



ernest

European Research NETwork
on Sustainable Tourism



NEWSLETTER 1 – MAY 2009

The ERNEST project is financed by the European Union within the 7th Framework Programme, under the Theme for Coordination of National and Regional Activities (ERA-NET Scheme).

Consortium

Regione Toscana (IT) – Project Coordinator

Cité de la Culture et du Tourisme Durable (FR)

Basque Government - Industry, Commerce and Tourism Department (ES)

Prefecture of Iliia (GR)

South-East Regional Development Agency (RO)

Govern de les Illes Balears (ES)

Regional Development Agency of North Hungary (HU)

South West Tourism (UK)

Danish Forest and Nature Agency, Nord Zealand (DK)

Generalitat de Catalunya (ES)

Conseil Régional d'Aquitaine (FR)

Regione Emilia Romagna (IT)

Duration: 4 years

September 2008-August 2012

How the project was born?

Sharing research and experience is the key to push forward sustainable tourism. In 2007, a number of representatives from European regions and other organisations actively

involved in the field of sustainable tourism joined to create ERNEST, an ERA-NET action, with the aim to develop and strengthen a framework for coordinating regional research programmes on sustainable tourism.

Who are the partners?

The project partners are among the most popular European tourist regions and they have been involved in issues related to sustainable research: Tuscany (Italy), Alpes de Haute Provence (France), the Basque country (Spain), Iliia (Greece), South-West England (United Kingdom), Catalonia (Spain), Aquitaine (France), Emilia Romagna (Italy), Nord Zealand (Denmark) and the Balearic Isles (Spain). In addition, participants from South-East Region of Romania and North Hungary are involved in the project. As representatives of new Member States of the European Union, these are two regions in which tourism plays a growing importance in terms of economic impact.

The project allows partners to learn from one another and discover research and initiatives that are perhaps not present in their own region. In some cases, these activities could be transferred; in other cases, they could be integrated into existing programmes. It brings these actors together at a local, regional and interregional level and encourages them to exchange ideas and experience in order to coordinate and add value to their individual activities.

In all the ERNEST partner regions, as in many others in Europe, tourism is or is becoming a fundamental economic sector but one which can put territory itself at risk. We are witnessing an evolution in the tourism market dominated on the one hand by a considerable growth in standardised coastal resorts and, on the other, by the growth of destinations with a higher cultural or nature content. Policies for tourism development often do not take into consideration the principle of social and environmental sustainability and instead concentrate on short to medium term economic gain.

For the first time, a large group of regions and organisations will actually undertake steps to strengthen contribution of sustainable practices

Strategic research areas

- ◆ *Impact of transport*
- ◆ *Residents' quality of life*
- ◆ *Quality of work*
- ◆ *Widening the geographical and seasonal tourism offer*
- ◆ *Active conservation of cultural heritage*
- ◆ *Active conservation of environmental heritage*
- ◆ *Active conservation of distinctive identities of destinations*
- ◆ *Reduction and optimisation of natural resource use*
- ◆ *Reduction and optimisation of energy consumption*
- ◆ *Reduction of waste and better waste management*



What is the ERNEST project about?

Sustainable tourism means that destinations commit themselves to have a low impact on the environment and local culture, and at the same time to generate income and employment for local people.

The ERNEST project is based on the concept that research on sustainable tourism has a “**two pillar operative structure**” which the project will share and develop among its partners. The two pillars are **social dialogue and measurement** and represent the basis on which further research activities on sustainable tourism can be based, by providing the conditions in which tourism-related research can match territorial needs and can be clearly measured and evaluated. It is fundamental for the public administration to put in place models and platforms for all types of coordination and social dialogue. ERNEST helps them in promoting transnational exchange, collaboration and joint activities.

The ERNEST project has a clear **European added value**. It aims to bridge the gaps that currently exist in research in the different regions involved. Coordination and cooperation within ERNEST will be of mutual benefit in this case, both for the successful implementation of new programmes and potential improvements for existing programmes. The project also dedicates time and resources to attract new partner regions from those European regions that are active in this field and want to take their research on sustainable tourism a step forward.

The project addresses **10 strategic research areas** into sustainable tourism and they have been identified for analysis during the ERNEST project.

Project progress

◆ Interregional events organized during the first year

The **kick off meeting** took place on 25th – 26th of September 2008 in Florence and served to establish the project governance, (including the two governing bodies: the Steering Committee and the Policy and Advisory Group), discuss the work plan, the role of each partner in the project and the expected results. The welcoming speeches of Mr. Albino Caporale, Head of the Economic Development Directorate and Mr. Paolo Bongini, Head of the Coordination Area for Tourism and Commerce of Regione Toscana emphasised the importance of the issue of sustainable tourism for the whole of Europe.

A **meeting of work-package coordinators** was arranged in Marseille on 29th of October 2008 where ongoing activities in specific work-packages were analysed. This meeting coincided with the **NECSTouR – Network of Regions for a Competitive and Sustainable European Tourism** conference, held in Marseille on the 30th and 31st of October. NECSTouR, like ERNEST, is based on the European Agenda for a Sustainable and Competitive European Tourism (COM (2007)621) and aims to develop and strengthen a coherent framework for the coordination of regional development programmes and research on sustainable and competitive tourism. For this reason synergies between the two networks will be sought.

The **second project meeting** took place in Bath, hosted by South West Tourism (SWT) on the **5th and 6th of March 2009**. The main issues focused on project management, advancement of work in the active work packages and outreach and communication actions. Various internal project management deliverables were approved by the Steering Committee, including the **communication strategy** and the **stakeholder involvement strategy**.

The meeting was also used for mutual learning, adding two specific features:

- the “*Knowledge exchange session*”, aiming to allow the partners to network information on how ERNEST issues are addressed in the various regions and to describe their experiences, challenges encountered and good practices. Two knowledge exchange sessions were organised in Bath, one concentrating on **measurement and indicators** currently being used in the partner regions (“measurement pillar”) and the other dedicated to the **regional stakeholder involvement plans** developed by the partners so far (“social dialogue pillar”).
- the “*Focus on the host partner*” session: **South West Tourism** presented “**REAP Tourism**”, a tool for measuring the tourist ecological/carbon footprint and for scenario planning.

◆ Next meetings

The **third project meeting** will be on July 2nd and 3rd in Greoux les Bains (PACA, France), hosted by Cité de la Culture et du Tourisme Durable (CCTD). The **fourth** will be hosted by Tuscany Region in Florence, Italy, the first week of November 2009, two days preceding the Eurometing International Conference, which will be held on November 5th and 6th.

◆ Activities and results achieved so far

For the first steps towards improved coordination, all the ERNEST partners started **mapping their regional stakeholders** and produced their stakeholder involvement plans, aiming to encourage involvement in the ERNEST project. In order to have a real overview of the territory and to promote collaboration and dialogue, consultation processes with the stakeholders will be carried out during the entire life of the ERNEST project. Specific participatory sessions are forecasted within work package 2 (interregional comparison) and work package 3 (common actions), in order to set-up priorities and interests in relation to the joint research activity on tourism and sustainable development.

From the beginning of 2009, ERNEST partners also started **mapping the existing programmes in the field of sustainable tourism**. The data collected will be used for the production of two reports: the “*Mapping of regional policies, strategies, programmes and capabilities*”, and the “*Interregional comparison*” report, which will be an analysis and a comparison of the programmes and good practices currently being carried out by the partners. This is a necessary starting point in order to be able to implement common activities and joint funding calls.

In terms of Communication activities, a number of communication tools have been produced, such as the **project logo, the web site, the brochure and the newsletter**. The Communication Strategy has been finalised in order to promote project activities and results at regional, national and European level and to raise awareness of issues related to sustainable tourism within the participating regions.



For further information regarding the ERNEST project, please visit:
<http://www.ernestproject.eu>

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