

ANNUAL TOURISM REPORTING FOR 2009

1. INTRODUCTION

Council Decision 86/664/EEC of 22 December 1986¹ establishing a consultation and cooperation procedure in the field of tourism foresees that “each Member State shall send the Commission, once a year, a report on the most significant measures it has taken and, as far as possible, on measures it is considering taking in the provision of services for tourists which could have consequences for travellers from the other Member States”.

With the publication of the “Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism”, the Commission announced that “in order to strengthen the collaboration with and among Member States, their current annual reporting through the Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC) will be used to facilitate the exchange and the dissemination of information about how their policies and actions safeguard the sustainability of tourism”.

This Communication was welcomed by the Competitiveness Council conclusions (22nd-23rd November 2007) and by the Presidency Conclusions of the Brussels European Council of 14th December 2007.

The main aims for the reporting process are:

- to be able to monitor the level of implementation of the “Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism” by Member States;
- to facilitate the exchange of experiences among member States with regard to how they tackle issues which are important for the competitiveness and sustainability of European tourism.

MS reports referring to year n shall be sent to the European Commission by the end of February of year $n+1$.

If the reports are sent in English, the deadline is shifted to the end of April.

2. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

This section should provide an overview of the main organisational structure to illustrate how tourism is organised and managed, to identify linkages and to identify the engagement of other organisations/stakeholders.

The information required will only need to be prepared fully in year 1 as it will subsequently only be necessary to provide details of any changes.

2.1 Please identify the National Bodies responsible for tourism (Ministry and also any separate/related National Tourism Organisation), including key areas of responsibility, and their relationship to other national bodies. (maximum of 1.000 characters)

Greek tourism is administratively divided between central, regional and local tourism authorities, which are structured as follows:

¹ Official Journal L 384, 31/12/1986 P. 0052 – 0053.

The Greek Ministry of Tourism which was established by virtue of the Presidential Decree 122/2004, as from October 2009 is merged with the Ministry of Culture (Gov. Gazette 213/A/2009). Under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the **General Secretariat of Tourism** was established (Gov. Gazette A/35/1-3-2010) to specifically deal with tourism issues. In broad terms, the Secretariat is responsible for the overall Greek tourism policy as well as for the regulation, planning and programming of the tourism development of the country within the framework of the government policy. Tourism is an intersectoral sector falling under the competence of various other ministries and the General Secretariat of Tourism has several executing agencies under its jurisdiction. After the merger of the two former Ministries, all the organisations previously supervised by the Ministry of Tourism are supervised by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (GNTO, OTEK, HTDC, HCC).

The **Greek National Tourism Organisation (GNTO)** is a Public Entity (PE) supervised by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Since 1950, the GNTO constitutes the ruling state agency for the tourism promotion of the country and the licensing of its tourism enterprises. According to the Law 3270/04 (Government Gazette 187/A/11.10.2004), GNTO consists of the Head Office located in Athens and the Regional Departments of Tourism (as of 01.01.2005, in Attica, Crete, Western Macedonia, Eastern Macedonia – Thraki, Western Greece, Epirus, Ionian Islands, Central Macedonia, Southern Aegean, Peloponnisos, Sterea Ellada, Thessalia, Northern Aegean). The structure of the GNTO's services and the competences of each unit are included in the Presidential Decree 343/2001 (Gov. Gazette no 231 A). GNTO also maintains several Info Kiosks (in Argostoli, Ancient Olympia, Arta, Gytheio, Evia, Zakynthos, Igoumenitsa, Herakleion, Thessaloniki, Santorini, Kavala, Kalamata, Corfu, Korinthos, Larissa, Lefkada, Rethymno, Samos, Chania, Chios).

It is important to highlight at this point that:

- a) by virtue of L.2160/1993, article 1, paragraph 13, the Greek National Tourism Organisation finances up to 50% the budget of the total programme of tourism promotion of all the Prefectural Administrations of the country through the Prefectural Committees of Tourism Promotion,
- b) by virtue of article 30, L. 3498/2006, the Directorate of Tourism Policy and

Coordination of the General Secretariat of Tourism supervises and provides its consent for all the tourism promotion activities of all public sector entities.

2.2 Please, describe what organisations/agencies are used to deliver services at the national and regional level and the services that they deliver. (maximum 800 characters)

Other institutions that are supervised by the Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism are:

- **The Organisation of Tourism Education and Training (O.T.E.K.) (ex. Schools of Tourist Professions)**

The Organisation of Tourism Education and Training (O.T.E.K) is the specialized Greek state institution that provides education and training for professions in the field of Tourism. O.T.E.K operates as a legal entity of Public Law, under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Today, O.T.E.K includes the former Schools of Tourism Professions and the Schools for Tour Guides. In particular, OTEK operates 2 Advanced Schools of Tourism Education, 8 Vocational Schools (Secondary Education) and 9 Institutes of Vocational Training (Post-Secondary Education). Furthermore, the Institutes of Vocational Training of the OTEK provide specialisation in the fields of Culinary Art, Hospitality and Catering Operations, Travel Agencies Operations and Housekeeping Assistance. In the field of alternative tourism, the Institutes of Vocational Training is currently operating three new specializations -Mountain Escort, Thalassotherapy-Spa Specialist, Balneotherapy-Spa Specialist.

- **The Hellenic Tourism Development Co. (HTDC) (ex-Hellenic Tourist Properties SA)**

The Tourism Development Co. is a public corporation and organisation managing real estate assets, supervised by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, which manages public tourism assets, acting in between the public and the private sector in order to assure optimal property development, thereby contributing to meeting tourism property goals. The Company's main scope of activity is to manage and administrate the state-owned tourism property while securing optimal development through modern financial techniques that promote the synergies. The state owned tourism property portfolio managed by Tourism Development Co., consists of business units - casinos, marinas, hotels, organized beaches, natural springs, campings, ski centers, golf courses, etc. - and undeveloped sites.

- **The Hellenic Chamber of Hotels (HCC)**

The Hellenic Chamber of Hotels, supervised by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, operates as a legal entity governed by public law. Since 1935, the HCC is an important statutory advisor of the State on tourism matters and has by law as members all the hotels operating in Greece. The Chamber is managed by an Administrative Council of elected representatives of the hotels all over the country and representatives of the State. The HCC is member of the Confederation of National Hotel and Restaurant Associations in the European Union (HOTREC).

A more detailed presentation of the above-mentioned bodies has been already provided in the previous year's report.

It is important to add at this point that tourism services are provided not only at the central level –as delineated above- but also at the regional and local levels. Regions, Prefectures and Municipalities set up and implement tourism programmes related to and in favour of their area of responsibility.

2.3 Please, describe which other bodies and organisations are involved at the national level and the process for involving them. (maximum 800 characters)

All relevant bodies and organisations as well as the process for involving them, are mentioned in the previous year's report.

It is important to add that in order to better manage the resources of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF), the **Special Unit of Coordination, Management and Implementation of Tourism Projects** of the General Secretariat of Tourism was established (Gov. Gazette B/1635 and modified by Gov. Gazette B/315). Said Service coordinates its actions with all of its supervised agencies, namely the Greek National Tourism Organisation (GNTO), the Hellenic Tourism Development Co. (HTDC), the Organisation of Tourism Education and Training (O.T.E.K.), the ELAGRO-Sustainable Tourism Development and the Hellenic Chamber of Hotels (HCC), as far as the submission of the suggestions on the co-funded programmes are concerned.

Said Service exercises the functions of a beneficiary as well as those of an intermediate management body of the Operational Programmes of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) for actions falling into the scope of competences of the General

Secretariat of Tourism.

2.4 Please provide a diagram/organogram of the organisational structure for tourism identifying the relationship between national, regional and local bodies. Provide also a short description of the core responsibilities and competencies of each of the organisations. Include also information regarding the direct and indirect links between other departments, stakeholder organisations and unions. Information about mechanisms of decision making process participation from outsider organisations, e.g. forums, advisory committees is also requested. (maximum of 2.000 characters)

Coordination of the policies within the public administration is achieved by bringing closer the Heads and Senior Officials of the Ministries whose competencies are directly linked to tourism within the framework of the **National Board of Tourism**. In said Board, the local administration is represented as well.

The mission of the National Board of Tourism is to establish, follow-up and update -if necessary- the National Development Strategy after achieving broad stakeholder consensus as well as mobilise all the productive sectors to implement the strategy and coordinate their efforts. Its principal aim is to contribute to the improvement of the national competitiveness taking into account the relevant international assessment systems and promote the country's role within the international and regional markets so as to take the lead in the Balkans and the South-East Europe.

Apart from this formal and direct linkages with ministries and services of joint-competency, more indirect linkages are mentioned involving cooperation with trade associations and professional unions, chambers and research centres (i.e HATTA, SETE, etc).

2.5 Please provide information about financial data, including spend on tourism as a percentage of overall government spend, the level of national funding support for tourism marketing, the amount of EU funding support made available for tourism and data concerning the support to SMEs and Destinations. (500 characters)

The Regular Budget for 2009 amounted to 81.258.813€, which is allocated as follows: 30.956.113€ for the former Ministry of Tourism, 32.802.700 for the Greek National Tourism Organisation and 17.500.000 for the Organisation of Tourism Education and Training.

The National Public Investment Programme for the Economic Year 2009 amounted to 8.800.000€; 5.150.000€ are channelled to co-funded programmes with the participation at the Structural Funds of the EU and 3.650.000€ are entirely funded from national resources.

Through the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSFR), the Action Plan for Tourism is mainly funded by the sectoral operational programme "Entrepreneurship – Competitiveness" 2007-2013 with a total budget of 521.232.565€ (axe II: boosting of the entrepreneurship

and extraversion amounting to 292.930.087€, axe III: improvement of the business climate amounting to 228.301.978€).

Furthermore, additional financing instruments in favour of the Greek tourism are the Joint European Resources for Micro to medium Enterprises (JEREMIE) and the Security Fund for Small and Very Small Enterprises (TEMPME), contributing with €44 million.

3. POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

3.1 Is there a current National Strategy for tourism? Yes No

If yes, please, provide information in bullet point format about the key aims, objectives and priorities of the strategy highlighting those that are designed to address sustainability issues in economic, environmental and social terms in particular those related in the six aims included in the Agenda. In preparing the tourism strategy, explain how consideration has been given to the 9 principles set out in the Agenda (para2.3 p5) and given in the appendix. (maximum 1.000 characters)

After the Greek Ministry of Culture merged with the Ministry of Tourism, special emphasis is put on the promotion of the Greek cultural heritage as well as the actual cultural creations and events, combining all three sectors of tourism, culture and sports. Revenue from tourism contributes essentially to the balance of payments of the country while tourism is the instrument of regional development par excellence.

The National Strategy for Tourism aims at broadly promoting the Greek culture as well as creating a human-centred and environment-friendly identity of the Greek tourism. In particular, strategic objective of the Ministry is to enhance the local-featured and social identity of tourism activity as well as modernise the national tourism product systematically, by enriching the tourism offer with innovative and diversified services. Within this framework, the national tourism policy is set as a horizontal umbrella under which synergies are encouraged among multiple productive sectors in order to develop and upgrade tourism throughout the country and against seasonality.

More specifically, the National Strategy for Tourism is based on 4 axes, as follows:

A. Promoting the prosperity of local communities living in tourism areas by extending the tourism activity throughout the year through actions that focus on:

- ❖ the improvement of the competitiveness of the offered tourism product
- ❖ the encouragement of tourism entrepreneurship and relevant professional occasions
- ❖ the support of traditional activities and
- ❖ the creation of employment based on tourism.

B. Enhancing regional cohesion and maintaining the local population in rural areas with a view to:

- ❖ improving the local community quality of life through tourism
- ❖ promoting continuous learning and training of human resources in the field of tourism in order to boost quality features of the tourism product, creativity and novelty
- ❖ improving accessibility to tourism areas and
- ❖ further developing all basic infrastructure.

C. Promoting sustainable tourism development through:

- ❖ duly managing the natural resources taking into consideration the sustainability principles
- ❖ supporting agricultural production and promoting the local products
- ❖ improving accessibility to tourism areas and
- ❖ supporting accommodation and agrotourism entrepreneurship oriented to "green hospitality" standards.

D. Promoting the cultural heritage through:

- ❖ the protection and utilisation of regional cultural resources and
- ❖ the creation of networks among historical and archaeological sites and monuments pertaining to various regions.

Through the NSFR, the Action Plan for Tourism is mainly funded by the sectoral operational programme "Entrepreneurship – Competitiveness" 2007-2013. In particular, the relevant resources are directed to the development of tourism infrastructure, actions of state aid, actions funded through the Investment Law as well as actions of education and training of the human resources. The actions of state aid are designed taking into consideration sustainability issues, comprising 4 basic programmes implemented by all 13 Greek regions: a) Green Tourism, b) Alternative Tourism, c) Cooperate and Innovate and d) Modernisation of the tourism sector.

As far as Product Development is concerned, the overall strategy incorporates nine distinct tourism sectors:

- ❖ Seaside Tourism – Sea & Sun – Diving
- ❖ Nautical Tourism
- ❖ Cultural and Religious Tourism
- ❖ Touring – Gastronomy

- ❖ MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions)
- ❖ Countryside - Rural – AgroTourism
- ❖ Health and Wellness Tourism
- ❖ City Breaks and
- ❖ Winter Tourism.

Greek tourism promotion through the internet and the international media continued for 2009, upon the guidelines provided by the Strategic Marketing Plan of the Greek Tourism stressing the significance of special forms of tourism (for more details see the previous year's report). The advertising campaign for 2009 was entitled "Greece: The true Experience," embellished with a new logo "Greece, 5,000 years old: a masterpiece you can afford." The campaign intended to give the viewer a chance "to see, feel and taste Greece" demonstrating its cultural uniqueness. The 2009 campaign was structured upon the aforementioned thematic sections and was also disturbed through the Internet. Inter alia, it highlighted Athens as a city break destination and put special emphasis on alternative forms of tourism such as pilgrimage and scuba diving. The Greek National Tourism Organisation participated also this year in the most important international tourism fairs and other fairs of special interest (amounted to 120).

3.2 Who was the initiator and who is responsible for its implementation? (maximum 200 characters)

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism that coordinates its actions with other Ministries with which it shares the responsibility to implement the National Tourism Strategy -given the ample competency scope of tourism as an activity. In particular, as for October 2009 the General Secretariat of Tourism of the Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism, which succeeded the Greek Ministry of Tourism, is the initiator and the main responsible for the national tourism policy. For its implementation, the General Secretariat of Tourism also assumes the role of coordinator of the works of the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change, the Ministry of Agricultural Development and the Ministry of Transport and Communication.

3.3 How is the strategy monitored and how often? (maximum 500 characters)

The national tourism strategy is monitored twice a year, once per semester, by an institutionalised collective body of wide composition, the National Board of Tourism. As already mentioned, said official board involves the participation of the most important tourism stakeholders in the tourism policy decision-making by encouraging their participation. Other aspects of the national tourism strategy are monitored and re-oriented,

if necessary, by services/Directorates of the General Secretariat of Tourism or by closer interministerial schemes.

More precisely, as far the national tourism promotion strategy is concerned, the monitoring of the compatibility of the promotional initiatives of the regions with the centrally-formed planning and concept, is constantly assumed by the Directorate of Tourism Policy and Coordination of the General Secretariat of Tourism.

3.4 What tourism specific legislation exists? (maximum 500 characters)

The main tourism legislation is mentioned in the previous year's annual report. Relevant developments are the following:

- a) the adopted Law 3766/09 "Operational arrangement and other regulations", published in July 2009,
- b) all procedures that have taken place during 2009 in order to harmonise the national tourism legislation with the community directive 123 concerning the free provision of services on a transboundary basis among the EU member-states and
- c) the joint ministerial decision 24208/11.06.2009, concerning the "Special Framework of Physical Planning (spatial master plan) and of Sustainable Development of Tourism".

4. MEASURES AND INITIATIVES

This section provides Member States with an opportunity to outline specific initiatives and policies that are or are going to be adopted to manage and develop tourism activity in ways which respond to the key challenges of the Agenda and which fall within the six main aims of the Agenda itself.

1 Economic prosperity

- a. To ensure the long term competitiveness, viability and prosperity of tourism enterprises and destinations.
- b. To provide quality employment opportunities, offering fair pay and conditions for all employees and avoiding all forms of discrimination.

2 Social equity and cohesion

- a. To enhance the quality of life of local communities through tourism, and engage them in its planning and management
- b. To provide a safe, satisfying and fulfilling experience for visitors, available to all without discrimination by gender, race, religion, disability or in other ways.

3 Environmental and cultural protection

- a. To minimise pollution and degradation of the global and local environment and the use of scarce resources by tourism activities.
- b. To maintain and strengthen cultural richness and biodiversity and contribute to their appreciation and conservation.

4.1 Please set out, briefly, the steps which have been or will be taken, if any, to address the 7 key challenges for the delivery of sustainable and competitive tourism, covered in the TSG report and referred to in the 'Agenda'.

4.1.1 Reducing the seasonality of demand. (maximum 200 characters)

Seasonality, with its associated problems of congestion, environmental damage and under-utilisation of resources, causes major difficulties to the competent authorities, the travel industry and the local communities. For this purpose, the General Secretariat of Tourism intends to increasingly mitigate seasonality in tourist demand. As said, in order to succeed, it seeks to enrich and diversify the tourism product through special forms of tourism. The overall strategy is to offer a variety of options, penetrate into as many and different markets as possible as well as set an influential tourism pattern, confirming the country's capability to meet the expectations of visitors with varied motives and multiple demands. All this variety is expected to ensure the viability of tourism enterprises operating through the whole year. In addition, an objective of paramount significance is the quality improvement in every aspect –in services, tourism infrastructure, visitors attracted in the country- which will contribute to the improvement of Greece's global presence (new markets, further boosting of traditional markets) and at the same time ensure favourable conditions for greater investments.

In this respect, through the NSFR and the related Action Plan for Tourism, the programmes a) Green Tourism, b) Alternative Tourism, c) Cooperate and Innovate and d) Modernization of the tourism sector, are implemented by all 13 Greek regions.

Additionally, for 2009, special emphasis is put by the GNT0 on the creation of several ecotourism routes, trekking paths and information kiosks throughout Greece (i.e. Santorini, Evia, Alonissos, Prefecture of Heraklion, Marathonas, Lakonia).

More than this, again in 2009, the GNT0 launched the programme "Tourism for all", granting coupons of Social Tourism to all people, disabled or not. Said programmes refer to the period from October to March, which constitutes a low tourism demand period for Greece.

Furthermore, OTEK contributes to the mitigation of the seasonality of tourism demand by enriching tourism education with new programmes as well as operating new specialisations

in the field of alternative forms of tourism (i.e. Mountain Escort, Thalassotherapy-Spa Specialist, Balneotherapy-Spa Specialist).

Moreover, the Hellenic Tourism Development Co. (HTDC) promotes the development and markets green tourism products and services which have a profound influence on tourism demand, eliminating seasonality. For instance, it has proceeded to the construction and operation of environment friendly certified campings in Paliouri, Chalkidiki and Fanari, Komotini, as well as to the creation of trekking paths and mountain bike in the ski centre of Parnassos.

4.1.2 Addressing the impact of tourism transport. (maximum 200 characters)

Strategies for addressing seasonality problems also include spreading tourists geographically, tackling transport congestion issues and implementing visitor management techniques and restricted access arrangements.

It is true that the consequences of all the relevant issues with tourism transportation developments are maximised in Greece since the airplane overwhelmingly dominates as a mean of foreign tourists' arrival. For this reason, all the efforts of the tourism authorities (and of the ministries with which they share the tourism competency) are concerted to the direction of tackling the accessibility issue of several destinations through the development and promotion of alternative means.

4.1.3 Improving the quality of tourism jobs. (maximum 200 characters)

The aim of the Greek tourism employment policy is to create new quality employment without discriminations as well as improve the quality of existing jobs related to tourism by enhancing career progression and opportunities.

The Greek Organisation of Tourism Education and Training operates as a legal entity of Public Law, under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. OTEK is the specialised Greek state institution that provides education and training for professions in the field of tourism and intends to gradually meet all the challenges of the sector which fall within its scope of activity. Said organization strives to constantly modernise and mainly extend its educational content, by enriching its programmes and syllabus with new and up-to-date specialisations and subjects.

First of all, OTEK's contribution to the improvement of the quality of tourism jobs is directly attained by its programmes of education and training. As far as Continuing Training is concerned, each year OTEK operates courses of continuous training in various cities,

addressed to people already working on tourism or to seasonally unemployed workers, who only have knowledge of their workplace based on experience. The participants have the possibility to systematise and complement their technical skills with the necessary theoretical knowledge in order to improve their performance to service provision. Said programme of "continuous training of workers and seasonally unemployed workers under the prospect of modernising and upgrading the offered services in the field of tourism 2008-2009" started in 02/01/2009 and was completed in 15/04/2009.

Additionally, in the period from 2006 to 2009, within the framework of the operational programme "Competitiveness", a training programme was organised as "Training and Further Education for workers, seasonally unemployed workers and tourism entrepreneurs". The aim of this programme was to improve the knowledge of the participants, in particular aptitudes acquisition in 9 fields.

It is essential to add at this point that the Social Tourism programmes subsidised by the GNT0, are aiming, inter alia, at supporting employment as a whole in the Greek tourism enterprises.

4.1.4 Maintaining and enhancing community prosperity and the quality of life, in the face of change. (maximum 200 characters)

The Special Framework of Physical Planning for Tourism (spatial master plan-Government Gazette 1138/B/2009) principally aims at improving living conditions and prosperity levels in the regions of the country and in favor of the local communities. In this respect, it sets guidelines, regulations and criteria for the physical planning and the organisation of tourism in the Greek territory in general, and at the same time defines the necessary infrastructure. The plan has been prepared to guide investment decisions and provide specifications for the type and intensity of tourism development. It is expected to open up development possibilities for the Greek tourism through the thematic, spatial and temporal expansion of tourism activity under the conditions of sustainability and quality. For this reason, it incorporates a long-term perspective for the next 15-year period (2009-2024).

In addition, tourism developing areas are integrated to the incentive regime of the National Development Law and the tourism enterprises are supported through the co-funded programmes of the EU (NSFP). In particular:

a) Through the development and promotion of alternative and special forms of tourism, the General Secretariat of Tourism and the GNT0 intend to boost sustainable tourism. These

forms of tourism are integrated into local development plans and are supported by local communities' initiatives. The programme "Alternative Tourism" finances investment plans for the establishment and the modernisation of tourism enterprises of special and alternative interests (nautical, sport – training, climbing, adventure tourism, city breaks and seniors' tourism, gastronomy, etc) as well as plans for the restoration and promotion of traditional cultural and historical resources of tourist interest (i.e. traditional wooden ships, industrial heritage, handcraft establishments, etc).

b) In order to promote the sustainable local and regional tourism development through the National Public Investment Programme many actions were also funded (the programme is still running). Said actions were implemented in cooperation with the local authorities and other bodies and involved the organisation of cultural events of tourist interest as well the elaboration of studies and the carrying-out of tourism development plans aiming at local and regional prosperity.

c) Within the framework of the NSFR 2007-2013, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism participates in actions of both the Programme of Rural Development and the operational Programme of Fisheries.

The Social Tourism programmes, implemented and subsidised by the GNTO, contribute to the improvement of the prosperity and the standard of living of local communities through the increase of tourism traffic and subsequently of the aggregated demand-consumption.

Taking into consideration the challenges set in the "Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism" and with a view to maintaining and improving the prosperity of local communities involved in and affected by the tourism activity, OTEK gradually incorporates the sustainability principles into its programmes of education and training.

The Hellenic Tourism Development Co. promotes the improvement of the environmental and social image of the company with a view to covering the deficit of its social acceptance through the creation of an ecological park at the lake Kaiafa, of public character parks at the Coast of Varkiza, at Paliouri, Chalkidiki, at Agioi Apostoloi, Chania and of the biking/cycling route throughout the coastal front of Attica.

4.1.5 Minimising resource use and the production of waste. (maximum 200 characters)

First of all, it is essential that tourism overdeveloped/saturated areas are characterised as such in order to be exempted from the incentive regime of the National Development Law. Such conditionality is very important to contain overcoming their carrying capacity as well as

minimising the use of natural resources and waste production.

Within the framework of the NSFR and under the sectoral operational programme "Entrepreneurship – Competitiveness" 2007-2013, the Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism (General Secretariat of Tourism) runs the programme "Green Tourism" which gives tourism enterprises the possibility to implement models of environment-friendly management of total quality (i.e. eco-hotels). It also finances investment plans for energy and resources' saving as well as for the use by tourism enterprises of renewable sources of energy. This programme also funds investment plans of tourism enterprises willing to minimise waste production.

Furthermore, the GNTO promotes certification systems aiming at environment-friendly management of tourism enterprises (European Ecolabel scheme, green key).

The Hellenic Tourism Development Co. aims at the decrease of the energy it uses and mainly of its ecological footprint, through actions such as: a) in the Centre Ski of Parnassos, the use of two wind engines for the power generation of 2MW, equal to the relative consumption of the facility, of snow-ploughs and snow-ply machines of antipollution technology as well as of the space heating through biomass burning and b) the creation of a desalination unit of 2000m³/d production through the use of renewable sources of energy in Paliouri, Chalkidiki, which will cover not only the energy needs of the involved company but also and mainly the water supply of the local community whose population during the summer rates to 10.000.

4.1.6 Conserving and giving value to natural and cultural heritage. (maximum 200 characters)

The Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism lays special emphasis on infrastructure promoting the rich natural and cultural resources of the country and giving value to the abundant Greek tourism resources, cultural heritage and important ecosystem. Relevant actions concern:

- ❖ Ecotourism – Hiking trails
- ❖ Tourist refugees – moorings
- ❖ Information Centers and Centers of Environmental Education
- ❖ Creation of museums and exhibition centers
- ❖ Utilisation of listed monuments (movable and immovable) as well as of locations of high natural and cultural value
- ❖ Thematic cultural networks
- ❖ Restoration, upgrading, modernisation and utilisation of the tourism properties
- ❖ Targeted actions for the development of special infrastructure supporting alternative tourism (i.e. diving, sport tourism, etc).

In addition, the Special Framework of Physical Planning for Tourism (spatial master plan) and its Study of Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment is being finalised in order to protect and promote the landscape and the natural and cultural resources as well as contain the adverse effects of climate change. The aim of this is to ensure sustainable and balanced development according to the natural, cultural, economic and social particularities of each area. An important modification of the Special Framework of Physical Planning entails further incorporating the environment-friendly approach to the physical planning for the development of the tourism product.

The GNTO actually proceeded to the promotion of different locations of the "Route of the Apostle Paul", such as the region of Kala Nera in Crete and the island of Samothraki, the restoration of the Monastery of Poretsou in the Prefecture of Ilia and the creation of a Cultural Centre as well as the renovation of buildings of vernacular architecture and the creation of museums and Centers of Environmental Information (mansion-house Petralia, School of Orini).

The Hellenic Tourism Development Co. promotes the protection of the natural and cultural heritage and the recognition of its value through: a) the promotion of protected areas, such as the water reserve of the Fanari, Komotini or the 4 Nissides, Thesprotia, b) the utilisation of listed monuments, such as the museum and the gardens of Achillion in Corfu, the island of Spinaloga, the Tourist Kiosk of Saint Demetrios Loubadiaris in Athens as well as the balneal centre of Aidipsos and finally c) the compliance of a series of hotels with the international environmental management models ISO 14001, EMAS and the promotion of actions of accreditation (Greenbuilding, ECOLABEL, EEAS, DGNB, ISO 26000) for their ecological labelling. Involved resources are: the Ski Centre of Parnassos, which is a part of the National Park of Parnassos, the Ecological Camping of Fanari in Komotini, which is part of the National Park of the water reserve of the lake Vistonida, the public character park of Paliouri in Chalkidiki, other facilities in the caves of Dyros, the Ecological Park of Kaifas and the 4 Nissides of Thesprotia.

Similarly OTEK proceeded to the instauration of the facades of the two listed buildings of Italian architecture where the Advanced School of Tourism Education and the Secondary Technical Vocational School of Rhodes are located.

Certainly, the Greek cultural and natural resources are integral part of the national strategy of product development and respective promotion worldwide. Aspects of this heritage and the contemporary reality are incorporated in the international advertising

campaign of the Ministry and the GNT0 (communicated through the media, printed material, internet, fairs and road shows participation). Additionally, the Greek brand draws much of its power from these unique characteristics.

4.1.7 Making holidays available to all. (maximum 200 characters)

The right to tourism for all the Greek citizens dominates the Greek tourism and social policy. First of all, under the scope of its competency and with a view to contributing to the enhancement of the competitiveness of the hospitality industry, the General Secretariat for Tourism has fixed the minimum prices of over-night stay for 2009 at same level as 2008.

The programme "Tourism for All", elaborated and subsidised by the GNT0, offers low-income groups of the population the opportunity to take holidays throughout the year. Said programme involved 8-day holidays and lasted from 15/05/2009 to 31/03/2010. For more details please see the previous year's report.

The Hellenic Tourism Development Co. promotes the improvement of the business climate and services provided as well as the facilitation of access to the tourism resources, boosting at the same time the environmental dimension of tourism activities, through, for instance, the modernisation of the elevators and of other infrastructure of the Ski Centre of Parnassos. In addition, the organisation aims at creating pioneer infrastructure and networking, by integrating, for instance, the following plans into the operational programme "Digital Convergence": a) Information Services and Visitors' Help Desks in Akti Vouliagmeni (Vouliagmeni Coast), b) Company's portal improvement to provide upgraded services to the interested enterprises based on the principles of the open government, c) Integrated Electronic Information Services to Visitors-Tourists concerning seats availability per boat type, cost etc in the Alimos marina, d) Integrated Services to citizens through an automated system for bike sharing throughout the biking route Alimos – Voula – Vouliagmeni.

4.2 As key challenges may change over time, please identify any other areas that are becoming a new challenge. (maximum 600 characters)

A top priority and a great challenge for the Greek Ministry of Culture and Tourism is the consistency, synergy and complementarity of all three thematic axes which constitute the three-fold scheme "culture-tourism-sports", based on the principles of sustainable development. Within this framework, Greece actively participates, for example, in the Wine Culture Tourism Exchange of the Council of Europe, where has taken an important management role since its inception as a project.

The development of internet applications and electronic platforms increasingly influences the management of the tourism product. At the same time, green development of tourism enterprises and destinations is promoted through multiple channels. In 2009, within the framework of the operational programme "Competitiveness", a relevant programme was completed: Integrated actions of Electronic Communication and Promotion of investment possibilities and opportunities offered by the Greek tourism sector.

In a similar vein, the General Secretariat of Tourism is going to participate to the following three programmes of the NSRF: a) operational programme "Digital Convergence", b) operational programme "Administrative Reform" and c) programmes of "European Territorial Cooperation".

Furthermore, in order to obtain a sustainable and competitive European tourism, the European Commission invites all the involved agents to adopt a holistic approach ensuring that tourism is well-balanced and integrated into the full range of activities that affect the society and the environment. Within this framework and according to the Immigration policy of the EU, an important challenge set by the Agenda is to tackle the issue of employment in the tourism sector of third country nationals who do not enjoy a regular status of stay. In particular, in order to control and reduce the flow of "illegal" workers at the desired levels, the Union recently adopted the Directive 2009/52/EC (18 June 2009) "providing for sanctions against employers of illegally staying third country nationals". Greece has to integrate said directive by 20.7.2011, even if its objectives are already covered by the regulation stipulated in the article 86 of L. 3386/2005, which provides for the prohibition of hiring and employment of third country nationals who do not possess a residence permit. Sanctions against employers range from fines to custodial sentence and, under certain circumstances, also allow for the closure of the enterprise or the suspension of its licence. In Greece, the competent authorities to control the implementation of the regulation are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Employment and Social Security.

For the Hellenic Tourism Development Co. a niche market and focus of interest are the ecological parks: the organisation supports the development and markets green tourism products and services, such as the construction and functioning of environment-friendly planned and certified eco-campings in Paliouri, Chalkidiki and Fanari, Komotini.

Finally, a real challenge –under the present inconvenience of the Greek economy and the unfavourable climate- is to find imaginative and creative ways for the maximum possible promotion of the Greek tourism and the country as a whole, since funds from the regular

national budget are very limited.

4.3 Please identify and describe a specific initiative, which is related to the 7 key challenges, that is innovative/successful and which would be of interest to or of help to other Member States. (maximum 2.000 characters)

The adoption of a new development model in service of the people and their real needs is a core necessity of the modern times which requires radical changes in our mentality and lifestyle. Green development respects the natural, social, cultural and economic environment, which is considered as development resources. Green development is a top priority also for Greece and entails comprehensive policy proposals in order to restructure the productive base of the economy, attain balanced regional development and create new and better employment. For the new Greek government, green development is a key opening up new horizons for greater competitiveness, attracting new investments and upgrading the quality of life for all citizens since it stimulates new business opportunities.

In this respect, taking into consideration research results and the claims of modern travellers concerning the respect for the environment as well as the needs of tourism enterprises in order to maintain their competitiveness, the **Special Unit of Coordination, Management and Implementation of Tourism Projects** of the General Secretariat of Tourism elaborated and will implement, after consultations, an extensive manual for "Green Tourism", a great innovation first time applied in the tourism sector.

As described in the previous year's report, combining programmes of Social Tourism with voluntary services, provided mainly by young people, are viewed by the Greek authorities as an important challenge and a valuable task.

The Hellenic Tourism Development Co. supports tourism works adopting procedures based on the principles of green planning, which contribute to the protection and promotion of the natural and cultural heritage while ensuring sustainable development and all year-long operation. Within this framework, the organisation will proceed to investments with a view to upgrading the national tourism product, such as the creation of the "Eco-Development Park of Thermal Springs of Kaiafas aiming at: a) an integrated and complex intervention in favour of the protection and the appropriate management of the natural environment with simultaneous actions for the environmental restoration of the distressed area of the property damages by the fires of 2007, b) the prolongation of the tourism period through the creation of a new ecotourism attraction pole, which will operate in a complementary and not competitive way vis-à-vis already existing tourism enterprises of the Prefecture involved

(Ilia), c) the operational upgrade of the thermal springs through the creation of a sustainable and model destination for therapeutic tourism and d) the offer of various opportunities of entertainment, well-being, rejuvenation of the body and education, compatible with the ecological fragility of the wider area.

5. MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Three mechanisms for implementing the Agenda were identified in the "Agenda": sustainable destinations, sustainable businesses and responsible tourists.

5.1 Sustainable destinations: What support is given to strengthen destination management at the regional/destination level (supportive policy environment, knowledge networks, training programmes, establishment of measures/indicators for benchmarking, etc.)? (maximum 600 characters)

In the 4th Programme Period 2007-2013, whose principal and declared aim is to enhance entrepreneurship and competitiveness, know-how on destination management is mainly provided to the decentralised administration (i.e. the General Secretariats of the 13 Regions) and the local authorities. Destination management can be of strictly public nature or take the form of cooperations with collective professional bodies, chambers and tourism business units. An important development in destination management could also come from the anticipated development of clusters (cooperation networks) in the tourism sector.

In addition, within the framework of the NSFR 2007-2013, the General Secretariat of Tourism included in the relevant programming the action "Tourism development and Ports" which concerns the physical planning of new ports and anchorages as well as the improvement of the already existing ones aiming at fulfilling the criteria of sustainable and balanced tourism development. Furthermore, the physical planning of ports is based on rational criteria and on strategic locations in order to ensure their economic performance, contain the environmental impacts, keep the natural and cultural resources unaltered, increase the competitiveness of the level of the offered services as well as attract new investors-managers for the functioning of the tourism port infrastructure.

At European level, Greece constantly participates in the European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) project of the European Commission, which aims to promote sustainable tourism development models for emerging destinations across the Union. The winning destination of last year, whose theme was "Tourism and Protected areas", was Lesvos -an island in the northern Aegean- and its Petrified forest.

5.2 Sustainable businesses: What support is given to strengthen the sustainability and competitiveness of businesses (supportive policy environment, orientation of business support services to sustainability, training, financial incentives, etc.)? (maximum 600 characters)

Within the 3rd Community Support Framework, the programme "Recruitment of Advisors in order to register the functional and other qualitative data of the tourism accommodation" was completed. In this respect, a standardised model was created categorising this accommodation according to the stars and keys system.

Moreover, within the framework of the programme "Integrated actions of Electronic Communication and Promotion of investment possibilities and opportunities offered by the Greek tourism sector", the possibilities were explored for the launching of a portal aiming at informing potential tourism investors, based on the model of "one stop shop".

In the field of tourism, the NSFR 2007-2013 promotes actions that contribute to the enhancement of the sustainability of the existing tourism enterprises as well as their modernisation through the incorporation of new technologies in their operation. Relevant interventions constitute part of an integrated business development strategy aiming at multiplied positive results, high added value, decrease in functional and administrative costs, cutting of bureaucracy burdens and consequently improvement of the competitiveness of the tourism enterprises what goes hand in hand with the upgrading of the quality of the offered services.

More specifically, the foundation of this strategy is the Action Plan for Tourism, mainly funded through the sectoral operational programme "Entrepreneurship – Competitiveness" 2007-2013. In particular, the relevant resources are directed to the development of tourism infrastructure, actions of state aid, actions funded through the Investment Law as well as actions of education and training of the human resources. The actions of state aid are designed so as to take into consideration sustainability issues, comprising 4 basic programmes implemented by all 13 Greek regions: a) Green Tourism, b) Alternative Tourism, c) Cooperate and Innovate and d) Modernisation of the tourism sector.

The General Secretariat for Tourism runs the programme "Green Tourism" which gives tourism enterprises the possibility to implement models of environment-friendly management of total quality (i.e. eco-hotels). It also finances investment plans for energy and resources' saving as well as for the use by tourism enterprises of renewable sources of energy. In addition, the "Green Tourism" programme provides with funding investment plans for the reinforcement of environmental and social corporate responsibility.

In addition, all the complex of GNTO competencies (controlling, supervising and regulative) intends to promote sound entrepreneurship through the creation of a stable framework of regulations related to tourism and the creation of favorable conditions in order to attract crucial for the national economy tourism investments.

The enhancement of tourism entrepreneurship increasingly in respect of the principle of sustainable development, is also effectuated through the implementation of the National Development Law. The provisions in force provide for three kinds of support (subvention, leasing subsidy, tax exemption & subsidy of the cost of the employment created by the investment plan) to the hospitality industry as well as the facilities of special tourism infrastructure. In the framework of subsidised modernisation, special reference should be made to the environment friendly supported forms of production and energy saving e.g. systems of electricity co-production in tandem with soft energy paths Solar/Wind energy (photovoltaic, solar water heaters, wind generators, power packs etc.), systems of automatic operation of the electrical works for energy saving.

Furthermore, it is noted that special tourism infrastructure, a great number of which has a character directly oriented to sustainability principles (tourism ports and pleasure boats, marinas, convention centers, golf courses, relevant to thermal springs infrastructure, spa and health centers, ski centers, centers of training and sport tourism, race-tracks and thematic parks) are subsidized –at very high rates- throughout Greece. Besides that, under the sustainability principle, hospitality investments are exempted from subsidies in the most congested tourist spots of the Greek territory, characterised as overdeveloped.

5.3 Responsible tourists: What support is given to promote responsible choices by tourists (e.g. sustainability in education, national marketing and media campaigns, promotion of certification schemes)? (maximum 600 characters)

Within the framework of the programme “Integrated actions of Electronic Communication and Promotion of investment possibilities and opportunities offered by the Greek tourism sector” run by the General Secretariat of Tourism, an electronic portal was designed with a view to informing tourists for their rights and duties as well as for the significance of the Global Code of Tourism Ethics.

6. DATA AND INDICATORS

Eurostat will provide, as an annex, the key statistical data required to support the reporting process covering around 20 indicators². These are mainly related to the aim of 'economic prosperity'.

Please, identify indicators that are being used or developed which could add to the range of information being provided by Eurostat, particularly in relation to social and environmental issues (other indicators from the TSG report, visitors/ residents satisfaction, etc.). (maximum 500 characters)

7. COMPLEMENTARY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If necessary use the following box to provide additional complementary information that has not already been covered.

After a long period of increase in the national tourism receipts, Greek tourism seems to have entered a particularly difficult period due to the recent global economic crisis and the problems the sector is facing at this difficult for the Greek economy conjuncture. At any rate, the Greek government has declared its determination not to allow one of the national economy's main "powerhouse" to be stunted by it, since tourism is widely considered as vital in determining Greece's overall performance.

In this respect, the new Greek Government has already proceeded to:

- ❖ The abolition of landing fees at all the airports of the country –except the International Airport Eleftherios Venizelos.
- ❖ The drafting of a new law, under cooperation with the social partners, to be approved by the Greek Parliament concerning the maritime cabbotage (Council Regulation No 3577/92 of 7 December 1992 applying the principle of freedom to provide services to maritime transport within Member States).

² These indicators have been selected from the 50 TSG indicators on the basis of the possibility to calculate them at the European level.

APPENDIX

Principles of sustainable tourism:

- **Taking a holistic and integrated approach**

All the various impacts of tourism should be taken into account in its planning and development. Furthermore, tourism should be well balanced and integrated with a whole range of activities that affect society and the environment.

- **Planning for the long term**

Sustainable development is about taking care of the needs of future generations as well as our own. Long term planning requires the ability to sustain actions over time.

- **Achieving an appropriate pace and rhythm of development**

The level, pace and shape of development should reflect and respect the character, resources and needs of host communities and destinations.

- **Involving all stakeholders**

A sustainable approach requires widespread and committed participation in decision making and practical implementation by all those implicated in the outcome.

- **Using best available knowledge**

Policies and actions should be informed by the latest and best knowledge available. Information on tourism trends and impacts, and skills and experience, should be shared across Europe.

- **Minimising and managing risk – the precautionary principle**

Where there is uncertainty about outcomes, there should be full evaluation and preventative action should be taken to avoid damage to the environment or society.

- **Reflecting impacts in costs – user and polluter pays**

Prices should reflect the real costs to society of consumption and production activities. This has implications not simply for pollution but for charging for the use of facilities that have significant management costs attached to them.

- **Setting and respecting limits, where appropriate**

The carrying capacity of individual sites and wider areas should be recognised, with a readiness and ability to limit, where and when appropriate, the amount of tourism development and volume of tourist flows.

- **Undertaking continuous monitoring**

Sustainability is all about understanding impacts and being alert to them all the time, so that the necessary changes and improvements can be made.

June17th 2008