STATEMENT ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPEAN MARITIME REGIONS
Document produced by the CPMR Sustainable Tourism Working Group, August 2008

BACKGROUND

- At the CPMR General Assembly in Florence, October 2007, a Sustainable Tourism Working Group (STWG) was established. The group is led by the Region Västra Götaland, Sweden and the Region of Sicily, Italy.

- The main objective of the work is to identify crucial issues in sustainable tourism development facing the CPMR’s member regions and translate this into strategic policy initiatives and concrete actions at various levels throughout Europe.

- The STWG has met three times: in Brussels in mid-February and end of April, in Gothenburg at the end of June, and another one is planned for early September in Palermo, Sicily.

- Three working documents have been produced and discussed so far with the aim of creating a qualified report and accompanying strategic proposals to be presented at the CPMR General Assembly in Bayonne - Aquitaine, France at the beginning of October.

- This statement reflects the position of CPMR STWG based on the hitherto work carried out, and shall at this stage be considered as a work-in-progress to propose to all the Geographical Commissions and the CPMR member regions.

EUROPEAN TOURISM AT THE CROSSROADS

*The CPMR Sustainable Tourism Working Group recognizes that:*

- Tourism has long been a major economic player in different types of regions throughout the European Union, not the least in rural areas, mountain environments, and particularly in coastal areas. Many of these areas have faced chronic economic woes, associated with a decline in their traditional economic activities, their relative isolation, and their small and shrinking populations. For these insular regions, tourism is regarded as the most realistic and often the one option for inducing economic diversification and growth.

- Tourism is arguably one of the world’s largest economic sectors. In 2006, the sector generated 10.3 percent of world GDP, providing 234 million jobs, or 8.2 percent of total world employment, and generated international tourism receipts reached almost $ 700 billion (estimations by the World Travel and Tourism Council).

- Measured in terms of international arrivals, tourism has seen a tremendous growth since the mid-1950’s and reached 800 million in 2005, and is estimated to be doubled in the coming 15 years. While Europe and the Americas accounted for 75% of the international arrivals in 2005, the rest of the world is estimated to account for 75% of the expected increase the coming 15 years.

- While the top 10 destinations in 1950 (all US & European) accounted for almost 90% of the total international arrivals, the share of the top 10 had dropped to 47% in 2005, and now included three major destinations outside the US and Europe. This change towards a more diverse tourist market structure is also expressed in the category of “Other destinations”, which has increased its share from 3% in 1950 to 42% in 2005.

- Europe has long held the title of the world’s leading tourist destination, measured in terms of international visitor arrivals. By 2020 the number of international arrivals within the region is projected to reach 717 million, equal to the total for world tourism in 2003. Most arrivals within Europe are from other European countries. In fact, 88.2 percent of international arrivals are inter-regional.

- The still predominant reason for travel to European countries is for leisure and recreation, but it has significantly declined since the early 1990s. On the other hand, Europe has become the world’s leading region in terms of business tourism. Furthermore, there is evidence of an increasing interest in culture, heritage and nature, which affects the ways tourists travel, using the physical space differently from sun and beach tourism.

- The distribution of tourist arrivals throughout Europe is highly uneven. While Southern/Mediterranean Europe in 2006 accounted for more than one third of all international arrivals,
Northern Europe only attracted 12%. Most international tourists (55%) in European countries arrive by road transportation, due to the high rate of inter-regional travel within this part of the world.

- Concurrently, air transportation has also gained in importance over the last 2 decades, to a major extent because of deregulation of the airline industry and the emergence of low cost carriers. By 2004, 38% of arrivals in Europe used air transportation compared to 32% in 1990.
- As new and more diverse destinations and travellers enter the market, the competition is increasing. As a consequence, the competitive parameters have increased, and many traditional destinations are forced to re-invent themselves in order not to lose market shares, moving from mass tourism market to a much more customer segmented market orientation.
- In Europe, this increasing customer segmentation comprises the fast growing number of third age travellers. This means that retired people are becoming more active and motivated to travel more at this phase of their life, but also to buy second homes or even settle down at attractive tourist destinations, like Mallorca.
- Furthermore, there has been a greater demand for new products and experiences related to cultural events and historical re-enactments. This is offering new opportunities for development and activities in the low seasons. Youth tourism and independent travelling have also become a very important aspect of tourism. This includes trends towards shorter stays, online booking, low cost airlines, the search for individual enrichment and meaning, and the search for new cultures and natural habitats.

FACING THE IMPACTS OF TOURISM

The CPMR Sustainable Tourism Working Group recognizes that:

- Regardless of how fast or how slow tourism has developed in Europe’s insular areas and, indeed, regardless of the type of tourism that has evolved, it is obvious that the sector has had many impacts, both positive and negative on these host destinations and their ability to ensure sustainable development.
- In terms of economic impacts, it is obvious that one of the fundamental reasons for promoting tourism in an insular destination, is to generate economic growth and employment which can help diversify a narrow economic base. Just by taking a cursory glance at a number of coastal areas and islands, it is evident that tourism has left its positive mark on the economy. The level of income of many of these islands’ inhabitants has increased and employment opportunities have expanded.
- Yet, tourism is also associated with numerous negative economic impacts. Part of this concerns the fact that tourism jobs do not pay very well, they are seasonal, and generally low-skill oriented. Tourism is also blamed for increasing the cost of land, especially in prime coastal areas meaning that there is a lot of property speculation and, often, land that may be highly suitable for agricultural production is turned over to resort developers. The rising cost of land is only one consequence of the inflationary pressures tourism may bring to a destination.
- Additionally, because of tourism development many islands have witnessed the accentuation of regional imbalances since this sector appears to favour coastal areas at the expense of interior settlements. Of course, it can also be argued that without tourism very few jobs would be created. Some advocates of tourism take the position that, even though the jobs may be low-skilled and low-paid, they still bring in a higher income overall that traditional activities like agriculture.
- In terms of socio-cultural impacts, it can be exemplified by the fact that many advocates of tourism often maintain that the sector is beneficial because it helps customs and traditions in a particular locale to be revived. Since tourists are eager to see something that portrays the host destination’s local culture, it makes economic sense to encourage the rebirth of lost forms of culture (e.g., dance and pottery). To be sure, in many instances there has been a rebirth of culture in a destination, albeit some may say that this is driven by commercial interests.
- On the down side, by contrast, tourism has often been blamed for inflicting adverse social impacts on host destinations, and some argue that traditional norms associated with an agrarian way of life have all but disappeared in many villages as the young people within these settlements gain employment in the tourism economy. Tourism may also be criticized for causing a clash of cultures, especially in very traditional societies where the population may be insulted by the way the foreign visitors dress and act.
• Not the least, the environmental impacts of tourism have received considerable attention. While on the plus side, the sector has been credited with encouraging the historical preservation of a traditional village or may have been linked to the preservation of a natural resource in the form of a national or state park, most analysts argue that tourism causes numerous negative effects in host societies. European island and coastal tourism is full of examples of how poorly controlled tourism development has inflicted serious problems that, in many instances, threaten the very survival of these places as visitor destinations.

• Mediterranean islands and coastlines are particularly vulnerable to tourism where this has been allowed to grow in an unplanned manner. For instance, in many places tourism has contributed to excessive water shortages, whilst problems have regularly been associated with the inability to deal effectively with excessive sewage and solid waste that accompanies rapid tourism development. Furthermore, in many destinations tourism grows in a linear fashion along a narrow coastal strip as each developer seeks to take advantage of coastal property. This has meant that development is rarely contained – indeed one settlement regularly spills over into the next.

• However not all coastal and island destinations have witnessed the same impacts and there are destinations, such as the islands of the Baltic Sea and the North Sea, where the quality of tourism development from an environmental standpoint is, indeed, quite high. On the island of Bornholm the well entrenched Danish land use planning system that is geared among others to protect large stretches of coastal land as well as ex-town areas, has meant that the level of development of tourist-related facilities has been severely restricted.

• But while one could well argue that the quality of the natural environment in this destination is exceptionally high compared to that of many Mediterranean destinations, one could make the argument that the austere land use restrictions have limited the ability of the tourist sector to expand and diversify. In this case, the planning system actually limits the competitiveness of this island destination, which already suffers from many handicaps, most notably the extreme seasonality associated with its tourism product.

• In the Mediterranean, islands like Mallorca or Crete, for example, provide the most striking example of how tourism can threaten to ruin a host environment. Twenty years ago Mallorca was the poster-child of mass tourism development. Today, following the implementation of a series of policies introduced during the 1990s to rejuvenate the island, plus a sincere attempt to drastically diversify the tourism product away from its narrow sun and sea image, Mallorca is enjoying a new lease of life as a tourist destination, where the emphasis has been placed on quality rather than quantity-oriented tourism.

TOURISM POLICIES IN THE MAKING

The CPMR Sustainable Tourism Working Group recognizes that:

• Increasingly there is a realization that tourism development at regional, national as well as supra-national levels must be nurtured within a context of overall sustainable development. In 2006 the European Commission 2006 stated: ‘Sustainable development is at the heart of the EU agenda. Its challenge is to ensure mutual reinforcement of economic growth, social welfare and environmental protection’.

• Until recently, most (if not all) policies that target specific regions, including maritime areas, have been sector-specific (e.g., on manufacturing, fisheries, offshore energy, the environment, and transportation) and, as result, it is possible that conflicting agendas reflected within these policies may impede the overriding goal of sustainable development. The fragmentation of policies is especially problematic from the point of view of tourism due to the fact that it is affected by so many different policy arenas and, until recently there has not been a clear-cut pan-European tourism policy.

• However, Article 176B in the Treaty of Lisbon (amending the Treaty of the EU and the Treaty establishing the European Community, Conference of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States 2007) stated that:

  1. “The ‘Union shall complement the action of the member States in the tourism sector, in particular by promoting the competitiveness of Union undertakings in that sector. To that end, Union action shall be aimed at:

     a. Encouraging the creation of a favourable environment for the development of undertakings in this sector;"
b. Promoting cooperation between Member States, particularly by the exchange of good practice.

2. The European Parliament and Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, shall establish specific measures to complement actions within the Member States to achieve the objectives referred to in this Article, excluding any harmonization of the laws and regulations of the Member States.”

- Due to tourism’s major contribution to economic growth, job generation, and the improvement of quality of life of both visitors and residents, it is imperative that any actions relating to tourism are well coordinated with the variety of policies affecting numerous sectors including transportation, the environment, regional and social affairs, employment and training. All of these policy areas either directly or indirectly have a bearing on tourism within the EU. And, because tourism is a major economic force for so many localities (regions down to communities) the EU strives to ensure that policies targeting these sectors do not run contrary to the goal of maintaining and enhancing tourism’s competitiveness.

- In recent years this inter-relationship of the tourism sector with several policy areas within the EU has been highly evident and continues to be obvious. For instance, the introduction of the Euro has served to eliminate the inconveniences of having to deal with several currencies whilst travelling. Perhaps more importantly, the European environmental policy, which has focused heavily on the sustainability paradigm, has proved an opportunity for establishing preservation strategies for historical/cultural buildings and monuments as well as natural areas. In fact, because of the EU’s environmental policy the quality of several areas (including beaches) has improved drastically in recent years.

- One of the most clear-cut relationships between several policy areas exists between transportation and tourism. Investments in new infrastructure (roads, bridges, air terminals) can lead to increased accessibility between several points, thus enabling more tourist flows. Airline deregulation has meant that competition between carriers has increased and the cost of travel between certain cities has been reduced dramatically. In contrast, proposals to introduce added environmental taxes on air transportation may adversely affect certain destinations, especially those that may already suffer from inadequate service; many islands are included in this category of destinations.

- Because of the various challenges that European tourism has come face to face with (including aging of the population and its implications; reduced growth rate of Europe as a global destination; the negative environmental and socio-cultural repercussions of the sector) the European Commission has recognized the need for a cohesive policy for tourism at the pan-European level.

  ° “This policy must be focused on clear and realistic goals, commonly shared by decision-makers, employers and employees, as well as by local populations. It should make the best use of available resources and take advantage of all possible synergies . . . Any European tourism policy should be complementary to policies carried out in Member States” (European Commission 2006).

- The overriding purpose of a European-wide tourism policy is to enhance the industry’s competitiveness whilst creating more secure jobs with better skills and higher wages. For this to be achieved there is wide-scale recognition that an agenda of sustainable growth in tourism must be encouraged. Amongst the steps that this policy initiative must focus on is the need to coordinate all measures that either directly or indirectly have a bearing on tourism development within the EU.

- In turn these are the areas, which need to be addressed. The first is the need to improve the regulatory context at all levels of governance. The EU already has made strides in this area by developing a communication on “Better Regulation for Growth and Jobs,” an approach which hopefully will lead to improved competitiveness. For instance, it proposes that all new proposals, including those that pertain to tourism, undergo an impact assessment. Also, the EC recommends relaxing current legislation like the Package Travel Directive and the Timeshare Directive.

- In another focused effort, the European Commission in 2004 created the Tourism Sustainability Group (TSG), aimed at enhancing the sustainability of tourism within the Union, as well as seeking to create various initiatives at the EU level, which will lead to sustainable tourism development.

  The TSG recognizes that in order to move towards sustainability it is imperative to adopt an ‘holistic and integrative approach’. It advocates an approach that meets the tenets of growth management, namely of ensuring that the quantity, quality, and location of development in each destination takes into account contingent factors.
Among other priorities that the TSG promotes is the need to ensure that developers are responsible for the externalities they impose on host societies (the polluter pays principle), and the need to recognize capacity thresholds of development. The TSG acknowledges that much has been done at various levels to promote tourism development, but recommends that there must be a concerted effort by all stakeholders (representing the private as well as the public sector) to enhance the opportunities for tourism’s contribution to sustainable development. For instance, recognizing the challenge of global climate change, calls are made to ensure that tourism’s contribution to greenhouse emissions is reduced.

Among the challenges that the TSG sees as the most important is the need to overcome the seasonality that plagues tourism in numerous destinations. The TSG also sees the need to address the effects of tourism-related transportation on the environment. After all ‘tourism transport (inbound and outbound) currently accounts for 8% of CO2-equivalent emissions in the EU. Air transport is responsible for 50% of CO2 emissions associated with inbound and outbound tourism for Europe as a whole.

As such, the TSG report stresses the importance of coordinating the EC’s Transport White Paper with the needs of tourism as an important economic sector. In other words, the TSG reflects the twin concerns that efforts to protect the environment by reducing transport-related emissions should not adversely affect tourism, whilst at the same time calls for tourism patterns that are much more environmentally friendly from a transportation point of view.

While the TSG report is an important document for the promotion and development of sustainable tourism within the European Union it does not specifically mention maritime or peripheral regions. In other words, the report is kept at a general level and is not place-specific; it does not relate to a specific type of destination but merely seeks to promote balanced development throughout the EU. Nevertheless, much of what is encapsulated within this report is directly relevant to coastal and insular regions and should be taken into account when seeking to identify targeted initiatives for sustainable tourism development in such areas.

In late 2007, the European Parliament adopted its resolution regarding the proposed EU policy, the commentary of the Tourism Sustainability Group, and various other documents (including a report on transport and tourism. Among others the EU Parliament recognizes the importance of tourism for Europe (including tourists from third countries) and recommends the need to simplify and coordinate visa regulations to ensure that travel to and from Europe and within Europe is made as smooth and uncomplicated as possible.

A second point is that it is imperative to improve data gathering as it pertains to tourism-related indicators. Among others the European Parliament calls for all member states to adopt Tourism Satellite Accounts since this approach allows tourism – as an economic activity – to be compared to other economic sectors. The harmonization of classification schemes as they pertain to tourist facilities is also viewed as essential by the European Parliament. For instance, currently the various member states do not reflect any level of consistency in the manner in which hotels are evaluated.

Additional areas where the European Parliament sees the need for greater harmonization are in quality management schemes and consumer protection (for instance in an age of increased sales through the internet, the European Parliament feels that consumers need a panoply of protective measures). Other recommendations include the importance of promoting health tourism, making all tourism-related facilities accessible to all and promoting sustainable tourism, especially in economically disadvantaged regions.

Another recent major initiative addressing the issue of sustainable tourism development is the Blue Book for a European Maritime Policy, which was approved by the European Commission in 2007. The Maritime Policy generate discussion regarding the creation of a maritime policy for the entire EU that ‘treats the oceans and seas in a holistic way’ (5), and aims to build on policies that are already in place and also is meant to be in tandem with the Lisbon Strategy.

The overriding theme in the Blue book is the development of maritime regions and its relationship to various sectors, including the shipping industry, the energy sector (including offshore energy sources), and technology. Much of the discussion relates to the environmental preservation of maritime resources but also the need to increase the competitiveness of the labour force. Further on, it seeks to underline the importance of enhancing the quality of life in maritime regions in order to make them attractive as places to live, work but also ‘play’. Because of the emerging attraction of
coastal areas for an increasing number of citizens, it calls for steps to reduce or eliminate the threats to marine resources; many which arise from enhanced development activity.

- Within the Blue Book there is one section that targets tourism specifically. Recognizing that coastal regions as well as islands are extremely popular attractions throughout Europe, the document warns that for Europe to maintain its position as the world’s leading destination, steps must be taken to protect the very assets that draw visitors in the first place. Sustainable tourism can contribute to the development of coastal areas and islands by improving the competitiveness of businesses, meeting social needs and enhancing the natural and cultural heritage and local ecosystems. The need to improve or maintain their attractiveness is an incentive to an increasing number of destinations to turn towards more sustainable and environmentally-friendly practices and policies.

**MEDITERRANEAN INITIATIVES TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM (Presented as an example of initiatives to be taken by the CPMR Tourism group)**

The CPMR Sustainable Tourism Working Group recognizes that:

- Tourism for long has been common development strategy in many European insular environments. Especially many of the Mediterranean islands possess sea and plenty of sun, all of which are necessary ingredients for mass-oriented pleasure-seeking travellers based in metropolitan areas in northern countries. But even in places located in less ideal climatic zones, such as those of the Baltic or North Sea, tourism has emerged as a major economic growth generator. To be sure the tourist season in these regions is quite short (6-8 weeks) but policymakers are making significant efforts to diversify the product and attract visitors all year around.

- Tourism in Europe is mainly intra-regional. In 2004 88% of the inbound tourism (measured as international tourist arrivals) in Europe was from other countries within Europe. Another evident regional feature of tourism is that Southern Europe/Mediterranean is the dominating destination within Europe and accounted for 36% of all European inbound tourism in 2004. In contrast, Northern Europe only accounted for 11%. Undoubtedly the pressure created by tourism on the countries around the Mediterranean has visible impacts on the environment, economy, society and human life.

- As a consequence, and encouraged by the above described initiatives taken at European Union level, various initiatives have been launched to promote various forms of networking in the Mediterranean (through e.g. Insuleur, Oramare, CPMR, CREST, OTIE etc). This objective is that the collective knowledge and experience can generate various forms of collaboration and raise the awareness on issues relating to sustainable tourism development. Good practices that also can be communicated regional, national as well as pan-European levels.

- New networks and partnerships will be developed to support and promote the cultural heritage and natural habitats of coastal areas. The local resources of the coastal areas are to be consolidated within the cultural heritage of the territory in a dynamic and creative way. It is imperative to improve the infrastructure and conditions for coastal tourism through:
  - An organisational framework formed by researchers, practitioners, policy makers and government officials.
  - Professional support related to maritime cultures and everyday life.
  - The design of effective marketing plans to promote innovative form of tourism in mature coastal areas.
  - Motivating the different local communities through empowerment and full participation.
  - Promoting a new culture of hospitality in the coastal areas connected with the internal territories.

- This regional approach will aim at clarifying the potential of the Mediterranean to promote the role of the different cultures in particular marine environments. In this way awareness will be raised on the need for:
  - Diversifying and strengthening the economic base of the Mediterranean.
  - Promoting and encouraging the development of coastal tourism related with the internal areas in the Mediterranean in both an ecologically and economically sustainable manner.
  - Rediscovering the enormous opportunities to raising the competitiveness of the coastal regions.
  - Recognising coastal tourism as an important component in the Mediterranean.
Ensuring that these resources of the tourism industry are managed in a sustainable manner.

- Implementing fair and open opportunities for those stakeholders who wish to allocate their business in the new form of tourism.
- Designing and implementing some initiatives related to sustainable tourism development in the coastal regions of the Mediterranean.

**STRATEGIC APPROACHES AND THE WAY FORWARD**

- The policy related initiatives launched by various European bodies and authorities, as well as the innovative actions initiated by regional actors in the Mediterranean, creates a strategic momentum, which the CPMR STWG wants to build upon and further enhance, and secure are translated into strategic policy initiatives and actions benefitting sustainable tourism development in the CPMR member regions.

- Inspired by the definition put forward by UN World Tourism Organization in 2004, sustainable tourism development have to be approached in a comprehensive manner:
  - Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.
  - Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary. Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them.

- In accordance, the CPMR STWG is working according to a policy approach on sustainable tourism development that is:
  1. **Integrated/holistic**, i.e. recognizing the inter-relationship between environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism.
  2. **Relational**, i.e. recognizing the importance of seeing the tourism system in its totality - the relationship between the places of tourist origin and destination, as well as the relationship between the production and consumption of tourism.
  3. **Inclusive**, i.e. recognizing the need to include all relevant stakeholders - private, public as well as NGO's - in the process of sustainable tourism development. The tourism initiatives initiated has to be based on co-operation between local people, entrepreneurs, organisations and institutions.
  4. **Territorial**, i.e. recognizing the importance and impacts of the spatial contexts of tourism development, such as the physical context - mountains, islands, coastal - and geographical/climate contexts - Northern Europe vs. Southern Europe.

The above points are part of the new approach known as Integrated Relational Tourism (IRT):

Tourism which favours interpersonal and environmental relations stimulating the historical-cultural sensitiveness and sustainability of development of dialogue among offer and receiving and which integrates productive and commercial sectors in micro and middle dimension. In other words a tourism deep-rooted in the territory that is the main stay of the micro-companies and that increases the value of the great cultural and natural patrimony not only in big centres but also in the small ones. Besides, this type of tourism is strictly bound to human relations with immediate and direct relations among who offers services and who enjoys them.

Furthermore, the CPMR STWG considers it fundamental to establish an active co-operation with other European networks operating within the field of sustainable tourism development, such as the EC/DG Enterprise Tourism Sustainability Group), and the Euromeeting network. In this network based co-operation, the contribution of the CPMR STWG will mainly lie in the development of proposals for policy initiatives relating to sustainable tourism development.