

Aspects regarding the relationship tourism-MSP

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ABSTRACT. The present paper aims to highlight the main aspects regarding the topic of land-sea interactions from the sustainable tourism point of view. Like many other activities taking place in the marine environment, tourism also has an onshore implication and is highly related to the economic impacts of MSPs for the economic development of the region. The correspondence between marine and terrestrial planning is crucial and should be achieved through plans and appropriate policies. In this respect the paper presents the concept and advantages of tourism carrying capacity (TCC) to be included in the planning for maritime areas and a summary guidelines in order to apply the method.

KEYWORDS. Development; impact; environment; tourism carrying capacity.

I. INTRODUCTION

The World Tourism Organization (WHO), the main international tourism institution is invested by the United Nations with its central and decisive role in encouraging the development of sustainable tourism, with the objective of contributing to the development economic and international welfare. It aims to stimulate and develop partnerships between the public and private sectors so that member states, destinations and tourism companies maximize the positive economic, social and cultural impacts of tourism, minimizing the negative effects on society environment.

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) is considered to be an appropriate procedure in tackling developmental and management issues related to the maritime areas, including issues related to coastal and maritime tourism, based on a resource combination at the border of land and sea environments. Starting from these resources, various profitable services have been developed in many coastal destinations such as well maintained beaches, diving, boat-trips, bird watching tours, restaurants or medical facilities. Today's tourists expect more than sun, sea and sand, they are waiting for a wide range of associated recreational activities and experiences including sports, cuisine, culture and natural attractions. At the same time, local people in traditional tourist destinations are increasingly anxious to preserve their own identity, their environment and their natural, historic and cultural heritage against negative impacts.[1]

Taking into consideration that coastal and maritime tourism is considered to be one of the fastest growing areas of present-day tourism and having in view to create safe, stable and attractive coastal environments with clean waters and healthy coastal habitats, it is necessary to develop well-managed strategies for sustainable and responsible coastal tourism. In this respect we can talk about the necessary strong relationship tourism-MSP. The components of the environment are also tourism resources, thus tourism is carried out "in" and "through" environment, its quality being able to favour or disadvantage tourist activities. Practicing sustainable tourism's activities means at the same time obtaining profit, preserving nature and developing local communities, and the hardest thing is to keep a balance between all this.

II. IMPORTANCE OF MSP FOR TOURISM

Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) is generally defined as being the process by which public authorities analyze and allocate the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in marine areas in order to achieve ecological, economic and social goals. It is a cross-sectorial tool that takes into account all maritime uses and the environment. [2]

In the Blue Paper and the Action Plan on an Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union (IMP) I, MSP has been identified as one of the cross-cutting tools supporting the IMP implementation.[5] An effective cross-border MSP requires the development of a common vision based on the exploration of common interests (electricity networks, tourism, fisheries, shipping, etc.), the overall trend being to increase the use of MSP.

Like many other activities taking place in the marine environment, tourism also has an onshore implication and is highly related to the economic impacts of MSPs for the economic development of the region. In 2010, a study on the economic aspects of MSP concluded that the effects economic aspects of MSP are reducing the transaction costs of new maritime activities and improving the investment climate.[6]

That's why MSP is considered a key governance approach in delivering a sustainable maritime economy based on a healthy and productive marine and inland environment. In July 2014, the Council and the European Parliament adopted rules (the Directive 2014/89/EU) creating a common framework for maritime spatial planning in Europe. Each EU country will have the freedom to plan its own maritime activities and local, regional and national planning actions in shared waters will be compatible by applying a set of minimum common requirements. With the entry in implementation of the Directive for Maritime Spatial Planning in September 2014, the tourism industry will be increasingly involved in MSP and the implementation of MSP in Member States' marine waters must be achieved by 31 March 2021.[3]

Among the minimum requirements for maritime spatial planning is also found the need to take into account land-sea interactions economic, social and environmental issues as well as safety issues. In this respect, coherence between maritime spatial planning and the resulting plans and other processes, such as Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) or equivalent formal and informal practices, should be pursued and promoted.[7]

The Black Sea is also included in this strategy as an area where the interests of six countries and cultures converge, an area characterized by a wide variety of economic activities that impact on the whole of the country, and its tourism potential can be better managed.[8] Undoubtedly, the regions are considered to be the most suitable national entities for the sustainable development of tourism and the promotion of the competitiveness of European destinations.

Competition for the maritime space (aquaculture, renewable energy, tourism, and other sectors) has highlighted the need for effective management in order to avoid potential conflicts and to create synergies between different activities, the advantages of maritime space planning being:

- conflict limitation;
- encouraging investment;
- improving coordination between administrations in each country;
- enhancing cross-border cooperation;
- protecting the environment.[9]

In conclusion, MSP represent an important way to enhance the development of the tourism sector. It will take into consideration the features of different activities at sea, their impacts on the marine environment and their synergies. A special attention must also be given to land-sea interactions as most touristic activities take place in the coastal area or depend on coastal infrastructures. Very important actors in the success of MSP and especially for the tourism sector

are the stakeholders representing an important source of information that could provide important inputs to the planning project and reducing knowledge gaps.

And moreover, because the tourism sector is very diverse and most activities are highly fragmented, it is necessary the integration of tourism and recreational data (information) to be challenging when developing a MSP.[3]

The whole approach requires local strategies which focus not only on tourists but also on value, both in terms of turnover as well as in terms of environmental and social values and requires also investments and actions because the sector has by far the highest numbers of employment amongst the Blue Growth activities. According to the Blue Growth Study, it is the biggest maritime sector in terms of gross value added and employment and is expected to grow by 2-3% by 2020.[6]

It is strongly recommended for local, regional and national actors to take into account the interests and needs of maritime and coastal tourism when drawing up policies and plans. The integration of maritime and coastal tourism into overall tourism policies is crucial. In this respect, integrated maritime policy, coastal management plans as well as macro-regional strategies could be considered main instruments.[10]

III. TOURISM-PART OF MSP

The potential of the sea is in the middle of efforts to achieve what has been called the "Blue Economy". This includes a series of different activities, both areas such as marine research, environmental monitoring and conservation, marine conservation, blue biotechnology and areas as ocean energy and the exploitation of the tourist potential of the coast and sea .

Coastal and maritime tourism is considered one of the largest segments of the maritime economic sectors and the largest component of the tourism industry with environmental impacts and compatibilities with other human activities. Coastal and maritime tourism depends mostly on the quality of the environment and on different uses of the maritime space. Maritime spatial planning is therefore an important leverage for the growth and sustainability of the sector.[3]

Speaking from the tourism point of view, coastal and maritime indicate different activities. While "coastal" refers to beach-based tourism and recreation activities (swimming, surfing, etc.), and other recreational activities in coastal areas, "maritime" indicate water-based activities (boating, yachting, cruising, nautical sports) and includes operations of landside facilities (manufacturing of equipment and services). It is necessary to specify that in geographical terms coastal areas are defined as those bordering the sea or having at least half of their territory within 10km of the coast.

In 2014, in Venice, at the Conference on Maritime Spatial Planning and Tourism, Karmenu Vella - Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries , affirmed that : " For those coastal communities, tourism is by far the biggest economic opportunity. However, not taking advantage of this potential, is like having a big bank account and not using it, or like sitting on a gold reserve without even knowing it!" [11]

As part of EU's Blue Growth strategy, the coastal and maritime tourism sector has been identified as an area with special potential to foster a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe. Employing over 3.2 million people, this sector generates a total of € 183 billion in gross value added and representing over one third of the maritime economy. [6]

At the European level, tourism policy also contributes to meeting the overall policy objectives in the field of employment and economic growth. This is the reason of the increasing importance given to the environmental issues and sustainable tourism dimension, already included in sustainable, responsible or ethical tourism packages.[4]

Coastal and maritime tourism is one of five focus areas for delivering sustainable growth and jobs in the blue economy (by employment rate and GVA) . The starting point for

substantiating strategies should be the recognition that seaside and maritime tourism is one of the main engines of growth and job creation for Europeans and especially for young people. The 2014-2020 EU research program (Horizon 2020) changed the way that marine and maritime research was done. On 20 February 2014, the European Commission adopted a Communication entitled "A European Strategy to Boost Growth and Jobs in Maritime and Coastal Tourism", for a new strategy to enhance maritime and coastal tourism in Europe , to unlock the potential of the sector.

In spite of all of these, there are no specific rules on tourism as such under international or EC law that have an impact on MSP.[12]

For maritime tourism, the challenge was to support regional cooperation in order to create joint products such as nautical or cultural routes and create higher-value jobs without damaging the marine environment. Concerning the Blue Growth Potential about coastal tourism, the main goals of the Commission's current strategy for coastal and marine tourism are focusing on: the number of high value jobs; reducing tourism's environmental footprint; adding value to tourism niche like nautical tourism, cruise shipping or underwater cultural heritage [6]

When implementing maritime spatial planning, different touristic activities, their potential conflicts and synergies with other uses and the environment are to be taken into account. Along with the traditional tourist activities (accommodation, food and restaurants, recreation, travels ,etc.) there are to be considered in this respect: cruise industry, recreational boating and marinas, underwater cultural heritage, whale watching, new or marginal considered activities (surfing, scuba diving, recreational fisheries or pesca tourism.[3]

In order to obtain results, a successful MSP should ensure the coherence between terrestrial and maritime planning. In this regard, a prerequisite for the development of coastal and maritime tourism is the accessibility to the coastline which means coastal infrastructure like marinas or parking space.

Most touristic or recreational activities depend on high quality environment, therefore benefits will arise from long-term and integrated planning of the sea and coastal waters.[3]

Coastal tourism, as well as tourism in general, is to a large extent dependant on an environment that is attractive to visitors. Consequently, protection of natural and cultural heritage is a precondition too for sustainable coastal tourism. Protecting areas and sites constitutes an efficient and necessary way of safeguarding natural and cultural heritage. Therefore, such areas contribute strongly to sustainable coastal tourism.[1]

IV. TOURISM CARRYING CAPACITY

"Tourism Carrying Capacity" (TCC) is defined by the World Tourism Organisation as "The maximum number of people that may visit a tourist destination at the same time, without causing destruction of the physical, economic, socio-cultural environment and an unacceptable decrease in the quality of visitors' satisfaction".

The challenge in tourism carrying capacity is to find a proper model that could be applicable to a certain touristic area and to select indicators and define standards that are relevant for a specific destination, considering the following issues:

- how tourism affects the ecosystem and the restoration cost;
- the tourism development at which the facilities of the territory are saturated or begin to show damaged;
- the system of linkages between the saturation` s level of locals and tourists reactions;
- the location ability to absorb the tourist functions without negative consequences on the environment;
- the level of comfort that tourists perceive at the destination area;

-the level of exploitation of a tourist destination, up to that maximum satisfaction offered to tourists without having consequences on tourism resources or environment.

In order to provide useful support oriented to decision-making, TCC should help to identify the maximum acceptable level of human activities, population growth, land use and physical development that can be sustained by the area under investigation without causing irreversible damage to the environment. [13]

In applying TCC three components are important and taken into consideration: physical-ecological, socio-demographic and political-economic, which acquire different weight or importance in different destinations.

There are several reasons for using the TCC approach in case of coastal and maritime tourism industry, such as:

- concordance with the MSP principles;
- provide capacity limits to develop a responsible tourism activity;
- meet the requirements of the maritime and coastal areas;
- builds the know-how to develop strategies and commitments;
- enhance the tourism responsibility concerning the environment;
- encourages the assumption of social and ecological objectives;
- take into account the interests of various stakeholders;
- involves a vision about local development and decisions about managing tourism.

Tourism carrying capacity (TCC) needs to be regarded as a management tool in this planning process, in order to maintain a balance between the tourism and the maritime and inland environment. [14]

According to the guidelines developed by UNEP - PAP/RAC (United Nations Environment Programme-Priority Actions Programme/Regional Activity Centre) a good method for carrying capacity assessment should be able to:

- 1) consider the priorities of the area under investigation (involving decision makers and local experts in the definition of indicators and standards at a local scale);
- 2) identify local constraints to tourism development, balancing the demand of new tourist infrastructures and the necessity to protect local environment;
- 3) select a set of indicators that can be useful to all tourism sector managers and that can be easily applicable, with well defined sources (the availability and quality of data should be checked, to assure the possibility of monitoring through time);
- 4) define scenarios for the development of the destination. [15]

The most critical phase remains the implementation of TCC taking into consideration aspects to be monitored such as spatial considerations, the role of actors, integration of TCC in the planning process and the institutional context, evaluation and monitoring.

The calculation and control of TCC has not been taken seriously by developers, whether public or private, especially in developing countries. This has resulted in many cases in overcapacity within the areas developed for tourism, including coastal areas, causing often damages of the natural environment.[16]

V. CONCLUSIONS

The economic role of tourism has increased and the growing role has turned tourism into a social and political issue which influences not only physical landscapes, land use and planning but also social structures, local cultures, everyday living and livelihoods. At policy level there is an emerging emphasis on local people and culture in tourism developments which stresses a need to develop tourism underpinned by sustainable tourism practices.

Nevertheless, there are several conditions required for a clear maritime spatial planning and spatial development initiatives: adequate infrastructure (including transport); highly skilled staff with access to low skilled workers; public acceptance; a solid international legal

framework regarding the international waters; good governance at local and regional levels; recognition that choices will need to be made in contexts where space is limited and the combination of all activities is not feasible.

Tourism carrying capacity (TCC) needs to be regarded as a management tool in this planning process, in order to maintain a balance between the tourism and the maritime and inland environment. In spite of difficulties in measurement, the concept of tourism carrying capacity must be included in the planning for tourism in coastal areas.

Unfortunately, there is no standard recipe for reaching the status of sustainable coastal or maritime tourism. The development and implementation of strategies and action plans for sustainable coastal tourism are useful measures that guarantees efficient and coordinated results and for best achievements is needed the involvement of all major interest groups that have a stake in local sustainable development.

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