



## CO-EVOLVE

*Promoting the co-evolution of human activities and natural systems for the development of sustainable coastal and maritime tourism*

# FACTSHEET #1

## The ICZM Protocol as a governance tool for improving tourism sustainability

### SUMMARY:

*Tourism as an economic driver plays a crucial role in the development of the Mediterranean region. However, its continuous growth exerts pressures on environmental and cultural resources of the coastal zones, where it tends to be concentrated. Setting an adequate governance framework can help limit its negative impacts and maximise the positive ones. The Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in the Mediterranean is a major governance tool which can be efficient for improving the sustainability of tourism activity.*

The Protocol is the main legal instrument for implementing ICZM in the Mediterranean. It is legally binding for the countries which have ratified it, as well as for all EU Mediterranean Member States. The following elements are essential for improving governance for a tourism respectful of the sensitive nature of the coastal zones:

- **The integrated perspective:** The ICZM Protocol insists on the need to have a holistic approach when dealing with coastal planning. In other words, tourism should not be planned as an isolated activity but in a wider context, which requires taking into account all its possible impacts, as well as avoiding developments which would be incompatible with other economic activities (Fig 1). Developing national ICZM Strategies and local coastal plans (Art. 17) can give the countries such a framework for planning their marine and terrestrial parts of coastal zones, avoiding excessive focusing and over-dependence on

tourism to the detriment of other activities. In addition, the Protocol insists on the importance of participatory processes (Art. 14) in the planning process, involving stakeholders at national, regional and local levels (vertical coordination), across sectors (horizontal coordination) and responsible for the land and the sea parts of the coastal zone (geographical coordination) (Art. 7).



Figure 1: Multiple economic activities in the coastal zone  
(©European Commission)

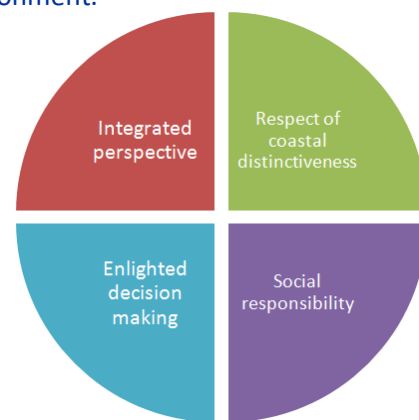
- **Respect of coastal distinctiveness:** Tourism has to be planned with respect to the specificities of the destination and within the limits of its carrying capacities (Art. 9 e) i.). For this purpose, specific forms of tourism, such as cultural, rural and eco-tourism will be promoted (Art. 9. d) ii.). Such alternatives contribute to avoiding territorial imbalances between tourism development on the coast and inland. Special attention should be paid to islands (Art. 12), which are particularly vulnerable due to their limited space and resources.

- **Enlightened decision making:** Because sustainable tourism is always based on long-term consideration, it is necessary to increase the understanding of the stakeholders regarding tourism impacts in order to achieve a long-term change in behaviour. This can then result in better tourism offer and improved environmental protection. Awareness-raising campaigns and education programmes and trainings (Art. 15) are a first step to advance in that direction. Making informed choices also implicates that decision makers have access to adequate socio-economic and environmental data. The Protocol prescribes to undertake environmental assessments (Art. 19) in order to ensure that all the environmental effects of a proposed plan or project are satisfactorily addressed. Finally, stakeholders should also have access to information regarding vulnerable zones and potential risks in their destination so as to be able to take all the necessary measures to address the effects of disaster in a timely manner (Art. 22).



Figure 2: Minister of the Environment at the Coast Day, a major awareness-raising event, in Split, Croatia, 2012 (©PAP/RAC)

- **Social responsibility:** In the context of tourism, social responsibility may be envisaged in terms of corporate social responsibility, which refers to the obligation of tourism professionals towards the society, and of personal social responsibility, which refers to the responsibility of visitors. Codes of good conduct advocated by the ICZM Protocol (Art. 9) may encourage actors from both categories to act more responsibly. These are not binding instruments, and are used only voluntarily without any control by a third party. As more compelling, the use of economic instruments is also encouraged by the Protocol (Art. 21). Instruments can be described as economic when they affect the estimation of costs and benefits opportunities for economic agents. The use of economic instruments with a view to protecting the environment and sustainable development, therefore, means increasing the costs of activities with negative impacts on the environment, or reducing the costs of activities beneficial to the environment.



4 key inputs of the ICZM Protocol for tourism sustainability  
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