

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AS A PILLAR OF THE EU DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY.

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ABSTRACT: This article looks at EU policies in the framework of the promotion of sustainable tourism through the management of natural and cultural heritage. Protecting European traditions and values means ensuring their passing on to future generations so that they can also benefit from them. Ensuring the sustainability of tourism and its constituents is provided for in the framework of the EU policies and sustainable development goals of the United Nations.

The enormous economic benefits generated by the tourism industry and its positive contribution to the creation of employment in several related sectors make for the protection and the promotion of touristic sites to be on the European and International agenda in the era of massive and profitable tourism. The role that UNESCO must play in this context is preponderant insofar as the heritage and traditions of values must not belong to a single generation, nation or Union but to mankind as a whole. This article not only retraces the known economic advantages of the tourism sector but also raises awareness of the sustainable and ecological aspect to be absolutely respected in order to guarantee the conservation of natural and cultural heritage. The article mentions the international and European regulations which aim to strengthen and promote tolerance and dialogue between people and nations through tourism and European values.

KEYWORDS: sustainable tourism, management of the natural and cultural values, UNESCO, travel & tourism economic impact, European Year of Cultural Heritage, European Heritage Strategy for the 21st century, the Danube region.

I. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt about the positive role played by tourism in the European economy and the millions of jobs it creates yearly. Apart from stimulating intercultural exchanges, tourism accounted for around 782 billion euros in EU GDP in 2018 and generated 14.4 million jobs, thanks to direct employment in the sector. Globally, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the industry, in 2018, represented 10.4% of global GDP and 319 million jobs or 10% of total employment. Tourism worldwide directly contributed about 2.9 trillion US dollars of GDP in 2019, if we take into account the different industries that make up the tourism sector, that is to say, the hotel industry, transport, entertainment, travel agencies, etc. From 2009 to 2019, revenues of the sector increased. In 2009, tourism contributed USD1,794.88 trillion to global GDP. In 2019, it was \$2,892.94 trillion, and the numbers have not decreased since 2019. Undoubtedly, these are good deals for several sectors of activity, namely business, leisure, and health. Airlines have also carved out a good deal of profit, between 2009 and 2017, the global aeronautical industry experienced annual growth of around 5.9%, reaching the staggering amount of USD 754 billion in 2017. The EU member states also derive a considerable profit as European airports and companies are well ranked among the most important markets for air transport. Adequate infrastructure, museums, and other UNESCO heritage allow European countries to benefit from the tourist expansion as national, and well-targeted European strategies on tourism begin to bear fruit.

The EU regional development strategies empower zones like the Iron Gates region to foster sustainable tourism and profit of it. It is undeniable that the European Union is among the regions which benefit the most from travel and tourism alongside North America and North-East Asia. Indeed, Europe remains the most visited region, hosting half of the international tourist arrivals. It should be highlighted that the wave of foreign visitors is not about to stop. In 2016, international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) reached 1,239 million worldwide, generating 1,107 billion euros in destination revenue. To achieve this status and be the most visited region in the world, requires targeted policies and strategies across Europe to impact people's life positively. One of these policies is the "European Union Strategy for the Danube Region", which has been very beneficial. The example of the Danube region as a strategic EU investment for the promotion of sustainable development is a smart idea

because the Danube Region is impressive because of its beauty, which makes it a unique and attractive place for visitors. EU plans for the region do not only encompass exclusively member states but are effective for accession countries of the Balkans, which are part of the Danube area. The implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube region starts from the Black Forest (Germany) to the Black Sea, (Romania-Ukraine-Moldova) a regional territory of 115 million inhabitants.

The EU strategy for the Danube region has beneficial effects for the Balkan countries. The 4 pillars strategy divided into 12 priorities, address questions related to sustainable development. Among the range of priorities, tourism and culture find themselves in a place of honour, being categorised PA 3 (Priority Area 3) over 12 priority sectors. For the Balkan countries, for example, the tourism potential is enormous. The New European regulations and national strategies can only positively impact the region's "dissonant heritage". The development of specific infrastructures, the promotion of traditions and enhancement of the natural, cultural and historical heritage as part of the tourism and culture strategy in the Balkans and the Danube region will surely enable harmonious development and reduce unemployment. The Danube region offers different tourism possibilities, ranging from Spa, medical tourism, Scientific tourism, Agrotourism, Cultural tourism, Educational tourism, Sports tourism and innovative wine tourism, for the wine-growing countries. However, there is much to do to achieve excellence.

By way of comparison, it can already be deduced that without a targeted and sustainable regional policy, the economic effects of tourism are not visible. The lack of awareness, poor management of heritage, inadequate infrastructure, lack of training for tourism professionals, digital monitoring of tourism needs, green transport for tourists, can cause a decrease in tourism revenues, States could benefit from.

This article will review the various initiatives and strategies the European Union has used to boost sustainable tourism in its member States. The gaps linked to regulations, the causes of the shortfall in the sector will be pointed out, and innovative ideas that can invigorate the industry will be proposed.

II. THE SOCIAL COMPONENT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Since the 90s, many authors and agencies highlight the economic importance of promoting local values and ensuring sustainability through the management of natural and cultural heritage. (Khan, Seng, Cheong,1990; Drost,1996;) Data on the direct, indirect and induced effects of tourism spending on production, income, employment and import leakage have been the subject of research for decades to understand the importance of tourism. (Stynes,1997) Conscious of this past research and witness to the exponential development of tourism in the 21st century, the European Union Commission has carried out concrete actions, in collaboration with key partners. On June 30th 2010, the European Commission published a document titled "Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe", which identifies four priority areas for development. One of these is "Promoting the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism" (European Commission, 2010). In 2018, by proposing 10 European initiatives corresponding to 4 principles which are: commitment, sustainability, protection and innovation. The European Commission initiated within the framework of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018. This brilliant idea aims to not only bring to light the concepts of enhancement, management and protection of cultural heritage but also to use it to unite different European regions and populations who share these traditions and cultures. Behind the idea of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, there is firstly the desire to celebrate the European regional dimension of these heritages and secondly, the desire to enhance tourism through culture, education, rural agriculture development, local development, social cohesion, environment, research and innovation, amongst other reasons.

The initiatives and other policies in favour of tourism have borne fruit according to the UNWTO Tourism Highlights, 2018 edition. European countries were visited by 672 million tourists, which brought them a total income of \$ 519 billion. Furthermore, the World Travel and Tourism Council, in its annual TRAVEL & TOURISM ECONOMIC IMPACT 2017 report, declared that "in 2016, Travel & Tourism directly supported 108,741,000 jobs (3.6% of total employment) in the world. The number even increased in 2017 as expected and is expected to continue to increase at 2.2% per year to reach 138,086,000 jobs (4.0% of total employment)

Considering the convincing results and desirous of improving the results while ensuring the sustainability of tourism, the countries of the Danube Region and the States Parties to the European Cultural Convention met to adopt the Namur Declaration in April 2015, to promote a shared and unifying approach towards the management of cultural heritage.

Their Declaration takes into account the major challenges of tourism. It recognises the dangers that could undermine the sector in the near future and develop strategies and recommendations as a solution. Among the main points of the document, it should be not firstly, awareness of the influence and dangers of climate change, demographic changes, migration, political, economic, financial and social crises on society and our heritage;

secondly, the Declaration promotes the role of cultural heritage, considers it a key element of European identity and recalls the general public interest of transmission to generations in order to contribute to the attractiveness, development, solidarity and unity of Europe.

The Declaration elaborates the European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st century: "Strategy 21". The objective of "strategy 21" corresponds to other European policy which targets tourism for the various economic regions of Europe, including the Danube region and redefines the place and role of cultural heritage in Europe. Improving the environment and the quality of life of European citizens through good governance and participation in the identification and management of heritage is a winning bet which, in its full cultural aspects, will allow the creation of jobs in several areas namely transport, education, hotels, services and others. The implementation of such policies will boost, for decades to come, the gains received from touristic activities.

III. TERRITORIAL AND ECONOMIC COMPONENT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

According to the European Heritage Strategy for the 21st century, the "territorial and economic development" component must take into account the correlation between the promotion and conservation of cultural heritage and the local and regional economy (governance) while respecting the principles of sustainable development. It is, therefore, through this component that emphasis must be placed and the promotion of heritage recognised as such, by those in the recognition phase. Later on, in this same section, we will return to this subject, but first of all, it seems appropriate to analyse the correlation between the existence and maintenance of natural and cultural heritage and the growth of tourist receipts.

Numerous studies have shown the positive relationship between natural and cultural heritage and the growth of tourist visits. Moreover, the World Bank's Carbon Finance Unit (CFU) has confirmed that the tourism industry is relatively environmentally friendly compared to other polluting sectors.

The European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, has been very successful as it reinforced the sense of belonging to a common European space and encouraged youth to discover European values, heritage, touristic attractions and at the same time, invite to sustainability. 6.2 million people took part in more than 11,700 events organised across 37 countries. Such an initiative must not stop and has to be continued through thematic projects, aiming at longer-terms to talk about sustainability and conservation of sites for the next generations. In order to secure stable revenues for its GDP, promote European cohesion, the feeling of belonging to the EU and share its values, sustainability must play a major role. As Europe is the most visited region in the world, it is crucial to take measures so that the tourist mass does not become an ecological burden. 35% of global tourism spending in the world is generated by the EU; half of the outgoing global tourism is generated by Europe, and residents of the European Union have made 1.2 billion trips. These facts show how relevant promoting sustainable tourism is for the EU because inter-European tourism and sustainability can be as much profit to the Union as other sectors of activity.

Supporting sustainable tourism is no longer a luxury but a necessity. Given the global revenues provided by this sector, it would be mind-boggling not to develop it. Therefore, initiatives and strategies of the European Union in the promotion of sustainable tourism for social cohesion, the discovery of European values and promoting inter-European mobility are essential.

In 2018, the year in which European tourism was promoted as never before, through initiatives such as 2018-European Year of Cultural Heritage or the implementation of the European framework for action on cultural heritage, Spain received 82.8 million tourists, while France received 89.4 million foreign visitors, confirming its place as the world leader with an increase of 3% compared to 2017. The total figure for spending by foreign visitors soared by 5% compared to previous years, with revenue of 56.2 billion euros.

For other European nations, the importance of tourism is even vital. For example, 14.2% of Malta's GDP comes from tourism, 11% for Montenegro and 10.9% for Croatia. Even the most financially balanced nations invest heavily in cultural promotion and promote activities that stimulate the development of the sector. Besides, the historical influence of the states, the presence of natural and cultural heritage plays a vital role in attracting visitors. For example, the top five European countries for visitors are France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and Spain. The historical past, the traditions, the cuisines, the ancient as well as the modern infrastructures, and the constant desire for improvement, make these countries first-class destinations. Regarding the value of natural and cultural heritage, France has 37 sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Beaches, landscapes, gastronomy, art and culture encourage tourism. Therefore, promoting sustainable tourism in correlation with natural and cultural values in the EU is relevant and can stimulate the local, national, European and even global economy. To achieve such goals and purpose, it is important to:

1. Prioritise a holistic approach when dealing with tourism, as recommended in 2007 by the 'Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism'. It involves updating knowledge with the specialists of the sector,

awareness-raising activities and involving academic structures, business organisations and associations dealing with tourism and site protections.

2. Enhance environmental and social commitment plus the conservation of culture and tradition through hospitality. In the era of climate change, tourism which is a flourishing sector must be sustainable, to be profitable for all the generations. For that reason, touristic activities must be eco-friendly, promote the well-being of cities while preserving natural and cultural resources. The promotion, protection and strategic managements of sites on tentative lists or that have already been recognized as natural or cultural heritage are linked to the economic growth provided by tourism as noticed by Dr Sally Farid.

3. Foster digital tourism served with cutting edge technologies and improve user experiences, as noticed in the article "Presence and digital tourism"(David Benyon; Aaron Quigley and Brian O'Keefe; 2014) The digital era will favour touristic sustainability and broaden new horizons with virtual reality and augmented reality tools that can simulate museums, galleries, sites and touristic places. This will be an answer to mass tourism that can sometimes be a burden to cities and their infrastructures.

4. Encourage proper promotion of tourism, eco-friendly infrastructure, modern hotels, training of workers, and awareness-raising activities.

Another grey area for the development of tourism is the abandonment of heritage, sometimes stimulated by the empathy of local authorities. Certain cultural and natural monuments which could well be inscribed on the UNESCO heritage list are not, due to the lack of knowledge or laxity of the authorities in charge of promotion and development. Ignoring the market value of cultural heritage is equivalent to ignoring the billions of euros that countries like France, Spain or Italy collect each year thanks to their natural and cultural heritage. A strategy of sustainable development, promotion and conservation of culture in other European regions is feasible, especially from the perspective where European countries are very popular with visitors. The strong tourist potential of several European countries, especially the countries of Eastern Europe remains to be materialised, to achieve the extraordinary results of the leading tourist countries such as France, England, Italy or Spain.

Apart from its purely economic nature, tourism has also a federative aspect. Through the development of diverse cultural activities, the will of the European Union is also to unite its citizens under the banner of European culture and traditions. A collective identity that would strengthen the feeling of belonging to the Union, thus nourishing patriotism. Also, tourism represents a powerful cultural and diplomatic weapon. The millions of annual visitors to Europe (according to OMT Tourism Highlights, 2018 edition - 672 million tourists have visited European countries) participate directly and indirectly in the promotion of European know-how and living skills. They are therefore excellent ambassadors because by discovering Europe, they are introduced to European habits and traditions. They learn new things, European languages, share their knowledge with the host countries. Europe, on the other hand, benefits not only economically from this influx of tourist mass but diplomatically by touristically exporting its culinary, artisanal and technical know-how. All that we have just mentioned can only foster tolerance, dialogues and partnerships between nations. In this perspective, European cultural heritage sites belong not only to a country or a civilisation but to humanity as they represent places where people of different traditions, ethnicities, religions and backgrounds meet to discover and share values. There is no doubt that this favours the position of diplomatic leader of the European Union on the world geopolitical chessboard.

IV. AWARENESS-RAISING COMPONENT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: (CASE OF SLOVENIA)

In Slovenia, for example, European policies on sustainable tourism are reflected in the "Slovenska Strategija Pametne Specializacije S4", a national strategy aiming to boost the competitiveness of the economy by strengthening its capacity for innovation, diversification and growth. The development of sustainable tourism figures prominently among the axes aimed at achieving this economic prosperity.

To realise the goals, the S4 strategy will support the creation of sustainable tourism product that will position Slovenia in the category of green destinations. Accent is put on the development of integrated services a first-rate experience with the inclusion and taking into account of nature conservation and cultural assets. This objective will be achieved thanks to the systematic development of specialised, adapted and innovative tourist needs and wishes to improve products and services.

As key objectives, the strategy aims by 2023:

1. 15% increase in the added value of tourism.
2. Increase in capital inflows from travel exports by 4 to 6% per year.
3. 20% increase in the energy efficiency of tourist facilities.

With Ljubljana as the 2016 green capital of Europe and many other international awards received by Slovenian cities, the S4 strategy is on the right track to achieve its objectives of boosting the national economy through

tourism and other national assets. Indeed, Slovenia has a rich cultural and natural diversity to offer, which makes it a popular destination. Thus, it is essential to ensure the sustainability of natural and cultural resources, to improve the natural and real estate heritage, to improve degraded resources and to encourage the creation of innovative interpretations. It is obvious that the quality of culture affects the standard of living of the local population and the experience of visitors. Heritage management is therefore in the interest of the municipalities with the aim of promoting employment, which once again shows that through tourism, cultural heritage can contribute to the development of cities, regions and whole countries. The tourism boom of a country has a favourable impact on several aspects of development, namely the economic, social and environmental sector, and helps to strengthen patriotism.

Sustainable tourism has not always been a priority in Europe. In the Balkans, even if sustainable tourism rhymes with the objectives of sustainable development of the United Nations, there is still a lot to do to really benefit from the tourist assets available to the region. The implementation of European green strategies for the future development of tourism will, in the long term, allow exponential development in the Balkans and the Danube region.

However, to achieve this, it will be necessary to apply another European strategy, that of awareness-raising and sustainable management.

It is well-known that mass tourism does not have only positive aspects. On the contrary, the development of tourism in Europe must "enlighten mass tourism" to profit of its financial assets. Enlightened mass tourism creates employment, boosts the GDP but also has many challenges that can be dealt with through the formation of professionals, green infrastructure and strategic plans. A recent report on the integration of sustainability into the tourism policies of major European cities has revealed serious shortcomings and negative impacts for urban tourism. Poor working conditions in hotels or the poor use of natural resources are pointed out.

The report reveals that unfortunately, the lure of financial gain for tourism at the expense of sustainable development is the urban touristic policy. It is a fact that the most significant challenge of the touristic industry is its (in) compatibility with sustainable development. States must be careful not to "pervert sustainable tourism into sustaining tourism" without any real green objective. In the era of climate change and the Paris agreement 2015 on global warming, we cannot ignore the carbon prints of all those visitors coming from different part of the world to visit unique places, such as the UNESCO protected areas. Moreover, by taking pictures or using high-tech gadgets, tourists participate in the degradation of unique, irreplaceable treasures as world heritage sites are very fragile and could unfortunately not be visited on high frequency and so regularly. To ensure sustainability, it is important to "appeal to the sensibility of the tourists which should be able to consciously consider alternatives that they deem more environmentally friendly". For that reason, authorities and decision-makers try to combine the economic bonus of tourism with the imperial of protecting nature and the touristic sites. In this perspective, a Code of Ethics for Tourism has been created, and it highlights in its Article 4, the disposition to be taken to encourage sustainable tourism and enable future generations to enjoy as well the world heritage. Unfortunately, history is full of facts showing the fragility of the World Heritage and some are even lost forever due to conflicts, negligence or lack of funding. «Culture is increasingly an important element of the tourism product, which also creates distinctiveness in a crowded global marketplace.» The destruction of unique masterpieces due to negligence would be damageable to our economy and growth. The protection of sites and the civic education of tourists is thus mandatory because the objectives of sustainable development oblige us to transmit in good condition all the resources we have benefited from.

The challenge is serious and should take into account not only the sensitisation of tourists, but also the formation of the tourism professionals who also need to be trained. It is a challenge to be taken up by the authorities, and it is precisely for this reason that Ministries of Culture appoint national coordinators or persons responsible for national monitoring and heritage management. In Slovenia, for example, to carry out this task, a cultural heritage strategy 2018-2026 was adopted by the Directorate of Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Culture. It is a 29-page strategic document which highlights the main priorities and actions to be taken to promote and develop the natural and cultural heritage of the Republic of Slovenia. Like all legal documents, the text defines the cultural heritage, its importance and its links with human rights. Additionally, the paper stresses the importance of UNESCO as an international organisation regulating the protection of cultural heritage and other relevant agencies. The right to a healthy environment and the enjoyment of cultural property find their place in this text. The text draws attention to the need to preserve and promote cultural heritage. The importance of public participation is noticed as well as the financial benefit and the tourist flow that natural and cultural heritage cause.

Many legal principles are evoked in the text, one of which is the consideration of the heritage conservation as the foundation of national identity, as well as the general goals of contributing to a more integrated society through the promotion of national cultural heritage. Finally, the strategies mention the importance of naturally

sacred cities, which are primarily not yet evaluated and consequently not protected. The principles of transparency and public involvement are mentioned, as well.

Education has always played an essential role in awareness-raising activities. More youngsters and the general public are taught how to protect cultural heritage and its importance for humanity, in order to prevent shameful acts of vandalism or uncivil behaviour. As awareness and education are not possible without schools, institutions and teachers, it is therefore essential that all social strata act in synchronisation and feel concerned to the sustainable use of heritage.

Apart from education, the question of management of immovable cultural heritage sometimes suffers from a budgetary limit. The lack of financial means for the restoration of heritage threatens their future. This is the case in many countries of the world. A public-private partnership would make it possible to exploit at the same time the economic aspect of the heritage but also to ensure their safeguarding for future generations. The EU funding for the management of immovable cultural heritage through various cultural initiatives has a positive objective: that of benefiting from the tourist flow and giving a common identity to its citizens.

V. CONCLUSION

In 1980, the first point of the Manila Declaration on tourism already emphasised not only the unifying role of tourism but also recalled its capital contribution to the world economy due to its direct effects on the social, cultural, educational and economic sectors, national societies and their international relationships.

This Declaration, although not legally binding like all the UN declarations, is nevertheless the cornerstone for international cooperation in tourist matters where states are obliged by soft law to ensure freedom of travel as part of free time and leisure activities, security and lasting peace necessary for the development of the touristic sector.

The current COVID-19 pandemic will inevitably have a negative economic effect on tourism statistics for the year 2020 and may perhaps influence the way in which we see rest and leisure activities today. Ensuring health and promoting the well-being of tourism stakeholders, tourists and local populations is also part of the prerogatives of the States. For this reason, any pandemic or unstable situation negatively influences tourism. The economic effects are automatically visible since tourism brings together several industries which contribute to the GDP of national, regional and international economies.

Based on these aspects, promoting tourism, innovating practices and ensuring the development of players in the sector is an economic imperative for any State. However, ensuring sustainability is also a challenge at a time of global warming. It is for this reason that all the strategies of the European Union in terms of tourism underline its sustainable nature and impact on the environment. The new agreement of the European Union, the Green Deal, obliges all the member States to ensure sustainability and promote green activities. This shows that the survival of tourism depends on its sustainable nature and the innovative ideas which relate to the safeguarding of the heritage, the promotion of new "hidden or unknown" traditions and heritage. Awareness at national, European and international level is also essential, and training centres and universities also have their place through the contribution of research and training.

The 27 countries of the European Union accounts for most international arrivals, around 81% of the total and 40% of the world figure. These figures, which are beneficial to the European economy, can only be supported by favourable policies which encourage the sustained growth of tourism to stimulate economic recovery.

In 2018, the total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP (including the wider effects of investment, supply chain and induced income effects, was USD 8,811.0 billion. (10, 4% of GDP)

It is expected to increase by 3.7% per year to reach USD 13 085.7 billion by 2029 (11.5% of GDP). This prediction is certainly to be slightly revised downwards because of the COVID-19 pandemic; however, there is no doubt that several countries and organisations will bet on strong tourism growth to get out of the economic problems caused by the global lockdown.

By 2029, travel and tourism are expected to directly represent 154,060,000 jobs, an increase of 2.1% per year over the next ten years. In addition, travel and tourism are expected to support 420,659,000 jobs (11.7% of total employment), an increase of 2.5% per year by 2029.

All these estimates are beneficial for Europe, the most visited region in the world. Based on previous statistics, it makes sense to estimate the increase in international tourist arrivals, which should generate the additional billions the EU needs to cope with the impending economic crisis.

In many European countries, the tourist windfall will be used to circumvent the economic conjecture by contributing significantly to job creation, GDP and the balance of payments. There is no doubt that the

development of the tourism industry will remain for the decades to come, one of the main pillars that the Commission of the European Union will use to stimulate employment and inclusive growth in its different regions.

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