European Sustainable Tourism

Context, concepts and guidelines for action

PROF. COSIMO NOTARSTEFANO[*]

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[*] Jean Monnet Professor of European Law and Tourism Law - University of Salento - Bari - Bergamo
Responsible of *Jean Monnet Center of Excellence "Polo Euromediterraneo"*

1) - Institutional context and conceptual issues

The European Commission, recognising the important role of tourism in the European economy and the significant contribution of tourism to meeting the key challenges facing Europe in the XXI century, has been increasingly involved in tourism since the early 1980s, in co-operation with the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

An important step forward was taken with the establishment of the Tourism Advisory Committee in 1986, in order to facilitate exchange of information, consultation and co-operation on tourism[1]. The decision of the Council of Ministers to declare the year 1990 "*The European Year of Tourism*" was designed to emphasise the role of tourism and to develop a coherent policy approach[2], along with the 1992 three year Action Plan to Assist Tourism[3].

The Community activities representing tourism were thus embedded in the "Tourism and Employment" process. Through its capacity to ensure greater cohesion among European regions, including the most peripheral areas of the Union where this activity often represents the main source of income and employment, tourism has an essential place in the integration of the economies of Europe's regions and in the enhancement of their cultural and natural resources. There are a large number of important influences which will combine to provide new market opportunities for European businesses (SMEs) and will contribute to bringing closer European citizens[4] and sharing their values.

On 4-5 November 1997 a joint Presidency/Commission Conference on Tourism and Employment was held in Luxembourg ("Employment and Tourism: Guidelines for Actions"), and a High Level Group on Tourism and Employment, was set up with the mandate to examine the conditions in which tourism could make a greater contribution to growth and stability in employment in European tourism, and to make recommendations.

On 22 October 1998 a report was presented[5], and the Commission identified the follow-up measures needed to implement the Group's recommendations[6]. On 21 June 1999 the Internal Market Council adopted comprehensive conclusions welcomed the achievements, and envisaged further work on specific topics between the Commission, the Member States, and the industry. As a consequence, the Commission and the Member States agreed to set up four working groups each dealing with one of the four topics specified in the Council conclusions:

- to facilitate exchange and dissemination of information, particularly through new technologies (Working Group A);
- to improve training in order to upgrade skills in the tourism industry (Working Group B);
- to improve the quality of tourist products (Working Group C); and
- to promote environmental protection and sustainable development in tourism (Working Group D)

These groups started working in February 2000. In addition, a special working group "managing the impact of new technologies in the tourism sector" (Working Group E) started work in early 2001. All groups tabled their reports on recommendations in the summer 2001. These reports were important material for the Commission Communication[7] "*Working together for the future of European tourism*" which is the final milestone of the "tourism and employment" process that was launched four years earlier.

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[1] Council Decision 86/664/EEC establishing a consultation and co-operation procedure in the field of tourism, of 22.12.1986. At present the Advisory Committee, composed of representatives from all Member States, provides information on the measures taken at national level in the area of tourism and, this Committee meets several times a year.

[2] Council Decision 89/46/EEC of 2.12.1988

[3] Council Decision 92/421/EEC of 31.07.1992. Following its 1995 Green *Paper on the Role of the Union in the field of Tourism*, in order to stimulate a debate on the Union's role in tourism, Commission adopted (30/4/96) a proposal for a Council Decision on a First Multiannual Programme to assist European Tourism ("Philoxenia" 1997-2000), which received the favourable opinion of the European Parliament, European Economic and Social Committee and Committee of the Regions, nevertheless the Council of Ministers was not been able to reach an unanimous agreement (Commission formally withdrew its proposal in 2000).

[4] Within the next 20 years, the population above the standard retirement age of 65 will increase by 17 millions; numbers will grow further over subsequent decades. This larger group of older people will, on reaching retirement enjoy better health and longer life expectancy and greater wealth and disposable income than previous generations, contributing to further growth in tourism. Given that they will be less likely to concentrate their tourist activity in peak periods to fit in with school and workplace holidays, they can also help to iron out the seasonality of demand for tourist services.

[5] European tourism: new partnerships for jobs. Conclusions and Recommendations of the High Level Group on Tourism and Employment.

[6] Enhancing tourism's potential for employment COM (1999) 205 final - 28.04.1999

[7] COM (2001) 665 final, of 13.11.2001.

On 21.05.2002 the Council of Ministers unanimously adopted a Resolution, based on the Commission Communication, presenting an important step further in the new co-operative approach for the European tourism sector, in where it urges closer monitoring of the impact of EU legislation on the tourism sector, suggests further examination of promoting Europe as a destination, and invites the industry to support the efforts undertaken by the European Community and the Member States. As a concrete follow-up to one of the ten measures that the Commission announced in its Communication adopted two years earlier, the Commission called for an EU-wide drive to enhance the economic, social and environmental sustainability of European tourism in the Communication "*Basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism*"[8] which emphasised the need to ensure the consistency of policies and measures affecting the sustainability of tourism and the industry's competitiveness.

On February 2005, the Commission proposed a new start for the Lisbon Strategy focusing the European Union's efforts on two principal tasks - delivering stronger, lasting growth and more and better jobs. In this context, globalisation, demographic changes and the evolution in transport are decisive factors in driving the rapid growth of this industry.

With its variety of attractions and quality of its tourism services Europe is the world leading tourist destination[9]. Tourism is therefore an activity which can play an important role in the attainment of the Growth and Jobs Strategy goals. Tourism is a cross-cutting sector, involving a big diversity of services and professions, linked to many other economic activities. It impacts on sectors such as transport, construction, retail and on the numerous sectors that produce holiday products or provide leisure and business travel-related services.

To respond to modern challenges while making the best use of available resources and taking advantage of all possible synergies the Commission proposed a renewed European tourism policy in the Communication on "*A renewed tourism EU policy: towards a stronger partnership for European Tourism*"[10] in order to improve the competitiveness of the European tourism industry and create more and better jobs through the sustainable growth of tourism in Europe and globally. For example better regulation, in many policy areas, can be of particular importance to the competitiveness of the tourism industry and tourist destinations. Given the large number of policies affecting tourism, it is necessary to actively promote better regulation, both at national and European level[11]. Most Community actions aiming to support the competitiveness of European tourism are carried out through the Enterprise policy instruments. Nevertheless many other European policies impact directly or indirectly on tourism.

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[8] COM (2003) 716 final of 21.11.2003

[9] In 1995, Council Directive 95/57/EC on the collection of statistical information in the field of tourism provided all Member States with a set of guidelines for the collection, compilation, processing and transmission of harmonised Community statistical information on tourism demand and supply. The aim was to establish a common information system on tourism statistics at Community level. After that, a "Community Methodology on Tourism Statistics" was elaborated with the help of Member States, following Council Decision 90/655/EEC, and was published in 1998. It set out the basic methodology for tourism supply and demand, tourism market segments (rural and regional aspects of tourism, cultural tourism), statistics relating to tourism (tourism expenditure and balance of payments, tourism costs, prices and tariffs, employment in tourism) and tourism and the environment. The Community methodology is used as a benchmark for tourism statistics and concepts, in order to produce harmonised basic tourism statistics and provide a common basis for all kinds of possible applications and tools for tourism analysis. In recent years, there have been new developments within tourism itself and in tourism methodology in Europe and in the world, which have made it necessary to update the concepts and methodological framework. At the same time, Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA) have been introduced as a new tool for measuring the economic impact of tourism. In 2001, a "*Tourist Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework*" was published jointly by the European Commission, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations (UN), the World Tourism Organization (WTO). These recommendations are based on a common conceptual framework for the design of the TSA that was established by an inter-secretariat working group. At EU level, this has prompted a revision of the EC Directive and of the Community Methodology (the revision concerns supply–side and demand-side data and will take into account Eurostat's six quality components: relevance, accuracy, timeliness and punctuality, accessibility and clarity, comparability, and coherence).

[10] COM(2006) 134 final) of 17.03.2006.

[11] In its Communication on "*Better Regulation for Growth and Jobs*", the Commission has set out a revised approach to further promote better regulation with a view to improving European competitiveness. It focuses on: (1) Improving and extending the use of impact assessment (IA) for new proposals (this integrated approach ensures that tourism will be fully taken into account in all IA work for proposals likely to affect the sector); (2) Screening pending legislative proposals and; (3) Simplifying existing European legislation (this will include legislation such as the Package Travel Directive and the Timeshare Directive).

Each year, the initiatives that may affect tourism, included in the Commission Work Programme, will be identified in order to make sure that their impact on the sector's competitiveness will be taken into account at an early stage. This is in line with the European Parliament's demand in the 2005 Report on new prospects and new challenges for sustainable European tourism[12]. The Commission will continue with its efforts to keep the members of the Advisory Committee on Tourism informed, in an efficient, timely and transparent way on the tourism related initiatives included in its Work Programme. This will allow the public administrations to also keep the various stakeholders, at national, regional and local level, regularly informed of the Commission initiatives. The Commission will continue consulting with and informing the tourism stakeholders on issues and initiatives affecting tourism. This is an interactive process which has produced positive results overall and must be strengthened and continuously improved. As a result[13] the Commission launched the preparation of a European Agenda 21 for tourism. The Commission set up in 2004 the *Tourism Sustainability Group (TSG)*[14] in order to encourage stakeholder synergies and to provide input into the Agenda 21 process for the sustainability of European tourism. The TSG paid particular attention to environment related issues and finalised its work in a report published in February 2007.

The general concept of sustainable development related to the special role of tourism reached at international fora, helps to set an agenda for more sustainable tourism that meets two elements: 1) the ability of tourism to continue as an activity in the future, ensuring that the conditions are right for this; and 2) the ability of society and the environment to absorb and benefit from the impacts of tourism in a sustainable way. In this context, an agenda can be used as a framework (set of 12 aims that address economic, social, environmental impacts) to develop policies for more sustainable tourism that recognize the two directions in which tourism policy can exert an influence:

- minimizing the negative impacts of tourism on society/environment; and
- maximizing tourism's positive and creative contribution to local economies, the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, the quality of life of hosts and visitors.

Aims	Actions
1) Economic Viability	To ensure the viability and competitiveness of tourism destinations and enterprises, so that they are able to continue to prosper and deliver benefits in the long term.
2) Local prosperity	To maximize the contribution of tourism to the economic prosperity of the host destination, including the proportion of visitor spending that is retained locally.
3) Employment Quality	To strengthen the number and quality of local jobs created/supported by tourism, including the level of pay, conditions of service, availability to all without discrimination by gender,race,disability or other ways
4) Social Equity	To seek a widespread and fair distribution of economic and social benefits from tourism throughout the recipient community, including improving opportunities, income and services available to the poor.
5) Visitor Fulfillment	To provide a safe, satisfying and fulfilling experience for visitors, available to all without discrimination by gender, race, disability or in other ways.
6) Local Control	To engage and empower local communities in planning and decision making about the management and future development of tourism in their area, in consultation with other stakeholders
7) Community Wellbeing	To maintain and strengthen the quality of life in local communities including social structures and access to resources, amenities, life support systems, avoiding any form of social degradation or exploitation.
8) Cultural Richness	To respect and enhance historic heritage,authentic culture,traditions,distinctiveness of host communities
9) Physical Integrity	To maintain and enhance the quality of landscapes, both urban and rural, and avoid the physical and visual degradation of the environment
10) Biological Diversity	To support the conservation of natural areas, habitats, wildlife, and minimize damage to them.
11) Resource Efficiency	To minimize the use of scarce and non-renewable resources in the development and operation of tourism facilities and services.
12)Environmental Purity	To minimize the pollution of air, water, land, the generation of waste by tourism enterprises and visitors

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[12] PE 353.597/v03-00

[13] The impact of tourism on employment should be seen also in relation to the general liberalisation of inbound and outbound tourism for EU Member States and to the fact that no major third countries still restrict the movement of people and their spending abroad on the basis of commitments taken under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

[14] TSG was composed of experts coming from a balanced representation of industry associations, destinations representatives, trade unions and civil society (Member States' administrations, international organisations such as the World Tourism Organisation are also represented).

Relationship between the 12 aims and the pillars of sustainability[15]
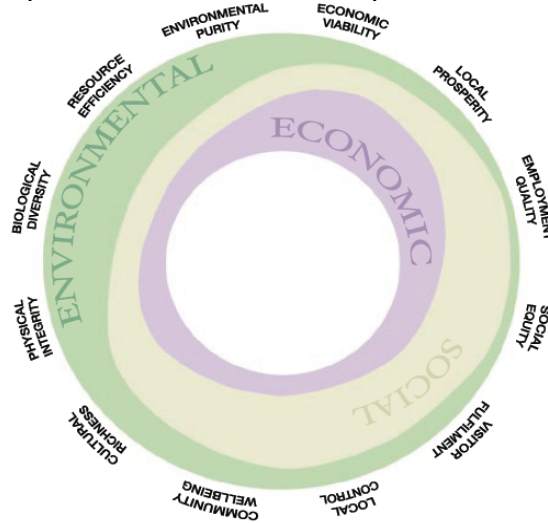
Action for More Sustainable European Tourism *Report of the Tourism Sustainability Group*
Table 1a: Action framework - implementation mechanisms

European Union	Member state	Local authority/DMO	Tourism businesses		Other bodies
Sustainable destinations	Promote sustainable destination management model. Establish a European knowledge network and benchmarking for destinations.	Provide support for local destinations within national policy framework. Support knowledge networks. Develop relevant training programmes. Establish measures and indicators and a common basis for benchmarking.	Establish a stake-holder body. Develop strategy and action plan Strengthen land use planning/control Invest in infra-structure. Use indicators and monitoring.	Actively engage in destination management bodies and processes	Educational/Research bodies: Technical support for policy development, planning, management and application of indicators. Research on good practice. Sustainability training for destination managers. NGOs and associations: Actively engage in destination management bodies and processes
Sustainable businesses	Further promote CSR amongst SMEs. Research business barriers and market trends Coordinate certification schemes. Create knowledge network and bench-marking for businesses Promote Europe wide actions and innovative ideas Procure sustainably	Create supportive policy environment. Research and dissemination. Orientate business support services to sustainability. Create advisory materials. Support certification schemes . Target financial assistance. Procure sustainably	Facilitate business networking. Appropriate destination marketing. Support business advisory services. Promote certification schemes to local businesses. Procure sustainably.	Trade bodies and associations to promote sustainability Engage with support services and certification Implement management systems in consultation with employees and representatives. Adopt sustainability criteria in purchasing/ supply chain.	Educational/Research bodies: Include sustainability in career training. Develop and deliver focussed training courses on aspects of sustainability. Trade Unions: Promote dialogue with businesses and employers. Promote training. Consumer associations and NGOs: Engaging in identification of good practice and benchmarking.
Responsible tourists	Support development of relevant education materials. Encourage European media and marketing to carry sustainability messages. Study codes of conduct and visitor charging schemes	Support sustainability in education. Support national marketing and media campaigns. Publicise certification schemes.	Include sustainability messages in marketing. Provide relevant detailed information. Identify and promote certificated product	Include sustainability messages in marketing. Provide relevant information to guests.	Educational/Research bodies: Include aspects of tourism/travel in school curricular on environment and sustainability. NGOs: Provide environmental and cultural information/ interpretation about destinations Consumer associations and NGOs: Promote sustainable travel to members.

[15] UNEP-UNWTO, "*Making Tourism More Sustainable. A Guide for Policy Makers*", 2005, pp.18-20. The order in which the aims are listed does not imply any order of priority (each one is equally important, many of the aims relate to a combination of environmental/economic/social issues and impacts: Economic viability of tourism depends strongly on maintaining the quality of the local environment; Visitor fulfilment is about meeting visitors' needs and providing opportunities -social aim-, but is also relevant for economic sustainability; Cultural richness is considered to be in the social sphere of sustainability, but it has a strong bearing with environment/cultural dimensions of society's interaction with nature; Community wellbeing, which can be seen as a social aim, is related to environmental resource management, with respect to access to water; Employment quality and social equity, such as poverty alleviation, relate closely to both economic/social/sustainability issues

Action for More Sustainable European Tourism - *Report of the Tourism Sustainability Group*
Table 1b: Action framework - sustainability challenges

European Union	Member state	Local authority/DMO		Tourism businesses	Other bodies
1) Reducing seasonality of demand	Consider issues relating to coordination of school holidays. Study climate change impacts	Develop national off-season marketing campaigns. Pursue adjustment of school holidays.	Stimulate and support creative products and packaging. Develop off-season events and activities/attractions.	Develop creative offers and price differentials.	Trade Unions: Encourage flexible holiday arrangements. Negotiate solutions to mitigate effects of seasonal employment. Consumer associations: Encourage off season travel.
2) Addressing the impact of tourism transport	Consider tourism in pursuing sustainable transport policies and action. Include aviation in EU emissions trading. Support research on new technology. Support infrastructure inclu-ding trans-Europe services	Invest in relevant infrastructure. Promote alternative transport options. Introduce fair tax/pricing reflecting impact. Adjust target markets.	Adjust target markets. Invest in local infrastructure and services. Introduce local charging. Market non-car/plane access, and provide information on this.	Airlines to research and introduce cleaner technology. Promote alternative transport options. Provide relevant information to guests.	NGOs and consumer associations: Provide travellers with information about alternative environmentally friendly possibilities. Advocating and campaigning for cleaner transport options.
3) Improving the quality of tourism jobs	Monitor employment conditions in the sector. Promote and publicise good practice.	Monitor employment conditions in the sector Ensure compliance with labour standards. Mount campaign to improve profile of tourism as a career	Support local colleges on training programmes. Work with local businesses colleges to improve profile of tourism.	Respect labour laws and collective agreements Improve HR planning and management. Work with employees and trade unions to improve employment conditions.	Educational/Research bodies: Strengthen tourism careers training. Offer life-long-learning programmes. Trade Unions: Pursue improvement of employment conditions in the sector Work with enterprises and employees to raise/meet standards Support training programmes Help raise career profile of tourism.
4) Maintaining and enhancing community prosperity and quality of life in the face of change	Sensitive use of funding programmes for restructuring and agriculture. Investigate good practice in different types of destination. Study impact and control of second homes.	Sensitive application of EU and national funding. Provide land use planning guidance on tourism.,		Engage local community in tourism strategy Strengthen land use planning/control. Encourage retention of tourism spending. Promote business to business networks& local supply chain	Strengthen local sourcing of labour, goods and services. Strengthen local supply chain.
5) Minimising resource use and production of waste	Promote application of appropriate standards, backed by certification. Identify and publicise promote good practice.	Promote application of appropriate standards, backed by certification. Identify and publicise promote good practice. Strengthen advisory and training services.	Work with local businesses to improve practice Provide relevant visitor information. Monitor environmental conditions Invest in relevant energy/water/waste infrastructure	Establish environmental management systems. Participate in training and certification. Provide information for guests on conserving resources.	Educational/Research bodies: Provide courses for businesses and staff on environmental management. NGOs/associations: Encourage business and tourists to be responsible.
6) Conserving and giving value to natural and cultural heritage	Relate tourism to conservation policies. Promote cultural tourism and support programmes for safeguarding tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Support protected area networks and Natura 2000 programme Study visitor charging mechanisms.	Relate tourism to conservation policies. Strengthen resources for conservation Encourage protected areas to prepare sustainable tourism strategies. Encourage quality products/ interpretation Promote visitor contribution schemes	Audit local heritage resources and support their conservation and interpretation. Promote local distinctiveness. Strengthen land use planning/control. Monitor impacts on culture/ heritage Promote visitor contribution schemes	Minimise impact of activities on nature. Invest in sensitive use of heritage buildings/ resources and sustainable land management. Use and promote local produce and crafts. Support visitor contribution schemes	Educational/Research bodies: Strengthen skills training in conservation and management. Conservation NGOs to support sustainable tourism as a conservation incentive.
7) Making holidays available to all	Investigate and promote good practice. Promote social tourism concepts and models	Set accessibility standards. Consider social tourism support schemes (e.g. holiday vouchers)	Monitor compliance with standards. Provide information on accessibility. Encourage provision of affordable holidays.	Improve accessibility to their facilities. Participate in social tourism schemes.	Trade Unions: Promote adherence to workers' holiday entitlement. Promote social tourism schemes.
8) Using tourism as a tool in global sustainable development	Reflect in transport policy. Support sustainable tourism development through EUROPAID. Support European tour operators in adopting good practice. Include international destinations in knowledge networks.	Support sustainable tourism development through bilateral aid. Support national tour operators/networks in adopting good practice Share good practice examples. Promote responsible travel behaviour to citizens.	Participate in exchange of skills and experience with destinations worldwide.	All tourism businesses working internationally to adopt sound sustainability criteria themselves and through their supple chains. Provide relevant information to tourists.	Educational/Research bodies: Support international exchange programmes on sustainable tourism. Trade unions: Pursue compliance with core labour standards in all destinations. International organisations: Participate in joint initiatives with the EU, member states and third countries on integrating sustainability into tourism development. NGOs: Support capacity

2) - Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism
Finding the right balance between an autonomous development of the destinations and the protection of their environment on the one side and the development of a competitive economic activity on the other side may be challenging. These characteristics make tourism the driving force for the conservation and development of the destinations – directly through raising awareness and income support to them, and indirectly by providing an economic justification for the provision of such support by others.

Global trends and priorities change – more than ever the overarching challenge for the tourism sector is to remain competitive while also embracing sustainability recognising that, in the long term, competitiveness depends on sustainability. In particular, climate change is now seen as a fundamental issue also requiring the tourism industry to reduce its contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and the destinations to adapt to changes in the pattern of demand and in the types of tourism they offer.

The future of European tourism relies on the quality of the tourist experience[16] – tourists will recognise that places that care for the environment, their employees and local communities are also more likely to care for them.

To achieve a competitive and sustainable tourism the European Commission invites all actors to respect the following principles[17]:

- *Take a holistic and integrated approach* – All the various impacts of tourism should be taken into account in its planning and development. Furthermore, tourism should be well balanced and integrated with a whole range of activities that affect society and the environment.

- *Plan for the long term* - Sustainable development is about taking care of the needs of future generations as well as our own. Long term planning requires the ability to sustain actions over time.

- *Achieve an appropriate pace and rhythm of development* - The level, pace and shape of development should reflect and respect the character, resources and needs of host communities and destinations.

- *Involve all stakeholders* - A sustainable approach requires widespread and committed participation in decision making and practical implementation by all those implicated in the outcome.

- *Use best available knowledge* - Policies and actions should be informed by the latest and best knowledge available. Information on tourism trends and impacts, and skills and experience, should be shared across Europe

- *Minimise and manage risk* (*the precautionary principle*) - Where there is uncertainty about outcomes, there should be full evaluation and preventative action should be taken to avoid damage to the environment or society.

- *Reflect impacts in costs* (user and polluter pays) - Prices should reflect the real costs to society of consumption and production activities. This has implications not simply for pollution but for charging for the use of facilities that have significant management costs attached to them.

- *Set and respect limits, where appropriate* - The carrying capacity of individual sites and wider areas should be recognised, with a readiness and ability to limit, where and when appropriate, the amount of tourism development and volume of tourist flows.

- *Undertake continuous monitoring* - Sustainability is all about understanding impacts and being alert to them all the time, so that the necessary changes and improvements can be made.

All these challenges are not fixed in space or in time.

The priority that will be given to them, the way they will be tackled and the arising opportunities that can be seized may vary from place to place. Stakeholders must continue anticipating and keeping abreast of changes.

Policies and actions need to take into account how demand and supply will be affected by environmental challenges - such as climate change[18] and water scarcity[19], technology developments or other political, economic, social issues. Therefore, a regular update of the set of challenges will be done with the collaboration of all stakeholders.

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[16] Although some big international companies contribute to this sector, it is mainly dominated by SMEs. In its most narrow definition, the European tourism industry creates more than 4% of the Community's GDP, with about 2 million enterprises employing about 4% of the total labour force (representing approximately 8 million jobs). When the links to other sectors are taken into account the contribution of tourism to GDP is estimated to be around 11% and it provides employment to more than 12% of the labour force (24 million jobs).

[17] COM (2007) 621 final "*Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European Tourism*", 19.10.2007, p. 11.

[18] See also Green Paper "Adapting to climate change in Europe – Options for EU action" COM(2007) 354 final of 29.6.2007

[19] See also "Addressing the challenge of water scarcity and droughts in the European Union" COM(2007) 414 final of 18.7.2007

3) - A framework for action : mobilising actors to produce and share knowledge

Achieving the objectives of this agenda and tackling the above mentioned challenges will require a coherent action which can be supported by appropriate public policies: sustainable management of destinations, integration of sustainability concerns by businesses and sustainability awareness by tourists.

In ensuring that new tourism development is of a scale and type in keeping with the needs of the local community and environment, a sustainable management can reinforce the economic performance and competitive positioning of a destination in the long-term. It requires a supportive framework with the involvement of all regional and local stakeholders and an efficient structure within which partnership and effective leadership are facilitated.

The "Agenda" aims at strengthening such a voluntary and continuous process. It should be promoted by all tourism stakeholders in Europe: the different levels of government - local authorities, destination management organisations, regions, Member States - and the European Commission itself, businesses, tourists and all other bodies (private and public stakeholders with decentralised competencies) that can stimulate, support and influence tourism. It is of major importance to respect the principle of subsidiarity and to work with a bottom-up approach, involving stakeholders who have the competence/power to act and who are voluntarily contributing to the implementation of the Agenda. That is why the focus will be placed on joint action at the destination level but within the context of supportive national and European policies and actions. Tourism stakeholders are called to accept these respective responsibilities and are invited to embrace the opportunities that the sustainability challenge offers as a potential driver for innovation and growth. The stakeholders should share their knowledge by communicating the positive and negative results they achieve on the way, in order to build a stronger bridge between the creation of knowledge, its dissemination and the implementation of sustainable and competitive practices.

3.2.1. Mobilising actors to produce and share knowledge

The European Commission will aim at achieving a better visibility and recognition of good practices by the EU citizens and society and at strengthening the knowledge and understanding of practices that link sustainability and competitiveness in a mutually reinforcing way. In particular, the **tourism learning area**[20] **handbook**[21] is a practical initiative that advocates the involvement of knowledge-based institutions within the framework of a consensus building approach aimed at improving SME performance and human potential in the tourism sector at destination level. A tourism learning area is of interest to:

(a) public authority staff in the geographical area who are interested in tourism-sector activities;
(b) learning centres seeking closer links with SMEs and public programmes;
(c) business associations (SMEs, managers, employees) seeking to be more innovative, competitive or sustainable;
(d) local social partners (trade unions, NGOs) who offer/require access to tourism-sector learning opportunities; and
(e) individual consumers, destination residents and workers.

The Commission will further seek to drive the attention of those actors who create knowledge (e.g. universities, research institutes, public and private observatories) towards the challenges for the sustainability of European tourism. It will facilitate their cooperation and promote the provision of formal and non-formal tourism education and it will encourage mobility across Europe through the support of transnational training and work placement, of exchanges and the development of training methods, materials and contents, including the integration of

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[20] *Tourism learning areas* concern all stakeholders in the tourism field and related sectors, since a well-run learning area can provide the continuous information, training and learning processes needed in our modern European 'knowledge-based' economy. Specifically, however, the main target groups are government departments, business associations and social partners that deal with tourism, education, employment, environment and information technology. A tourism learning area will encompass all these subjects, and will develop a complex set of partnerships and networks to improve learning opportunities in order to stimulate human potential. To achieve this, it is most likely that the implementation phase of a learning area will be undertaken by public administrative and educational bodies who can take a leading role in the process in partnership with private tourism business associations and key social organisations.

[21] The content of this handbook should be of primary interest to: (a) regional development organisations (coordinating bodies, sectoral departments, public–private partnerships); (b) local/regional authorities (councils, NUTS III–V) (1); (c) learning centres (educational or training institutes); and (d) SME business associations. Within this target group, the handbook is aimed at two types of individuals: (a) individuals who have the capability to take policy-level decisions and can take action to ensure that a learning-area policy is developed at destination level (or for a thematic area); (b) individuals whose job it will be to implement, manage and advise on that policy as it unfolds as a networking/partnership/IT exercise to stimulate learning and innovation.

sustainability principles in training programmes[22]. Local and regional levels' engagement will be supported through alliances between different types of destinations (e.g. rural, coastal, mountain, urban) committed towards sustainable destination management set up by the forerunners and opened to the participation of all other interested parties.

The European Commission will support the strengthening or the creation of platforms – by also using new technologies[23] – where lessons drawn by good and bad practices can be exchanged and where collaboration between tourism and other related sectors can be improved. The promotion of best practices exchange towards sustainable destination management (e.g. addressing the issue of seasonality and the prolongation of the tourism season) can contribute in a significant way to the competitiveness of the tourist destinations. These platforms could allow a more specific approach reflecting the territorial and economic characteristics of destinations. The annual European Tourism Forum also provides a platform where all stakeholders can exchange views and strengthen their collaboration on the issues related to the links between sustainability and competitiveness of European tourism.

- Promoting destinations of excellence - "*European Destinations of Excellence*" (EDEN) pilot project, promotes emerging European destinations and offers support to those where the development in tourism is being pursued in such a way as to ensure social, cultural and environmental sustainability.

- Mobilising the EU financial instruments - The opportunities at European level are already there to be seized, such as the possibility for Member States and all Regions to finance tourist projects through the European Regional Development Fund. Sustainable and innovative tourism practices are already highlighted as priority criteria in the different objectives of the various European financial instruments – in particular the Cohesion Policy funds (the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the European Fisheries Fund, the 7th EC Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration activities (where the key priority on climate change includes impacts on tourism) – and in the 'Leonardo da Vinci' programme, through the introduction of a specific measure for apprentices and young persons in vocational training and a project currently underway, analysing and developing qualifications in the sector. The 'Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme' (CIP) also supports the competitiveness of EU enterprises and especially SMEs.

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22 Being aware of challenges and trying to overcome them are essential to successful training or education. Some useful suggestions for tourism include : (a) make the learning process job-related; (b) where possible, apply the mentor model; (c) get strong support from both management and workers; (d) try to integrate learning in the career path of the employee; (e) embed the learning process in a strong framework supported by the organisation or company; (f) include basic skills (language, behaviour, culture, organisation) in this learning process; (g) the whole process needs passion, or at least motivation, with continuing stimulation from both sides; (h) learning plans need to be transparent to the users; (i) learning (still) needs to be fun for everybody; (j) it is very important to establish goals and measures to evaluate results and outcomes; (k) importance of social dialogue is not to be neglected; (l) partnership in general is crucial for the success of every kind of learning process.

23 Despite the increasing competition in overall there will be a large increase in elderly tourists, the cultural and natural heritage tourism will be the fastest growing segment and some of the driving forces of the EU such as liberalisation, the internal market and the euro will only gain more importance for the further evolution of tourism. Nevertheless, decisions taken by individual tourists are mainly subjective and thus sensitive to external influences. The possibility of Internet booking and consequent individual travelling, the trend towards late and flexible travel decisions, and the availability of low-cost carriers and intensified search for price advantages makes tourism one of the most volatile and dynamic economic sectors. In discussing trends or general societal changes, new forms or themes of tourism are also of great influence for the further development of this sector: (a) tourism and sustainability: • a seismic shift in people's awareness of the environmental impact of mass tourism; • a new social awareness-interest in authentic, small and local holiday experiences; • the new tourist (would eat in a local restaurant, use local guides, look for the true story behind the destination); • more do-it-yourself travellers (more demanding and at the same time taking responsibility); (b) tourism and accessibility: almost 40 million people in Europe are handicapped and they are tourists too; from a commercial point of view alone these consumers are not to be neglected; (c) tourism and rural and cultural heritage: there is a clear and growing market for non-traditional tourist destinations; (d) tourism and peace: tourism is associated with tolerance, cultural exchange, learning to know each other, creation of welfare and friendship; (e) tourism and sports: this goes far beyond the Olympic Games, as it is a rapidly growing segment for individual and group tourism; (f) tourism and health: • a healthy lifestyle and promoting a healthy diet among customers will become a priority for travel companies; • holiday companies will work more closely with the medical professionals; • travellers will be better educated about holiday health risks in general; (g) tourism and technology: • virtual holidays will become a reality.

- Mainstreaming sustainability and competitiveness in Commission policies - Several existing European policies and actions can have a strong influence on tourism and its sustainability and can make an important contribution in tackling the key challenges. General policies such as environment, transport, employment or research can have different impacts on diverse territories because of their specific characteristics[24].

Learning Areas Tourism Stakeholders Classification Matrix

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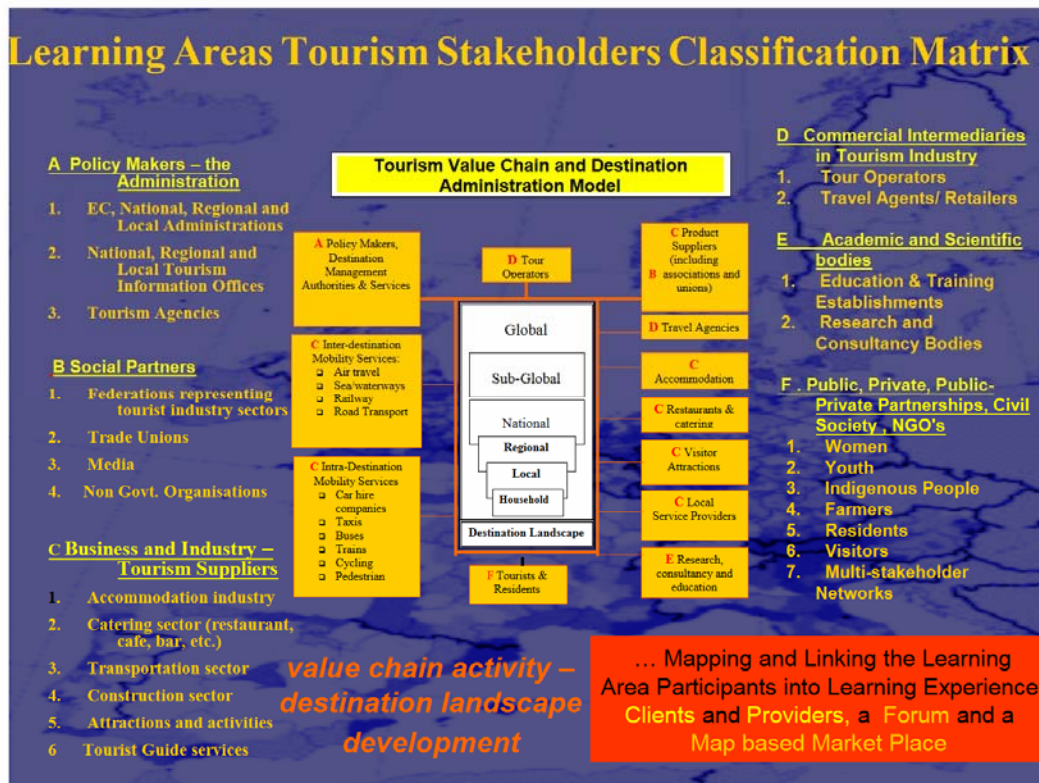
[24] The substantial response from stakeholders to the consultation process on the future EU Maritime Policy has demonstrated their interest and support for action at EU level towards more sustainable and competitive maritime and coastal tourism (see www.medmysea.eu MedMySea - Archimed programme 2000-2006). In response to their concerns, the integrated approach of the Maritime Policy will provide the basis for elaborating further action to enhance sustainability and competitiveness in the sector. As a first step, the Commission will focus its attention on the coastal tourism sector by assessing the effects of fast growing segments such as cruise tourism, examining the interlinkages between the cruise industry, port facilities, marinas and other maritime industries, and of issues concerning competition between land and maritime uses in coastal environment. Mountain areas need prospective policies of rural development that integrate both the conservation requirements of this particular natural environment as well as the sustained welfare of its inhabitants (*The Protocol on Tourism to the Alpine Convention* is an example of framework instrument that can stimulate/coordinate the contribution of stakeholders at regional/local level). The Commission recognises the need to preserve the rich natural heritage of many of these vulnerable mountain spaces. Rural areas are investing in tourism in order to diversify their economies, which is necessary for growth, employment and sustainable development. They offer real opportunities in terms of their attractiveness as a place in which to live and work, and their role as a reservoir of natural resources and highly valued landscapes. This implies the need to ensure coherence and synergies in Community policies and to preserve the environment and safeguard the countryside. Tourism can also contribute to the sustainable development of urban areas by improving business competitiveness, meeting social needs and preserving the cultural and natural environment. If urban destinations are to be successful in all these areas, they must take a global approach that is based on the principles of sustainable development and is recognised and supported by public policies at all levels, including the European level.