

## **EDITORIAL NOTE:**

### **The ETIS – European Tourism Indicators System**

**Fernanda Oliveira**

**GITUR –Tourism Research Group of the Polytechnic  
Institute of Leiria**

The current paradigm of sustainable development in tourism, including activities, businesses and territories, has implied the adoption of a monitoring process to assess the performance of the components of environmental, social and economic. This process usually uses a measuring instrument consisting of a sustainable indicators panel.

The use of sustainability indicators is crucial both at an early stage of tourism planning, and also in supporting its development and management since it allows:

- Conceiving a quantitative diagnosis characterizing the conditions, business and territorial needs;
- Setting of targets for strategies, policies and actions;
- Measuring the operationalization of principles, objectives and goals of management and development;
- Measuring and assessing progress and identify any need for revision and amendment.

Indeed, “indicators make it possible to monitor changes over time in a constant and consistent manner. They can help to clarify goals and, most importantly, force them to be more precise. They can be very valuable in fostering greater accountability and in raising awareness of, and support for, actions” (UNEP & WTO, 2005, p. 72).

In terms of sustainable management of tourism destination, besides its use in planning and making of tourism policy, indicators can provide a highly effective and flexible tool when applied more widely including issues such as development control. “Regular monitoring of changes in environmental or social conditions using indicators can allow for an adaptive management approach that is more flexible than the heavy use of regulation” (UNEP & WTO, 2005, p. 73).

In the context of the European Union, and considering the aim of maintaining its position as a leading global tourist destination, along with the sustainability recommendations outlined in 2007 in The Agenda for a Sustainable and Competitive European Tourism, the European

Tourism System of Indicators for Sustainable Management at Destination Level (ETIS) appeared to try to answer this objective.

This Indicator System has been commissioned by the European Commission, through the DG Enterprise and Industry, and was developed by The University of Surrey in partnership with The Sustainable Travel International and The INTASAVE. The public presentation happened in Brussels last February. It has been specially designed for tourism destinations and its main purpose is to contribute to improve their sustainable management by providing tourism stakeholders with an easy and useful toolkit which will help them to measure and monitor their sustainability management processes, and enable to share and benchmark their progress and performance in the future (DG Enterprise and Industry, 2013).

The ETIS is composed by 27 core and 40 optional indicators that can be used on a voluntary and flexible basis, once they can be integrated into other existing destination monitoring systems. The base indicators are those that are common to other already known measurement systems and are considered of easy quantification by the majority of the tourism destinations. The 67 indicators are distributed within four sections, namely: Section A: Destination Management (4Core/5Optional); Economic Value (5C/9Op); Social and Cultural Impact (7C/11Op) and Environmental Impact (11C/15Op).

The feasibility of the system has been tested in several European destinations, including the Alqueva region (Portugal), Cornwall (UK), Durbuy (Belgium), Florence (Italy), Maastricht (Netherlands), Soomaa National Park (Estonia), Calvià (Spain), St. Tropez (France), Oetzal (Austria), and Brasov (Romania).

One of the basic principles of the ETIS application is that in each tourism destination it should be ensured by a local management and destination responsibility, ownership, and decision-making should be shared. To undertake effective destination management it strongly recommends the creation of a local work group to collect and report information. For the establishment of this Indicator System is suggested a seven steps scheme including:

- Step 1. Raise Awareness
- Step 2. Create a destination Profile
- Step 3. Form a Stakeholder Working Group
- Step 4. Establish Roles and Responsibilities
- Step 5. Collect and Record Data
- Step 6. Analyse Results
- Step 7. Enable On-going Development and Continuous Improvement

In a long-term perspective, it is intended that the ETIS is adopted across Europe by a significant number of destinations in order to en-

courage and support the adoption of an approach to sustainable management of tourism. To this end, and in order to assess the effectiveness of this system, the Tourism Policy Unit has scheduled three pilot phases during which any European destination can express interest in participating in the testing process.

Moreover, the success of ETIS should be based on the best practices developed on the tourist destinations that have already implemented their own system of indicators as well as application procedures and methodological options for data collection already tested. One of these contributions is developed by Magliulo, in this edition of EJT<sup>HR</sup>, through the model for the sustainable competitiveness of tourism destinations.

It is a model of territorial planning inspired by the Balanced Scorecard (BSC), which is targeted specifically for the development of tourist destinations and incorporating the NECSTouR System of Indicators for Sustainable Competitiveness. This model derives from the work done by the Region of Tuscany, which has already begun to establish a Network of Tourism Destination Observers involving local institutions, universities and tour operators. The working party is collecting and selecting a series of statistical indicators in order to construct an integrated information system that, once completed, will enable the monitoring and comparison over time of the sustainable competitiveness of multiform destinations: from the Mount Abetone to the thermal baths of Montecatini.

Based on this example, and considering the ten pillars of indicators that this system comprises, Magliulo proposes the integration of an eleventh - the price competitiveness. This pillar can be measured through a set of indicators such as average hotel prices according to class (index number), average non-hotel structure according to type prices (index number) and average price for catering services (index number).

In terms of application, the proposed model is divided into three phases, namely: designing a “strategic map” defining the hypothesis of destination development in terms of Resources, Offer, Demand, Sustainable competitiveness and Performance; develop a diagnostic that characterizes these five variables and prepare a SWOT analysis (determining Opportunities and Threats, Strengths and Weaknesses of the destination), and thirdly, defining the mission, vision and strategy for the tourism destination.

Considering the diversity of destinations throughout Europe, the experiences in the region of Tuscany and the proposals presented by Magliulo the model may prove to be the most adequate to monitor the sustainability of some European tourist destinations and, as such, should be articulated in the European Tourism System of Indicators for Sustainable Management at Destination Level.

## REFERENCES

DG Enterprise and Industry (2013). *European Tourism Indicator System TOOLKIT for Sustainable Destinations*. Brussels: European Union.

UNEP & WTO (2005). *Making Tourism More Sustainable - A Guide for Policy Makers*. France/Spain: UNEP/WTO.