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PRESS RELEASE

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The purpose of the study is the analysis of the economic relation between tourism development and environmental protection. The study can contribute to more rational decisions, which will facilitate tourism development without causing serious damage to the environment.

A key position of environmental economics is that, when the good of economic growth conflicts with the good of environmental protection, the only rational approach is a combination based on a comparison of the benefits and costs from both sides. It is recommended to use financial incentives to promote environmental protection in the logic of "the polluter pays". If the polluter is obliged to pay he will try not to pollute so as not to be burdened.

Tourism activity is not the reason of any major international environmental issues. However, its adverse environmental effects can in some cases be quite serious. Consequently, the study refers to the main adverse effects of tourism development on the environment and the main ways of dealing with them, both in general and in our country. Thus, the position and importance of environmental problems related to tourism development, compared to the general environmental problem, can be more correctly approached and the public impression can be reconsidered. There is also a brief

reference to methods for identifying and preventing emerging environmental problems in high-density tourism areas. It is noted that, with few exceptions, tourism in our country do not exceed the carrying capacity of tourism areas.

As already mentioned, the approach of the study is economical, neither technical nor legal. However, the issues that occur between tourism development and environmental protection are to a large extent either legal or technical. In order to protect the environment or other related goods, a series of prohibitions, limits and restrictions are imposed on tourism development, starting with legislation. Furthermore, in the case of a permitted tourism project, a detailed examination of its possible environmental effects is organized in order to either terminate the project, if the competent authorities do not accept it, or authorize its construction under conditions aimed at addressing these effects. In this regard, the general framework of prohibitions, limits and restrictions related to tourism development and their importance, as well as the process of examining the possible environmental impacts and the ways of dealing with them, is briefly presented.

The Greek legislation regarding tourism activities and especially environment protection from the consequences of tourism activities is very strict. It is indicative that it treats a large tourism unit as strictly as a heavy industrial facility.

The information included in the relevant chapters is necessary in order to analyze from an economic point of view the importance of the current legislation for tourism development. It is also helpful as to form an opinion about the strictness of the current regime in terms of environmental protection in relation to tourism development.

If problems occur from improper compliance with the law, the correct solution is the most effective control and not the discouragement of the most serious investors. In this case, a critical examination of the legal framework concerning environmental protection in relation to tourism activities from the economic point of view is attempted and then the application of constitutional provisions and other related regulations is examined.

The decisions of Council of State are analyzed as they use reasons of environmental protection to annul the actions of the administration related to the execution of projects that directly or indirectly concern the tourist development. This common practice increases the uncertainty of business decisions in the tourism sector, affecting its development.

Between tourism development and the environment there are not just issues that have to do with current restrictions and conditions imposed on tourism development. **The needs and prospects of tourism development in the future, combined with the need to protect the environment, also lead to thoughts of new initiatives and new regulations of a positive nature which will facilitate tourism development, while at the same time they will protect the environment.**

Due to the geomorphology of our country, half of the territory consists of barren or bushy areas that are not used or cannot be used productively. In most European countries the corresponding percentage ranges from 15-25%. The non-use of their productive resources is a problem for the environment.

According to the study, in order to fully meet the future land needs of tourism development, only 1-2 per thousand of the productively unused areas are required. **The environmental damage is a non logical argument to prevent the productive tourism use of such areas, which do not have other resource of growth and improvement of living standards.**