Tourism and the environment

Towards a reporting mechanism in Europe

ANNEX 17. Indicator assessment TOUR009
Tourism certification tools (3). Protected areas

ETC/ULS consortium partners: Environment Agency Austria, ALTERRA Research Institute, The Institute of Geodesy, Cartography and Remote Sensing (FOMI), space4environment, GISAT, The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), Universidad de Málaga (UMA)

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Indicator name: TOUR009 – Tourism certification tools (3). Protected areas

Assessment

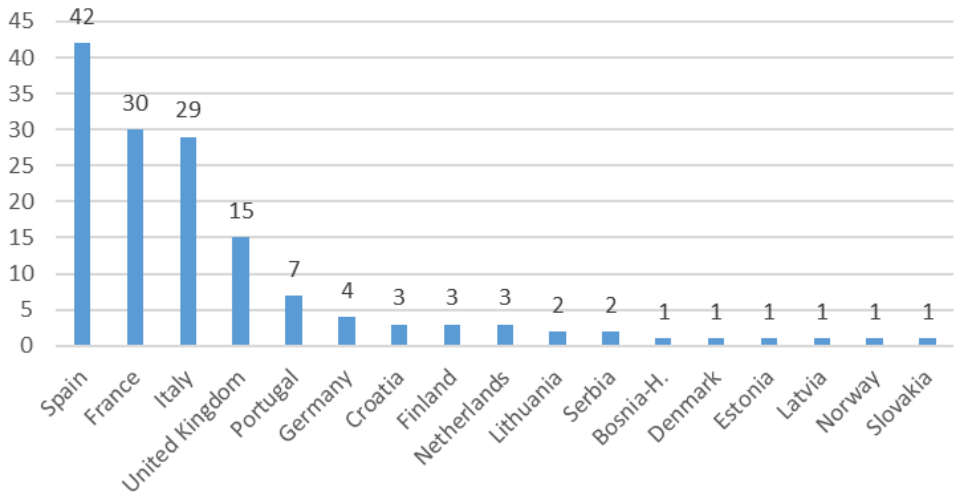
Indicator name
TOUR009d – Number of protected areas awarded with the European Charter of Sustainable Tourism

Key policy question
What is the potential for promoting nature-based tourism in each territory?

Key message
A necessary prerequisite to help increase ecotourism and nature-based tourism is to offer to tourists appropriate places where to undertake those associated activities, such as protected areas. Europe has different levels of nature protection in terms of protected surface, depending on the country and the region inside each country (see TOUR008). Complementary to strict nature protection, a certification tool such as the European Charter of Sustainable Tourism has been developed in order to identify and promote those protected areas committed to sustainable tourism.

Key assessment
The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST) is a certification tool for protected areas created and awarded by the Europarc Federation. The Charter reflects the wishes of the authorities managing protected areas, as well as of local stakeholders and representatives of the tourism business, to support and encourage tourism that accords with the principles of sustainable development. In this sense, the ECST can be seen as a booster for sustainable nature tourism in the places where it has been implemented. 146 protected areas throughout Europe hold this certification so far (2016), although more than 100 are concentrated in only three countries (Spain, France, and Italy). This shows the potential increase in the implementation and consolidation of this award throughout the continent.

Number of parks ECST awarded per country, 2016



Source: Own elaboration from data provided by the Europarc Federation.

However, not all the ecotourism and nature-based tourism activity takes place inside protected areas, nor do all protected areas receive the same level of tourists, and not all protected areas that promote sustainable tourism have been awarded with the ECST. In any case, the ECTS can be considered as an indicator of commitment towards sustainability from management authorities and related stakeholders.

Specific policy question
What are the potential conflicts in land use by tourism (with other activities)?

Specific assessment
Protected areas visitation by tourists and leisure excursionists can be a benefit for those places and the surrounding areas, but at the same time it can create pressure and conflicts with other activities. In this case, though, there is no data at European level to analyse this issue so far.

Specifications

Indicator definition
Number of protected areas per country awarded with the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism.

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Rationale
The more the territory under any nature protection scheme (Natura 2000, national and regional protected areas, etc.) is protected, the highest the probability to increase its use for nature-based tourism or ecotourism, as protected areas are the key destinations for these types of tourism. This should even be more evident in the case of those protected areas that have been recognized as "sustainable nature destinations", such as those ones certified as ECST.

Not all the ecotourism and nature based tourism activity takes place inside protected areas, nor all the protected areas receive the same level of tourism visitation. Moreover, not all the protected areas that promote sustainable tourism have been awarded with ECST. However, it can be considered an indicator of commitment towards sustainability from management authorities and related stakeholders.

Policy context
EC and national policies on tourism and sustainable tourism.
EU regulations regarding terrestrial and marine ecosystems: Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Habitat Directive.
National and sub-national spatial planning regulations.

Methodology for indicator calculation
Number of ECST awarded protected areas according to Europarc Federation database.

Data specifications
Data is provided by Europarc Federation.

Ownership and contacts
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