

# MARINA MOBILISATION AND MUTUAL LEARNING WORKSHOP

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## MARITIME CUISINE MEETS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM Challenges and Opportunities

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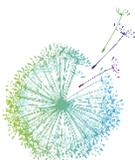
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INTERNATIONAL YEAR  
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## Maritime Cuisine Meets Sustainable Tourism Challenges and Opportunities

Tourism demand is increasing worldwide and tourism is a growing business in Europe. In 2013, the number of nights spent in hotels was 2,6 billion. The challenge is now to exploit this potential in a way that sustainably produces economic benefits.

Today many tourists seek a unique and customised experience rather than a traditional sun-and-sea package holiday. They are more and more interested in authentic experiences that connect them to nature, the people and places they visit. They want to meet local people, learn about how they make a living and taste the fruits of that labour.

Nowadays food is considered as the essential component of tourist experience. Eating out has become popular among tourists and they consider food to be as important as accommodation and good weather conditions. Therefore, sustainable consumption of seafood is a major component for the development of sustainable coastal tourism and can contribute to sustainable management of marine and coastal environment.

Several European countries like France or Italy are strongly associated with culinary tourism by both international and domestic tourists who travel to different places to sample local food and wine. Culinary or food tourism is the search of unique and unforgettable eating and drinking experiences. It differs from agri-tourism in that it is considered as a subset of cultural tourism (cuisine is a manifestation of culture), whereas agri-tourism is believed to be a subset of rural tourism. (Wikipedia)

Although many cities, regions or countries are famous for their food, culinary tourism is not limited to food culture and tasting local food. Every tourist eats at least three times a day, making food one of the major economic drivers of tourism. Countries like Ireland, the Philippines and Canada are investing significantly in culinary tourism promotion and product development and are seeing results with visitor spending and over night stays rising.

In coastal areas there is a high demand for local seafood among tourists to the region as well as among local residents. For seaside tourists, seafood is a key culinary attraction. The Europe's strengths are its diverse coastal landscapes (a coastline stretching from the Arctic to the Mediterranean, from the Atlantic to the Black Sea, the Pacific and Indian Ocean with French overseas territories) and rich cultural heritage. The sustainable seafood production and consumption patterns, as part of the cultural heritage, have the potential to enhance the image of Europe as a sustainable high-quality destination, can contribute to responsible management of marine resources, and promote the specificity of regional sea basins, which can be translated into a competitive advantage.



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Tourism in coastal and marine areas generates a huge demand for seafood products from fishing and aquaculture. In some cases this market demand is met by products of low quality or uncertain origin. This process, if not properly managed, can threaten artisanal fishing and aquaculture, foster unsustainable large scale industrial fishing and intensive aquaculture, thus impacting not only natural resources but also the activities and traditions of local communities. For example in Cyprus, until 2010 the stock level of four most commercial fish species was in over-fishing status. The coastal areas of Cyprus are not rich in marine life mainly due to small inputs of nutrients and pollution. Despite adopting standards for the environmental quality of seawaters under the Fisheries Regulations, overfishing of young fish populations is still taking place. Furthermore, illegal shark fishing by tourists on charter luxury cruises is still part of leisure fishing.

Furthermore, local wild fish should be eaten in the proper season and the spawning seasons must be respected in order to conserve fish stocks and optimise their quality. Yet, in Europe, the most-travelled tourist seasons are from June to September – a time during which certain types of local wild shellfish so popular among tourists (e.g. oysters) should not be heavily consumed as during this period their re-production phase sets in. On the contrary, other types of local wild fish or shellfish can be consumed freely during this time without endangering their stocks ([www.mrgoodfish.com](http://www.mrgoodfish.com)). The challenge lies in directing tourists towards sustainable consumption without depriving them of a local and unique culinary experience.

**What types of Responsible Research and Innovation actions should be put in place so that sustainable seafood production and consumption could contribute to competitive and sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in Europe?**

The European Commission even launched a pilot initiative in 2011 in an attempt to combat tourism seasonality, stimulate the creation of employment and therefore encouraged non-Europeans to travel to Europe during the off-season between October 2012 and March 2013. A strategy like this could be complementary to sustainability programmes promoting sustainable seafood consumption.

The culinary attraction of seafood is often linked to tourists' interest in the fishing culture of the region and seafood festivals have become a real highlight to promote local seafood traditions. In Italy for example, fish and seafood are increasingly part of the national cultural heritage. The re-evaluation of these products, their link to traditional habits and culture, make fish the witness of thousands of years of experience of the relationship between men, their territory and the sea.



This cultural aspect of seafood production can lead to diverse activities. Touring an oyster farm is the kind of thing today's tourists are looking for. Some cultural hands-on experiences are: meetings with local fisherman, trying one's hand at harvesting (hauling a lobster trap on a fishing boat, learning to shuck oysters or to shell prawns, harvesting mussels) and learning the art of cooking seafood.

Other experiential tourist attractions are: guided tours for seafood, boat tours led by fish harvesters, tours of local fish processing plants, fish farm tours, fish auction guided visits, fishing demonstrations and contests. Fresh fish markets are places where visitors could engage directly with local populations.

Numerous seafood festivals are an occasion to learn about local seafood culture: Fête de la Moule, Fête du Hareng, Route du Poisson in France; Mussel, Lobster or Galway Oyster Festivals, Bay Prawn Howth in Ireland; Lisbon Fish and Flavours, Açores Gastronomia Viva, Sardine Festival in Portugal; A l'Ostendaise, Shrimp Festival in Belgium; Eel Festival, Camogli Sagra del Pesce, Fish and Chip Festivals in Italy; Asturian Coast Flavours Route in Spain; Cromer and Sheringham Crab & Lobster Festival, Dorset Seafood Festival, Pembrokeshire Fish Week, Clovelly Lobster and Crab Feast, Rye Bay Scallop Week in the UK; Baltic Herring Festival in Finland, among others. Museums and heritage sites offer cultural attractions (Maréis in France, Museo de la Pesca de Palamós in Spain, Costa Brava, Nationaal Visserijmuseum in Coxyde, Belgium, etc.)



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### **How can coastal and maritime tourism drive sustainable seafood production and consumption? Let's talk about it!**

Promoting sustainable seafood production in the tourism industry can help to preserve marine resources. Many European countries face issues on fisheries and marine resources management.

Fisheries resources suffer intense pressure from overfishing. For example in Italy most valuable species are too expensive because they have almost disappeared due to overfishing and Italian consumers prefer to buy seafood products that are imported from other countries because they are cheaper.

At the same time, national fishermen complain about the strict rules that they are obliged to respect and that do not apply to fisheries beyond the EU.

They are paid very little for the local fish they bring to the seashore, whereas consumers pay very high prices for the same fish products on the market. According to Coldiretti, during the last 30 years, the Italian fishery sector has lost 18,000 jobs and 35% of boats, while only last year Italians bought 769 million kilos of fish coming from other countries.

Other European countries face similar problems. Fishing communities tend to be over-dependent on this single source of income and diversification is needed to improve local livelihoods and the declining profitability and employment. Tourism assets of fishing villages can provide diversification opportunities as fishermen have the opportunity to increase their core business activity, resulting in an increased income. Tourism also raises the profile of fisheries among the general public, allowing for greater appreciation of seafood value and its nutritional aspects.



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## Why is it a hot topic?

The United Nations Organisation has declared 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. This is an exceptional opportunity to raise awareness among public and private sectors, decision-makers and the general public about the impact of tourism as a catalyst for societal and environmental positive changes and to bring all stakeholders together to develop innovative and smart solutions to the multiple challenges facing the marine and maritime sector.

In 2015, during the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly, 154 heads of state and government adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, along with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all. The tourism industry can contribute to achieve several of these goals. Moreover, tourism, has been included as target in Goal 14 on the sustainable use of oceans and marine resources, thus requiring a clear implementation framework, financing and investment in technology, infrastructures and human resources.

The hot topic of tourism and seafood is related to the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- ***SD Goal 2 - End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture***

Tourism can spur agricultural productivity by promoting the production, use and sale of local produce in tourist destinations and its full integration in the tourism value chain. In addition, agro-tourism, a growing tourism segment, can complement traditional agricultural activities. The resulting rise of income in local communities can lead to a more resilient agriculture and aquaculture while enhancing the value of the tourism experience.

- ***SD Goal 8 - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.***

Devising and implementing policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products without harming the environment, will contribute to stimulating economy by 2030.

- ***SD Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.***

To do so, it is imperative to develop and implement tools to monitor the impacts of sustainable tourism that creates jobs, promotes local culture and products. The Sustainable Tourism Programme (STP) of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP) aims at developing such sustainable consumption and production practices, including resource efficiency initiatives that result in enhanced economic, social and environmental outcomes and a better quality of life for all. It also involves engaging tourists through awareness-raising and education on sustainable consumption and lifestyles, providing them with adequate information through standards and labels.

- ***SD Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.***

Coastal and maritime tourism, tourism's biggest segments, rely on healthy marine ecosystems. Tourism development can help conserve and preserve fragile ecosystems and serve as a vehicle to promote the blue economy.

Moreover, in the framework of the Blue Growth Maritime Strategy, the EC has identified maritime and coastal tourism as a driver for the European economy, innovation and growth and an area with special potential to foster a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe. It is the biggest coastal maritime sector in terms of gross added value and employment (Blue Growth Study)<sup>1</sup>.

According to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) the environmental status will be assessed on the basis of 11 qualitative indicators: 1. Biodiversity is maintained; 2. Non-indigenous species do not adversely alter the ecosystem; 3. Populations of commercial fish species are healthy; 4. Elements of food webs ensure long-term abundance and reproduction; 5. Eutrophication is minimised; 6. Sea floor integrity ensures the functioning of the ecosystem; 7. Permanent alteration of hydrographical conditions does not adversely affect the ecosystem; 8. Concentrations of contaminants have no effects; 9. Contaminants in seafood are within safe levels; 10. Marine litter does not cause harm; 11. Introduction of energy (including underwater noise) does not adversely affect the ecosystem. All these indicators can be related to sustainable tourism and seafood that depend or impact them.



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Seafood security is a hot topic because it involves different stakeholders: the fishing sector, business, scientists, retailers, control agencies, consumers, media and several others. Therefore, sustainable seafood production and consumption require a systemic approach and cooperation among all

actors operating in the supply chain, from fisherman to final consumer.

Determination and prediction of seafood quality is a hot topic because of the increase in international markets for fresh fish products and the growing aquaculture industry. More fish is being transported long distances than ever before, and means of evaluating freshness are required to help predict end-user quality. Several EU legal regulations impose providing the consumer with information about the production of fisheries and aquaculture (Regulation (EU) No 1379/2013), the traceability (Regulation (EC) 1224/2009) and labelling (Regulation (EU) 1169/2011).

1. [https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/sites/maritimeaffairs/files/docs/body/study-maritime-and-coastal-tourism\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/sites/maritimeaffairs/files/docs/body/study-maritime-and-coastal-tourism_en.pdf)

## What are the key issues about this hot topic?

Despite fostering growth and generating wealth and business opportunities, the coastal and maritime tourism industry is faced with multiple challenges.

The sector should develop new products that will promote the attractiveness and accessibility of eno-gastronomic activities, raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate; decrease economic inequality and social tensions between relatively poor locals and relatively rich tourists.

- **Political challenges**

The coastal and maritime tourism sector lacks clear rules for seafood products traceability and their harmonisation on a European level.
- **Economic challenges**

The sector suffers from business fragmentation (high proportion of SMEs and micro enterprises), limited or no access to funding for investment and innovation, volatility of demand (vulnerability to economic, financial and political changes), seasonality (socio-economic gains are concentrated in the summer months) even though recreational fishing has some potential to address the seasonality challenge, lack of investment, innovation and diversification, and the increased worldwide competition due to low-cost destinations.
- **Social challenges**

The social challenge of coastal and maritime tourism is to exploit the potential of tourism in a sustainable way and to offer attractive jobs to people, also respecting local tradition and culture. It can be a major source of growth and jobs. The challenge is that the sector is not attracting enough skilled staff mainly due to job seasonality and the lack of career progression opportunities.
- **Cultural challenges**

Nowadays tourists are not only charmed by the beaches but also by culture and other activities that are offered on the coast and in the sea. They look for diversified offerings, e.g. coastal and inland transnational thematic itineraries such as cultural, religious or ancient trade routes and other synergies that local culture and nature can offer to them. However, the new trends (e.g. seafood tourism) must be carefully assessed and regulated in order not to create “easy” income at the expense of the marine ecosystems, and local communities and traditions.
- **Technological challenges**

The technological challenges facing the coastal and maritime tourism are the lack of skills and innovation, multifunctional sustainable infrastructures, difficulties in accessing ICT (e.g. for internet connectivity, marketing tools, monitoring, management schemes, measuring sustainability performance), lack of innovative customised products and services such as e.g. underwater tourism, marine archaeology, maritime heritage, eno-gastronomic activities, the lack of automatic and electronic data capture, seafood traceability systems and real-time information sharing.
- **Environmental challenges**

Tourism is putting growing environmental pressures (impact on biodiversity and ecosystems) on vulnerable coastal and marine habitats. At the same time, it depends greatly on a healthy environment and the sustainable use of natural capital. However, the last few decades have demonstrated that tourism activities and in particular mass tourism can threaten local ecosystems and the overall attractiveness of tourist areas because of the biodiversity degradation resulting from infrastructure development.

Sustainable seafood consumption may help to reduce fishing exploitation, provide diversification opportunities and become a new source of income through fishing tourism.

- **Legal/Legislative challenges**

The seafood sector lacks efficient protection against importation of fish coming from IUU fishing (Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing).

- **Capacity building and education challenges**

Maritime and coastal tourism suffers from knowledge gap and mismatch of skills and qualifications. Due to seasonality and lack of career opportunities, it is not attracting enough skilled personnel, which can lead to lowering service quality and impede competitiveness. The sector lacks well-qualified professionals who are service-minded and speak several languages. It also lacks dynamic entrepreneurs to implement professional approaches and innovative management schemes (e.g. to capture the potential of tourists who can travel in low seasons) amongst local enterprises, administration and stakeholders. The high quality of products and services are the basis of competitive distinction.

## Facts and Figures

- Europe is the world's n° 1 tourist destination (534 million tourist arrivals in 2012 and 356 billion EUR revenue, i.e. 43% of the world's total).
- Coastal and maritime tourism is the largest sub-sector of tourism. It is the largest maritime economic activity in Europe. It employs over 3.2 million people, generates 183 billion EUR in gross value added and represents over one third of the maritime economy.
- Almost one third of all tourist activities in Europe takes place in coastal areas.
- More than four out of nine nights spent in accommodation establishments in the EU are in coastal areas. In 2012 cruise tourism alone generated a direct turnover of 15.5 billion EUR and employed 330,000 people; European ports had 29.3 million passenger visits, a 75% over 2006.



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## How does this hot topic relate to Responsible Research and Innovation?

Responsible Research and Innovation can help to overcome the current marine and societal challenges and unlock the potential for Blue Growth.

There is a strong need for redefining and refocusing the business model of tourism. Therefore, the future success of maritime and coastal tourism will depend on the ability of the European countries to develop sustainable and integrated value propositions that take into account the needs and ambitions of society and reflect its values. In this context, Responsible Research and Innovation (in processes, products, services and technologies) can provide valuable solutions. Its dimensions of public engagement, gender equality, science education, open access, ethics, governance and environment protection, can become a framework for allowing societal values and expectations as well as environment to be taken into account in the process of reshaping coastal and maritime tourism business models.

- **Engagement**

The tourism sector lacks support in the development of transnational and interregional partnerships, networks, clusters and smart specialisation strategies. It needs new partnerships with businesses and universities to develop customised programmes.

Collaboration with other companies in the seafood chain and social and environmental actors is needed to improve access to information (traceability, certifications), research on improvements and innovation of practices and better meet environmental and social standards.

Changing customer demand requires attractive and sustainable products that provide unique and customised experiences. Still, potentially interesting tourist sites are often not promoted attractively or not well linked with other tourist offers. Cooperation among

research institutes, museums, tourism companies and other stakeholders has the potential to develop innovative and sustainable products and services that will respond to new visitors' expectations. Engagement of fishermen communities in this process will also help to continue fishing activities and ensure their environmental, economic and social sustainability.

- **Open access**

Open access, i.e. giving free online access to the results of publicly-funded research (publications and data) will boost innovation and increase the use of scientific results by all societal actors.

Open access may also mean traceability of seafood products, transparency about supply chains and the ability to trace seafood back to its source is critical to environmental and social improvements (public trust). Even though more and more consumers look for high quality fish that are caught in a sustainable way, there are few adequate traceability instruments and tools that allow them to know the origin of fish they buy and the fishing gear it has been caught with. The risk of fraud (e.g. selling imported or farmed fish as local) is still present.

- **Gender equality**

The coastal and maritime tourism faces challenges that can negatively affect women's presence in this industry. In particular, as in many sectors, labour market segregation is a challenge: women are over-represented in lower-skilled and lower-paid areas of hotel, catering and tourism (HCT) work, particularly in areas such as housekeeping and some customer services. Women are also more often employed in part-time and temporary jobs or even carry out a large amount of unpaid work in family tourism businesses. In the seafood industry, women are mainly engaged in seafood processing and little in

fishing and aquaculture activities. In addition, women's presence in decision-making positions is not particularly high: a survey covering 78 tourism companies with information publicly available (including international tour operators, airlines and cruise ships, hotel groups and international professional associations and certification bodies) indicates that women make up 18.5% of all board members, i.e. 99 women out of a total of 526 positions.

- **Ethics**

The ethics challenges relate to respect of fundamental rights and conditions at work in the entire supply chains.

- **Governance**

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have identified 12 aims for sustainable tourism governance and management: economic viability (competitiveness of tourism destinations, able to deliver benefits in the long term), local prosperity, employment quality, social equity, visitor fulfilment (satisfying tourism experience available to all), local control (empowering local communities in planning and decision making), community wellbeing, cultural richness, physical integrity (quality of urban and rural landscapes), biological diversity, resource efficiency and environmental purity (minimising pollution of air, water and land, and decreasing generation of waste).

They provide the basis for tourism policies but also to policies relating more broadly to sustainable development and the environment.

Nevertheless, the critical requirement of governance for sustainable tourism is that there is active engagement of the key public and private stakeholder bodies whose policies and actions can significantly affect the development and impact of coastal and maritime tourism.

- **Science education**

Raising awareness about marine issues and sustainable management of marine resources (marine biodiversity,

vulnerability of marine ecosystems and food chains, etc.) in communication campaigns and educational programmes such as Mr.Goodfish are not included in tourist offers and packages. Reliable scientific information is not easily accessible for tourist and stakeholders of the tourism industry.

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