

## **Tourism and Environment Protection: A Starting Point for the Discussion**

Janez Mekinc, Faculty for tourism, University of Primorska, Slovenia

Helena Cvikl, Faculty for tourism, University of Primorska, Slovenia

Clean and orderly environment is the fundamental condition for a profitable and quality tourism which we wish for in Slovenia. Tourism in Slovenia, in addition to the tourism industry consists of various activities such as cultural, festival, sports, educational, convention and exhibition events. All of them are highly dependent on nature, orderly human and especially tourist environment and also on the progress of different industries.

When arranging the spatial issues it is important to coordinate the work of tourism and commercial complexes. On the one side there is often a conflict of interest between traders and private capital and the requirements / standards of environmental protection, natural and cultural heritage on the other. It follows that the relationship between tourism and the natural environment must be coordinated from two perspectives: in terms of the impact of tourism on the natural environment and also in terms of importance of the quality of the natural environment for tourism. Even though the ethical and economic assessments of these two aspects are of equal importance, the importance of environmental quality is often neglected, perhaps even deliberately in favour of capital and profits. There is a thin line between legal and illegal action and intervention in favour of tourism activities, for example the case of construction work. Inappropriate or even illegal construction works lead to tourism's step-motherly attitude towards natural environment, cultural heritage and natural values.

There are other indicators of tourism impact on the environment including water consumption and quality of water resources, the impact of waste water, electrical energy supply, waste management, and ultimately the increase of different types of traffic. Tourism certainly adds pressure on nature and the environment, but there is the question of whether and to what extent the tourism illegally burdens the nature and the environment.

The problems mentioned above require a careful consideration about each intervention in the environment. Therefore, tourist activities in natural parks and reserves should be aligned with the regimes of protecting the nature and formulating the appropriate policies or instructions. Long-term projects like golf resorts, tourist roads, recreational facilities and other interventions in nature should be aligned with the protection of forests, waters and biodiversity, proper treatment of waste and sewage and safety of people and traffic movement. Furthermore, destination arrangements and new investments must be consistent with spatial planning and environmental protection. This can be guided and supported by a concerted effort by national authorities, industry associations, local government and civil society. To reduce the illegal

interventions into nature and the environment it is necessary to establish protected areas, study and arrange appropriate security arrangements and identify which factors will maintain order and security. When protected areas are taken into consideration certain obstacles like proprietary issues which cause damage to owners and communities and force them into inappropriate or even illegal actions must be surmounted.