

## **Memorandum: Cultural Tourism and Development**

Up to now, tourism has tended to be neglected as a field of activity in German development cooperation (DC). Two motions proposed this year by the governing parliamentary parties CDU/CSU und SPD and Bündnis 90/The Greens are calling for increased commitment to promoting the tourist sectors in developing countries. In October the central points of these two motions were discussed at the conference on “Cultural Tourism and Sustainable Development” to which CulturCooperation had invited experts from DC, research and the tourist trade. We are going to inform the political parties and the decision-makers about the results of the debate and the recommendations of the experts.

### **I. The cultural significance of travel**

#### **Foreign travel promotes dialogue between cultures and religions**

The motions proposed by the political parties are in agreement on the principle that foreign travel offers opportunities for intercultural exchange and understanding. The experts’ opinions differ greatly as to whether this is in fact true and to what degree, or whether it rather serves to confirm existing prejudices.

The majority of travellers to foreign countries certainly express the wish to meet inhabitants of the country they have chosen for their holiday, but these meetings naturally tend to be very superficial. There are many popular but poorly prepared “Meet the People” programmes, but these are burdened with unclear expectations on both sides and cannot really provide intercultural dialogue. At the symposium warnings were expressed that excessively high expectations of the effects of such meetings of tourists would overload these situations. In the experts’ view it is an illusion that tourism can be a suitable tool for correcting prejudices. However, if such meetings are wished by both sides, and are well prepared and competently run, then these programmes can well function without conflict and can lead to new insights under these circumstances.

#### **Tourism promotes the maintenance and revitalisation of traditional culture**

There are basically two positions on the effect of tourism on the cultures on the countries visited by tourists. The pessimists are concerned that foreign travel subjects the culture to considerable pressure to adapt and that it could be destroyed for ever by the effects of tourism, the other side sees tourism protecting the cultures and contributing to the revitalisation of traditional cultures. Both viewpoints are contained in the motions put forward by the parliamentary parties and they were the subject of lively discussions at the symposium. A major criticism was that both viewpoints are based on a completely outmoded concept of culture which sees culture as a static entity and not as a process (of communication) that is continually undergoing change. It is understandable that the tourist industry pays most attention to the requirements of its customers and markets cultural elements in its foreign travel programmes. This leads to traditions being reproduced that had long been overcome and are now “revitalised” for “ethnic” shows.

It should be the people in the developing countries that determine what is to be maintained or not, and whether certain rituals should be abandoned or replaced by modern forms. The hosts should decide themselves which holy sites should be accessible to tourists and which rituals or dances should be presented. If tourism is to make a contribution to improving the intercultural consciousness of tourists, then those tourists must be given a realistic picture of the countries they are visiting. Treating the cultures of the foreign countries with respect also means appreciating those cultures in their great variety of aspects including their modern forms of expression.

## **II. Tourism as a means of combating poverty**

As was to be expected, the experts at the symposium had highly differing views as to whether the impressive and ever increasing results of the tourist sector in developing countries actually lead to a reduction of poverty.

Klaus Lengefeld of the GTZ (German Technical Cooperation) was of the opinion that the economic significance of mass tourism could certainly be applied to combating poverty and pointed out that employment, income and sales of local products are generated particularly by mainstream tourism in all-inclusive resorts. Dina Bauer from the “forum anders reisen” (forum different travel) spoke in favour of strengthening community-based tourism and medium-sized companies in the tourist trade in the developing countries. Mathias Sorke of Gebeco also pointed out that it is local structures (suppliers, service providers, etc.) that can receive support through the chain of profit from tourism. Harald Friedl (FH Joanneum, Bad Gleichenberg) expressed the view that controlling tourism also provides opportunities to take positive influence on processes of social change towards sustainability. Heinz Fuchs from TourismWatch in the German Protestant Development Service (EED) insisted that tourism cannot be an instrument for combating poverty as poverty is never only a question of monetary poverty. He said that it was necessary for tourism to be controlled by the state but local companies should be taken into consideration at the same time.

However, there was widespread agreement on the view that an expansion of tourism in DC has to be limited because tourism relies for the most part on natural resources that cannot be expanded and which cannot cope with unlimited numbers of tourists. In consequence, the viewpoint as presented by the Green parliamentary party that the extension of “sustainable tourism” can be a suitable instrument for contributing to the achievement of millennium development targets, in particular reducing poverty by 50%, seems greatly exaggerated.

### **Recommendations:**

In order to arrive at an assessment of the potential of tourism contributing to sustainable development, the effects of tourism should be systematically investigated in their economic, social, ecological and cultural aspects (sustainability). Research particularly at universities should be given funding for these topics.

## **III. Tourism in development cooperation**

As even the parliamentary parties agree that there is a lack of significant studies on the tourist value chain, it is difficult to see why the parties are vehemently in favour of giving greater weight to the promotion of tourism in development cooperation at this point in time. According to the Green Party: “Partner countries are to be encouraged within the framework of bilateral development cooperation to integrate the tourist sector more into their national strategies for combating poverty”, and the coalition parties suggest “making tourism a major part of development cooperation if the partners wish for this”.

At the conference projects of the GTZ and the DED were presented which actually serve to promote cultural tourism. The promotion of tourism that the partners wish for is only one component of these two projects aiming at making a contribution to the utilisation of cultural heritage for the tourist value chain in a sustainable manner.

Regardless of the fact that there are not yet any results concerning the effects of these projects on actual employment and income of the local population, it was agreed that measures of this nature in bilateral development cooperation are worthy of promotion. One problem, however, is the lack of transparency as to which forms of tourism are currently already being supported in various countries.

## **Recommendations**

It should be made clear that the state does not undertake any promotion of tourism! There can be no question of tourism being a major part or an independent sector or development cooperation.

Nevertheless tourism remains an integral part of various projects of development cooperation and should be in particular be used to control the development of the tourist sector in DCs. For this purpose, central areas of activity such as the training and further education of local experts in tourism management or the implementation of ecological and social standards in the tourist industry should be assessed and determined. For countries in which tourism is a significant factor, suitable resources must, if required, be made available to direct the tourism development towards sustainability.

In future, activities relevant to tourism should be coordinated and agreed between the various institutions involved.

### **Further recommendations:**

#### Increased education and publicity work

Foreign travel and its consequences should be paid more attention within development cooperation education programmes, particularly in schools. Educational campaigns should be used to sensitise the consumers on the development of sustainable tourism, i.e. to perceive the responsible use of resources as a positive aspect of a journey.

#### Fair Travel

Customers should be given more and better aids to orientation on offers of fair travel where demand is increasing, particularly for trips to developing countries.

Although the experts agree that the certification of offers for fair travel is especially difficult to set up due to the complexity of tourism as part of the service sector, initiatives for the development of criteria and standards should be specifically promoted in cooperation with tourist companies in the partner countries.

#### Lack of coherent politics

The significance of sites of cultural heritage and historic cities for tourism in developing countries is fully recognised. Bilateral development cooperation supports various measures for the restoration of historic cities or provides financial and scientific support for historic excavations. In this context it is completely unacceptable the federal governments of recent years have at the same time granted state guarantees for projects for the construction of dams, e.g. in Turkey or in Syria. In the view of the experts these projects involve the systematic destruction of some extremely important buildings and sites of cultural significance.

Our common responsibility for the preservation of world cultural heritage should not be reduced to just words when German construction companies are looking to their profits. In this area politics have considerable deficits in credibility.

Further information on cultural tourism is to be found on the website  
[www.culture-and-development.info](http://www.culture-and-development.info)