



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SUMMARY

Towards quality urban tourism

Integrated quality management (IQM) of urban tourist destinations

Enterprise Directorate-General
Tourism Unit



Brussels, 2000

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It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu.int>).

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Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2000

ISBN 92-828-7839-2

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Printed in Belgium

PRINTED ON WHITE CHLORINE-FREE PAPER

Foreword

Tourism is essential in achieving the general objectives of the European Union, namely the promotion of the European citizen's interests, growth and employment, regional development, the management of the cultural and natural heritage and the strengthening of a European identity.

The importance that is attached to urban areas can be seen from the communication from the Commission 'Sustainable urban development in the European Union: a framework for action' of October 1998 which aims in particular to enhance economic prosperity and employment in towns and cities and to improve the urban environment.

Quality tourism can contribute to the sustainable development of urban areas by improving business competitiveness, meeting social needs and preserving the cultural and natural environment.

If tourist destinations are to be successful in all these areas, they must take a global approach that focuses on tourist satisfaction and is based on the principles of sustainable development set out in this publication on integrated quality management (IQM).

Although IQM is a relatively new approach, a certain number of urban tourist destinations are making real efforts in this direction. They have defined strategies with the key partners, are implementing good practice and are continually developing monitoring and evaluation tools for adjusting that approach according to its economic, social and environmental impact. The purpose of this publication is to draw lessons from the experience of these destinations and to make recommendations useful for urban tourist destinations.

The Commission communication 'Enhancing tourism's potential for employment' of April 1999, underlines the importance of a wide dissemination of this kind of work. On the basis of that communication, the Council of Ministers of 21 June 1999 gave a further boost to activities in the area of quality and sustainability in tourism. Guidelines for programmes in the period 2000–06, adopted by the Commission on 1 July 1999, also recommend that the Structural Funds support tourism development by pursuing these objectives.

The Commission intends to foster the exchange of good practice in the area of tourism, with the help of all the public and industry partners concerned.



Erkki Liikanen
Member of the European
Commission

Introduction

Urban tourism

Approximately 80 % of Europe's population lives in towns and cities, making Europe the world's most built-up continent and the urban question one of the major issues for future years.

Urban conurbations mirror the problems that face European society as a whole: traffic gridlock, pollution, lawlessness and unemployment. They are not just the main places in which wealth is created and the focus of cultural and social development, however, but places where people live and work, shop and enjoy leisure pursuits.

Renewed interest in urban tourism since the beginning of the 1980s has brought about a sharp upturn in this kind of tourism. Various interlinked factors have undoubtedly played a part in this: the need to breathe life back into and rehabilitate the historic centres of towns and cities, wider-ranging and more diversified cultural pursuits, consumers' interest in the heritage and urban development and their search for things to do and for spending opportunities.

The fact that people are taking more, but shorter, holidays, the advent of the single market and the general increase in mobility have also helped to build up urban tourism in Europe.

The broader range of activities and leisure pursuits that visitors are seeking is extending what is on offer. This diversification is also due to a growing awareness of tourism among political decision-makers who are increasingly keen to promote it as a key factor in economic development bringing wealth and employment.

Tourism is being seen as a cornerstone of a policy of urban development that combines a competitive supply able to meet visitors' expectations with a positive contribution to the development of towns and cities and the well-being of their residents.

Integrated quality management (IQM) offers an opportunity to act on both these fronts: economic development, on the one hand, and urban development, on the other. It does this by offering visitors a unique and original experience and by trying as far as possible to satisfy residents' rightful aspirations for harmonious economic and social development which shows concern for the environment.

Taking 15 case studies of European urban tourist destinations as a starting point, this publication highlights factors that have helped to make such strategies successful, looks at methods and procedures and shows what resources have been implemented and what results have been obtained.

Who is this publication for?

This publication is for everyone, whether in the public or private sector, involved in managing urban destinations. Not just those in charge of or providers of tourist services or products in destinations, but also those responsible for urban development (planning and urban development departments, development and environmental agencies, etc.). The case studies

and recommendations may also provide food for thought for local, regional and national public authorities, the tourism industry and in particular SMEs which are the driving force behind and the cornerstones of an urban destination's quality initiatives.

The publication also looks at the ways in which tourism enterprises can help individually or collectively to improve a destination's quality.

What kind of urban destinations have been studied?

Urban destinations from the whole of the European Economic Area that are being promoted as tourist destinations, have been studied. They include small towns and large cities, towns with a tradition of tourism and towns where tourism is a more recent development, as well as towns active in various urban tourism markets (cultural cities, leisure centres, business centres, trade fair and conference towns). Residential towns and towns with fewer than 20 000 inhabitants were excluded as case studies.

Working method

This publication is the result of a study conducted by the Belgian contractor OGM ('Organisation Gestion Marketing') for the Tourism Unit of the Enterprise Directorate-General of the European Commission.

Information gathered from European, national and regional organisations and an assessment of the replies to a self-evaluation questionnaire sent out to 171 urban destinations in the European Economic Area provided a starting point for identifying and selecting the 15 case studies.

A panel of experts initially selected a long list of 28 destinations which, following further examination, were reduced to a final list of 15 destinations for detailed study (in particular through a visit to the destination).

The 15 destinations finally selected reflect the diversity of European urban tourist destinations from the point of view of their location, size, openness to and reliance on tourism and the progress that has been made with quality initiatives and the ways in which such initiatives can be implemented, as well as their objectives and strategies. While these may not be unique situations, they do illustrate real experiences and can in no way be considered to be models.

Digest of recommendations

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Digest of recommendations

The recommendations set out below are chiefly aimed at public and private agencies working in tourism keen to play their part in the harmonious development of the tourism industry throughout the area of their town or city and its surrounding region by achieving the best possible impact on tourist satisfaction, socioeconomic development and the quality of life of their fellow citizens.

They are based on an analysis of those factors that seem to play a key role in the success of integrated quality management in urban tourist destinations. These recommendations cover the stages of design of the approach, strategies and practical measures and of implementation, resources, measurement and results.

They are practical and designed to meet the actual needs of those involved in tourism, who are often heard to speak about the integrated quality management of the tourist destination without really understanding its issues and implications or how to tackle and introduce an approach of this type.

The following should, however, be borne in mind:

- the recipes proposed are neither universal nor exhaustive, but illustrate successful practices, the guiding threads of which can be transposed;
- integrated quality management is a new managerial approach for tourist destinations: its pioneers are in most cases on a learning curve where successes are often matched by failures;
- many of those involved are unaware of the actual concept of integrated quality management: destinations other than those selected are undoubtedly launching this kind of approach without ever having felt the need to link it to the concept of integrated quality management;
- the findings of this study should be seen as a contribution to European policy to promote quality and quality strategies in order, among other things, to disseminate good practices within the Member States.

It has been possible, through this study, to develop a chart for an IQM approach proposed for tourist destinations which has provided a framework for the presentation of the case studies. This chart is global and systemic and flexible and adaptable: in some ways it is an evolving and repetitive framework.

The dynamics of partnership: paving the way for an integrated quality management approach

There is no recipe for the successful introduction of a quality plan in an urban tourist destination. A sustainable quality improvement will be more likely, however, if a number of basic conditions are satisfied.

Generally speaking, integrated quality management is a repetitive and participatory process.

In tourism, particularly in towns and cities, this process involves an integrated management policy, i.e. a policy that concerns everyone involved in the basic services and products supplied to tourists, which is the source of attraction for the visitor, as well as in secondary services, which are an important part of the overall tourist experience.

Six criteria are helpful in creating, maintaining and progressing a dynamic partnership between all those involved.

They are as follows:

- establishing a strong, well-structured, institutionally-based management that has resources (financial and human) for action, autonomy and responsibility and the support of the public authorities, the private sector and local people;
- from the formulation of the plan right up to the monitoring of its implementation, forging a partnership approach based on close and cohesive cooperation between all those involved at local, regional, national, and even international level, thereby making the most of the resultant synergies, spin-offs from measures and economies of scale;
- working towards a common vision of tourism development by consulting the agencies involved and local people and establishing a high-quality internal system for the circulation of information;
- looking for a balanced distribution of the positive impact of urban tourist development between visitors, industry professionals, their personnel and local people. The foundations need to be laid for a positive outcome that offers added value for everyone;
- drawing up a consistent policy and coordinating, in the field, the activities of services responsible for tourism and other services responsible for urban development which have a major part to play in the quality of the visitor experience (public transport, public cleanliness, police, etc.);
- introducing incentives to promote the emergence and encourage the development of private initiatives to improve tourism quality. These incentives may be constructive or repressive and can take a whole range of forms (tax concessions, aids and subsidies, information and promotion, prizes and awards, training, etc.).

Finding a strong leader for the partners: integrated quality management requires a strong and recognised authority.

Who are the main partners and how are they linked?

The strategic development plan should:

- identify the various partners, representatives of political and administrative authorities at all levels (local, regional, national, European), tourism professionals in the public and private sectors (public tourism bodies, professional associations, owners and managers of tourist enterprises), representatives of civilian society (non-governmental organisations, local people's representatives, residents);
- set up structures for concerted action, consultation and information of the various partners and describe their methods of operation (working groups, neighbourhood meetings, surveys, methods of monitoring and evaluating results, etc.).

Division of roles between the partners

The strategic development plan should precisely define the role, responsibilities and rights of each of the partners in each of the stages of the integrated quality management approach.

The dynamics of design: strategic plans and objectives

The choice of objectives depends on factors connected with the context, positioning and orientation of tourist development policy. Ideally, these objectives should be formulated so that they are in keeping with urban development policy. Implementing integrated quality management in urban tourist destinations requires in-depth work to:

- analyse the current situation;
- define the objectives and overall strategy of the approach;
- examine the environment and sustainable development;
- improve human resources and training schemes.

Analysis of the current situation

The partners working in an urban destination should carry out a detailed analysis of the SWOT type on the position of tourism with respect to the main market trends, its potential and the limits on its sustainable development, its positive impact and its constraints.

Defining the objectives and overall strategy of the approach

The reasons for introducing an integrated quality management approach need to be clearly set out in order to avoid any subsequent frustration of the expectations of public and private partners and the local community. These reasons should preferably be positive and preventive rather than negative and corrective.

The objectives should be operational, possible to evaluate and staggered over time. If they are few in number, they can be readily communicated which should help to unite the partners, step up the internal mobilisation of the destination and provide visitor information that is increasingly sensitive to consumer notions.

The environment and sustainable development

These objectives should be part and parcel of an overall strategy of urban development whose aim is to make the most of local socioeconomic impact and to optimise the quality of life of current and future generations. Account should be taken here of Agenda 21 themes.

Human resources and training schemes

The human factor is one of the keys to the success of an urban tourist destination. It is the quality of the contacts that visitors make that they will most often remember and speak about to their friends and family. The objectives chosen should therefore always include personnel satisfaction underpinned by a wider range of opportunities for personal enhancement through a policy of continuing training and improvement of working conditions.

The dynamics of implementing integrated quality management

Public authority initiatives

When implementing an integrated quality management plan, every urban destination will choose its own priorities. These choices, often shaped by the reasons that provided a starting point for initial thinking about quality and tourist resources, will take a whole range of practical forms, often involving public authority initiatives in particular in the fields of:

- the environment and sustainable development;

- accessibility and mobility;
- security.

The environment and sustainable development

Policies to develop tourism should include practical measures covering a broad range of aspects of the destination and should be in keeping with a general policy of environmental protection and management. These measures should include, in particular, links between tourist infrastructure development or programmes to rehabilitate the habitat in town and city centres and town planning, waste collection, etc.

Accessibility and mobility

The urban tourist flows generated by the use of personal vehicles exacerbate the day-to-day traffic and pollution problems of towns and cities. Local authorities need to develop a global approach based on both incentives and deterrents. The main components of this approach should include:

- high-quality, competitively priced, intermodal public transport;
- sales of products and services that encourage tourists and residents to use public transport;
- park and ride schemes and zones in which access and traffic are restricted.

Particular attention should also be paid to the needs of disabled people.

Security

A real and subjective improvement of the security of a destination improves its image and tourist appeal. Preventive measures, services to help victims of crime and training for local police in tourist care and rapid processing of their complaints should all help to improve perceptions of security.

The lead authority's services and support for professionals

Any urban destination implementing an integrated quality management approach has to provide support for tourism professionals through a range of services including:

- internal communication and leadership;
- promotion and external communication;
- the new information and communication technologies;
- training.

Internal communication and leadership

Internal communication should:

- ensure that the managing structure is recognised and that its tourism development plans receive the active support of local people;
- target different groups, ensure exchanges of information, forge links between all those involved and make the tourism sector dynamic;
- consolidate the destination's identity.

Internal communication should include:

- analyses of the current situation of urban tourism and its economic prospects;
- the organisation, with all the partners, of working and consultation meetings on the development of tourism in the destination;
- the strategic plan for tourism development and the outcome of initiatives and endeavours;

- a practical guide to tourist services in the destination.

Promotion and external communication

All tourist destinations should develop their policy of promotion in two ways:

- ensuring that tourism professionals are constantly aware of the destination, by making particular use of the new technologies, setting up an Internet site, etc.;
- ensuring that the destination is well represented by its local promoters and occasional ambassadors (police officers, taxi drivers, public transport drivers, traders, etc.).

The new information and communication technologies

The leader of an urban destination will encourage tourism professionals to use the new information and communication technologies to:

- supply, automatically and on-line, useful information in and outside the destination;
- pave the way for interactive reservation;
- encourage dialogue by recording complaints and comments by tourists and local people.

Training

The lead authority will encourage tourist industry personnel to consolidate their skills and to improve interpersonal skills and the quality of visitor care. Training should be available in a variety of fields including customer care, helpfulness, personnel involvement and motivation, foreign languages, knowledge of the destination's resources and events, helping visitors to organise their stay, etc.

Tourist services

Particular attention needs to be paid, in an integrated quality management approach, to the needs of tourists when planning their trip, throughout the visit itself and after they return home.

Action should be taken in the areas of:

- information and visitor care;
- accommodation and catering;
- attractions, events and combined products.

Information and visitor care

Information should be available at any time, using the new technologies or from partners in the destination.

It should be consistent, complete, attractive and in keeping with visitors' needs.

High-quality visitor care:

- should be apparent at all strategic points of the destination;
- requires friendly, helpful and skilled tourism professionals;
- will be consolidated by the active participation of local people;
- will make use of the new technologies (payment methods, dissemination of and access to information, etc.).

Accommodation and catering

- introduction of:
 - national or local classifications;

- quality labels and codes of conduct;
- comparative evaluations of classification systems.
- upgrading of the culinary heritage of the destination or its region;
- specific training in tourist care for personnel in the accommodation and catering service sectors;
- modifications to meet the specific needs of disabled people.

These are all elements that play a part in the positive image of a tourist destination; tourists will then calmly and confidently be able to gauge the quality and range of accommodation and catering services.

Attractions, events, combined products

The diversity of an urban destination's resources and its ability to link attractions and events will to a large extent determine its appeal and the extent and quality of the positive impact generated by tourism.

An integrated and diversified approach is needed here:

- upgrading of the destination's resources;
- control and channelling of flows in the town or city;
- optimum accessibility for both visitors and residents;
- organised visits for different target groups.

The dynamics of monitoring

Integrated quality management is based on the principle of repetition. Relevant information on results obtained in the area of satisfaction, on changes in the context and on trends must be regularly fed back into the process.

Tourist satisfaction

Various types of indicators should be devised and as much information and numerical data as possible gathered before, during and after the tourist's visit to and/or stay in the tourist destination.

An initial set of surveys before and during the visit should help to:

- anticipate the main trends in the urban tourism market and determine the position of the town or city with respect to these trends;
- identify visitors' profiles and behaviour;
- fix the image of the destination in the minds of visitors and likely and unlikely visitors;
- find out about visitors' and likely visitors' expectations;
- check the image of the destination that opinion makers and retailers are passing on to people likely and unlikely to visit the destination.

A second set of surveys should be carried out on departure or after the visit. They should help to:

- evaluate the extent to which visitors' expectations have been met and their levels of satisfaction;
- evaluate whether the image of the destination has been modified by the visit;
- measure the impact that this change of image has had on visitors' satisfaction and what they are likely to tell friends and family when they return home;
- quickly gather visitors' comments and suggestions.

Satisfaction of tourism professionals

Quantitative and qualitative indicators need to be devised in order to:

- evaluate the performance of the tourism sector by category of visitors and service provision;
- measure the endeavours that professionals in the various branches of tourism are making to meet the standards and quality labels formulated and implemented by their professional associations and/or the authorities in charge of implementing the integrated quality management approach;
- evaluate the quality of employment contracts and the career opportunities open to employees in the sector.

Measuring the impact of tourism on the economy, the environment and residents' quality of life

Quantitative and qualitative indicators are needed, through which it should, among other things, be possible to measure:

- local people's perception of the effects of tourism, its drawbacks and its benefits;
- socioeconomic impact, creation of jobs and revenue (wealth), new infrastructure and improvements of public facilities and services as a result of tourism;
- the positive impact of the integrated quality management approach on the actual and subjective quality of life experienced by the residents of towns and cities and their neighbouring areas;
- the real positive or negative impact of any development of tourism on the quality of the environment and the impact of the approach on sustainable development.

These measurements of subjective and objective impact will require detailed thought about which parameters to take into account, which indicators are the most relevant and how the data collected can then be fed back into policies and strategies. Impact on neighbouring areas, especially rural areas, should also be measured by these indicators.

The dynamics of evaluation and adjustment of components of the approach

Quality management is based on the principle of feedback and repetition within a cyclical process of ongoing improvement. Measuring quality is therefore a necessary step in converting an ad hoc approach into a permanently evolving system.

The measurements of impact provided by the qualitative and quantitative indicators will make it possible to evaluate performance and take appropriate corrective action if needed, while giving the partners involved a view of their performance and ensuring that the integrated quality management approach is permanently rooted.

Conclusion

The task of the lead authority is to:

- lead the integrated quality management approach for the urban tourist destination;
- unite the various partners by establishing facilities for concerted action and consultation;
- initiate specific measures likely to improve the quality of the services and products offered to visitors;
- integrate this approach into the broader framework of the general development of the destination and its neighbouring region;

- put forward a policy of sustainable development of tourism based on the optimum use of the destination's resources.

Public and private tourism service providers should:

- work with the public authority to design, implement and monitor the integrated quality management approach;
- comply with standards and quality labels (as well as environmental labels) and constantly endeavour to improve the services and products offered to tourists;
- listen to visitors and to their staff in order to provide food for thought and feedback for the integrated quality management approach;
- help, through individual and collective initiatives, to improve the destination's appeal;
- ensure that visitors have a positive image of the urban destination and are aware of its specific nature.

Local people should:

- take part in consultation meetings and surveys organised by the public authority as part of the design, implementation and monitoring of the integrated quality management approach;
- play an active part in improving visitor care through their attitudes, friendliness and helpfulness to visitors;
- abide by and help to implement the measures and regulations drawn up by the public authority in areas such as cleanliness, the rehabilitation of buildings, respect for the environment, use of public transport and security.

For this purpose, tourists should be encouraged to behave in a responsible way and:

- be made aware of the well-being of the local population;
- respect the traditions and cultural features of the destination's residents;
- abide by measures to minimise the negative impact of tourist flows on the environment.

List of the case studies examined in the full document:

Amsterdam (Netherlands)
 Aix-en-Provence (France)
 Coimbra (Portugal)
 Dublin (Ireland)
 Glasgow (United Kingdom)
 Göteborg (Sweden)
 Leipzig (Germany)
 Loutraki (Greece)
 Málaga (Spain)
 Orléans and Blois (France)
 Rhodes (Greece)
 St Andrews (United Kingdom)
 Stockholm (Sweden)
 Volterra (Italy)
 Winchester (United Kingdom)

European Commission

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Enterprise Directorate-General — Tourism Unit

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

2000 — 14 pp. — 21 x 29.7 cm

ISBN 92-828-7839-2

