

Assessment Criteria for a National Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy

Abstract

The document presents criteria for reviewing National Tourism Development Strategies with regard to sustainable development. This is a tool for the measurement of how well a national strategy fulfills the criteria for sustainable development of tourism.

The assessment is based on the Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism, the EU biodiversity policies and CBD guidelines. In addition to the three dimensions of economic, social and environmental impact of tourism, the text focuses on essential elements of modern planning for tourism.

The evaluation is based on analysis of weighted assessment presented in the form of a check-list table which includes criteria and their importance for the strategy as well as submission of points which may be granted for each measurement of criteria in an analyzed strategy. Consequently, it creates an opportunity for estimating the general fulfillment of the given criteria.

Since 2005 the **Sustainable Tourism Working Group of the CEEweb for Biodiversity** has been working on guidance for decision makers on policy development of sustainable tourism. The prior projects focused on elaborating the following:

- a. the database of the economical, environmental and cultural impact of tourism in Central and Eastern Europe,
- b. the training tool for education concerning principles of sustainable tourism,
- c. the recommendations for the indicators developed by the EC DG Enterprise Tourism Sustainability Group.

The assessment criteria for national sustainable tourism development strategy, which derives from the previous studies as well as from the experience of many NGO members, approaches and continues to integrate the tourism policy with the principles of sustainable tourism.

1. Introduction

Strategic planning in tourism is necessary for sustainable development of the industry, monitoring of social consequences and protection of biodiversity within a country or any other tourist destination.

Mass tourism after the Second World War was the reason for application of state tourism management (Gaworecki 2003). Contemporary tourism policy is closely related to the macroeconomic goals of a particular country. Economically developed countries are focusing on ecological or social goals different than economic aims. On the other hand less

developed countries use tourism sector to achieve economic goals. Nevertheless in both cases it is important to stress the sustainable aspects of tourism included in national planning documents and implemented in Central and Eastern Europe countries. While these countries create and promote new tourism attractions in order to join the European competitive market, it is necessary to include policies, which will strengthen the position of tourism destinations in the market also by implementation their development of sustainable tourism and protection of ecosystems.

It is important for local and regional tourism development that sustainable development requires harmonized support to nationalize processes. On the other hand the state policy has to be connected to the international sustainability agreements. The criteria of the strategy assessment were elaborated in light of the EU biodiversity policies (EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020) and the Agenda 21 for a sustainable and competitive European tourism. These include sustainable conservation and management of natural and cultural resources, minimising use of resources and pollution at tourist destinations including the production of waste, managing changes in the interests of the well being of the community, reducing the seasonality of demand, addressing the environmental impact of transport linked to tourism, making tourism experiences available to all without discrimination, and improving the quality of jobs in tourism.

EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 establish that a number of key partnerships will be expanded and promoted to support this strategy EC has set up the EU Business and Biodiversity Platform, which currently brings together businesses from six different sectors including tourism to share their experiences and best practices.

It is important to underline that the protection of biodiversity is strongly connected to service quality and health policy. The reciprocity of this connection is still growing in national tourism market and every year tourists require the quality which include clean, natural and diverse environment and well managed local communities which convert in competitive advantage on the European tourist market.

2. Goals, target audience and methodology of the assessment

- **The main goal** of the analysis is to create criteria for reviewing National Tourism Development Strategies in Central and East Europe in light of the EU biodiversity policies and the Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism. The criteria will constitute guidance and technical tool in the development or review of their strategies for development tourism, national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

Biodiversity loss is damaging to the economy particularly in sectors such as tourism which depend directly on ecosystem services. Therefore **the assessment's long term goal** is to initiate strategies which set their main goal as development of an environmentally and socially responsible tourism which creates long term economic benefits for the businesses and destinations.

- **Target audience** for this analysis is: policy makers, governments at national and local level and managers (of tourism clusters for example). Therefore the purpose of the assessment is twofold: (1) to provide countries with constructive feedback on the national tourism strategy linkage between tourism and biodiversity protection, that could be used to further improvements of these strategies, and (2) to inform CEE NGOs and decision makers on the subject.
- **Methodology of assessment** is based on analysis of weighted assessment and review of major tourism sustainability indicators for a tourism strategy which are divided into several categories (see **the evaluation table**, p.6).
Firstly, each indicator gets its **weight (W)** in points (on a scale of 1 to 4) according to its importance for a national sustainable tourism strategy. Secondly, during the evaluation of existing strategies or elaboration of new ones, each indicator gets a **score (S)** in points (on a scale of 1 to 5) according to the level of fulfillment of the requirements of each indicator. The sum of multiplications ($W_1 \times S_1 + W_2 \times S_2 + \dots + W_n \times S_n = \sum (W_n \times S_n)$) will give the result of total points received by a strategy – **Total Score (TS)**. Finally, the TS will be given as a percentage of the **Maximum Score (MS)** to show how well a strategy fulfils the given indicators.

(!) The result should be regarded as guidance for strategic tourism development, not as the final and only measurement for sustainable development of tourism.

3. National Tourism Strategy as public document

National Tourism Strategies are planning documents and are formulated in order to define visions, goals and directions of tourism state policies. National tourism strategies constitute also important and necessary tool for territorial management of tourism within the state boundaries. In terms of planning time a National Tourism Strategy refers to medium and long term period of planning.

The most important feature of these documents is that it is not compulsory for tourism sector, only serves as source of information of:

- direction of national tourism policy,
- operational tasks for national tourism policy,
- initiatives in tourism development supported by state.

Furthermore they are important planning documents which determine other planning documents on regional and local level. Consequently it is vital for them to reflect essential contents of international, supranational, European and global agreements as far as sustainable tourism is concerned.

The strategy is formulated by National Tourism Administration (NTA). In majority of cases in the Central-East Europe it is the ministry responsible for tourism development which compiles the strategy.

A national tourism strategy should answer several questions:

- How the document tackles the importance of fulfilling touristic needs of its own society?
- What are the measures for rational use of touristic values, work resources and capital?
- Is there a consideration for the optimal size and structure of tourist movement in the country?
- How is content of the document related with other branches of social and economic sectors?

These issues should be approached by scientific research which should support the creation of the strategy. Problems of coordination, collaboration and partnership are also at the forefront of much tourism research on finding new solutions to resource management and destination development problems (Hall 2000). Also the relationship between the tourism industry and government tourism agencies is important in order to answer the question to which established policy process (a strategy) lead to outcomes which are in the "public interest" and which contribute to the sustainability rather than meeting just narrow sectoral interests. Additionally, many tasks conditioning tourism development lay beyond the responsibilities of the ministry responsible for tourism. Therefore it should be prepared and realized through inter-department cooperation (in Poland for example: Polish Tourism Organization, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of economy, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development) and other institutions specialized tourism non-governmental organizations (Zareba 2006).

The support of relevant research and studies for a national tourism policy is necessary as far as the following subjects are concerned:

- management process and procedures,
- cost-benefit analysis of tourism demand and supply from the perspective of energy and environment,
- culturally-determined product and service standards,
- tourism as complementary activity in economically and socially depressed areas.

A National Tourism Strategy should take into consideration the environmental protection system and role of ecotourism in maintaining different kinds of protected areas in

the country (provided by national nature protection system and EU net of nature conservation such as Natura 2000).

As the territorial cooperation in tourism is emphasized in the most important recommendations of European Union and communications of European Committee¹ multi-stakeholder partnerships is required for sustainable development of tourism (partnerships of public authorities, private business, and other civil society groups for networks and territorial cooperation). There is a need to underline other kinds of cooperation in the strategy such as regional cooperation (for example within Carpathian Region, Balkan Region), geographical regions cooperation (mountainous areas, lakes areas, wetlands etc.), cultural cooperation of ethnical and cultural regions (for example Orawa in Poland and Slovakia), cross-border cooperation (for example of nature protected areas: Tatra National Park).

As well as other protected areas Natura 2000 may enhance the attractiveness of regions and it is necessary for tourism to contribute to its protection. The management of this sites should be linked to management plans and strategy in general.

The tourism policy expressed in a strategy should focus on climate change, habitat destruction and the loss of species, potable water availability, solid and liquid waste pollution and others problems expressed in agreements and policy documents on European level. According to sustainability concept which has been developed in last 20 years tourism development should be carried out in the way that:

- use of resources, both natural and cultural, should be non consumptive, making them renewable,
- supports the local economy, being an opportunity for remote communities,
- provides a linkage between different sectors like private-public sector, forestry, agriculture, handicrafts etc.,
- provides an economic incentive to conserve natural and cultural assets,
- foster greater understanding between people (and interested parties).

A national tourism strategy reveals economic aspects of tourism. Therefore it is important to link tourism offer with target in competitive European market with long term enhancement on biodiversity and nature protection. The questions: what products do I want to offer?, which markets do I want to target?, who do I choose to compete with?, apply to national tourism organizations, regional tourism bodies, local governments and individual businesses.

A strategy's environmental goal should be to provide for sustainable tourism development by encouraging responsible planning and management practices consistent with the conservation. Tourism and nature-based recreation tourism as an economic factor can only sustain itself in the long term if its development is geared towards sustainability.

¹ *Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European Tourism* (COM(2007) 621 final - 19.10.2007), *A renewed tourism EU policy: towards a stronger partnership for European Tourism* (COM(2006) 134 final - 17.03.2006), *Basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism* (COM(2003) 716 final - 21.11.2003) and *Working together for the future of European tourism* (COM(2001) 665 final) - 13.11.2001).

4. Assessment Criteria for a National Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy – the evaluation table

<p>Abbreviation and acronyms</p> <p>CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity) CSR (Corporate social responsibility) EC (European Commission) EIA (Environmental impact assessment) IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources/World Conservation Union) LA21 (Local Agenda 21) NTS (National Tourism Strategy) UE (European Union) UNEP (United Nations Environmental Programme) UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization) TIC (Tourism Information Centres) NSTDS (National Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy)</p>		
<p>Definitions</p> <p>Biodiversity Biological diversity is the adaptive potential of the range of ecological complexes or systems that sustain the variety and variability of life (CBD).</p> <p>Sustainable tourism Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities (UNWTO).</p> <p>Ecosystem services - services provided by the natural environment that benefit people including regulatory services, such as water regulation, provisioning services, such as food and timber, and cultural services, such as recreation, they provide outputs or outcomes that directly and indirectly affect human wellbeing.</p>		
Name of an indicator	Weight (W) (1-4)	Scores (S) (1-5)
I Description of the document and elaboration process		
1. The document representing tourism policy in the country: - general plan of social-economic development - sector plan (national tourism strategy) - operative plan for government actions and agendas	2 4 4	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Biodiversity protection is included in the document as measurable goal, in other words: national strategy sets out clear priorities, goals, policies, objectives, interventions and expected results that contribute to improving biodiversity protection and meeting national and global commitments in: - vision of national tourism policy	3	<input type="checkbox"/>

- goals of national tourism policy	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
- directions of national tourism policy	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
- operational objectives	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Targets or standards are established in such areas as:		
- land-use zoning	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
- ecosystem functioning	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
- biodiversity conservation and sustainable use	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
- poverty alleviation/mitigation	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
- participation of indigenous and local communities	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Strategy formulation process includes the following actions:		
- baseline information is gathered on the base of multistakeholder consultations	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
- local communities are included in the consultations	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
- public and private sector work together during the consultations	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
II Situation analysis and programming		
5. Major preconditions and problems for sustainable tourism development:		
- domestic (national) market: major stakeholders: tour operators, travel agents, national and regional authorities, NGOs etc.	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
- international market	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
- tourism supply: product, services, infrastructure and facilities	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
- demand of the domestic market (income, costs, positive/negative events, working hours)	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
- SWOT-Analysis, needs for further development	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Political factors, EC-politics, international aspects of tourism development		
- product and infrastructure development, general industrial policy starting points	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
- destination marketing	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
- reinforcing the image of the country as a tourist destination	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
- benchmarking (product, strategic)	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
III The grade of enhancement on sustainable approach to tourism in policy		
7. Special chapter dedicated to the connection of NSTDS with national environmental policy	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Reference to sustainable tourism agreements, conventions, protocols, EU policy towards development of sustainable tourism and nature conservation:		
- the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET) as a comprehensive set of principles designed to guide key-players in tourism development	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
- the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, especially Decision VII/14 Biological Diversity and Tourism and Decision V/25: Biodiversity and tourism, 2004	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
- The Charter for Sustainable Tourism (developed in Lanzarote, Canary Islands) Spain, 1995	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
- EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS) with indications for national policies on law foundation for sustainable development of tourism, implementation of principles for tourism in other sectors of state activity and enhancement on scientific research on relations between tourism development and environment protection,	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
- the Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
- European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas	1	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (not relevant for al countries):	1	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Agenda 21 as a comprehensive plan of action to be taken by governments in every area in which human impacts on the environment, Rio de Janeiro, 1992 - The Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) adopted at the 3rd Ministerial Conference "An Environment for Europe", 1995, Sofia - EU Strategy for the Danube Region, the Carpathian Convention (Tourism Protocol) - other.....		
9. Linkage of tourism to other sectors: - agriculture and rural development - transport strategy - health policy - employment policy	4 4 3 3	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
IV Social benefits		
10. Community profits as recognition of the role of tourism in: - preservation and development of the culture in the region - distribution of income and prospects for employment - reinforcement of national heritage and identity	3 4 2	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
V Participation of institutions in tourism management		
11. Setting up and enabling a National Tourism Organization as: - a national body for tourism firms and destinations - a source of best practice, offer tourism business advice - a custodian of the national product database	3 4 3	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
12. Enhancement on bottom – up approach in destination management through: - local tourism bodies are responsible for a tourism destination which reflects the natural geography of an area's visitor economy (rather than local public sector or electoral boundaries) which means to allow tourism bodies to band together into larger groups voluntarily - ensuring financial sustainability on the part of these new bodies with minimum reliance on public funds (can act as partners with LA –local authorities, or local business partnerships) - reduction of taxation on central level - supporting creation of Destination Management rather than Marketing Organizations - partnership between public sector and local authorities and local businesses and attractions - recognition of role of the bodies for a Regional Development Strategies	4 3 2 2 3 4	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
VI Attention to sustainable development of tourism businesses and supply of services		
13. Plans to increase the number of environmentally oriented tourism providers and offerings by: - support of certification schemes - strengthening cooperation between (organisation and financing) public and private entities as well as partnerships for sustainable tourism development - educational programs for tourist staff and their professionalization in the framework of tourism environmental impact and social responsibility	3 4 4	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
14. Attention to sustainable practices in companies: - energy efficiency and savings - efficient water management solutions	4 4	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

VII Special enhancement addressing nature protected areas		
15. Support for financial flow from tourism industry to territorial nature protection:	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
- enhancing regional marketing as the foundation for sustainable tourism development, particularly in UNESCO biosphere reserves and national parks	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
- areas close to or in populated regions are protected for nature-based recreation	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
- incorporating Europe network of sites Natura 2000 in tourism territorial development		
VIII Tourism strategy measures		
16. Monitoring of:		
- regional supply chains through the establishment of local or regional cooperation	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
- enabling training programmes for local people participating in tourism business (qualified tourism employees)	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
- measures for reducing dependency on tourism	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
- other.....	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Summary - Tourism Strategy Achievements and future projects		
<i>Comments</i>		
Total Score (TS)	$TS = \sum (W_n \times S_n)$	
Percentage in which a strategy fulfills given indicators (P)	$Maximum\ Score\ (MS) = \sum (W_n \times 5) = 960$ $P = (TS / MS) \times 100\%$	

Glossary

Communication - non-binding decision of the EU institutions such as communications of the Commission on various topics, Court judgments, opinions of the Committee of the Regions or the Economic and Social Council

National Tourism Strategy - planning documents formulated in order to define visions, goals and directions of tourism state policies

EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 (COM(2010) 2020) – the strategy that has adopted by the European Commission on 3rd of May, 2011 to halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU by 2020. The strategy is aimed at reversing biodiversity loss and speeding up the EU's transition towards a resource efficient and green economy.

Resources:

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6. Hall C.M. (2000) Rethinking Collaboration and Partnership: A Public Policy Perspective [in] Tourism Collaboration and Partnerships. Politics, Practice and Sustainability, Channel View Publications, Clevedon.
7. http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/documents/communications/commission-communication-2007/index_en.htm
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13. Turystyka [2007] red. W. Kurek, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.
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