

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

RECOMMENDATION No. R (95) 10

OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES

ON A SUSTAINABLE TOURIST DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN PROTECTED AREAS

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 11 September 1995
at the 543rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,
Having regard to Recommendation No. R (94) 7 on a general policy for sustainable and environment-friendly tourism development;

Bearing in mind the Declaration of the Ministerial Conference held in Lucerne from 28 to 30 April 1993 on "Environment for Europe" which calls upon the Council of Europe to pursue its activities on standard legislation and pilot projects to promote sustainable tourism;

Observing the considerable growth tourism and leisure activities are undergoing, which is bound to increase in the future;

Recognising that sustainable tourism should be regarded as a means of developing the social and economic potential of regions;

Noting a change in the attitudes of visitors, who are more and more receptive to ideas of nature conservation and the protection of the environment;

Convinced of the need to develop nature tourism based on discovery of fauna, flora and landscapes;

Noting that parks, reserves and other protected areas are attracting an increasing number of visitors;

Stressing the need to apply a policy whereby protected areas are opened in order to satisfy the expectations of a society in search of protected areas, seen as the last remaining refuges for wildlife and as places in which to enjoy silence and contemplation;

Considering that tourism should help to make European citizens aware that protected areas contain a unique natural and cultural heritage which should be preserved for present and future generations;

Aware nevertheless of the potential destruction which excessive tourist pressure and certain harmful practices may cause in protected areas,

Recommend that the governments of member states:

- a. maintain, wherever necessary and possible, strictly protected areas, the sole purpose of which is to serve the needs of scientific research;
- b. with regard to other protected areas, take appropriate measures to encourage sustainable tourism which respects the heritage of those areas, based on the principles and guidelines contained in the appendix to this recommendation;

- c. ensure that this recommendation is circulated as widely as possible among the authorities concerned at national, regional and local level, as well as among tourist industry representatives and local communities.

Appendix to Recommendation No. R (95) 10

A. Definitions

For the purposes of this recommendation, the following definitions shall apply to:

1. *sustainable tourism, which is:*

any form of tourist development or activity which:

- respects the environment;
- ensures long-term conservation of natural and cultural resources;
- is socially and economically acceptable and equitable.

2. *protected areas are:*

areas set aside for the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, natural resources and related cultural resources, which are managed by means of legal methods or other effective conservation measures.

B. Scope

The principles and guidelines apply primarily to protected areas. They may also apply to areas with a wealth of cultural, biological and landscape features which are, in consequence, worthy of protection.

C. Principles and guidelines

I. Authorities responsible for the management of protected areas should promote the use of protected areas for tourism which respects the intrinsic value of each area, with supervision measures in keeping with its natural and cultural characteristics. To this end, it is advisable to develop forms of tourism based on:

- a. respect for biodiversity, natural and cultural features, and the quality of the water, air, soil and landscapes;
- b. respect for the social and cultural identity of the local populations;
- c. compatibility and the need to strike a balance between the competing aspirations and needs of local communities, tourist development and conservation; precedence must always be given to conservation interests whenever they cannot be reconciled with those of tourism;
- d. the use of resources generated by tourism to promote measures to preserve and manage protected areas and add to the well-being of the local population;
- e. the existence of different types of protected areas, and the need to provide for a kind of tourism appropriate to the aims of each area and based on the key concept of carrying capacity;
- f. shared responsibility;
- g. the aim of ensuring that the approaches adopted in protected areas serve as examples, since these places are considered as pilot areas, which tourism can use as a source of new models and new approaches.

II. The authorities responsible for regional and spatial planning should incorporate the protected area into a complete tourist development strategy.

Although the protected area may enhance the region's tourist interest, it is not the only tourist attraction and cannot, on its own, meet all the demands which people make on it. The following measures should thus be taken:

- a. devise a strategy which makes the most of all the natural and cultural resources of a region and conduct environmental impact studies for all projects and programmes;

b. compile an inventory of the region's tourist resources and amenities, indicating the extent to which they are used by tourists, the visitor capacity of the region and the carrying capacity of the tourist sites;

c. define the role played by the protected area in the tourist development of the region, as well as its relationship to other tourist attractions;

d. analyse tourist demand, promote a wide range of tourist amenities, and organise a variety of activities for visitors;

e. call upon a broad range of expertise in devising this strategy, relying on disciplines other than those currently recognised;

f. accommodation and reception facilities and amenities should be situated, if appropriate, outside protected areas; the potential of the surrounding area will thus be enhanced, with the provision in particular of appropriate services and activities; the impact of the surrounding area on the protected area should be analysed.

III. Those responsible for protected areas should provide an appropriate response to the growing public interest in such areas.

In the context of the conservation and management plan specific to each protected area, and in conjunction with the tourist industry and local communities, they should develop a concept of sustainable tourism, and a plan of action which emphasises:

1. *Conservation of the area*

Each protected area must have a set of rules drawn up which is adapted to its aims and function, stating whether and to what extent certain activities can be carried out or if they should be prohibited altogether, determining when the public can visit and guaranteeing behaviour conducive to preventing damage to nature.

2. *Controlling numbers*

Activities should be spread out in time and space, according to the carrying capacity of the area in question, through the following measures:

- partitioning the areas into zones bearing in mind the habitat's richness, fragility, sensitivity to certain pressures, and carrying capacity;
- routing or channelling tourists along clearly marked paths or trails or by means of guided tours;
- limiting visitor numbers by any appropriate means, or even restricting visiting days and times, according to the carrying capacity of the area in question.

3. *Visitor reception, information and education*

a. The organisation of reception entails:

- i. having a thorough knowledge of the various types of tourists with their diverse motivations and expectations;
- ii. bearing in mind the variety of requirements and cultural approaches needed in dealing with the public;
- iii. providing recreational or educational facilities to suit the environment and the public, and removable amenities in certain sensitive zones, and promoting research into techniques for manufacturing materials suited to protected areas;

b. an information, explanation and communication strategy should be implemented. Its aims should be:

- i. to promote awareness of the value of the heritage contained in protected areas and the need to preserve it;
- ii. to encourage people to accept the constraints necessitated by its protection;
- iii. to explain the delicate task of the manager, who must both accommodate visitors and keep intact, or even enhance, the natural, cultural and landscape features of the protected area;
- iv. not only to instil knowledge but also to answer visitors' questions.

It should comprise the following:

- i. information provided competently and with due regard to the target groups (tourists, decision-makers, tourism professionals, and so on), particularly on measures to prevent pollution;
- ii. use of information media to help alert the public to the issues through education-oriented facilities (walks, tours, etc.), and signposting (vital for the park's image, and a primary source of information), if possible in several languages;

iii. training programmes for officials responsible for reception, information and explanation in the protected areas, particularly wardens and other park employees.

4. *Follow-up*

A programme should be drawn up to monitor and supervise the development of tourist activities, making it possible to:

a. follow and fully understand the changing needs, expectations and behaviour of the public as well as visitor numbers;

b. develop research programmes to make a systematic assessment of the effects which certain activities have on the natural habitat and species, and take the precautionary and suspension measures needed to prevent or offset adverse negative effects;

c. continuously supervise the state of reception infrastructures.

5. *Co-operation among all concerned*

There must be patient, active co-operation with a view to developing a balanced pattern of tourism. Consequently, there should be scope for formalising dialogue, pooling resources and know-how, and seeking mutually agreed solutions with the various partners involved.

The exchange of information and sharing of experiences with the managers of other protected areas should be encouraged. Information systems comprising data on sustainable tourism should be compatible, so that they can be used for all protected areas.

IV. Tourism professionals should accept the constraints of a sustainable pattern of tourism, that is to say one which respects the environment, and should make a direct contribution to the conservation of protected areas.

They should:

a. take account of the nature of each protected area and the wishes of the local people;

b. develop tourist projects within the framework of the development and management plan for protected areas in which they may be situated and in consultation with the authorities responsible for the areas concerned;

c. build facilities in the local style and if possible with local materials which blend in with the surroundings and the landscape;

d. make every effort to enhance and restore existing infrastructures and buildings, if appropriate by endowing them with a new function;

e. support the economy of the local communities by using the local workforce, services and products;

f. contribute, as users of the natural assets of the protected areas, to maintenance and administration costs;

g. provide services and promote environment-friendly products;

h. give priority to public transport which is quiet and non-polluting, both in providing access to the protected areas and for moving about within them;

i. develop training programmes to inculcate respect for the environment, aimed particularly at guides and members of the profession;

j. inform tourists not only of the attractiveness of nature, but also of its fragility, and of the need to respect it;

k. incorporate the ethics of conservation into their advertising and marketing policy in such a way as to arouse tourists' interest in protected areas and foster an understanding of them;

l. have recourse to the services and assistance of specialist bodies or networks which have information, new ideas and successful experiences that can be passed on.