

TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN FRANCE

The various regions of France harbour a wide variety of riches, and it is these very regions that have helped make our country the most popular destination in the world for international tourists, placing it 3rd in the world in terms of revenue from international tourism. Tourism plays a significant economic role, accounting for 7.3% of the GDP, and is the principal surplus item of the balance of payments. Over 270,000 companies were operating in the sector in 2011, with a paid workforce representing the equivalent of over a million full-time positions.

Tourism demand will continue to increase. Indeed, there is significant potential for additional tourists, particularly as a third of French citizens do not take holidays, whilst two-thirds of domestic tourism demand stems from residents.

The tourism industry is highly concentrated, with half of all tourism-related overnight stays by residents taking place between July and September and the population of nearly a dozen French départements, and those on the coast in particular, doubling in size during peak season.

This, of course, presents a number of fundamental issues for our country to deal with, including how to accommodate potential additional tourists at a time when accommodation in particular is becoming outdated and is no longer always able to meet guests' requirements. How can tourism be

reconciled with a respect for the 'load-bearing capacity' of certain regions that are having to deal with mass influxes of tourists over a short period of time? How can we ensure that tourism, as a high-growth industry, is sustainable in economic, social and environmental terms? How can we enable as many people as possible to take a holiday? How can we improve the training provided for professionals and the position of seasonal workers? How do we deal with the challenge of management when the majority of players in the tourism sector and the lack of collaboration between them are detrimental to the efficiency of expenditure and the clear perception of the tourism offering?

The ESEC wishes to highlight four issues, namely responding to the increase in the number of tourists in both a qualitative and quantitative manner, promoting diversified tourism that is appropriate to the

'capacity' of the respective regions, dealing with the diversity of the visitors that the country attracts and developing a form of tourism that is based on the assets of each region.

The ESEC has formulated a series of proposals designed to encourage the sustainable development of tourism across all of the French regions.



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CREATING JOINT REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

- Creating a joint regional tourism development project based on well-known 'brands' by means of contractual partnerships between local authorities. Developing the necessary engineering works with the support of Atout France, appointing a leader to monitor the project. Presenting the project to local residents to encourage them to support it.
- Designing tools to facilitate the application of the notion of 'load-bearing capacity' which should then be introduced at regional level.

PROMOTING A MORE EVEN DISTRIBUTION OF TOURISM IN TERMS OF BOTH SPACE AND TIME

- Developing business tourism by means of a policy that incorporates transportation from the airport to the trade show and improves security.
- Developing seaside, winter sports and rural school trip options and giving greater consideration to tourism among older people.
- Increasing the contribution of the Social Tourism Investment Fund (fonds "Tourisme Social Investissement") and other contributions to social and solidarity tourism.

DEVELOPING NEW FORMS OF ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY TOURISM AND LOCAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Maintaining the means allocated to preserving natural areas. Taking the environmental aspect into consideration in all areas of tourism policy. Encouraging the circulation of 'good practices'. Looking at ways of improving the legibility and raising the profile of labels and seals of approval.
- Taking the natural risks associated with climate change into account within the regional authorities concerned by means of heightened vigilance with regards to planning permission and raising awareness among tourists.
- Encouraging regional players and professionals in the tourism industry to offer walking and cycling tours for tourists.
- Developing high-end sustainable tourism in the overseas departments and territories with a strong emphasis on eco-tourism and domestic tourism.

USING THE DIGITAL OFFERING TO ITS FULL POTENTIAL

- Creating and promoting a public portal detailing all certified and approved offerings (eco-labels, accessibility, etc.) among the general public. Providing access to all national and local tourist information for France via the Atout France digital portal.
- Encouraging information brokers to include sustainable tourism among the criteria for choosing a destination.

DEVELOPING A WIDE VARIETY OF ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS AND MAINTAINING THE QUALITY OF THE EXISTING OFFERING

- Examining the possibility of transferring the benefits associated with new tourist construction projects to renovation or onsite reconstruction projects, subject to a certain rental period.
- Increasing accessibility by means of a special offering within organisations in the social and solidarity tourism (SST) sector and examining the matter with the help of an impact study of the consequences in terms of aid for renovation projects undertaken by organisations benefiting from SST approval.
- Incorporating private accommodation rental platforms in tourism policies by including them in the visitor tax scheme.

IMPROVING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE TOURIST TRANSPORTATION OFFERING

- Taking tourist travel into account in the design of transport and urban travel plans. Completing and standardising the trans-European passenger transport network, putting in place additional bus routes and charter transport services linked to multi-modal hubs and strengthening inter-city connections, particularly by rail.
- Developing a multi-lingual multi-modal instant information service at major stations and multi-modal terminals.
- Promoting the concept of carpooling. Encouraging the development of green multi-purpose cycle routes and cycling in urban areas, developing local public transport networks and promoting soft mobility in towns and cities.

PROMOTING TRAINING TO IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT

- Incorporating modules on the issues associated with the digital sphere and community management into ongoing professional training programmes aimed at those working in the tourism industry.
- Supporting the development of employers' associations (GE – *Groupements d'employeurs*) at regional level. Introducing a GE approval procedure.
- Maintaining the principle of social equality and making investment corresponding to the value of works to renovate or construct accommodation for seasonal workers exempt from tax.

IMPROVING GOVERNANCE

- Providing the ministry responsible for tourism, with the support of the INSEE, with a reinforced statistical unit to produce more reliable statistics at a faster rate.
- Increasing the involvement of both public and private players by pooling the means to promote France as a destination that lives up to expectations.
- Launching a national information campaign to help raise awareness of the importance of the tourism industry and of sustainable tourism.