



Report

JOINT EVENT ORGANIZED BY EUSAIR TSG3 AND TSG4

“Evaluation and Preservation of Environment for Tourism”

DATE: 26 – 27 September 2019

PLACE: Valmar Diamant Hotel, Poreč, Croatia and Trg Etbina Kristana 1, Izola, Slovenia

PRESENT PARTICIPANTS: See list of participants Annex 2.

PROGRAMME: See Annex 1.

CONCLUSION OF THE FIRST DAY, Thursday, 26 September 2019, Poreč

With the aim to present global, regional, national and local attitudes, policies and activities tackling sustainable and responsible tourism development, which considers environment, climate, people and heritage on the whole as important elements of tourism, the first day of the conference provided food for thought for all levels of governments and governance in the Adriatic and Ionian macro-region.

It was not only the first joint event of two EUSAIR Pillar, but also the first time two transnational programmes, ADRIAN and Mediterranean, joined forces.

The keynote presentation by UNWTO, Dirk Glaesser, elaborated on the role of sustainability in national tourism policies and integration of the SDG 12 in them. **SDG 12 is one of the goals, which makes explicit reference to the tourism sector and one of the goals with more connections to other SDGs given the crosscutting nature of sustainable consumption and production.** The analysis shows that only approximately half of them have clear references to sustainability and that almost one third of them refer to resource efficiency and connect sustainability with competitiveness. The impact area with highest reference is biodiversity conservation and the lowest water use efficiency. When it comes to instruments in national tourism policies, they are predominantly voluntary followed by regulatory with weak proposals for economic instruments. The overall monitoring tools mentioned in the reviewed tourism policies are well represented, but not so for the environmental tools. Even worse situation is with the public progress report. The **sustainable tourism observatories represent a good tool** and quite a number of countries are joining the INSTO network (see Annex 3).

The **importance of tourism in national economies is demonstrated** not only through its contribution to GDP but also its presence **in national development strategies**, which takes into account not just the developmental directions, horizontal policies, necessary legal actions, innovation but also fiscal measures (see Annex 4).

The already existing international documents, such as the **Barcelona Convention and its Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)** provide a **very good starting point in all national and local decisions when it comes to physical planning and proposal of activities**. It provides the necessary understanding and rationale for the preservation of natural and landscape coastal values, so important for tourism and the free access to the sea. Many of the elements necessary for good ICZM application actually cross the national borders and ask for joint regional actions (see Annex 5). This is also closely connected to the EUSAIR TSG 3 Environmental Quality mono-pillar project idea the main focus of which is to promote a sustainable development of the AI region by implementing **ICZM and MSP integrated together as inclusive governance instruments, strengthening institutional capacities to works across borders and sectors to ensure human activities at sea take place in an efficient, safe and sustainable way - protecting environment and manage natural and cultural assets** (Annex 6).

Maritime tourism is a very important segment of the Adriatic and Ionian region as generator of employment and revenues and is expected to further grow. However, both cruising and boating tourism products also have direct and indirect negative impact on the environment and the infrastructure. With the trends of the increased size of cruise ships (mega ships) and the ease with which small and medium tour boats can access pristine areas, public authorities should establish appropriate limitations and buffer zones, implement speed restrictions, and ensure proper surveillance and control of environmental impacts, especially waste discharges. **A regional background study on both cruising and tour boats activities could help in synergistic activities due to the spill-over effects of this type of tourism activities** (see Annex 7).

In order to come to relevant policies, measuring sustainability of tourism is crucial. **CROSTO is the Croatian Sustainable Tourism Observatory** that is using 15 core indicators modelled on ETIS with the aim of having an organized data system for measuring sustainability of tourism that would eventually enable better cooperation of stakeholders in destinations and a common and comparable methodology at national and international level. The main challenges are: availability of needed up-to-date information, dependence on availability of financial resources, lack of specific institutions in smaller destinations. (see Annex 8) To be able to compare data at a regional/international level, it is necessary to use a unified list of core indicators, but also it would be advisable to develop region-specific ones in order to enable benchmarking and recognition of good examples and practices across the region.

Being aware that the Adriatic and Ionian macro-region is a part of the broader Mediterranean region, it was only natural to become associated partner with **PANORAMED**, encompassing strategic projects within the INTERREG MED. **One of the themes, “Coastal and Maritime Tourism” aims at making the Mediterranean, and hence the Adriatic and Ionian region as its integral part, a globally attractive, smart, sustainable and inclusive tourist region** (see Annex 9). Two specific objectives, improvement of sustainability and empowerment of actors in the value chain, are in line with the recognized needs and priorities of Sustainable Tourism Pillar, especially with the expected result of integrated multilevel planning for sustainable tourism and capacity building of tourism actors. Reducing pressure on territories with mass tourism through temporal and geographic redistribution of tourists, are imperatives of both TSG 4 and TSG 3. Involving local stakeholders (TSG 4, Topic 1-Diversified tourism offer) as well as the horizontal priority of innovation (IT) - are mutually recognized needs. This makes our cooperation with PANORAMED not just complementary but imperative.

Cooperation with other Pillars of EUSAIR was also demonstrated through development of a cross-pillar project (Pillar 4 and Pillar 2-energy) aimed at enhancing the use of the environmental energy technologies in the buildings of architectural and high cultural interest. (see Annex 11)

Further case studies presented national, local and protected areas activities all aiming at raising awareness of clean environment, necessity of education, including young population who can further on act as ambassadors of sustainable tourism in their communities. The experience of local projects

often shows that without legal mechanisms, it is difficult to ensure implementation of the assigned activities, even more so after the completion of the project-which raises the question of the very sustainability of the project. In smaller destinations, the work itself and especially its continuation often depends on idealistic and dedicated individuals. Additional problems are under-capacity of employees in institutions that are supposed to carry on such work. In protected areas, the problems often arise with the actual boundaries of such areas since neither nature nor human activities begin or stop at them. Co-management approach is one of the solutions but it is very often difficult to deal with cumulative impacts (coming also from the area bordering the protected areas) and conflict of interests within and outside the protected areas. It is of utmost importance to involve the local community and stakeholders, explain the impacts of all activities and propose those that would contribute to the area and strengthen the local community. (see Annex 12)

Sometimes regional/local authorities understand that concrete actions will be a step forward in understanding what both authorities, citizens and tourist should do. The intention to develop all-year-round quality tourism, especially in less developed areas while preserving natural and cultural resources, can be achieved through a systematically planned series of activities. The eco experience is not only for tourists, it is interesting and important for the local community. The case of Istria, the region that developed 12 categories with 50 must-comply criteria for the eco accommodation (Eco Domus certificate), comprising elements of water and energy saving, use of eco-certified products (cleaning, washing, food, materials), is a clear proof of it. Their activities go further in connecting all sorts of sustainable offer in their network (hard copy and on-line brochure) comprising eco producers and events, eco beaches and museums, e-charging stations, list of protected areas and eco-friendly activities. (see Annex 10) Workshops on how to approach the systematic orientation to eco-friendly destination, which benefit its community, could be organized.

CONCLUSION OF THE SECOND DAY, Friday, 27 September 2019, Izola

The second day began with the welcome of state secretary Eva Štravs Podlogar, Ministry of Economic Development and Technology and Paolo Trichilo, Ambassador of Italy to Slovenia. They all emphasized the importance of such events, as well the **need to actively participate in the sustainable development of tourism as one of the very promising industry, taking into account the conservation of environment without which tourism is not possible.** Both spheres are in tightly connected and need to be considered as equally important.

This is demonstrated through development of inter-pillar TSG 3/4 project Managing Tourism Flows in Protected Areas presented by TSG 4 coordinator Blanka Belošević. The general objectives of the project idea are to ensure a good environmental and ecological status of the protected areas, enhance the sustainable and responsible tourism capacities of the tourism actors across the macro-region (see Annex 14). As each country needs a strategy for development of tourism Katarina Ceglar, Tourism and Hospitality Chamber of Slovenia, presented Strategic Development Innovation Partnership for Sustainable Tourism (see Annex 15). **Main focus of the innovation partnership represents the reinforcement of relationships in the field of development and innovations;** research between participants in the field of tourist economy, state and other non-economic institutions, research and education activities and other professional and non-governmental organizations; the contribution to the sustainable development of Slovenia.

The **sustainable development is also a key theme at the Slovenian Tourist Board who has established the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism as a comprehensive tool for the development of sustainable tourism on destination and service provider level** (see Annex 16). This includes international standards ETIS and global GDS and a very good management of tourists flows, dealing with exceptional products, digitalisation and recognisability of different regions. Good management also needs an Assessment of carrying capacity and directing tourist flows: research and management approach (see Annex 17) presented by Ljubica Knežević Cvelbar, School of Economic and Business, University of Ljubljana, who stressed the importance of gathering data on tourism flows. Main advantage of such research is a novel approach of using publicly available tourist posts to identify tourism flows. The obtained data can help

develop a sustainable tourism model and offer as well help preserve the most sensible areas often under pressure of uncontrolled touristic flows.

An important aspect of tourism and environment is also **cultural heritage that is often left aside**. The importance of it was presented by the Institute for the Protection of Cultural heritage of Slovenia, by Tanja Hohneč (see Annex 18), who emphasized the importance of it in tourism as well its preservation and conservation from the environmental aspect. In Slovenia there are still a lot of not properly evaluated sites that need to be taken into account as a touristic offer.

How is it possible for tourism and environment to concretely connect was presented by Ariana B. Suhadolnik, general manager of Tourism Miren Kostanjevica, with a **good practice related to conservation of the environment and tourism**. Several projects were implemented with concrete actions e.g. events organized entirely without the use of plastic. All the visitors were encouraged to recycle their waste in the designated areas or project E-MOBILITY in which 5 municipalities and 5 mayors took over 5 electric cars for the duration of 5 years (see Annex 19).

Another good practice was presented by the **Interreg MED project INHERIT which aim is to valorise and conserve the Mediterranean coastal and maritime natural heritage by promoting sustainable tourism strategies**. JZP Izola as the project partner presented the aim of the project using a representative way to show the strategies of INHERIT project - the INHERIT approach. By introducing their small scale investment plan, with the dry wall stone technique, they will protect the natural heritage and at the same time allow safer and controlled touristic flow to the Isola's famous beach Bele Skale, that is a part of Landscape park Strunjan (see Annex 20). Tatjana Martinovič Vučetić, Ministry of Tourism, Croatia, that is also partner of the INHERIT project presented one of the first studies made in the projects that shows how the bottom-up strategy approach helps the sustainable touristic development of the remote islands of Mediterranean (see Annex 21).

For implementation of project is of high importance also to focus on transnational and interregional cooperation. Transnational programmes are focused on **developing common strategies and action plans of the area**, harmonized methodology and **management tools**, common structures and management systems, **pilot and test activities with a transnational goal**. **Danube, Alpine Space and Adriatic Ionian transnational programmes also correspond territorially to three macro-regional strategies – EUSALP, EUSAIR and EUSDR**.

One of the projects that shows such cooperation and is relevant to the conference topic is MERLIN CV, where the project objective is **to increase the tourism appeal and visibility of the cross-border region** through sustainable models that encourage the development of new innovative tourism products for the sustainable enhancement, innovative use and marketing of cultural heritage and the exceptional ecotypes of planned landscapes) with the use of green technologies. Presented by Irena Marš, TSG 4 member, Ministry of Culture, SI (see Annex 22).

Preservation of cultural heritage is an important aspect that is rising nowadays. One of the most used methods to do so is digitalisation of cultural heritage. The positive impacts of it were presented by Urška Starc-Peceny and Tomi Ilijaš, Arctur and tourism 4.0 initiative (see Annex 23). The quest of the Tourism 4.0 initiative is to unlock the innovation potential of advanced technologies, originating in Industry 4.0, to tackle the challenges of massive tourism all the way to the tourism in the protected areas and to boost positive tourism impacts. The model combines a study of carrying capacity methodology with technological component including data from different sources to provide recommendations for destinations that go well beyond the policies. The result of their activities help municipalities and cities understand their limits and strategically act to create destinations that people want to visit and live in.

Nevertheless, all different spheres (cultural, natural, digitalisation, technology, etc.) must be taken into account when talking about tourism and environment. **For cultural heritage is important to preserve and protect also natural assessments like sensitive marine areas. One of such area is Miramare marine protected area**, which was presented by Carlo Franzosini, WWF Miramare Marine Protected Area (see Annex 24). Because of its sensitive ecosystem, such areas need special treatments and a very good management of touristic activities to decrease possible human pressure. It is very important to raise awareness on how to behave in MPA. Also is important to implement a good monitoring system:

chemical, physical and biological.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- It is mainly people who are causing the problems so it is up people to find out smart solutions to overcome them. Most of the problems are actually very similar or the same in the region so it would only be prudent try to find the solutions that could work in our destinations. Holding joint conference proved to be a good step in that direction.
 - Cooperation in developing studies and common guidelines for crucial problems of regional tourism, such as boating, cruising, water and waste management etc. might be a way forward in dealing with common problems.
 - Workshops that would allow exchanges of good practices on specific, commonly agreed themes can help in establishing better regional cooperation and improve sustainable management of tourism in destinations across the macro-region
 - IT shouldn't be a tool to create virtual traveling but should support processes on finding solution to tourism challenges of travel.
 - A way of how the local communities can be involved in tourism should be identified.
 - An important question that needs to be addressed is how to identify or develop a monitoring system to make synergies among different ministers and countries.
 - Storytelling as important tool to interpret a story in a different way for tourist and locals
 - We need to be aware of transport emissions caused by tourists – individual transportation is producing high emissions, the range and number of travellers are increasing and is needed to share the responsibility and how to deal with this in terms of conservation of good environmental status
 - How to regulate the use of energy, e.g. hotel mini bars use a lot of energy, awareness is important but not enough, since tourism is growing, pressure is growing, steps need to be faster and bolder. Also how can we impact on human behaviours.
- We should travel more responsible and sustainable.

- 1) Tourism is growing pressure and impact to environment and quality of live on local level.
- 2) To enhance our responsibility all stakeholders in tourism should find and demonstrated/enhance partnership and responsibility to enhance quality of environment and life with planning and management of touristic flows and other infrastructures.
- 3) Go into concrete projects for finding solutions under challenges of first and second point.