



World Tourism Organization



International Seminar

*Sustainable Tourism and Competitiveness in the
Islands of the Mediterranean*

*Island of Capri, Italy,
17-20 May 2000*

FINAL REPORT

International Seminar on Sustainable Tourism and Competitiveness in the Islands of the Mediterranean

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INTRODUCTION

The International Seminar on “Sustainable Tourism and Competitiveness in the Islands of the Mediterranean” was convened and held jointly by the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Blue Plan of the UNEP-Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP-MAP), in the island of Capri, Italy, from 17 to 20 May 2000, upon an invitation of the local authorities of Capri (Comune di Capri).

This Seminar was intended as a regional Mediterranean follow-up to the WTO/UNEP Conference on Sustainable Tourism in Small Island Developing States and Other Islands, held in Lanzarote, Spain, in October 1998. It focused on the growing relationship between tourism competitiveness and sustainability, and it examined some specific components of tourism supply in the islands of the Mediterranean Sea.

The Seminar gave special attention to the solutions adopted in some islands to such problems as: scarcity of water resources, renewable energy, treatment of solid and liquid waste, environmental management of hotels, tourism in natural parks, and integrated planning of tourism in islands, among others. Many interesting case studies on these subjects were presented by participants from all parts of the Mediterranean (Annex 1).

The Seminar was opened by the Mayor of Capri, Mr. Costantino Federico, who welcomed all participants and stressed the importance of sustainable tourism policies and practices in the Mediterranean islands. A welcome speech was also given by the representative of the *Ente Nazionale Italiano per il Turismo (ENIT)*, as well as by the WTO and UNEP representatives.

The first working session opened with a presentation by Mr. Francesco Frangialli, Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization, who summarized the actions taken by WTO in support of the sustainable development and management of tourism in islands, and who explained WTO cooperation in this field with other international organizations. Ms Giulia Carbone, UNEP’s representative, recalled, in her opening speech, that all stakeholders have a role to play in implementing sustainable development in tourism, and that UNEP’s Draft Principles of the Implementation of Sustainable Tourism, presently open for consultation, provide a framework for action for all stakeholders.

The Seminar gathered participants from 13 countries in or surrounding the Mediterranean (Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Malta, Slovenia, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Turkey) as well as other participants from international and regional organizations, as detailed in Annex 2 of this report.

The Conclusions and Recommendations presented in this document are based on the presentations made and the discussions held during the Seminar. They have been drafted by WTO in association with UNEP and the Blue Plan, taking into account the comments made by participants at the Seminar's closing session.

National Tourism Administrations, islands' local authorities, individual Seminar participants and the tourism industry of the Mediterranean islands in general, are called to study these conclusions and to use all means at their disposal for a prompt application of the recommendations ensuing from this Seminar.

The World Tourism Organization, UNEP and the Blue Plan, as co-organizers, are grateful to the authorities of Capri for the support and hospitality granted to the organizing institutions and to all participants.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Sustainability: a fundamental condition for general and tourism development in the islands of the Mediterranean

1. **The Mediterranean, the world's top tourist destination, an ecologically-threatened region.** The Mediterranean, one of the region's with the greatest geographical, cultural and biological wealth and diversity is, with 30 per cent of the world market and some 200 million foreign visitors a year, the world's leading tourist destination. But, at the same time, the Mediterranean, one of the most fragile areas on the planet, has been and continues to be subject to tremendous human pressures on an environmental and cultural heritage that has been profoundly transformed and is seriously at risk. The forecasting studies carried out by the Blue Plan and WTO on general and tourism trends in the area have given rise to mounting concern about its future. In the coming decades, the population on the Mediterranean coast will continue to expand, and international tourist arrivals will amount to 270 millions in 2010 and to 346 millions in 2020.

2. **The sustainability of tourism development: an ethical requirement and factor of competitiveness in the islands of the Mediterranean.** The sustainability of general and particularly of tourism development is today a fundamental requirement and challenge in the islands of the Mediterranean.

- Ethically, as set forth in the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, approved by the WTO General Assembly in October 1999, it is essential not only to preserve the economic, natural, cultural and social heritage, which in the islands of the Mediterranean has proved vital and extremely vulnerable, but also to take steps to ensure that tourists behave responsibly when benefiting from this heritage.
- Not only do environmental abuses impoverish the island heritage, often dramatically and irreversibly, but also, inasmuch as today's tourist acts like a mature, increasingly demanding consumer, the quality, diversity and specific environmental and cultural attributes of each island's tourism supply constitute a key factor of its competitiveness, i.e. its capacity to maintain or improve its trading position in a ever-more open tourism market.

1. **The challenges of Mediterranean tourism are great**, considering that tourism is the first economic activity in Cyprus, Malta, the Balearic Islands and in Sicily, while in other islands it is an important or the main possible or potential source of jobs for the local populations - such as those of the Aegean Sea,

Corsica, Djerba, Aeolian Islands and elsewhere – which, if not engaged in tourism, are forced to migrate.

These challenges refer to financial, political, economic, environmental and sociological aspects, which were discussed throughout the Seminar and are spelt out in the remainder of this document.

4. **The diversity and unequal development of the islands of the Mediterranean.** The Mediterranean Sea has hundreds of islands and numerous archipelagos with highly diverse characteristics: different historical and cultural backgrounds (distinct civilizations and languages), different land areas (from 25,000 km² in Sicily to smaller islands of a few hundred km²), a number of biological peculiarities determined by the number of species endemic to the respective islands, considerable variations in population density (from more than 1,000 inhabitants/km² in Malta to 28 inhabitants/ km² in Corsica), an unequal distribution of tourists (more than 6 million tourists visit Majorca, whereas many islands of the Aegean attract barely 100,000 visitors a year) and very different levels of socio-economic development (ratios of 1:8 in per capita income). Broadly speaking, the transformation of the eastern and southern islands has been less marked than that of the northern and western islands where socio-economic advances have been accompanied by serious environmental impairment. At the same time it should be stressed that the difference of opportunities and resources of all kinds between the large and the small islands (the latter for the most part situated on the coasts of Greece, Croatia and Italy) is usually immense, pointing to the need to encourage the institutions operating in the area to carry out the relevant support and cooperation activities.

II. **General guidelines for the sustainable tourism development and management in the islands of the Mediterranean**

5. **Opting for a sustainable approach to tourism in the islands of the Mediterranean entails institutional leadership, co-ordination with the private sector, social involvement and skilled technical backing.** All tourism stakeholders -governments at central and local level, local authorities, the tourism sector, other sectors providing goods and services for tourism and the tourists themselves- have a shared responsibility to make tourism sustainable. A new type of island planning and management, based on broad institutional and social agreement in which the islanders participate, is then a prerequisite for the preparation of new guidelines for sustainable development. The vision of integrated development and of the future, the sharing of opportunities and risks and the definition of aims for the short, medium and long terms suggest the need for

institutional, economic and social co-operation at all levels. Once the essential consensus has been achieved, it is necessary to combine policy-setting action with voluntary initiatives underpinned by appropriate support (e.g. institutional frameworks, technical support). Furthermore, partnerships among Governments, the tourism industry, and international and other organisations should also be explored and developed.

It is important to note that in the current Euro-Mediterranean context, a multiplicity of financial instruments exist at the disposal of the Mediterranean islands for optimizing their resource base and protecting their environment, and which may be available to help in implementation of projects to protect the environment and promote sustainable use of resources in the context of tourism.

- 6. Tourism as an opportunity and a challenge in the islands of the Mediterranean.** Tourism is one of the activities that have contributed most to transforming the Mediterranean coastline and islands. In twenty years the region has seen a three-fold increase in the number of visitors and a twenty-fold increase in foreign currency receipts. The islands, especially those situated in the north west, have played a key role in this process. During this period, the development of the islands that have witnessed the highest tourism growth has thrown into relief the importance of this activity as a factor of development, the opportunities it creates – diversification of and multiplier effect on various activities and employment, the modernization of businesses and services and raised living standards – as well as its potential risks – deterioration of the traditional economic network, of the physical and cultural environment, of resources and local biodiversity and, when all is said and done, of the quality of island life –, risks that are capable of seriously impairing the very heritage on which the initial development was based. It is precisely the experience gained in islands with a long tourism tradition that today constitutes a yardstick for islands with an emerging tourism sector, so that they can avoid reproducing models that are today obsolete owing to their unsustainability.
- 7. The integration of tourism into sustainable, quality island development in keeping with island conditions.** The experience of the past few decades calls for fresh approaches to tourism development in the Mediterranean. The aim should not be to seek from the outset and at all costs the rapid and unlimited expansion of any form of tourism, but rather to design and develop tourism that draws on local assets, that is well integrated economically, culturally and environmentally with these assets, that supports local employment and economic sectors, and that is sustainable in the medium and long terms. The facts prove that the mere transposition of tourism models catering for interests alien to the islands is not always the most beneficial strategic option for the islanders: such models often result in unsustainability in the medium term, low multiplier effect on other economic activities, small share in total tourist expenditure, etc. The concepts of quality and sustainability should therefore be combined in an indissoluble partnership to

advance the idea of “total quality” which, embracing as it does ethical, strategic and commercial criteria, will eventually hold the key to the competitiveness of destinations and their tourism facilities.

- 8. Tourism and sustainable management.** Any tourism policy should include not only a sustainable development vision, but also a sustainable management dimension. This is not to oppose planning to sustainable management, but rather to examine how, in the framework of sustainable tourism development, will be integrated the economic, social, cultural and ecological aspects. The choice of any sustainable management option requires a high degree of creativity and due consideration given to each island's own characteristics and development level.
- 9. A key concept – island carrying capacity – that can be applied in a host of ways requiring simultaneous action on supply and demand.** The carrying capacity of island systems – i.e. the degree of external impact they can assimilate without unleashing a process of deterioration – is a central qualitative concept (not a mere quantitative formulation) to be borne in mind in drawing up a sustainable tourism scenario for the islands. This also includes maintaining a balance of tourism with other economic activities, so as to achieve an optimum outcome for sustainable development. Large doses of creativity and consideration of the specific attributes and degree of development of each island (size, fragility, type of island development, aims, etc.) are however essential for choosing the best ways, processes and tools for the sustainable management of tourism in each case. At all events, in order to work with the concept of carrying capacity, it is necessary to adopt new criteria and procedures for balanced action on both supply (limits on, quality of and pace of introduction of accommodation establishments and tourism products) and demand (moderation of tourist access to each island depending on its characteristics and carrying capacity) so as to preclude undesirable imbalances.
- 10. Focusing the tourism strategy on the assets, peculiarities and capacities of each island and integrating a diversified supply of attractions.** The peculiarity and authenticity of the natural and cultural resources of each island represent the greatest asset of its tourism supply. It is safe to say that the attraction of the islands for tourists will increasingly depend on their ability to develop their own cultural trajectories and a diversified supply that is as well integrated as possible. It may also be said that this is a condition that must be met if the islands are to be able to distribute the tourism pressure over an extended season and select the most appropriate segments of tourist demand for their destinations. To achieve this, it is no longer enough to possess fine beaches and attractive landscapes: visitors are increasingly demanding the possibility of contact with nature and with the history, culture and inhabitants of the destination.

III. Planning and management of sustainable, quality tourism in the islands of the Mediterranean

- 11. Devising an integrated, quality and preventive tourism strategy for the islands.** To guide the development of quality tourism in a sustainable way in the islands, it is essential for them to devise – sooner rather than later - an integrated and preventive strategy and approach for the sector (Agenda 21 – Integrated Tourism Strategies). This is how the sector’s development can be reconciled in advance with preservation of the island’s carrying capacity and its main economic, cultural, environmental and scenic assets. Only in this way can tourism’s integration into the island system be co-ordinated with all the institutional, business and social partners and its development guided, planned and gauged with a view to the future.
- 12. Instituting preventive measures at “points of access” and the most valuable and fragile areas of each island.** Special importance should also be attached to ensuring that the management of the “points of access” to the islands, i.e. the ports and airports through which tourists pass, is compatible with the general strategy. In this respect, developing sound access systems is as important as adapting them to the carrying capacity of each island. For instance, in the mature islands with a tendency to overcrowding and limited accommodation supply, steps must be taken to prevent overspill at points of access or mismanagement of the flows of excursionists or cruise passengers, which could throw the reception capacity out of balance and reduce the sector’s economic productivity in island destinations. It is also necessary to provide for and properly plan the sustainable management of the most valuable and fragile natural resources of the island. Officially approved planning criteria should be introduced as soon as possible for the most interesting natural areas, the cultural heritage and for coastal, land and marine areas, in order to reconcile tourist access and mobility with preservation of the assets in those areas.
- 13. Promoting the staggering of tourist flows throughout the year: a fundamental and feasible task in the islands of the Mediterranean.** The concentration of the holiday period in the three to four summer months causes alternating “peaks and troughs” in the islands, with concomitant highly negative economic, social and environmental effects, viz.: over-occupancy of tourist centres and facilities; overstretched carrying capacity of the natural and cultural heritage; imbalances and diseconomies in the management of environmental services; low returns on investments; and discontinuous and harsh working conditions in the labour sector. The islands of the Mediterranean do indeed possess the right attractions and climate to re-distribute tourism pressure throughout the year, by combining a larger influx of tourists in the low season with the gradual reduction of visitor congestion in the peak season.

- 14. Taking into account all the interrelations and “complete life cycles” when analysing the sustainable management of natural resources, especially when addressing issues connected with water, energy, materials and waste.** Reducing the consumption of natural resources (especially water), minimizing the use of energy and its impacts and limiting the generation of waste and treating it appropriately are key aspects of the sustainable management of tourism in the islands of the Mediterranean. Such measures should however be analysed in the light of the situation in each island, bearing in mind the interrelations between them (ensuring that solving one problem does not entail aggravating another) and the complete cycles of the resources and products (“from the cradle to grave”). It is moreover essential to involve businesses and tourists alike in the problem-solving process.
- 15. Appropriate design of the tourist mobility system.** Tourism and transport are two closely connected sectors, which is why the management of tourist mobility in the islands is another issue of paramount importance. Besides the need to assert the vital importance of and dependence on systems of access to the islands from the outside world, it is necessary to design inland areas and systems of tourist mobility (tourists may travel up to 20-30 Km a day in some islands) in such a way as to ensure that the services in demand are close at hand, to preclude the unlimited expansion of inland travel and of the relevant infrastructure and to promote travel on foot and by non-motorized vehicles for short distances and use of public transport for longer distances. Similarly, islands need to assess carefully the whole range of impacts that may result from an increase of cruiseship tourist visits into their territories.
- 16. The planning and management of tourism taking into account quality and sustainability criteria requires innovation and use of new technologies and working tools.** New tools are being tried and tested to aid implementation of the concepts and approach of sustainable tourism. Special mention should be made of the following:
- Ecolabels, certificates and other voluntary sustainable quality initiatives (often based on ISO, EMAS, EFQM and other standards) should not only be geared to the diverse situations and resources of the various islands, but also be accompanied by precise institutional regulations. However, care should be taken for these instruments not to be used as ‘non-tariff’ trade barriers.
 - Ecotaxes and other economic, financial and commercial measures are innovative and interesting and should be studied in relation to the situation of each island.

- Observatories, barometers and indicators for monitoring the sustainability of development are vital tools for the responsible management of island tourism.

- The new techniques for displaying, storing and exchanging information on land-use which, like the Geographical Information Systems (GISs), provide an insight into the situation and expedite decisions on a wide range of issues, also afford the prospect of innovating and improving the management of island institutions.
- Information and communication technologies, Internet and similar initiatives, such as EUMEDIS, to be launched soon in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Similarly, in the more mature islands showing symptoms of overcrowding, a broad social debate is under way, which is yielding new values and concepts: the total quality concept, land reconversion and urban restoration, moratoriums on tourism expansion and slackening of the pace of growth, the idea of acting on both supply and demand, etc.

17. Towards tourism benchmarking for islands. In the light of increased international competition it is necessary to establish benchmarking tools to know what is happening elsewhere and to take the necessary corrective measures. It is a continuous process of identification and learning of best practices within the sector, as well as identifying what is particularly well done within the organization (i.e. external and internal benchmarking).

18. Investing in training and sustainability awareness programmes for destinations and for tourists visiting the islands of the Mediterranean. The concepts and perceptions that support the sustainability of tourism development are new and often out of step with the dominant values of the tourism policies of the past few decades. They include integration of the economic, social, cultural and ecological aspects, and involve a new type of island planning and management, based on broad institutional and social agreement in which the islanders participate. It is therefore essential to invest in awareness programmes to promote understanding of all aspects of sustainability in tourism - economic, environmental, social and cultural - at all levels and to take advantage of all the possibilities of creating new professions and job opportunities in the islands. In each island it is particularly important to provide training on these subjects in institutions and to their technical staff, to businessmen and in local schools, besides conducting campaigns targeting the population as a whole. So far as tourists from abroad are concerned, they should be provided with information in their places of origin under agreements with tour operators and travel agencies, at ports and airports and in the island's accommodation establishments, with the co-operation of the appropriate people.

IV. Promoting inter-island co-operation in the Mediterranean

- 19. It is necessary to promote inter-island co-operation in order to progress towards more sustainable bases for tourism.** In spite of the many valuable but isolated measures being taken in the islands of the Mediterranean, it is essential to invest in training, technical innovation and technological advances if they opt for the integration of tourism into balanced island development. By working together and learning one from the other they will all enhance their operational capacity. It is therefore important to transcend the limited scope of many islands when it comes to possessing sufficient human resources and specialised means and to promote the formation of inter-island co-operation networks capable of co-ordinating the activities of universities, institutions, NGOs, businesses, etc. In this respect, it is advisable to use such instruments as the MEDA regulations, resulting from the 1995 Barcelona Conference. Certain regional and international organisations could play a prominent role, in particular the Mediterranean Action Plan, WTO and UNEP, in fostering the development of networks and associations of co-operation, with particular reference to the smaller islands of the Mediterranean.

ANNEX 1

LIST OF PRESENTATIONS AND CASE STUDIES
REVIEWED AT THE SEMINAR

- *An ecological approach in accommodation structures*, presented by Mr. Lorenzo Canova, ACTA, Italy
- *An integrated product policy for a sustainable tourism strategy in the Mediterranean islands*, presented by Mrs. Stefania Minestrini, ANPA – Italian Environment Agency, Italy
- *Chambers of Commerce position on tourism in islands*, presented by Mr. Georges Giourgas, Chambers Group for the Development of Greek Isles
- *Code of Conduct for marinas*, presented by Mr. Nigel Tansley Thomas, Foundation for Environmental Education in Europe
- *Competitiveness and environmental management of tourism supply in Mediterranean islands*, presented by Mr. Robert Lanquar, WTO Consultant, France
- *Ecotaxes and self-regulation: possible ways for sustainable tourism in islands*, presented by Prof. Miguel Cuerdo Mir, University Rey Juan Carlos I, Madrid, Spain
- *Environmental Policies in Water Treatment*, presented by Mrs. Francisca Pol Cabrer, Adviser to Deputy Mayor, Palma de Majorca, Balearic Islands, Spain
- *Environmental sustainability of tourism in the Mediterranean*, presented by Mr. Richard Tapper, Consultant UNEP, United Kingdom
- *Features of Sustainable Development in Greek Islands: Kefalonia*, presented by Mrs. Maria Maraka-Romanos, Head of Sector, Regional Planning, National Tourism Organization, Greece
- *Integrated Plan of Tourism Development for the Mediterranean Islands*, presented by Mr. Antonio Barone, Heritage & Tourism Engineering, Italy
- *Lanzarote in the Biosphere: A strategy for integrated sustainable island development*, presented by Mr. Fernando Prats, WTO consultant, Spain

- ***Local authority perspective I***, presented by Mr. Panagiotis Skliros, Mayor of Lefkada, Greece
- ***Local authority perspective II***, presented by Mr. Michele Giacomantonio, Mayor of Lipari, Italy
- ***Opening remarks***, presented by Ms. Giulia Carbone, Programme Officer, Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, UNEP, France
- ***Public-private sector co-operation for sustainable development of tourism***, presented by Mr. Christian Del Bono, Centre for Tourism Services of the Aeolian Islands, CST, Italy
- ***Sewage, Water, Waste and Energy: Tourism implications from a Maltese Perspective***, presented by Mr. Alan Vella, Planning Officer, Planning Authority, Malta
- ***Spatial impact of tourism development in Majorca***, presented by Prof. José Antonio Manchado, University of the Balearic Islands, Spain
- ***Strategic Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development in Cyprus***, presented by Mrs. Athena Metaxas, Architect, Planning Department, Cyprus Tourism Organization, Cyprus
- ***Sustainable management of tourism in Port-Cros***, presented by Ms. Nicole Jensen, Deputy Director, Parc National Port-Cros, France
- ***Sustainable Tourism in Cres Losinj archipelago***, presented by Mr. Andrija Randic, Head, Office of the Sea and Coast Protection, Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, Croatia
- ***The dynamics of sustainable tourism development in Mediterranean islands***, presented by Prof. Harry Coccossis, University of Egee UNEP-MAP Blue Plan consultant, Greece
- ***The fundamental problem of water management in tourist areas of the Mediterranean islands***, presented by Dr. Ettore D'Elia, Docente di Protezione Idraulica del Territorio, Faculty of Architecture, University of Naples "Federico II", Italy
- ***The Ulixes 21 project in Mediterranean islands***, presented by Mr. Jordi Calabuig i Serra, MED-Forum, EcoMediterrànea, Spain
- ***Tour operators point of view and contribution to sustainability***, presented by Dr. Liliana Baldi, Chief, Orizzonti, Italy
- ***Tourism and sustainable development in the Mediterranean***, presented by Mrs. Elizabeth Coudert, Centre of Regional Activities, Blue Plan, France

- *Tourism carrying capacity assessment in Malta – The implications*, presented by Mr. Jeffrey Cutajar, Director, Product Planning and Development, Malta Tourism Authority

- *Tourism sustainability and market competitiveness in the islands of the Mediterranean*, presented by Mr. Eugenio Yunis, Head, Sustainable Development, WTO
- *VIVARA, Association of Friends of Small Islands*
Mr. Roberto Gabriele, Dottore in Scienze Naturali, Associazione Vivara, Italian Association of Friends of Small Islands
- Presentation by Ms. Ann-Marie Kjellander, on the activities of Fondazione Axel Munthe, Anacapri, Italy (including a visit to Villa San Michele)

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