

CONFERENCE REPORT



Ethics in tourism as a key to development, prosperity and well-being of all stakeholders: 3rd International Congress on Ethics and Tourism, Krakow, 27–28 April 2017

In line with the two¹ previous International Congresses on Ethics and Tourism of the UNWTO this sought to promote responsible, sustainable and fair tourism as an element of economic development. The Congress was organized by UNWTO, the Ministry of Sport and Tourism of Poland, and the European Commission. The participants from 32 countries included about 200 tourism officials, business leaders, academics, representatives of international organizations and NGOs, and experts in the field of ethics and tourism. There were 23 speakers in four-panel debate sessions. The sessions addressed following issues: (1) Tourism Governance as a Deliverer of the Sustainability Agenda; (2) The Imperative of Advancing Tourism for All; (3) Key Challenges in Managing Destinations' Natural and Cultural Assets; and (4) Companies as Champions of a Responsible Tourism Supply Chain. This all sounds wonderful but very commercial.

Is it in fact credible that tourism may be a key to development, prosperity and well-being of all stakeholders? Does tourism make 'a major contribution' in tackling a wide array of global environmental and social issues? The speakers presented numerous examples, but are they reliable?

Opening ceremony and keynote speech

The ceremony was opened by: Jacek Majchrowski, Mayor of Krakow; H.E. Mr. Witold Bańka, Minister of Sport and Tourism, Poland; Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General, UNWTO; Elżbieta Bieńkowska, European Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (via a video message). All stressed that tourism is an extraordinary phenomenon, yet not enough appreciated. These speakers pointed at chances for economic development and social empowerment. They also noted that tourism growth brings challenges. For sustainable tourism development, ethical principles (the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism) must be implemented.

In his keynote address, Pascal Lamy, Chair of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics, spoke of the need to understand both faces of tourism. If there is the bright side (e.g. development, more tolerance and understanding) there is a dark side also (e.g. child abuse). That is why we should share the responsibility for ethical and social damage caused by tourism. In an interconnected world where the business volume of tourism equals or even surpasses that of oil exports, food products or automobiles, a robust and compelling set of principles

is necessary. Thus, the conference is justified. Mr. Lamy concluded that the world should follow the 1999 Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, as the road map in that matter.

Objective and conclusions of the 3rd International Congress on Ethics and Tourism

Session 1: tourism governance as a deliver of the sustainability agenda

The aim of this session was to explore policy frameworks and governance models that can lead the stakeholders to a sustainable, responsible and ethical development. The session was run by Ólöf Ýrr Atladóttir, Vice-President of the European Travel Commission (ETC) and Director General of the Icelandic Tourism Board. Ms. Atladóttir underscored the need for action so that hosts and visitors alike showed care for sustainable tourism development. Five speakers participated: Renata Králová, Director of Tourism Department, Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic (representing Karla Šlechtová, Minister of Regional Development, Czech Republic); Evaldas Gustas, former Minister of Economy of Lithuania and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General of UNWTO; Gheorghe Bogdan Tomoioaga, State Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Romania; Marion Weber, Head of Tourism Policy Division, Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy, Germany; George Tziallas, Secretary General for Tourism Policy and Development, Ministry of Tourism, Greece; and Xavier Font, Professor of Sustainability Marketing, University of Surrey, UK.

The five government representatives presented ideas implemented in their countries in regard to sustainable tourism development. Professor Font maintained that marketing is responsible for many of the impacts, positive and negative, in a tourist destination.

Conclusions of the first session [1]:

- Governments should create an enabling environment for multi-stakeholder cooperation aimed at advancing resource efficiency, shared value and accountability of all stakeholders.
 - Given tourism's cross-cutting nature, all Sustainable Development Goals can be addressed by the governments in close collaboration with the industry, civil society and academia.
 - Tourism governance mechanisms need to include certification schemes based on concrete and measurable targets and indicators.
 - Sustainable marketing should be aimed at reducing environmental and social impacts, educating tourists and local people, decreasing seasonality and attracting the kind of tourists we actually want.
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Session 2: the imperative of advancing tourism for all

The second session, focused on enabling all people – whatever their socio-economic status – to experience travel and tourism. The session was moderated by Rajan Datar, BBC World News. Mr. Datar articulated the view that tourism is a human right – not a privilege; quoting Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: ‘Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.’ Five speakers participated: Ivor Ambrose, Managing Director, European Network for Accessible Tourism; Marco Pizzio, Project Manager, Europe Without Barriers & Head, Social & Accessible Tourism, Italian Association of Multiple Sclerosis; Magnus Berglund, Accessibility Director for Scandic Hotels, Sweden; Lee McDonald, International Partnerships Manager, VisitScotland; and Francisco Madelino, President of INATEL Foundation, Portugal.

Their maxim was Tourism for All. The demand went beyond the well-known special needs, like mobility requirements, visual and/or hearing impairments or learning difficulties. Other limitations should be noticed as well. Here one asked whether equivalence should be made among being tired, old or pregnant, allergic, and having language difficulties; and if so, was this ‘a moral matter’ or ‘a practical matter’ or just normal polite behaviour? Did one need to agonize about the obvious?

The speakers were resolute that ‘tourism for all’ is not only a moral duty but also a good business principle – it brings prosperity.

Conclusions of the second session [1]:

- Tourism is a human right and not a privilege.
 - An inclusive tourism sector does not only do good for its direct beneficiaries; it also enhances competitiveness and quality, better distributes tourism flows, brings in new customers and more income. It is good for business.
 - Accessible tourism requires a change of mindset. We can enforce laws but it is the attitudinal barriers that we need to break first. Every customer has different needs.
 - Companies should provide accurate information so as to enable travellers to assess if their individual access requirements can be met.
 - Accessibility needs to be mainstreamed in tourism policies and throughout the supply chain to ensure a seamless tourism experience.
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Session 3: key challenges in managing destinations’ natural and cultural assets

Dawid Lasek, Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Sport and Tourism of Poland, acted as moderator of the third panel of the Congress. The focus was on enabling destination places to preserve their natural and cultural resources for future generations and boost their economic potential to ensure a quality visitor experience. Six speakers participated: Helga Bauer, Vice-President, European Destinations of Excellence (Eden Network Association); Björn Jonzon, CEO, Stora Brännbo Conference & Hotel, Sigtuna, Sweden; Peter DeBrine, Senior Project Officer, Sustainable Tourism, UNESCO World Heritage Centre; Amitava Bhattacharya, Founder and Director, Social Enterprise *banglanatak.com*, India; Tomasz Domański, Professor of International Marketing and Distribution, University of Lodz and Representative of the City of Lodz; and Antje Monshausen, Head of Tourism Watch, Bread for the World, Germany.

This session aimed to bring together ecology, culture and economy to support sustainable development for tourism rules. Antje Monshausen recalled a sentence from the Preamble of the Berlin Declaration on Transforming Tourism: ‘The transformation of our world is not possible without the transformation of tourism.’

Conclusions of the third session [1]:

- If we are to keep our natural and cultural wonders for future generations, we should reconcile growth with sustainability, and the expectations of policy makers, tourism investors and visitors with the self-determination of local communities.
 - If we wish host communities to take ownership of tourism development, they need adequate education and training which take into account local culture, traditional management of resources and human rights principles.
 - The livelihoods of local communities can be advanced and their identity preserved, only if there is a meaningful participation and consultation process, especially in the phases of planning, implementation and monitoring of tourism development projects.
 - Destinations can reinvent themselves if their local population and authorities share a common vision of the place they would like to live in and co-exist with visitors. Urban transformation projects can convert industrial cities into cultural hubs and in turn improve the quality of life for all.
 - Customers should understand why hotels need to become more sustainable and what energy efficiency is all about. Effective and user-friendly communication is key in this process.
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Session 4: companies as champions of a responsible tourism supply chain

The last, fourth session of the Congress, moderated by Pedro Ortún, Principal Adviser, Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, European Commission, centred on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Liability mostly concerns advocating human rights, community well-being and environmental protection. Mr. Ortún's view was: Better Business – Better World. Six speakers participated in this panel: Irek Węglowski, Vice-President of the Management Board, Orbis SA Hotels; Marta Martín Martín, VP Internal Communications & Corporate Responsibility, NH Hotel Group; Helena Egan, Global Director, Industry Relations, TripAdvisor; Mike Brauner, Senior Manager for Sustainability, TUI Group; Agnès Weil, Director of Sustainability and Philanthropy, ClubMed; Angelica Mkok, Head of Social Responsibility, Amadeus IT Group.

The speakers highlighted the linkages between ethical business practices, innovation, completeness and the overall service quality. They all admitted that tourism business should share profits with those who have needs (e.g. if a natural disaster occurs in area where a firm operates). There should be a responsible tourism supply chain (e.g. by buying food from local suppliers). The point was to raise awareness among customers of responsible consumption habits and informed decision-making in travel and tourism.

Conclusions of the fourth session [1]:

- Tourism companies can make a major contribution to the 2030 Sustainability Agenda. They can reduce inequality, contribute to the wellbeing of customers, workers and host communities, provide decent jobs, ensure food security, promote sustainable consumption patterns and initiate local partnerships.
 - Besides caring for the environment, companies also need to address the issues of diversity in the work place, the empowerment of women and youth, the protection of children, humanitarian crises, disasters, as well as their own employees' direct involvement in the communities in which they operate.
 - The tourism industry should stand up against any form of exploitation of human beings, advocate for rights of children and train its staff to recognize and report any suspicious case.
 - CSR pays. It can attract new profiles of customers, improve the credibility of businesses, help revise their supply chain, make the employees take pride in their work and contribute to society.
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Conclusions and additional consideration

Tourism can be a vehicle for sustainable development. But this requires ethical tourism, which can be understood as a tourism that benefits people and the environment in different destinations. There were many statements which suggested a degree of human benevolence or holiness which was unlikely to be present in many tourists, anywhere. Yet synergy between people and environment has to be achieved.

Furthermore, the idea of sharing responsibility for the dark side of tourism by all stakeholders sounds wonderful. But what does that mean? France advertises the fact of penalties for paedophilia on buses and signs at Paris airports. Poland turns a blind eye to strip night clubs, which have sprung up very fast at nearly every market square so frequently visited by tourists. Is that effective 'sharing of responsibility'?

Each of us is a tourist and we should start all changes from ourselves. Many scholars note that when on holiday, tourists behave more freely and differently than at home [2] – they are in the 'play mode' [3]. Many tourists not only do not respect the social and cultural values of the host communities, but they also, which is even more important, treat the trip as an exemption from the obligation to respect the customs and moral norms prevailing in their own living environment [4].

So, if you want to change something, be more ethical in tourism, whether you are a tourist or you run tourism-related business. As the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban

Ki-moon once said: ‘Everyone has a role in sustainable tourism. Every action counts. This year, one billion international tourists will travel to foreign destinations. Imagine what one act multiplied by one billion can do.’² Or, in the words of Anita Roddick:³ ‘If you think you are too small to have an impact, try going to bed with a mosquito in the room!’ The Convention on Tourism Ethics presented to the 22nd UNWTO General Assembly has now been adopted by UNWTO as the Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics⁴ (15 September 2017) [5].

General conclusion from the Congress [1]:

- The International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development is a great occasion to raise awareness of the major contribution of tourism in tackling a wide array of global environmental and social issues. It also represents a platform for showcasing best practices on how these challenges are already being addressed by the governments, the industry, the civil society and individuals.

Notes

1. 1st International Congress on Ethics and Tourism (Madrid, Spain, September 2011); 2nd International Congress on Ethics and Tourism (Quito, Equator, September 2012).
2. Message from the Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon on World Tourism Day 2012, 27 September 2012 Available online at: www.cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/docpdf/tourism2012_0.pdf (accessed 1 September 2017).
3. Anita Roddick (1942–2007) was a human rights activist and environmental campaigner, best known as the founder of The Body Shop.
4. In a nutshell, the Convention covers the responsibilities of all stakeholders in the development of sustainable tourism; and it provides a framework that recommends an ethical and sustainable modus operandi, including the right to tourism, the freedom of movement for tourists and the rights of employees and professionals.

References

- [1] Conclusions of the 3rd International Congress on Ethics and Tourism, 2017, Conclusions delivered by Mr. Rajan Datar. Available online at: www.cf.cdn.unwto.org (accessed 15 September).
- [2] Kozak, M. and Tasci, A.D., 2005, Perceptions of foreign tourists by local service providers: the case of Fethiye, Turkey. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 7(4-5), 261–277.
- [3] Reisinger, Y. and Turner, L.W., 2003, *Cross-cultural Behaviour in Tourism: Concepts and Analysis*, (Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann).
- [4] Apollo, M., 2015, The clash – social, environmental and economical changes in tourism destination areas caused by tourism. The case of Himalayan villages (India and Nepal). *Current Issues of Tourism Research*, 1(5), 6–19.
- [5] PR No.: PR 17104, 2017, Historical decision: approval of the UNWTO Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics. Available online at: www.media.unwto.org (accessed 15 September).

Michał Apollo

Department of Tourism and Regional Studies, Institute of Geography,
Pedagogical University of Cracow, Poland

 apollomichal@gmail.com  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7777-5176>