

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ECO-FRIENDLY ACTIONS NETWORK

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S T E F A N

AN ERASMUS+ PROJECT

The Sustainable Tourism Eco-friendly Actions Network (STEFAN) is an ERASMUS+ project that is focused on developing sustainable tourism and ecotourism in the partner countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Spain, Slovenia and North Macedonia) by establishing an innovative e-learning platform and educational materials to increase the number of tourism professionals, raise entrepreneurial skills and local cooperation among educational companies, people working in the tourism sector and tourists

Improving Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism knowledge, the professional capability and quality of services offered will empower achieving an European Tourism Industry more competitive.

In order to generate local knowledge on sustainable ecotourism as training material, a **desk research** and a **survey** with local stakeholders from 4 key tourism sectors were developed in each partner country. A **theoretical and conceptual review** was also included as part of the intellectual debate that the current issue requires.

European partnership

The project implementation, that started in September 2020, is conducted by European partnership of 5 organization:

- **Institut Pro Regionalni Rozvoj, o. p. s.** (Czech lead partner)
- **Academia Postal 3** (Spanish partner)
- **ASK Development d.o.o.** (Slovenian partner)
- **Ecocenter Alapítvány** (Hungarian partner)
- **Green Institute** (Macedonian partner)



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ECOTOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: SAME THING?

BY CELESTE CLAREMBAUX, ASK DEVELOPMENT D.O.O.

Usually, tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in the world economy, however it often generates negative effects on destinations with strong impact on nature and its resources. This inevitably produces a conflict between sustainability and the maximization of economics benefits from tourism.

With the focus on ecology as part of the international agenda in recent decades, the concepts of ecotourism and sustainable tourism are in the foreground. Although they are used interchangeably as if they were synonyms, both concepts have different meanings. The two are intimately connected but their scope and impact are different.

What unites these concepts and what's the difference?

Their similar objective is to link the objectives of conservation, economic and rural development; however the concept of sustainable tourism guarantees that **ecotourism attractions will be protected from the negative impacts of tourism and will keep these unique areas protected for future generations**. This is essential when it comes to seriously thinking about the least environmental impact for the sustainability of future generations.

Without a sustainable approach, ecotourism can be harmful, so the main goal of sustainable ecotourism is to stop the harmful effects of tourism and support population viability and ecological sustainability.

Thus, the "success" of tourism is not measured only in the number of visitors and economic impact generated in local economies but also by the **capacity of this type of tourism to keep nature "intact" for the next generations, that is, "zero negative impact"**. All countries are still in a change process but the important thing is that this process has already begun.



Main characteristics of Sustainable Ecotourism

- maximise yearly visitors
- minimize natural and socio-cultural environment impact
- carrying capacity – balance between ecological damage and recovery capacity
- importance of local cooperation - provide alternative employment and income opportunities for local communities
- ecological footprint
- protection of the natural and cultural heritage
- the importance of natural and cultural wealth
- respecting local culture and traditional values
- education is important in this segment – developing environmental awareness
- responsibility and contiguous education of the visitors

THE SLOVENIAN STRATEGY TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE ECOTOURISM

BY KINGA LANGER, ECOCENTER ALAPÍTVÁNY

Slovenia has devoted itself to tackling sustainability issues systematically and strategically, uniting destinations and tourism providers through the **Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism tool and certification programme**. There is a concerted effort at the national and local levels to make sustainable tourism one of the basic economic pillars in Slovenia, actively involving destinations, suppliers, and local stakeholders. Sought-after alpine destination, the Soča Valley works towards sustainability by attracting the right investors, as well as investing in product and brand development, destination management, improvement in transport infrastructure, and the quality of services to be enjoyed in the valley. Responsible accommodation provider Urška Tourist Farm is Slovenia's first certified organic farm stay, with 80% of the food served being grown on the farm.

In 2016, Slovenia became the world's first "Green destination" with an impressive 96 out of 100 sustainability indicator. Almost 60% of Slovenia is covered in forests and 32% of the country is covered by agricultural land. No surprise that eco-friendly accommodations (especially tourist farms) are so successful around the whole country.



find more technical information in the Country Research Report on Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism