



CLIMATE CHANGE AND TOURISM POLICY IN OECD COUNTRIES

Climate change is a two-fold challenge for the tourism industry. One part of this challenge involves addressing the impacts of tourism in contributing to climate change, particularly as a result of travel and accommodation as well as tourist activities, and developing strategies for the mitigation of those impacts. The other part of the challenge concerns what tourism can and needs to do in terms of adaptation to climate change. Adaptation may relate either to managing adverse effects or to making the most of new opportunities, as changing climate trends affect such things as water availability and/or quality, local food supplies, snow reliability and heat stress. In order to establish a framework for tackling these issues, the Tourism Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs and Local Development, working jointly with the United Nations Environment Programme, has drawn up a report entitled *Climate Change and Tourism Policy in OECD Countries*. This report assesses the current situation and reviews existing policy making on tourism and climate change. It goes on to make recommendations on priority areas for further action.

Tourism currently accounts for an estimated 5% of anthropogenic CO₂ emissions, however, under a business-as-usual approach these emissions are projected to more than double over the next 25 years.

- The sheer scale of tourism (measured by numbers of international arrivals) grew from an estimated 25 million in 1950 to 920 million in 2008 and, after briefly declining in 2009, is predicted to rise to 1.6 billion by 2020.
- Today's tourists make longer journeys, to more remote destinations, and use increasingly energy-intensive forms of transport to do so.
- Travel causes three quarters of tourism's carbon dioxide emissions (with most of the rest resulting from accommodation). Aviation alone causes 40%, however, when considering non-CO₂ GHG, aviation is responsible for over 50% of tourism's contribution to radiative forcing.
- A business-as-usual approach is unsustainable, and in direct conflict with global climate stabilisation goals; limiting the average temperature increase to 2°C would require global emissions reductions of 3.7 % per year even if that downward trend began in 2011.
- Policy options on climate change mitigation need to reflect the wider context of the place of tourism in the structure of a country's economy. Many governments and tourism organisations favour reducing the emissions

from tourism in line with the reductions required of other sectors. Others, because of the structure of their economies, the importance of the tourism industry to national welfare and their distance from large global markets, will seek to achieve net emissions reductions in the context of balanced initiatives across various sectors.

Adaptation to climate change is a crucial consideration for sustainable tourism development for a variety of reasons.

- Changes in climate and weather, and climate-related factors, can affect the attractiveness of tourist destinations, the type of holidays they can offer – such as sea, sun and sand, winter tourism and nature tourism – and their levels of customer satisfaction and future demand.
- Tourist infrastructure such as pools and golf courses, as well as accommodation, may be vulnerable to water scarcity.
- Deterioration in water quality can make recreational activities less appealing or pose health risks.
- Specific ecosystems or landscapes may be vulnerable to climate change and some destinations such as small tropical islands may be entirely climate-dependent.
- Within Europe, Alpine winter tourism is particularly vulnerable to climate change.

- The cost competitiveness of some destinations could be affected by climate mitigation policies designed to curb carbon-intensive travel.
- Heat stress may make some destinations less attractive, whereas others could benefit from warmer climates.

Policies to address emissions from aviation and shipping have made little progress at the international level. However, in a unique policy to be applied at a regional level, the European Union emission trading scheme (ETS) will, under current proposals, include aviation and shipping in its allocation of emissions permits from 2012.

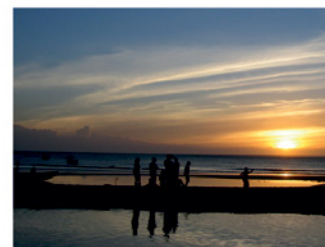
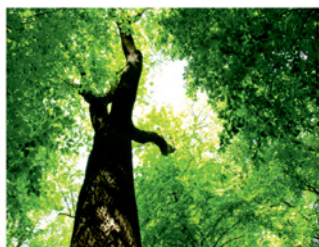
- The International Maritime Organization, as of July 2010, had not adopted any binding targets or measures to reduce emissions from shipping. Passenger cruises are a rising proportion of this total and have the dubious distinction of being the most energy intense form of tourism per tourist trip.
- The International Civil Aviation Organization has dismissed the idea of a global ETS for aviation, and also decided against requiring airlines to participate in the European Union ETS. It has, however, formed a Group on International Aviation and Climate Change which recommends an “aspirational” target of improving the global fuel efficiency of aviation by 2% per year from 2021 to 2050. This would not mean an actual cut in aviation emissions, since the volume of air traffic is expected to rise by about 4% per year.
- The rapid introduction of biofuels may be one of the few options for cutting aviation emissions, but still faces real technical, social, economic and environmental difficulties and should be subject to independently monitored sustainability criteria.

A survey to better understand different country approaches to dealing with the climate change challenge for tourism was conducted by the OECD and UNEP, and found that policies on climate change mitigation were still in their infancy. It found a prevailing paradox between ambitious pledges of emissions reductions and a fundamental lack of “serious” tourism climate policy. Only one-third of the countries studied had identified tourism-related strategies and only five out of 44 had implemented any policies (apart from the EU ETS). None had focused on the kind of comprehensive measures recommended by the OECD in this report as an appropriate five-fold tourism climate policy strategy, i) embracing the building of knowledge and awareness, ii) fostering technical innovation, research and behavioural change, iii) the introduction of carbon pricing and emissions trading, iv) regulation, and v) incentives for

adopting low carbon technologies.

Similarly, although adaptation will be necessary in the tourism industry to deal with climate change impacts that are unavoidable, the OECD and UNEP survey of national policies found that relatively few countries had done much to assess impacts and vulnerabilities. The absence of specific policies on how tourism could adapt, with the partial exception of measures to manage freshwater use, prompted the report to comment that there was an urgent need for more thorough engagement.

The report highlights the need for further research and exploration of perceptions and understanding of climate change, the identification of best practice approaches to mitigation and adaptation, and the likely challenges for tourism. More strategic research is also needed to address research gaps, including tourist perceptions of changing environments.



The full report can be downloaded at
www.oecd.org/cfe/tourism
www.unep.fr/tourism/

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