



Intervention Panel
**“International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, 2017:
the Year in Review”**

Closing Ceremony
of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, 2017
Palace of Nations (Room XX), Geneva, Switzerland
19 December 2017, 14:00-17:30

The International Year of Sustainable Tourism and the objectives set by the World Tourism Organisation helped us to raise awareness for our policy, to make visible that our own goals are shared by such an important tourism institution.

In recent years, tourism to the Balearic Islands has grown significantly and despite having positive consequences and being the most important industry in the islands, this has also brought with it a series of social and environmental challenges.

As Balearic Government, we are well aware of these challenges. Our mission at the Balearic Islands tourist board is to support a sustainable tourism model so that tourism to the islands benefits our local communities

Mallorca, Ibiza and – on a minor scale – Menorca and Formentera are mass tourism destinations. An important part of the development on the islands has been able thanks to tourism. But the steady increase of visitors, especially in the high season, is starting to be a problem.

As Mediterranean islands, both our territory and our resources are limited. So it goes without saying that increase of visitors can not be unlimited.

We already started in 2016 to implement policies aimed to tackle negative impacts of mass tourism by introducing a sustainable tourism tax.

This tax is applicable to all overnight stays amongst visitors, excepted children under 16. The amount of the tax depends on the length of stay, the type of accommodation and the time of year

The purpose of this tourism tax is to raise funds for sustainable tourism initiatives such as promotion of sustainable public transport to natural spaces and beaches in Mallorca, restoration of the ancient costal path “Camí de Cavalls” in Menorca, protection for the ses Salines Natural Park in Ibiza or improvement of water supply in Formentera.

Tax income helps us to reduce the cost of tourism and to improve basic infrastructure that embellish environment and raise the value of our tourist destination.

At the same time, we changed towards a new tourism promotion strategy, focusing on growing a sustainable tourism model. Our promotional activities look at generating visitation outside of the main summer season and promoting the more authentic and cultural aspects of the islands. This would help to have more stable contracts and to generate a better spread income or distribution of the benefits of tourism.

We are aware of the seasonal challenges and in particular, the oversaturation of tourists in specific areas during the peak summer months. This is a concern for residents and local businesses and we are looking into a series of measures to address this.

One of the issues is the rise of privately owned rentals through platforms such as Airbnb, which is making suitably priced accommodation inaccessible to locals and seasonal workers, and has made it challenging for governments to put a cap on accommodation facilities. We have taken two measures to address this: firstly by limiting the number of places available for tourists in hotels and other accommodation, and by introducing a new law which prohibits platforms from putting up flats for rent without a licence.

Looking forward, we are working on a series of other initiatives to address the challenges we face as a mature tourism destination. This is not always easy, because many only think in short terms and don't want to see the importance of the changes we are introducing. It is delicate to talk about limitations on tourism, but we consider it indispensable – also with regard to the local population and their acceptance of tourism.

Tourism is hugely important to the economy of the Balearic Islands. We recognise we have our challenges, and we are well aware of the concerns of the local residents related to mass tourism. We take their concerns seriously and are looking into what additional measures can be implemented going forward.

It is our duty to take measures to make tourism sustainable. We want to assure that our grandchildren still will be able to live on our beautiful islands with their unique landscapes and environment, and we want to assure that the grandchildren of our visitors will still be able to enjoy all this with us.

If it takes bold steps to achieve this, we are willing to take them.

We were therefore very happy to be partner of this International Year, and we would like to express our gratitude to the WTO to raise awareness of the importance of a more sustainable tourism.

Thank you very much