Tourism companies in Italy implement sustainable tourism practices

According to the survey implemented in the framework of the European project "Shapetourism", 73% of the tourism companies in Italy make use of sustainability practices. Only 27% say that they do not adopt any sustainability practice.

Shapetourism is a project funded by the Interreg MED Programme. The survey covered most of the Mediterranean countries: Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain. The activities in Italy have been implemented by AICCRE – Veneta Federation and Ca' Foscari University of Venice that is part of the European consortium promoting the project .

Cyprus turns out to be the country with the highest rate of tourism companies that do not adopt any sustainability practices in their business: 45% of all tourism companies. Cyprus is followed by Croatia where almost 1/3 of the tourism companies do not use any sustainability practices, and by France and Italy (27% of the tourism companies not implementing any sustainability practice). Among the most virtuous countries we can mention Spain and Portugal (the rate of tourism companies not adopting sustainable practices in these countries is equal respectively to 12% and 17%).

The most widespread sustainability practices in Italy is creation of commercial connections between tourism and other economic activities (67% of companies), followed by hiring local people for job opportunities (56%). Among the practices that are less adopted, we can mention: donate funds or services in kind to "green" initiatives (only 5% of companies), limit visitor access to sensitive cultural and historical resources (only 10%) and purchase from companies with certificates of ecological practices (only 12%).

The survey detected also the barriers perceived by the tourism companies to using sustainability practices. Generally speaking, only 3% of the companies in Italy stated that there are not barriers preventing the adoption of sustainability practices. The country of the Mediterranean area with the highest rate of companies agreeing with this sentence is Portugal (25%) followed by France and Spain (20%).
The main barriers mentioned by the Italian tourism companies are the lack of available cash to invest (43% of companies) and the lack of incentive programs for sustainability (38%). On the contrary, the tourism companies do not consider as relevant factors like the importance given by

customers to sustainability (only 20% of companies consider it impacting) and the lack of involvement with respect to sustainable tourism practices (22%).

Another aspect detected by the survey is the perception of the tourism dynamics in the different regions of the Mediterranean area. In this regard, compared with the situation of three years ago, 41% of the tourism companies in Italy agree that their region is investing more in tourism, 48% agreed that the number of employees of the tourism sectors is increased, 51% agree that the tourism offer is more diversified and that also the tourism distribution channels are getting more diversified.

The results of the survey contributed to set up an innovative participative decision support system that can be used by stakeholders (private and public) to shape a more sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean regions. The system includes also an observatory on tourism in the Mediterranean regions, with interesting indicators built using big data, useful to understand the tourists' perception of the tourism facilities and attractions in the different Mediterranean sites. Two further facilities provided by the systems are scenarios maps and region clusters useful to simulate and compare future tourism trends and dynamics among regions.
The system has an open access and has been set up according to a user-friendly design: interactive maps allow users to select relevant information for each single territory and compared them with other territories of Mediterranean regions. Please visit the website www.shapetourism.eu to use this system and get more information.