

## **SUMMARY**

### **R20AWS Breakout Session**

### **SUSTAINABILITY IN TOURISM:**

### **More Quality of Life and Regional Value Enhancement**

#### **Background**

Tourism is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world and represents an important source of income for many regions and cities. Whilst tourism can increase, enhance and sustain quality of life for guests, local populations and people working in the sector, the industry's impact on climate change must not be ignored or side-lined. An agenda for sustainable tourism needs to address all aspects of the sector's economic, social and environmental impact: Beside economically healthy enterprises, a reasonable balance should be found between the usage and respect of natural resources. Tourism should not only help to enhance quality of life but also regional value.

#### **Outcomes**

The tourism sector has already demonstrated its ability and creativity in dealing with the associated challenges: Some destinations have begun offering climate-friendly mobility. Hotels have created a USP by focussing on renewable energy, up-cycling and good working conditions. One hotelier invented a 'climate-Euro' as part of the fees for the overnight-stay, which runs into climate protecting measures. This initiative should be encouraged Europe-wide. Some parts of the tourism industry focus on sustainable food (regional, seasonal and fair trade) and on the avoidance of food waste. This contributes to a significant reduction of CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions.

Such activities are not only accepted but valued by the guests and result in increased employee-loyalty. The time has come to take the motto of the R20AWS 'from action to transaction' and spread best practices to provide a comprehensive transformation of the tourism industry, thereby fostering increased sustainability and climate protection.

#### **Adaptation and rethinking of frameworks/guidelines/indicators/long-term strategies**

- Governments need to have clear tourism strategies, such as the Austrian Plan T – Masterplan for Tourism, which addresses all aspects of the sector's economic, social and environmental impact and includes sustainability both within their overall goals and their concrete implementation measures.
- Sustainability must be an integral aspect of tourism success, therefore success indicators beyond merely numbers of arrivals and overnight stays need to be developed and implemented.
- The best solutions often are developed in a participatory approach, whereby all stakeholders – decision makers, companies, employees, civil society, such as NGOs, etc. are involved at the same eye-level.
- The financial system, e.g. banks and their loan criteria, as well as insurance companies, need to support measures for enhanced sustainability more seriously to motivate tourism suppliers to adopt sustainability into their business models.

- Tourism suppliers need more guidance in their sustainability approaches: trainings, support programs, financial assistance for improvements, etc. that foster a culture of cooperation and increase the image of tourism as employer.

#### **Creating more awareness in all stakeholder groups**

- Business and Sustainability reports corresponding to the SDGs could result in increased awareness of the importance of tourism as an instrument for the implementation of the SDGs
- Tourism marketing needs to position sustainable offers and destinations in the foreground, using the values behind sustainability more than the wording 'sustainability' to attract consumers.
- Tourists need to channel their growing interest in sustainability into more sustainable travel behavior, especially in terms of mobility. Bringing the message of sustainability to life with exciting visualizations and authentic story telling can support this.

#### **Incentives to reward sustainable behavior or payments to support sustainable measures**

- Payments for more or less sustainability – e.g. the climate-Euro or CO<sub>2</sub>-compensation for flights – should be changed from opt-in to opt-out decisions. Similarly, nightly turndown services and other services could be provided 'opt-in' in order to raise awareness of how many resources are consumed on even menial tasks. Climate friendly and sustainable behavior could be awarded with incentives.