GREENING BLUE TOURISM

Trends, challenges and policy pathways

Blue tourism—coastal and maritime tourism —encompasses beach-, land and water-based tourism activities in the coastal areas. As one of the largest and growing sectors of the blue economy, blue tourism is having a high ecological and climate impact that is not well addressed in the current policy and governance frameworks.

Main challenges and opportunities for sustainable blue tourism

CHALLENGES
- Inconsistent policies causing uncertainties and resistances among blue tourism stakeholders.
- Limited collaboration between stakeholders hinders engagement for sustainable blue tourism.
- Emerging new actors are disrupting the governance mechanisms.
- High costs, limited financial incentives and funding options.

OPPORTUNITIES
- Climate risks and COVID-19 are driving the reshape tourism strategies towards sustainability and digitalization.
- Emerging nature-based and circular economy solutions can provide opportunities for climate mitigation and adaptation.
- Management and monitoring tools for tourism are increasingly adopted in coastal areas, which can drive towards green measures and investments for infrastructure.
- Spatial planning tools are increasingly adopted to optimize ocean space use, allocate activities and foster sector synergies.

Suggested policy actions

FOSTERING INTEGRATED POLICY AND GOVERNANCE
- Foster policy cohesion and collaboration among marine regions to enhance synergies at different levels.
- Endorse a blue tourism strategy to consolidate strategic sustainability directions for the sector.
- Encourage networks and partnerships to enhance participation of destination stakeholders in decision making.

ENCOURAGING SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRY PRACTICES
- Promote sustainable production and consumption practices throughout the tourism value chain.
- Support tourism businesses in overcoming barriers to change through tailored technical support (e.g. capacity building, innovation and technology support).
- Minimize tourism seasonality and concentration, and associated pressures, by diversifying and extending the tourism offer.

SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION PRACTICES
- Enhance climate resilience in tourism through capacity building (e.g. risk assessment); financial measures; and awareness raising (e.g. climate risks, adaptation practices) for tourists, businesses, communities.
- Promote responsible visitor management in sensitive areas (MPAs, cultural heritage sites) to minimize tourism impacts.
- Endorse nature-based solutions and circular economy practices to adapt to climate change and minimize blue tourism pressures.

PROMOTING SMART TOURISM DEVELOPMENT
- Strengthen policies for digital and smart tourism including digital infrastructure development, digital equality, digital skills.
- Develop innovative indicators to analyze blue tourism impacts and inform action plans at the environment, economic and social levels.
- Increasing awareness among the private sector of long-term benefits of digital solutions to increase green investments.