

Steps towards Sustainable Tourism in Coastal Areas

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Abstract

Tourism is an economic activity that depends strongly on the environment and its quality. The quality of the environment determines whether a tourist chooses a destination. Accordingly, the tourism sector should not be seen just from an economic point of view. Environmental conservation, biodiversity maintenance and social and cultural development and conservation are critical factors for the implementation and definition of any tourist development strategy, if it is pretended that this sector becomes attractive and competitive in the national and international economy, and if it is pretended that the sector shows capacity to innovate and create new products and attract new markets. However, the philosophy should be "conserve and protect" using the resource for the recreation and leisure.

The interest for sustainable tourism comes as a reaction to the results of the implementation of tourist development strategies that were supported by massive offer and demand models and with a strong constructive pressure on the territory. These strategies led to great levels of urban occupation and environmental degradation that are nowadays among the principal factors that explain the lack of interest and demand for these areas. This phenomenon is particularly evident on coastal areas. These areas, which are considered as the preferential areas for the tourism sector, suffered, or are suffering, a reduction in terms of demand, due to the saturation of the sun and sea product, urban pressure and infrastructure overload, with clear consequences on the environment. However, every coastal area is unique, in the point of view of environmental and cultural resources. The opportunity for the development of new tourist strategies for these areas is substantial, according to the environmental, cultural and historical resources of each coastal place.

The Portuguese government launched, in January 2006, the guidelines for the National Strategic Plan of Tourism (PENT), emphasising the strategic value of this sector for the national economy. Tourism is seen as a strategic activity of vital importance for the socio-economic development of our country, which needs, for that, a competitive, structures and quality offer.

In this study, we offer a tourist development approach that is more friendly of the environment and of the local cultures and traditions of coastal areas. This perspective should be a way to sustain competitive and attractive development models and that can be able to attract new markets and renew coastal places. It is our purpose to include sustainable tourism in the development processes and in the attraction, interest and renew capacity of coastal areas in Portugal. It is also our purpose to evaluate the environmental coastal resources board and its importance for the tourism sector, according to the diversity of coastal ecosystems and its conditionings, and contributing to the improvement of environmental quality of coastal areas, specially in those areas that need a renew through the implementation of sustainable tourism programs.

Doing so we will start a comparative evaluation of what is being done in Europe in terms of sustainable tourism in coastal areas, in a way to understand how these strategies are structured, as well as to identify costs and benefits of the same strategies.

Keywords: tourism, coastal areas, sustainable tourism strategies, planning.

Tourism and Environment

Tourism is one of the greater economic and social phenomena nowadays. From an activity that was appreciated by just small elite of population in the beginning of 20th century, it turned of a massif phenomenon in the more developed countries. The big expansion of tourism occurred in the 70's, reaching nowadays almost all population of different nations (UN, 2001).

Tourism sector integrates a set of economic activities, and it is considered frequently as a huge industry. It is in the moment the most important international sector of trade and services. In some countries, tourism has turned into the most important sector of economic activity, managing the biggest source of economic exchange and profits outwards, and creating an important and expressive source of work (UN, 2001). Tourism industry has an accelerated development and modernization, mainly due to the impulse of technology and communications, development of transports and also due to the diversification of interests and tourist objectives (Begazo, 2001 in Congreso Virtual Internacional de Cultura y Turismo).

Tourism is an activity of great importance in the international economy, and one that establishes the biggest relationship with sustainable existence of an equilibrated environment. (Partidário, s/d, in *Economia e Perspectiva*). However, environmental damages associated to this increasing phenomenon, especially in coastal areas, are frequently referred. The damages result not only from the spatial and temporal concentration of tourist, but also from the associated problems to this economic and social development, which is so quick that does not permit any control above the dynamics that origin.

As a result of rapid growth of tourism sector, traditional and emergent local destinations are facing strong pressure on its natural, cultural and socio-economic environments. There is a general acknowledgment that uncontrolled growth of tourism takes, in a short time, to negative impacts to the environment and to the society, destroying, in this way, the basis that have promoted the development and production of tourism. Thus, it is possible to understand the progressive trend for the conception of alternative tourist dynamics, in a way to promote real effects of tourism in local and regional sustainable development processes. In this way, we can verify a strong diversification in tourist activities, through the promotion and use of new tourist products (Sirgado, 1996). If doesn't exist a concern in conserving these resources, it can emerge a threat to the viability of economic and sustainable development of tourism. It is necessary that tourists, local population and planners are sensitized for the

preservation and protection of natural and environmental resources, in such a way that these resources can maintain tourist interest and economic viability.

The complex relationship between tourism and environment is dependent of diverse environmental characteristics of each destination, as well as it is from the impacts that this activity can produce in each one of these locals. Environment is a tourist resource. In this way, tourism and environment should depend one of another and also benefit one of another. Researches realized about tourism refer natural and cultural environment as the principal reason to visit local destinations. As examples of these visits it is possible to identify visits to historical places, cultural and natural heritages, traditional costumes, sightseeing, and bird watching (Butler, 1991).

There is a strong environmental concern, such as nature protection and biodiversity conservation, since environment is considered attractive in terms of tourism. This concern has been adopted all over the world, which takes to the appliace of the sustainable development principles into the tourism sector.

The Importance of Sustainable Tourism

The interest for sustainable tourism emerged due to the increasing concern felt especially in those areas where tourism activity has a strong massif character. This massif character has taken to strong environmental impacts in tourist destinations, especially in coastal areas, which takes to untypical areas and consequently to the lost of interest through its potential visitants. Due to this reason, sustainable tourism concept has raised, in such a way that this is developed satisfying and protecting regions and local populations, being part of the general sustainable development concept (WTO, 1993).

According to Cocossis (1996, in Droy, 2003) there are many possibilities of interpretation of sustainable tourism concept. These interpretations depend on the strategy that each local pretends to implement. Thus, Cocossis refer four possibilities of interpretation: 1. economic sustainability of tourism, emphasizing the promotion and improvement of tourist destinations image; 2. sustainable tourism development, based on economic perspective, but ensuring long-term viability of this activity, considering the environmental quality as an important factor of tourism competitiveness; 3. ecologically sustainable development, with a more conservationist character, giving priority to the protection of natural resources

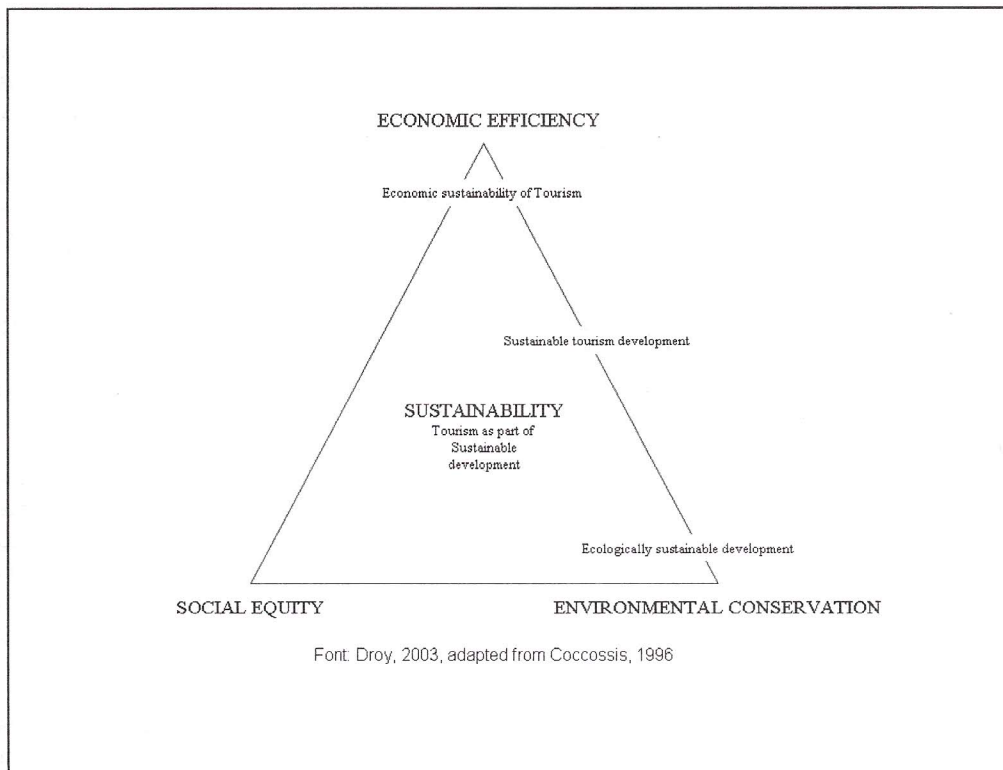


Figure 1: Interpretation of sustainable tourism concept

and ecosystems; and the last one, 4. tourism as part of sustainable development, which considers environmental conservation as the principal objective for the economic efficiency and social equity (based on Coccossis, 1996, in Droy, 2003).

Sustainable tourism embraces social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. In this way, we think that this last interpretation is the one of which ideas of a sustainable tourism strategy should converge. In such a manner, it is necessary to change attitudes and behaviours about the consumption of tourist product.

There are many objectives that are pretended to reach with the application of sustainable tourism strategies. These objectives are defined accordingly to the diverse characteristics of each area, such as natural resources, involved population, local entities, existing infrastructures, etc. However, we can refer as general objectives of each sustainable tourism strategy:

- Identify existent tourist resources, and how them are being used;
- Investigate the economic value and the employment generated by tourism sector;
- Identify positive and negative effects on environment;
- Identify tourist resources that require conservation and protection;
- Analyse actual and potential target markets and the offer for sustainable tourism;

- Identify opportunities for new products and infrastructures of sustainable tourism;
- Identify and promote the participation of local population in the strategy;
- Review the relationship between tourism and other sectors of industry, including aquaculture, fishery and agriculture (adapted from Destination Marlborough, 2002).

These are general objectives that should be reviewed and changed during the elaboration of the sustainable tourism strategy, whenever it is necessary.

Sustainable Tourism and Coastal Zones

Coastal zones were always considered as preferential areas for the setting of population. The use of sea for transport and trade and the richness of coastal waters led to this setting of population, and, consequently, to the development and growth of several urban areas (CE, 1999).

Tourism is considered as one of the most important activities in coastal zones; however, this activity has strong and negative impacts in these same areas. Tourist activity started to be developed without any control and with the absence of an effective planning system and appropriated to the dimension and intensity of emergent dynamics. This situation transformed coastal zones in areas with a strong pressure in the environment. This pressure is yet more evident in summer season due to sun and

beach products. In this season, coastal destinations, especially the one's from Western Europe, duplicate or even triplicate its population, without having infrastructures that support this raise, which will take to an unsustainability of these destinations. There are yet some other places that have these infrastructures but that are underused all over the year except in summer season. In this way there is a waste of investment in making these infrastructures profitable. It is precisely in these fields that sustainable tourism has importance.

Due to the specified problems, several of these coastal areas need a renewal in tourist resources. In Western European coast it is visible a decadence of tourism, due to massif tourism in summer season. Therefore, many of these coastal destinations are starting to apply some sustainability principles to the tourism sector. Sustainable tourism can help coastal destinations both in terms of environmental qualifications of tourist infrastructures and a more efficient use of them (trying to overpass the seasonality effect), and also by improving new tourist products based on local and regional natural resources, cultural resources and landscape specificities. In this way, sustainable tourism can be seen as a way to renew coastal destinations, through the promotion of natural and cultural potentialities of these areas.

Sustainable Tourism Strategies in European Coastal Zones

Sustainable Tourism in Europe

Europe is one of the most visited places in the world and it has a huge diversity and density of tourist attractions. For this reason, tourism is the largest service industry in European Union, which can be noticed by the growth in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the last years (CoR, 2006). Actually, tourism sector in Europe includes a variety of products and destinations, as well as a vast quantity of enterprises and manager entities, both public and private (CCE, 2001).

European tourism, its enterprises and destinations face important challenges, which could constitute opportunities or threats to cross. However, an overall strategy for tourism in Europe is not yet defined (CoR, 2006). In this way, there is a strong opportunity to adequate tourism to new sustainable forms by taking advantage of natural and cultural resources diversity and existing infrastructures. For these reasons, it was elaborated from the European Commission the communication "A renewed EU Tourism Policy: Towards a stronger partnership for European Tourism" (COM (2006) 134 final). This communication refers the strategic importance of

sustainable tourism, stating that "the need to improve the attractiveness of the regions acts as an incentive to an increasing number of destinations and stakeholders to turn towards more sustainable and environmentally friendly practices and policies. Sustainable tourism plays a major role in the preservation and enhancement of the cultural and natural heritage in an ever expanding number of areas, ranging from arts to local gastronomy, crafts or the preservation of biodiversity. This in turn impacts in a positive way on employment and growth creation." (COM (2006) 134 final)

In the communications "Basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism" it was proposed the elaboration of an Agenda 21 for the European Tourism (COM (2003) 716 Final), that should be completed in the end of 2007. The Commission has also defined some specific actions of promotion of economic and social sustainability of the European tourism, such as (COM (2006) 134 final):

- "To identify national and international measures to support tourism-related SME's and set up a good practice exchange process;
- To evaluate the economic impact of better accessibility in the tourism sector on macroeconomic growth and employment, business opportunities for SME's, the quality of services and competitiveness;
- Facilitating the exchange of 'tourism for all' good practice;
- Publishing a handbook on 'How to set up Learning Areas in the Tourism sector' in order to support the upgrading of skills in the tourism sector with the involvement of all stakeholders;
- Studying employment trends in coastal and sea-related tourism sectors;
- Developing official statistics and commissioning *e-Business W@tch* studies to assess future implications and impact of e-business on the tourism industry;
- Continuation of its initiatives and collaboration with the Member States, the industry and the World Tourism Organisation in order to combat the sexual exploitation of children, especially when such crimes are committed by tourists."

According to these measures, some coastal European areas started to elaborate or think in some sustainable tourism strategies. It is important for us to understand how these strategies are structured in a way to identify costs and benefits of these same strategies.

Examples of Sustainable Tourism Strategies in European Coastal Zones

The research about sustainable tourism strategies in European coastal zones reveals that there is a huge amount of information in different scales of analysis. It was possible also to identify some documents that refer recommendations of how these strategies should be elaborated, at a national, regional and local level. There are already some regions in Europe that defined actions to promote sustainable tourism. These are the Mediterranean area, which is covered by Barcelona Convention and Mediterranean Action Plan (Map) and supported by MEDA programme; Alps region, covered by the Additional Protocol on Tourism and Recreation to the Alpine Convention; and Baltic Countries, covered by the Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region (CoR, 2006). However, according to this research, it looks like the implementation of these strategies is occurring, essentially at a local level, as pilot-projects.

We will present some European case studies belonging to states with different levels of economic development and where tourist industry has different importance on national Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Municipality of Calvia – Spain

Spain is a country which has a strong tourism activity, essentially due to its enormous coastal area, exploring, in this way, the sun and beach product. According to World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), Spain Travel and Tourism (T&T) Industry is expected to contribute 6,9% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the T&T Economy is expected to contribute 17,8% to GDP in 2006 (WTTC, 2006), which evidence the importance of tourism in this country.

Calvia Municipality is one of the most important tourist destinations in the Balearic Islands and one of the most visited by tourists. It is considered as a typical example of massif tourism and urban pressure resulting from sun and beach tourist activity in the Northwest Mediterranean (Calvia Local Agenda 21).

Its infrastructures and equipments started to reveal decadence, and a strong environmental degradation has been noticed, which took to a lost of competitiveness and tourist attraction (Calvia Local Agenda 21: Sustainable Development in a Tourism Municipality). Moreover, tourist industry has destroyed the biggest part of this coastal zone to construct these infrastructures to receive tourists. At economical terms, this municipality is based only and exclusively in tourist industry, with a markedly

seasonal character, which origin seasonal fluctuation in terms of employment, and with periods of strong unemployment (low season) and 'complete employment' (high season) (Calvia Local Agenda 21: Sustainable Development in a Tourism Municipality).

Due to strong urban and tourist pressure, and demand reduction due to the lack of environmental quality, Calvia Municipality needed to implement a strategy that try to revert this situation. Therefore, since 1996 Calvia Municipality is implementing a sustainable tourism strategy, through its Local Agenda 21. Through the application of Agenda 21 principles defined in the Rio Conference in 1992, it is ensured financial, social, cultural and environmental future through a strategic conception of tourist development that considers environmental factor as the key aspect (Calvia Local Agenda 21: Sustainable Development in a Tourism Municipality).

According to the document "Calvia Local Agenda 21: Sustainable Development in a Tourism Municipality", we can refer some of the impacts of the application of this strategy:

- "Halt to uncontrolled urban growth. Declassification of 1350 hectares of building land, equivalent to 40000 tourist beds;
- Urban renewal and remodelling. Demolition of buildings on sea front and conversion into park areas. Remodelling of coastal areas. Evident increase in the quality of the urban area, both public and private, and increase of tourist satisfaction;
- Application of programmes for optimising natural resources;
- Improvement of the quality of the public services and tourist establishments;
- Consciousness by the bodies, institutions and society about the need to act;
- Recognition of the project on a local, regional, national and international level. Calvia was awarded the European Prize for Sustainable Cities 1997;
- Achievement of institutional support for the development of the project;
- Wide social consensus and active participation of all the agents involved in the process; Assessment Forum, Special Subject Committees, Institutions, University, etc."

Through this project, which has been turned into a pilot-project for massif coastal destinations in the Mediterranean, it is possible to learn some lessons and good practices. As a principal lesson we can refer that massif coastal destinations could experience a renewal tourist process, through the effective application of Agenda 21 principles, with a strong participation and social consensus and

ensuring the capacity to satisfy economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations. It is also important to refer that this resort had the capacity “to redefine its strategies by following an integrated conception of local development” (Calvia Local Agenda 21: Sustainable Development in a Tourism Municipality).

Cirali – Turkey

According to World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), Turkey Travel and Tourism (T&T) Industry is expected to contribute 5,7% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the T&T Economy is expected to contribute 13,5% to GDP in 2006 (WTTC, 2006). In this way, we can affirm that tourist activity has a great importance in Turkey. That can be proved by the importance of tourism in coastal zones of Turkey, since its economy is strongly dependent of a mass tourism, which was formed at the 80's, causing negative impacts in the environment. Since the 90's, Turkish coastal zones started to notice a decrease in the occupation of tourist infrastructures, without reaching the expected values (Tourism and Coastal Zone Management in Turkey; The Cirali Practice).

Cirali is a significant village from natural, historical and socio-cultural perspectives. In a way to prevent a wasteful tourist expansion, with illegal constructions, it was elaborated a coastal zone management plan to promote sustainable development of this area. Illegal constructions are one of the biggest problems found in this area (Priority Action Programme Regional, 2005).

Several thematic studies were carried out with respect to water quality, fauna, flora, sociological aspects, laws and regulations, city planning, geology, geomorphology, ecotourism potential, and organic agriculture (Priority Action Programme Regional, 2005). It was elaborated a set of activities in a way to promote the dissemination of the plan for all population. To facilitate public awareness several activities were implemented, such as (UNEP/MAP/PAP, 2001a in Priority Action Programme Regional, 2005):

- “An environmental education programme in the Cirali Primary School;
- Computer classes and the donation of computers to the Cirali Primary School;
- Outdoor activities, educational activities (i.e. slideshows and video films), for students of the Cirali Primary School;
- English language courses for the young women in the village;
- The local people of Cirali were offered practical training courses conducted by experts on ecotourism and organic agriculture;

- The first “Cirali Turtle Festival” was organised by DHKD”.

With the elaboration of this plan, Cirali was considered as a Best Practice 2000 by the UN-Habitat. This acknowledgment was due to the contribution of this plan to the environmental conservation and improvement of life quality of local population (Tourism and Coastal Zone Management in Turkey; The Cirali Practice).

Galway City – Ireland

Ireland is a country which has a T&T industry percentage of GDP that is low, comparatively to the other case studies. Irish Travel and Tourism (T&T) Industry is expected to contribute just 2,3% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and the T&T Economy is expected to contribute 7,7% to GDP in 2006 (WTTC, 2006). For this reason, there are beginning to appear some projects of sustainable tourism in a way to promote tourism, which is the case of Galway.

Galway is a city situated in a coastal area, which is an attractive reason to live and visit. Galway city and County Tourism Committee recognized the need of a bigger integration and coordination between different agents that operate in the Galway County in a way to maximize the benefits of existing resources. For this reason it was elaborated the document “Developing Sustainable Tourism in Galway – A framework of action” (Galway, 2003-2012).

This coastal zone, different from the other case studies, since tourism has not a mass character, also felt the need of application of sustainability criteria, because its tourist product started to show a decrease, according to the data that is referred in the document “Developing Sustainable Tourism in Galway – A framework of action” (Galway, 2003-2012).

In this way, some objectives were defined accordingly to the key-aspects in order that all sectors of Galway County converged to the same target: “to further develop Galway as a vibrantly unique destination centre on its cultural identity and built on a foundation of co-operation and integration” (Galway, 2003-2012). These objectives are:

1. “Marketing - Key overall objectives aimed at developing marketing activities in Galway include:
 - a) to promote Galway's existing product base through increased co-ordination
 - b) to increase year-round tourism dispersal and average length of stay

- c) to undertake regular market research aimed at matching Galway's product with relevant market demands
 - d) to promote a choice of value for money and all-weather attractions in Galway aimed at extending the tourism season.
2. Access - Long and short term objectives aimed at improving access to and within Galway address each of the issues set out below:
- a) to facilitate increased international and domestic air access to the West and enhance transport links to key tourism locations within Galway
 - b) to work in partnership with relevant authorities to provide additional rail infrastructure and services to the West via Western Rail Corridor and services along the Galway City and County
 - c) to integrate tourism needs and objectives in road infrastructure planning and other strategic planning processes for Galway City and County.
3. Product development - Long and short-term objectives aimed at promoting sustainability and cultural development of our product base include:
- a) to co-ordinate public, private and community resources to create a National "flagship" attraction or series of attractions for Galway City and County
 - b) to provide visitors and residents with a choice of quality special interest products based on our natural and cultural resources
 - c) to establish Galway as a leading National and Europeans waterbased activity destination through targeted investment throughout Galway
4. Servicing the visitor - Actions aimed at maximising tourism satisfaction rates whilst visiting Galway include:
- a) to nurture and maximise the hospitality and friendliness of Galway, its people, products and services
 - b) to achieve standards of excellence in service provision via inter-sectoral cooperation and co-ordination
 - c) to further develop Galway as a 'value for money destination'
 - d) to promote and develop Galway as a distinctive, unique, cultural destination by emphasising its Irish Celtic tradition."

To reach these objectives, some actions were defined, each one being attributed to each partner, which will be responsible by its coordination and implementation. Galway city and County Tourism Committee will facilitate the general coordination of

the program, as well as its monitoring, in a way that all actions will be executed by each partner.

Albania Coastal Zone Development and Cleanup

Albania's coastal zone has a rich cultural heritage, natural beauty and high biodiversity, and it is recognized as the "most important and economically valuable space from both the development and the environmental point of view" for this country (ACZDC). Albania Coastal Zone Development plan refers that Integrated Coastal Zones Management is the key to the sustainable development of tourism and trade. These two sectors are considered as the support for the long-term economic growth.

International tourism is arising since the 90's, which can be proved by the growth of the importance of this economic activity to GDP. Thus, Travel and Tourism (T&T) Industry is expected to contribute 3,8% to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the T&T Economy is expected to contribute 11,9% to GDP in 2006 (WTTC, 2006).

According to Albania Coastal Zone Development Cleanup, tourism is concentrated just in two coastal cities: Durres and Vlora. In this way, Albania has a significant coastal area that is undeveloped, which is "an opportunity that is unique in Europe to manage sustainably its coastline, maximizing both conservation and development objectives" (Albania Coastal Zone Development and Cleanup).

Albania is preparing an Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Clean up Program. The principal objective of this program is "to protect the Albanian coastal ecosystems, resources and cultural assets and promote their sustainable development and management" (World Bank, 2005). This objective will be achieved through:

- "establishing an integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) policy framework;
- strengthening the broader regulatory and enforcement capacity at the central, regional and local levels;
- introducing alternative planning tools that promote active public participation in the integrated management and development of the coastal zone and its resources;
- implementing sub-projects aiming at sustainable coastal zone development;
- enhancing biodiversity conservation and sustainable ecosystem management with conservation of world heritage in the protected areas." (World Bank, 2005)

This is a project where tourism activity has a great importance and it is expected that this activity will promote sustainability of coastal areas through the application of sustainable tourism strategies. In this

way, five components were defined for the first phase of the program (World Bank, 2005):

- Component 1: Integrated Coastal Zone management Institutional Capacity Building;
- Component 2: Sustainable Coastal Development;
- Component 3: Porto Romano Hot Spot Clean-up;
- Component 4: Global biodiversity and world heritage conservation in Butrinti National Park
- Component 5: Project Management, Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation and Training.

According to tourism activity, which is integrated in the second component, this project will support an "implementation of sustainable land-use and tourism development plans undertaken by local communities and municipalities, including the design and launch of a *Cultural Eco-sites Sustainable Development Initiative* to support developing income-enhancing options for conserving and managing coastal resources as well as setting up a grant facility that supports communities in developing income through sustainable tourism and other small and medium enterprises" and a "preparation of investments for *critical regional infrastructure* for environmentally sustainable tourism development in the southern coastal zone (e.g. gateway with public port, marinas, etc.), including conducting feasibility studies, preparation of full EIA, etc." in a way to address acute problems in priority coastal areas (Albania Coastal Zone Development and Cleanup, 2004).

This project is under preparation by the Ministry of Urban Planning and Tourism, which is the project coordinator. Since this is a project that is in the earliest stages of development, it's not possible to recognize, so far, social and environmental costs and benefits. However it is expected "to reduce the current pressures on the coasts and thus is not expected to have any negative impacts" (Albania Coastal Zone Development and Cleanup, 2004), and to bring benefits to national and local agencies, coastal regions and its communities (World Bank, 2005). A Strategic Environmental Assessment will be realized in a way to describe mitigating measures and what kind of concerns should be taken.

Sustainable Tourism in Portuguese Coastal Zones

Analysis of National Tourism Strategic Plan Guidelines (PENT) and Basis for Integrated Coastal Zone Management (BGIZC)

National Tourism Strategic Plan Guidelines were presented in the beginning of this year, since tourism is seen as a strategic activity to Portugal and of "vital importance to the socio-economic

development project outlined for our country" (speech of the State Secretary of Tourism). This can be noticed by the importance that tourism activity has to GDP. It is expected that Travel and Tourism industry contribute 6,4% to GDP and T&T Economy 17,5% (WTTC, 2006). In this way, Portuguese government is betting in the diversification, dinamization and innovation of tourism sector, promoting sustainable tourism forms, but rentable in economical terms. Therefore, it was referred by the State Secretary of Tourism that Portugal will just impose himself if it has an offer that is based on excellence, and that is distinct and affirmative of the country as one of the principal tourist destinations of well-being and quality of Europe (speech of the State Secretary of Tourism).

National Tourism Strategic Plan stakes in a range of strategic products as strengtheners of growth and development of tourism in Portugal. The defined strategic products are: gastronomy and wine, cultural and landscape touring, wealth and well-being, nature tourism, MICE, residential tourism, city and short breaks, nautical tourism, and last but not least sun and sea. These products were chosen "attending to the actual and potential competitiveness of Portugal and attending to the possible contribute of each one for the strategic objectives of the sector and of the country" (speech of the State Secretary of Tourism).

Relatively to sun and sea product, this is seen as a traditional one, that needs a renewal, since it is the principal product for the traveller and recreation markets (PENT, 2006). Portuguese coastal zones present a huge diversity of natural areas with environmental and landscape values very attractive for the development of tourism (BGIZC, 2006). This activity assumes an economic and social importance in these areas, which is very relevant at local, regional, national and international levels (BGIZC, 2006). However, there is a perception that Portuguese coastal tourism is very massif, which is not blended with natural and cultural values, as well as with an emergence of quality tourism. For these reasons it is necessary to encourage the application of sustainable tourism strategies in coastal areas, since these areas are, as expected, the most favourable for the tourism sector assertion.

PENT also refers that it is necessary to qualify Portuguese coastal destinations. Therefore, and accordingly to the Basis for Integrated Coastal Zone Management, also presented in January, this year, it looks like to us that is essential to put in the Portuguese political agenda the discussion of a sustainable tourism strategy for the coastal zones of Portugal. This strategy should strongly stake in the renewal and valorisation of Portuguese coastal areas, through the support to innovative projects to be applied in these same areas. Accordingly to this

Basis, the opportunity for tourism sector in these areas goes through (BGIZC, 2006):

- “Increment of economic importance of tourism sector in coastal zones, relevant at local regional and national level;
- Recognition of the necessity of renewal of degraded constructed areas or with underprovided conditions of constructability;
- Promotion of nature tourism, 3rd age tourism, sustainable tourism and maritime and sea-going tourism;
- Adaptation to the increasing exigency on quality of tourist destinations, at international level, and to raised levels of service qualities;
- Renewal, valorisation and creation of new infrastructures;
- Increment and diversification of tourist offer (recreational tourism, sun, sea and beach tourism, cultural tourism, congress tourism, nature tourism, business tourism and sport tourism);
- Improvement of professional forming and environmental awareness.”

Conclusions

From the case studies presented we can affirm that sustainable tourism strategies are in a first phase of implementation and that are different forms of applications of these strategies. Calvia has prepared a Local Agenda 21 for the tourism sector and it has already some results of the application of this strategy, such as an improvement of environmental quality and a urban renewal, by preventing uncontrolled construction and remodelling of coastal area. Natural areas were also improved and protected and there were an increase in tourist and local population satisfaction.

Cirali has elaborated a coastal zone management plan as a way to achieve sustainable development of the area, focused essentially in tourism sector. In this way, Cirali has promoted some activities to support the dissemination of the plan, such as environmental education programmes and practical training courses on ecotourism for local population. However, Cirali Physical Plan is still not implemented due to “the slow progress of the review and decision mechanisms and the deficiency in coordination among ministries” (UNEP/MAP/PAP, 2001a in Priority Action Programme Regional, 2005).

Albania is still preparing an Integrated Coastal Zone management and Clean Up Program, so this country is now giving first steps for the implementation of a sustainable tourism strategy, as a component of this program. Albania hopes to achieve some good results with this plan, but it is not possible yet to

identify these results, since it has not been yet applied. The same is occurring in Galway city, since it was realised a framework of action. However, Galway City is different from the other case studies, since this area is not so massified in terms of tourism. The objectives that were defined are expecting that Galway grows as a unique tourist destination by its specificities, such as cultural resources and Irish Celtic traditions.

Since these projects are being widespread in this moment, it is difficult to indicate which contribution sustainable tourism can give to the sustainability of coastal areas. There are few places that already have some good results, but most places are now starting to implement the action plan. However, there are some principles and measures that should guide development processes. In this way, a first step for the definition of a sustainable tourism strategy is to understand what are that principles and define them, accordingly to the intensity of development and artificialization of the environment. The second step is to understand how tourism is being developed in the area where the strategy will be applied, to realize how to act accordingly to the principles defined. Therefore, it should be elaborated an analysis of the existing tourist activity and to identify key aspects. The third step is to identify which are the political documents that could respond to the defined principles of the strategy in a way to ensure that they will be applied (PLANet Yorkshire and Humber, 2005).

At this stage of the study is not possible to identify all the sustainable tourism strategies that are being applied in Europe at different levels of analysis. However, it was possible to recognize that some countries are already trying to apply the principles of sustainability to tourism sector, but that are many ways to apply these principles, such as Local Agendas 21, Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plans and sustainable development strategies.

Tourism is an economic sector from which are expected interesting results, which can strengthen local economies in some European regions. Sustainable tourism is a planned development that pay attention to visitors but that protect the resources where tourism is based. This kind of tourism generates an economic prosperity and promotes an improvement of life quality for local communities. Moreover, it manages the development and uses of resources in a way to future generations satisfy its own necessities (Destination Marlborough, 2002).

Portuguese coasts have great natural resources, pleasant climate and huge cultural and historical patrimony. Besides that, tourism is an important economic activity in Portugal, since it has a great contribution to national GDP, essentially produced

on these coastal areas. In addition, natural, cultural, historical and patrimonial resources are not unallocated and transferable to some other places (as it is automobile industry, for instance). By this way, it is through the bet on diversity and specificities of each local that Portugal can react to the problems that globalization bring to development processes. Therefore, if Portuguese government wants tourism as a strategic and competitive activity, it has to apply sustainable tourism strategies and concerns, in a way to improve environmental and life quality for these same areas.

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