



isto

Brussels Addendum

Towards social sustainability of tourism

FOREWORD

In the context of its 60 years of existence, by publishing this second addendum to the Montreal Declaration adopted in 1996, ISTO, a key player in social and solidarity-based tourism, is affirming that the social sustainability of tourism is the major pillar of its sustainable development, the entry axis that acts as a lever to activate the other two pillars, economic and environmental.

This addendum is intended for its members and all those involved in tourism. With this document, ISTO invites them to exchange and collaborate on the implementation of real social sustainability. However, ISTO deems it necessary to propose a definition of social sustainability in tourism and criteria for assessing this sustainability.¹

DEFINITION

Social sustainability in tourism is about stakeholders taking into account the social aspects of tourism for the people living in the places visited, the workers in the sector and the visitors themselves, with a view to ensuring their long-term survival.

By taking this into account, we aim to guarantee social justice, equal opportunities and a good quality of life for all in tourism by:

- Controlling the negative impact of tourism on present and future populations and on their social, cultural, financial and environmental resources;
- Amplifying the sustainable social benefits for all (residents, workers, visitors) in terms of accessibility, inclusion and strengthening of social ties;
- Encouraging participatory governance in tourism development;
- Promoting responsible and respectful behaviour towards both visitors and the people and places they visit.

Social sustainability in tourism is linked to its effects on societies, cultures and territories, and is assessed using a number of criteria for the various stakeholders.

¹ The text is the result of work presented at the ISTO Congress in the Azores in 2022, contributions provided by researchers from the Alliance for Training and Research in Social Tourism (within ISTO), reflections on the criteria for evaluating the social sustainability of tourism at two seminars, one in Belgium and the other in Mexico in May 2023 as well as input from the various ISTO bodies and working groups.



CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF TOURISM

The evaluation criteria are designed to guide tourism stakeholders in their consideration of social sustainability in five broad categories:
Local populations, Tourism workers, Visitors, Operational sector in tourism, Public authorities

Local populations

The local population includes the permanent or temporary inhabitants of the place visited.

The social sustainability of tourism in relation to resident populations is assessed according to the following criteria:

- The degree of social acceptability by the population of the tourist activity and of any new tourist development;
- Respect for local economic, social and cultural activities;
- The level of participation of the population in the decision-making process and the consideration in public policies of the positive aspects - such as the income and jobs generated by tourist activity - but also the negative elements - gentrification, displacement of residents, rising cost of living, housing crisis, etc.;
- The consideration of the impacts of tourism activities and facilities on spatial planning;
- The contribution of tourism to the population's quality of life (poverty reduction, unemployment reduction, access to health and education services, cultural enrichment...);
- The downsides of tourism, such as the exploitation of workers, access to water and other resources as well as to tourist and cultural sites for the resident population.

Tourism workers

A tourism worker is someone who holds a job, permanent or otherwise, directly related to the tourism activity in both the public and institutional sectors and the private for-profit and voluntary sectors, whether as a manager, employee or self-employed.

The social sustainability of tourism for workers is assessed according to the following criteria:

- Fixed, non-permanent jobs and fair wages;
- Working conditions (valuing skills, working hours, holidays, length of contract, accommodation);
- The level of training and qualifications as well as the guarantee of continuous training;
- Reception and accommodation conditions for seasonal workers;
- The degree of inclusion without discrimination at all levels of jobs and functions;
- The empowerment of workers in a context of social dialogue.

Visitors

A visitor is someone who travels away from home to meet other people, learn about new cultures or visit different places. The term includes tourists and excursionists.

The social sustainability of visitor tourism is assessed according to the following criteria:

- Participation and non-participation in tourism, leisure and holiday activities;
- The level of encounters and exchanges between visitors and the local population;
- The diversity of visitors and the accessibility of tourist sites for all without discrimination;
- Accessibility to public and health services;
- Access to information and awareness of the culture, customs and traditions of the societies visited;
- Protection for visitors.

Operational sector in tourism

The operational sector of tourism includes all businesses in the tourism industry and social organisations active in the tourism sector.

The social sustainability of tourism in this sector is assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

- The existence of a policy of local and solidarity-based purchasing;
- Eco-responsible and fair management of the tourism offer;
- A transparent remuneration policy in line with staff skills, duties and responsibilities;
- Non-discriminatory human resources policies promoting diversity and equality at all levels of jobs and functions;
- A commitment to a policy of social responsibility and balanced, sustainable relations for the players involved throughout the tourism chain.
- Participation in a policy to develop tourism and leisure products with educational and/or social integration objectives (civic content).

Public authorities

Public authorities are the local, regional or national authorities that can determine and conduct political, legislative, regulatory or administrative action.

To assess the social sustainability of tourism, taking into account the actions of public authorities, the criteria are as follows:

- Support a network of hospitality facilities, particularly those in the social economy;
- The existence of schemes to help people go on holiday; the size of budgets allocated and actually spent on tourism-related social programmes;
- The level of protection and public safety provided to visitors;
- The implementation of a managed tourism policy that safeguards the tangible and intangible heritage and local culture;
- The management of tourist flows to avoid overcrowding of tourist sites and public spaces and promote social and territorial cohesion;
- The existence of formal mechanisms encouraging the participation of the population in the management and choice of the development of tourism activity in its territory;
- The degree of involvement of public authorities in facilitating the social, economic and physical accessibility of tourism infrastructures.



ISTO'S COMMITMENTS

Social sustainability, as an essential pillar of sustainable development, is a key element of ISTO's action, which is committed to:

1. To provide a forum for reflection and experimentation on social sustainability and to become a key stakeholder in lobbying, disseminating and promoting social sustainability to all stakeholders in the tourism ecosystem, in particular operators, national, regional and local public authorities and international and regional institutions active in the tourism and sustainable development sector.
2. To collect and consolidate information and data on the social sustainability of tourism, thanks in particular to the contribution of members active in training and research, by creating a tool for observing and analysing the social, sustainable and solidarity-based dimensions of tourism.
3. To encourage its own members in the social and solidarity tourism sector to implement the social sustainability of tourism in practice in their service offer, while encouraging them to carry out development, evaluation, research and innovation activities in this respect.
4. To foster cooperation with a view to identifying and developing measurable indicators and to promote, through various means of dissemination, the inclusion of criteria and indicators for the social sustainability of tourism in the policies, strategies and programmes of national, regional and local administrations responsible for tourism development.

