmental pressure with plans for development and land management that take environmental questions into account,
 - avoiding generalised urbanisation too close to coasts and the building of roads parallel and close to coastlines that promote this kind of urbanisation and generate traffic that alters the quality of the destination areas,
 - identifying the most remarkable coastal sites (such as wetlands, sand dunes, and so forth) and implementing measures that ensure their protection, e.g. creating natural reserves or land agencies for procurement wherever possible.
- implement programmes enabling the rehabilitation of mature destination areas favouring the environment,
- implement mechanisms enabling (whenever possible) a financial contribution from the tourist sector for protecting and managing natural and cultural sites.

Reducing consumption of natural resources and the pollution caused by tourist accommodation and activities

Tourism causes heavy consumption of natural resources (especially water, soil and energy) and produces a lot of waste. This consumption and waste production come on top of those generated by the resident population. These effects are all the more considerable for the fact that tourism in the Mediterranean is concentrated mostly over a short period (July and August), which leads to inordinately large amount of amenities and an increase in the problems of water management in the most critical period.

The tourist sector can and must play an innovative role in these environmental questions. Some professionals have, moreover, already implemented environmental charters in facilities and destination areas.

Recommendations

Mediterranean States and local authorities are urged to:

- ensure good environmental management of tourist facilities and destination sites;
- encourage quality environmental procedures (certification, charters and so forth) with possible regional financial support;
- develop all means that may lead to spreading the tourist season over the entire year;
- promote the tourist sector:
 - to fight against waste and pollution in the water areas (reduced consumption, purification and recycling), energy waste (energy savings and use of renewable energy, especially solar energy) and waste (minimisation, selective collection, recycling and so forth),
 - to promote clean and innovative technology in this sense,
 - to promote and implement the certification process (EMAS, ISO 14000, etc.) of facilities and destination areas and develop voluntary tools such as environmental charters.

Controlling the development of tourist leisure activities affecting the sea and coastal environment

The generalised use of beaches and the development of boating and new leisure activities (jet skis) and underwater tourism can seriously affect the environment, especially certain protected species (cetaceans, turtles among others).

Recommendations

Mediterranean States and local authorities, in concert with the professional players involved, are urged to take the necessary steps so that:

- pleasure boats do not discharge their waste water at anchor or, even less, in ports,
- yacht harbours be furnished with the necessary facilities for taking solid and liquid waste,
- new leisure forms likely to affect the environment, especially protected species, only be authorised once their impact has been assessed and are shown to conform to the tourist strategies of the areas concerned,
- access and use of beaches by the public as well as their use by professionals be regulated, if need be, and managed in accordance with environmental factors.

2. PROMOTING TOURISM AS A FACTOR IN SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Suitably guided and controlled, tourism can become a powerful vector of sustainable development for many Mediterranean regions benefiting both local populations, tourists, environmental protection and the highlighting of natural and cultural heritage.

Developing national and local strategies aimed at better reconciling tourism, the environment and sustainable development

Aware of the need to better integrate tourism and the environment, many Mediterranean States and local authorities have already implemented negotiation procedures between services and the pertinent players which have resulted in conventions, agreements and protocols and in defining strategies and programmes. These steps remain too limited, however, and are in general insufficiently operational.

Recommendations

The Mediterranean States and local authorities are urged to:

- develop and strengthen the in-depth confrontational/negotiation methods between authorities dealing with tourism, the environment and regional development and the pertinent players to define strategies that enable:
 - the setting of mid-term result goals,
 - better defining and sharing out the roles of the various partners,
 - implementing adapted action tools;
- develop these strategies especially by depending on the observation of tourist impact (on the economy, society, the environment and cultural heritage), the producing of prospective exercises for the mid- and long-term and the selection of pertinent indicators;
- endeavour on a scale with tourist destinations to mobilise local populations, NGOs and the pertinent professionals and implement local Agenda 21s.

Promote the diversification of tourism and balanced regional development.

What is required is promoting more compatible forms of tourism with the stakes of sustainable regional improvement and development.

Recommendations

The Mediterranean States and local authorities must endeavour to:

- promote the development of cultural, ecological and rural tourism compatible with the environment. Highlighting archaeological, historical, architectural, landscape and natural heritage can be a strong contributor and should be developed,
- look into the complementarity and synergy with other economic sectors, especially agriculture, fishing and craftsmanship,
- develop the synergies between coastal tourism and inland tourism,
- implement specific-action programmes adapted to the sustainable development of particularly fragile areas on the ecological and human levels, especially islands, hinterland and wetlands,
- develop appropriate tools for these objectives, as, for example, biosphere reserves and natural parks and processes of the local Agenda 21 sort, by giving them sufficient financial means and technical assistance.

3. DEVELOP MEDITERRANEAN CO-OPERATION

Following the example of other fields of common interest and other regions of the world, the Mediterranean would benefit from building strong regional co-operation in the tourist field. Stakes are crucial and the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, along with the MAP, have a booster role to play in harmony with tourist trade professionals and NGOs.

Among other things, its goal is to:

- further the development in the tourist demand for a tourism that takes the importance of protecting the environment and sustainable development into greater account and to highlight the market role to this aim,
- define and promote operational tools adapted to national and local authorities and tourist businesses, enabling the control of tourist development and contributing to its being better integrated into the sustainable development of the areas concerned.

Recommendations

The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, along with the MAP, and in concert with tourist professionals and NGOs are urged to:

- strengthen awareness activities on a regional scale in tourist destinations as well as in the source countries,
- Organise experience-sharing between the players involved in tourist destinations of the various countries,
- develop training programmes for those players involved, especially local authorities and professionals,
- promote the implementation of Mediterranean networks (between professionals, between certain areas such as islands or certain kinds of tourism such as the cultural variety...),
- promote the implementation of Mediterranean eco-labels,
- stimulate a “regional co-operation mechanism” in this field that works in a network.

4. PROPOSALS FOR AN ACTION PROGRAMME

Proposals for Actions

Participation in networks and international initiatives for sustainable tourism

The goal is to make the Mediterranean region one of thought and action on a global scale and within this context to promote the implementation of Mediterranean networks (between professionals,

between islands...). To this aim, the MAP will take part, especially in the following procedures:

- “Tour Operator Initiative”, steered by UNEP, UNESCO and WTO, following on the 7th session of the UN Commission of Sustainable Development,
- The “Islands” joint programme between the UNEP-EI and the WTO, initiated at the Lanzarote Conference (1998),
- the “Tourism and the Environment at the European Level” project initiated by the European Environmental Agency.

The implementation of a regional programme within the framework of the “sustainable coastal-zone management” part of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership

Within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and its priority programme of action for the environment (SMAP—management of coastal areas), the MAP will submit and ensure the follow-

up of a regional programme for the sustainable management of the Mediterranean tourist coastal areas.

This three-year programme will consist of the following activities:

i) Experience-sharing between Mediterranean tourist destinations

This will concern the destination areas selected by the States. Among other things it will enable:

–a better identification of the players concerned and their roles as well as past and current developments

and their environmental, social and economic impact (in particular by means of appropriate indicators);

–the pinpointing of the tools used and their range;

–a contribution in developing strategies and projects for better integrating tourism with sustainable development;

–the definition and promotion on regional and local levels of the real tools for the authorities and businesses concerned.

ii) Promoting Mediterranean eco-labels

This consists of looking at the opportunity and the methods for granting Mediterranean eco-labels, in particular for the tourist destination areas striving to reconcile environmental protection and tourist development.

iii) Awareness campaigns on the regional level

In particular this means:

–producing and distributing practical reference documents (“white book”, “good practice guides” and so forth);

–conducting awareness campaigns for the general public in the source countries to contribute to a better awareness by tourists of the environmental and social stakes involved.

iv) Promoting economic and financial tools for protecting and managing sites

This means pinpointing and promoting those economic and financial tools for enhancing an effective

contribution from the tourist sector for protecting sites and improving the sustainable development of the destination areas.

v) A study for a “regional co-operation mechanism”

This means carrying out a feasibility study of a “regional co-operation mechanism” for contributing to a

better integration of tourism in sustainable development in the Mediterranean region by contributing to the follow-up of the implementation of the present recommendations (following on the three-year plan).

It is advisable to specify what, among other things, could be its functions and its operational mode.

vi) The year 2002 for a regional symposium

A regional symposium in 2002 has been suggested, the goal of which would be to:

- draw conclusions from the present programme;
- derive a common view for integrating tourism with sustainable development in the Mediterranean and to draw up main lines for a long-term programme of action;
- stimulate sustainable tourism regional co-operation in the Mediterranean region.