



Union for the Mediterranean

Topic B: The Mediterranean as a key feature for sustainable development through tourism; discussing on an alternative portfolio of financial activities and urban regeneration for the countries of the region.

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Background to Mediterranean Tourism

The Mediterranean touristic industry is currently one of the most powerful on the planet with more than 232 million individuals engaged in international tourism in the area every year. As Farsari and Prastacos observe “in this area, tourism is considered a very significant economic activity contributing foreign exchange and leading to further economic gains. As a result, mass tourism, which brings in immediate economic gains, at the expense of long-term viability in many occasions, has flourished and often has been extensively promoted by the national authorities” (Farsari and Prastacos, 2001, p.105). According to Tresseras “the Mediterranean is a destination that is growing in popularity and according to predictions, an increase of between 440 and 665 million tourists is expected by 2025. At present, three quarters of Mediterranean tourism is concentrated in four EU member countries: France, Spain, Italy and Greece. With the accession of Slovenia, Malta and Cyprus, the EU will be even further strengthened in this respect. The rest of the Mediterranean region also has a great dependency on tourism as an economic activity and strategy of development, especially Egypt and Tunisia” (Tresseras, 2003, p.1). Spain, France and Italy remain however by far the strongest tourist attractions, a study conducted

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in 2003 showing that they obtained 33.6 billion dollars, 32.3 billion dollars and 26.9 billion dollars respectively from international tourist activities. The Southern Mediterranean rim is also progressing at a rapid rate. By 2009 Turkey exceeded 14 billion dollars in income and Egypt and Lebanon approached 10 billion (Lanquar, 2011, p.5).

From the perspective of tourist arrivals, the past years have been marked by a gradual increase in Mediterranean tourism but at the same time a gradual (albeit incremental) reduction in the percentage difference between the North Mediterranean Rim¹ and the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Rim², from a difference of 29.20% of the world share of tourism in the North Rim to 5.56% in the Southern and Eastern Rim in 2000 which compressed through a monotonically decreasing function to a difference between 22.41% in the North Rim to 9.53% in the Southern and Eastern Rim (Lanquar, 2011, p.1).³

Germany and the United Kingdom are among the most important countries which provide international tourists for the Mediterranean region, also followed by Switzerland, France, Sweden or Italy. Borelli and Brogna show that in 1995 almost half of all German tourists (32 million out of 73 million) headed for the Mediterranean as their holiday destination and in relative percentages even more UK tourists (11 million out of 19 million) followed Mediterranean destinations (Borelli and Brogna, 2000, p.3).

Although the Mediterranean tourist industry is the cumulatively the strongest in the world it still suffers from various threats. Instability generated by terrorist incidents and threats, both of a religious and regionally separatist type represents one of the main problems for the industry. This is particularly accentuated in the former Yugoslavia countries which have access to the Mediterranean. According to Tresseras tourist activities in "Eastern Slovenia, Baranja and Srjem and the zones which formed part of the Srpska Republic of Krajina are not recommended due to the risk of mines which have not yet been deactivated" (Tresseras, 2003, p.2), in Israel due to the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflictual situation, in Turkey due to PKK activities and more recently in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Algeria and others due to the highly unstable political climate. Among other threats are those mentioned by Lanquar for the Southern Rim but which are applicable to a majority of states such as climate change, the economic and financial crisis, government budget cuts in tourism education, training and marketing and in some countries a generalized hostile attitude towards strangers due to a potential "clash of civilization" (Lanquar, 2011, pp.16-29).

Benefits obtained from tourism in the Mediterranean

¹ Composed of Andorra, Cyprus, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Monaco, Portugal and Slovenia.

² Composed of Albania, Algeria, Bosnia, Croatia, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Kosovo (UN SC/RES/1244), Lebanon, Libya, former Yugoslavic Republic of Macedonia, Morocco, Mauritania, Montenegro, Palestinian Authority, Serbia, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey.

³ According to the various scenarios advanced by Lanquar (2010, pp. 16-29) the Southern Rim is on the path to accumulate even more of the percentage by 2030.

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According to UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization) the Mediterranean region holds the *world's leading tourism destination position*. Although the vast influx of tourists waves in the region, tourism is distributed unequally among the Mediterranean states.

Tourism is a huge profit-generating industry for each country, and especially when it comes for the countries of the Mediterranean region. Moving further, tourism has both positive and negative impacts on host countries, but in this part we will elaborate on the positive ones.

Expansion of market labor and economic growth

To begin with, tourism provides direct employment to the people being occupied in tourist infrastructures such as hotels, restaurants etc, while at the same time creates many new employment opportunities and new tourism enterprises in local market. As a result, both the unemployment rate decreased even temporarily and an increasing in the economic levels is noted, two important factors for the elimination of poverty. Furthermore, tourism consist a source of taxation and incomes for the enterprises that dealing with tourism industry, which in turn leads to state's economic growth.

Impact of tourism on local community and host country

An important positive aspect of tourism on the host country is the infrastructure development, as many large scale constructions such as roads, bridges and public transportation are taking place in order to deal with the influx of the tourist. These infrastructures play an important role in state's development and improvement of the locals' social level.

Apart from country's economic growth which derives from tourism industry, tourism can contribute to the empowerment and the evolution of the education level of the host regions. That can be achieved by investing this foreign income at national and local level in better education, modernization and conservation of infrastructure and promotion more responsible tourism. At the same time, public and health care services are developed for the outbound visitors but also for the local people that maybe weren't available before.

Based on the previous details, it is possible to reach the conclusion that tourism can deter local people from migrate as it can improves their economic and socio-cultural level.

Tourism as a mean of promotion

In the frameworks of tourism, commercialization of local products and promotion of local customs and traditions, contribute to cultural preservation and promotion of country's civilization. Another important fact connected with tourism is the expansion of the commerce of exporting goods and services, mainly from touristic regions.

Last but not least, states make any possible effort to preserve nature, wildlife and urban cleanliness, in order to attract outbound people. Thus the protection of the environment consist a high priority for both local population and tourists.

The negative consequences of tourism in the Mediterranean

Although tourism is a significant source of benefits for the Mediterranean region, especially from an economic standpoint, it is also a source of several negative externalities. Borelli and Brogna (2000) divide these externalities into three categories:

- **Physical impacts of tourism:** *erodes natural spaces through new constructions, overdevelopment puts pressure on fragile natural elements, disturbs wildlife habitats and ecosystems, generates litter and pollution, diverts local resources (e.g. water and land) for tourism development, disadvantaging residents;*
- **Socio-economic impacts of tourism:** *utilizes the environment for profits that are directed out of the country, disrupts traditional employment patterns and the local socio-cultural framework, utilizes economic benefits to import materials, food and beverages typical of western society, but alien to many developing communities, provides a market for prostitution, drugs and crime, introduces moral standards typical of developed countries into local communities, generates tension between visitors and residents;*
- **Cultural/educational impacts of tourism:** *trivializes the local arts and cultural traditions of residents by turning them into artificial events, undermines original local identities and traditions;* (Borelli and Brogna, 2000, p.6)

In particular, issues associated with the environment are of a paramount importance in the Mediterranean basin. A 2001 WWF Mediterranean Program Report identifies four main challenges which tourism in the Mediterranean poses to the environment: 1. **lands and landscape**, as “intensive tourism development on coastal fringes has already caused major damage to coastal ecosystems. For example, three-quarters of the sand dunes on the Mediterranean coastline from Spain to Sicily have disappeared mainly as a result of urbanization linked to tourism development. In Italy over 43% of the coastline is completely urbanized mainly linked to tourism development, 28% is partially urbanized and less than 29% is still free of construction. In addition, there are only 6 stretches of coast over 20 km that have no construction and only 33 stretches between 10 and 20 km without construction”⁴; 2. **species**, “as a major cause of the loss of natural habitat, tourism has a very direct negative impact on biodiversity, directly affecting

⁴ <http://www.monachus-guardian.org/library/wwftou01.pdf>, p.2.

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rare and endangered species. Over 500 plant species in the Mediterranean are threatened with extinction and are under intense pressure from tourism development in some overbuilt destinations. In Zakynthos (Greece), sea turtles have had their coastal nesting grounds disturbed and destroyed by tourism development and tourist behavior”⁵; 3. **freshwater**, as “during the summer months water supplies are exacerbated by tourist flows for use in hotels, swimming pools and golf courses. For example, an average Spanish city dweller uses approximately 250 litres of water per day, while the average tourist uses 440 litres. This number increases to 880 litres if the tourist uses accommodations with swimming pools and golf courses.”⁶ and 4. **pollution and wastes**, as “the Mediterranean Sea receives 10 billion tonnes of industrial and urban waste per year with little or no purification. The production of wastewater and solid waste in tourist areas often exceeds the carrying capacity of local infrastructures due the high seasonal demand. Pollution also negatively affects water quality in beach areas and drinking water supplies. The human health implications can be severe. The cause and effect for tourism is also great, as tourism contributes to all forms of pollution (water, waste and atmosphere) and is adversely affected by the impact of pollution on the natural resources they rely upon.”⁷

Improvement of the tourist sector in the Mediterranean

Solutions for expanding tourism in the Mediterranean region

Tourism in the Mediterranean region is seeking ways to be expanded further in light of recent political developments, economic uncertainty and the ongoing challenge of climate change.

It is, in all events, necessary the creation of projects to cope with the logistics and the needs derived by large numbers of tourists, especially on the more accessible and emblematic spaces of the Mediterranean coastline and hinterland. Thus, states in the region should boost their cooperation by coordinated efforts in the field of access, travel facilitation, accommodation etc.

At individual level each country needs more active tourism marketing and unique marketing strategies to increase its external tourism rate, in order to keep up with growing lifestyle travel and competitive tourism industry among the nations.

At the same time, national governments in the Mediterranean need to develop their own

⁵ <http://www.monachus-guardian.org/library/wwftou01.pdf>, p.2.

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Sustainable Tourism Policies and framework of tourist planning such as to define limits to tourism growth. For all these to be effective, the existence of a legal framework in tourist operations is more than necessary. Besides, law and order, political stability, safety and no racial and religious discrimination are basic conditions for tourism industry.

It is crucial for the attraction of new tourist but also for the maintenance of the existing ones, the state to improve its public facilities, so as to deal with the influx of tourists, but also to improve the quality of life for residents who will be able to use the tourist services (restaurants, local transport, sports recreation facilities) Preserve the existing attractions of the country nicely. Add new attractions.

Another key element for the expansion of tourism is modernization. Companies, professionals and mediating organizations should be able to deal with new technologies in the field of tourist marketing, by keep their skill levels high and permanently updated.

That requires also well-based training from the highest to the lowest employee, so as to hold high positions within the tourism industry and to provide superior service to the guests. They should be well prepared and experienced with their communication skills and their attitude in order to facilitate tourists, and taste their appreciation. After all, it's the people who make a place memorable. Treatment of outbound people in the best way is quiet challenging and important as they consist a source of word of mouth publicity and maybe an opportunity for future business too.

Another way for a country to promote itself and attract more tourists is the creation of tour packages that will combine both quality and lower prices. These packages can be advertized through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, radio, TV and holiday magazines. Special attention should be given to the internet publicity as foreign visitors rely on the online media extensively. Each country should have a well constructed official website with updated content and online booking facilities.

National governments should not underestimate or neglect the internal tourism. Internal tourism can and should be promoted within states borders, by promote local destinations at competitive prices and creation of affordable package tours.

Finally, education is an important element in the expansion of tourism. A bright example is the Mediterranean Universities Union (UNIMED), a network of 83 universities from 21 different countries in the Euro-Mediterranean basin, which contribute to the process of integration between the two Mediterranean shores, through scientific and educational cooperation in the region. UNIMED is active in different fields and among others tourism.

Solutions for diminishing tourist-related threats

The first course of action in minimizing the negative externalities of tourism in the Mediterranean, in particular environmental ones, is the development of a sustainable approach to tourism. Farsari and Prastacos (2001) propose 10 principles for such a

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development, consolidating each of them with measurable indicators to in order to monitor the progress achieved. The principles are: 1. Using resources sustainably, 2. Reducing over-consumption and waste, 3. Maintaining diversity, 4. Integrating tourism into planning, 5. Supporting local economies, 6. Involving local communities, 7. Consulting stakeholders and the public, 8. Training staff, 9. Marketing tourism responsibly and 10. Undertaking research (Farsari and Prastacos, 2001, pp.7-8).

In a somewhat more extensive undertaking, Borelli et al (2000) propose a “code of conduct” which specifically targets all the relevant actors involved in tourist activities, i.e. the tourists themselves, the industry (tour-operators, hotel staff, airlines) and local authorities. In addition the authors also propose 10 principles for a sustainable tourism, which are similar but not identical to the ones proposed by Farsari and Prastacos. These are: 1. Support integration between tourism development and environmental conservation, 2. Support the conservation of biodiversity, 3. Use natural resources in a sustainable way, 4. Minimize consumption, waste and pollution, 5. Consider local cultures and attitudes, 6. Respect historic sites, 7. Provide benefits to local communities, 8. Educate and train staff to support sustainable tourism, 9. Ensure that tourism is educational and 10. Comply with regulations (Borelli et al, 2000, p.3-5). Borelli et al (2000) develop their analysis further and propose concrete principles for each of the three categories of actors mentioned above (e.g. choose a reputable tour operator involved in environmental protection with trained, professional staff for tourists) and even very specific measures for all the categories (e.g. use organic products in flight meals for airplane operators, reduce traffic load revising motorized circulation system as establishing one way street for local authorities as well as many others).

Programs' APPENDIX

The concept of sustainable development and sustainable tourism are taken seriously in Europe, and there are a number of important agencies with whom the European Travel Commission maintains close contact., such as:

1. Destinet,
2. ECOTRANS,
3. ECO-TIP,
4. Oceans Blue Foundation,
5. International Ecotourism Society,
6. European Soft-Mobility Network (NETS),
7. Tourism Concern, ECoNETT,
8. UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme),
9. International Ecotourism Club Global Nature Fund (GNF) etc.

Below you can find some of the programmes that are been conducted by now and are related to tourism within Europe and Mediterranean region.

MAREMED

The Mediterranean Program "Maremed: aims in improving the coordination of regional maritime policies between the levels of National, European and Mediterranean Governance. In order to establish a comprehensive policy, the basic priorities need to be observed and receive simultaneous management.

The project aims at those elements of maritime policy that have an inherent transnational dimension.

Fourteen regional partners and the CPMR will carry out an overview of the policies implemented and their governance, from which they will identify pilot coastal zones for transnational management and shared operational tools to aid in decision-making.

Total budget: € 1,982,000.00.

MODELAND

The program aims through transnational cooperation to promote awareness of the population and Local Authorities in the Mediterranean on the importance of landscape in

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rural areas as a key element for development purposes and as a sign of their identity.

Total budget: € 1,781,430.00

OSAIS

The OSAIS program was created out of the need for a new approach to address and study the issue of state aid in terms of financial support to small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The overall aim is to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of regional / local development policies in the areas of the program's partners in the sectors of economic modernization and increased competitiveness of the SMEs, by assisting the exchange, distribution of good practices and knowledge for financial assistance to SMEs by the State.

Total budget: € 1,996,175.00

ENSPIRE EU

The Program ENSPIRE EU was created out of the need to attract young entrepreneurs, while focusing on building and developing a European business culture and promoting entrepreneurial inspiration.

The general objective is improving the efficiency of provincial development policies aimed at encouraging an entrepreneurial culture in a way that will contribute to economic modernization and increased competitiveness in Europe.

Total budget: € 1,951,463. 00

HELLAND

The program aims to promote and enhance the socio-economic performance of areas with special emphasis on strengthening the protection of tourism and cultural heritage and landscapes of the Mediterranean basin. Specifically the program promotes the development and dissemination of advanced systems for integrated management, exploitation and dissemination of cultural heritage and landscape.

Total budget: € 1.934.000, 00

PERIURBAN PARKS

The PERIURBAN PARKS program is a regional initiative that aims to strengthen

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cooperation, which uses inter-regional exchange of experience on improving policies regarding the management of natural surroundings. The PERIURBAN PARKS program specifically focuses on policy and management of solutions to reduce pressures on biodiversity. The creation and management of natural parks in suburban areas has a positive impact on the environment and halting biodiversity loss. These initiatives focus in line with the European environmental policy and restoration of sites.

Total budget: €2,288,528.00

INNOFUN

This is a project which aims to reduce the gap between research and the market. Observing that the gap is quite big in Europe compared to America, the project aims to produce new tools and practices to help increase the support to researchers and companies to be able to present their innovative ideas in public and private institutions for funding.

More specifically, the problems identified are:

- Lack of communication between research, market and society.
- Obsolete and non efficient selection procedures for funding.
- Incorrect selection criteria for public funding

The InnoFun Project will move towards solving the above problems with the cooperation of several countries (partners), the exchange of best practices among themselves and implementing various tools such as "Digital Storytelling" (using a computer for the narration of a story or idea).

Total budget: €2.031.121,68

GRISI PLUS

GRISI PLUS aims to improve the efficiency and to enrich economic development policies in rural areas by increasing the use of geographic information and geomatic tools, in order to provide decision supporting tools for public key stakeholders and policy makers. To achieve this goal the partners will share their experiences, will identify and transfer good practices in two fields relating to common issues for the revitalization of rural areas:

- Develop the attractiveness of rural areas in order to attract new residents. The latter will promote Telework (work at distance), thanks to the new ICT.

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- Promotion of local tangible and intangible products, thanks to the use of geomatic tools and Geographic Information Systems.

Total budget: € 1.629.572,00

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