



European
Commission

EMAS

and the tourism sector
CASE STUDY



Environment

Studiosus

BACKGROUND

Europe is the world's leading tourist destination. According to UNWTO, five EU Member States were among the **world's top 10 destinations** for holidaymakers in 2016 (France, Spain, Italy, the UK and Germany). That year, Europe welcomed 616 million international tourists, equivalent to half the global total, which represents an increase of 13 million from the previous year¹. In the EU 28, the total number of international tourism arrivals was 500.1 million (40.5% of the global market in 2016)².

Tourism is already one of the largest economic sectors, and despite the challenges faced by some destinations (terrorist attacks, political instability and natural disasters) it is expected to continue to flourish in the next decade; according to UNWTO Tourism Towards 2030³, **arrivals to Europe are projected to grow to 744 million in 2030**.

The travel & tourism industry contributes to GDP and employment in many ways; according to the Travel and Tourism Council, beyond its direct economic impact, the industry has significant indirect⁴ and induced⁵ impacts, making **its total contribution to GDP nearly three times greater than its direct contribution**⁶.

In 2017, travel & tourism was at the forefront of wealth and employment creation. It directly supported 118,876,000 jobs (5.1% of total employment), while its total contribution to employment increased to 273,043,000 jobs (11.7%)⁷. In 2017, it directly accounted for 3.9% of EU GDP and had a total impact of 10.3%.

But these economic and social performance indicators rely on Europe's natural and cultural attractiveness, which makes these resources crucial for the long-term sustainability of any type of tourism activities. If they are damaged, this could undermine tourism in the future.

New types of tourism and increased frequency of holidays have serious environmental impacts at regional and local level⁸, and Europe is already facing environmental problems related to tourism density, particularly in areas where tourism is heavily concentrated (coasts, mountain, lake areas, and the most visited cities). Construction has increased environmental pressure on land, climate change is altering the

conditions for the use of tourism resources, the increasing presence of visitors has effects on biodiversity and can cause habitat deterioration, and tourism activities use resources such as water and energy intensively. All these negative impacts must be managed, both by destination managers and by the tourism sector in order to ensure the viability of their activities and businesses in the long term.

The European Environment Agency reported in The European environment — state and outlook 2015 (SOER 2015) that a tourist consumes 3 to 4 times more water per day than a permanent resident, with daily per capita non-tourist water use ranging between 100 and 200 litres across Europe. Accommodation and restaurants are major contributors to packaging waste (Eurostat, 2010), and moreover, their seasonal variation means that they put extra strain on waste management facilities during peak season, adding complexity to the planning and use of waste management services.

But tourism - if correctly planned and managed - also contributes to regional and potentially sustainable development. It raises visitors' and residents' environmental awareness of natural and cultural heritage and it can play a key role in the protection of natural resources by influencing interested parties and through collaboration initiatives within the sector.

The tourism industry is very complex, and its services are provided by many different sectors such as accommodation and resorts, leisure activities, food and drink, tour operators and travel agencies, and transport and logistics. Tourism is also interlinked with other sectors such as agriculture, construction, food and drink manufacturing, and many other manufacturing activities. This interaction can be an opportunity, as it enables the tourism sector to lead a circular model in the local economy through its repercussions along the supply chain.

Finally, the tourism industry can also help improve management of destinations as it has an impact on public policy, infrastructure and services provided at the destination (i.e. energy and water supplies and waste and sewage management).

¹ Source: UNWTO Tourism Highlights, 2017 Edition <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284419029>

² Source: UNWTO Tourism Highlights, 2017 Edition <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284419029>

³ UNWTO Tourism Towards 2030 is UNWTO's long-term outlook and an assessment of the development of tourism over the two decades from 2010 to 2030.

⁴ The 'indirect' contribution includes the GDP and jobs supported by travel & tourism investment spending, government 'collective' spending, and domestic purchases of goods and services by the sectors dealing directly with tourists.

⁵ The 'induced' contribution measures the GDP and jobs supported by the spending of those who are directly or indirectly employed by the travel & tourism industry.

⁶ Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2018 European Union, Travel and Tourism Council. <https://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic-impact-research/regions-2018/europeanunion2018.pdf>

⁷ Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2018 European Union, Travel and Tourism Council. <https://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic-impact-research/regions-2018/europeanunion2018.pdf>

⁸ Source: SOER 2015 — The European environment — state and outlook 2015 - European briefings - Tourism, European Environment Agency <https://www.eea.europa.eu/soer-2015/europe/tourism>

THE TOURISM SECTOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Undoubtedly, one of the biggest beneficiaries of a more sustainable tourism industry will be the industry itself. Environmental management systems and ecolabels have proved to be excellent tools for implementing good practices and improving the environmental performance of activities. Organisations with a variety of activities linked to the tourism sector have already implemented EMAS. These include accommodation, food and beverage services, travel agents and tour operators, theatres and opera houses, amusement parks, and marinas.

EMAS enables any sort of tourism business or organisation to adopt a systematic approach to environmental management, from the design of the service to the final outcome. EMAS is also fully compatible with other environmental tools such as

the [EU Ecolabel](#) and other existing environmental labels in the EU, as well as with other management tools such as the Energy Management System, Quality Management Systems and Health and Safety Management Systems, as they all share a common “Plan – Do – Check – Act” scheme.

EMAS can be an excellent tool for organisations in the tourism sector that want to be drivers for realizing the UN's [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), as it helps organisations to identify their significant impacts and it guides the company to take action, taking into account its context and stakeholders, and thus to carry out relevant actions and generate impact at the local level. EMAS ensures that these actions are not isolated, but rather are framed within a broader vision of the company's management.

According to the EU register of EMAS-registered organisations⁹, **177 European organisations have implemented EMAS in accommodation activities, another 71 engage in food service activities, and 77 are operating in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector.** These EMAS-registered sites number more than 370 and account for more than 30,200 employees (16,600 in accommodation, 7,300 in food services, and 6,250 in arts, entertainment and recreation).

Nearly 95% of the EMAS-registered organisations from these activities are SMEs. This confirms that EMAS is suitable to be implemented in any sort of small organisation.

The accommodation sector is the 4th-leading service sector in EMAS registration. It represents more than 13% of EMAS-registered organisations in Germany and more than 10% in Spain.

EU Register, as of August 2018: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/emas_registrations/register_en.htm

The Seehotel Wiesler GmbH (Germany)





the Gargano National Park Authority

EXPERIENCES OF EMAS-REGISTERED COMPANIES IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

Four organisations will provide us with their views on how EMAS contributes to their business from different perspectives: Fundesplai with its hostel in Barcelona, the National Park of Gargano (Italy), the German leading study travel provider Studiosus, and the Fundação Serralves, the foremost museum for contemporary art in Portugal.

The Fundació Catalana de l'Esplai (Fundesplai) is a non-profit organisation. Alongside their education and leisure activities for children and young people that seek to bolster social inclusion, they also own and manage a 329-bed [hostel](#) located at El Prat de Llobregat, just two kilometres from the Barcelona airport. Apart from the hostel, the building hosts the headquarters of the association, with a staff of more than 300 people.

The building was conceived from the outset as a sustainable building. Its orientation allows for the use of natural light, and its double facade on the north face insulates the building and saves energy by preventing overheating in summer and heat loss in winter. The building is equipped with solar panels, which avoids the emission of about 18.45 tonnes of CO₂, and a photovoltaic system. Lighting is provided by energy-saving light bulbs and a system that conducts sunlight from the ceiling to the rooms through a mirror duct (solar tube). Water is a limited resource in the region; therefore, the building incorporates a water reuse system with two

underfloor deposits. One of the reservoirs collects rainwater (2,429.46m³ in 2017) that is used in the garden, while the other collects water from sinks and showers. After appropriate treatment, this second flow of water is used in the WC tanks.

Fundesplai implemented EMAS just after the construction of the building, as it enabled them to visualize their job and environmental performance globally. Ms Júlia García, who is responsible for the Department of Environmental Education – Action, Education and Social Programmes Area, explains that “the internal communication and disclosure of environmental information and transparency required by EMAS materialized in the project of ‘Eloquence of our building’, which reports on the operation and the environmental values to all the people who visit us”.

Rooms are equipped with a placard that shows the guest how these technologies are integrated into the room and how they work. Staff and visitors can also take a walk and learn about the “bowels” of the building. Fundesplai also offer guided tours for students and visitors from different organisations. In their more than 10 years of experience as an EMAS-registered organisation, Fundesplai have highlighted the added value of EMAS for the collection of the «vital signs» of the building and their activities.

SERRALVES

[The Serralves Foundation](#) is recognized as one of Portugal's leading cultural institutions, especially for the north of Portugal. Since 2012, it has been classified as a national monument, and currently it is the only EMAS-registered museum in the country. The museum, designed by the architect Álvaro Siza, is harmoniously integrated within the surrounding urban area and the pre-existing spaces of the gardens of the park and villa. The park also plays a very important role for the tourism sector, the city and the country because of its importance in the history of landscape architecture. It constitutes a fundamental part of the ecological structure of Porto, adding to the ecological richness and potential diversity of habitats in urban space through its interconnected spaces: formal gardens, woodlands, and a traditional farm. The 18 hectares host a great variety of landscapes and habitats, and many species of animals and plants find shelter and food there.

The Serralves Foundation has been a national and international reference point, and it has always taken an active role in areas such as environmental education and reflection on the current environmental challenges of society. Conscious of its influence with the local, regional and international communities, and seeking to have a replicating effect on other organisations' adoption of good environmental practices, the

Serralves Foundation decided to implement an environmental management system and registered in the Community Eco-Management and Audit System (EMAS).

According to *Ms Helena Cerveira Pinto*, Environmental Manager, "the process of implementing EMAS had several positive impacts; however, it may be worth highlighting the increased employee awareness, a greater assurance of compliance with legal requirements and, on the other hand, such a transversal approach to the whole organisation made it possible to promote several synergies between the various departments, which allowed efficient systematisation of processes and greener practices".

Considering the constraints related to artwork conservation, the environmental management system has made it possible to implement the most common and viable energy-saving good practices. Regarding water consumption in the buildings, water leakage is checked periodically and the importance of saving water is communicated. The environmental management system has also stimulated a circular economy approach; some of the biodegradable waste generated in the maintenance of the park is composted and used for fertilization of the fields, and different materials are often reused for the educational activities.





The Seehotel Wiesler GmbH (Germany)



The [Seehotel Wiesler](#) GmbH (Germany) is a nature and wellness-oriented four-star hotel located on Lake Titisee in the southern Black Forest in Baden-Württemberg and has been EMAS-registered since 2006. It is a small organisation that has achieved surprising results, not only in relation to its own environmental performance, but also because of its ability to involve other companies in the sector and along the value chain.

Its electricity needs are covered by 100% hydropower and photovoltaics systems, and heating is generated through woodchips from the nearby forests and a solar thermal system. This makes very low CO₂ emissions per overnight stay (200gr. CO₂) possible. The environmental actions of the Seehotel Wiesler also contribute to the local development

of the region as it purchases regional products from local farmers.

The environmentally friendly measures not only ensure the preservation of nature, but also make a significant contribution to the guests' well-being. The kitchen offers freshly cooked regional specialties, partly vegetarian and vegan, while completely omitting additives, taste enhancers and other artificial flavours.

Besides improving the hotel's environmental performance, the owner, *Mr Klaus-Günther Wiesler*, has also been able to motivate 32 other hotels in the area to join EMAS.

Together, they constitute the "Naturpark Wirte und Hotels", which collectively represents added value for the region, for each involved hotel, and for the group as a whole.



The [Gargano National Park Authority](#) manages a territorial resource that is highly important to tourism and is used by operators in the sector to make their services attractive. EMAS helps the Park Authority to control the environmental value of both the managed territory and its own organisation.

Furthermore, the Gargano National Park Authority benefits from the access that EMAS registration gives it to calls for funding and other financing opportunities. It is also important to highlight that all the expertise acquired for EMAS has been useful for the other paths that the park has pursued, such as UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme and the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.



Studiosus [Studiosus](#) is the European market leader in the cultural tours segment. This Munich-based family business was founded in 1954 and today runs a business with sales of over 275.4 million euros. With more than 103,000 participants in 2017, it offers travel to more than 100 countries worldwide.

In 1998, the company became Europe's first tour operator to register with EMAS; the concept of sustainability was already firmly anchored in the company and it wanted to provide a solid framework for its environmental commitment within an internationally recognized and high-quality standard. EMAS provided the opportunity to frame the environmental issues already existing in the company in a systematic way while also enabling the company to publicize with transparency its efforts to preserve destinations and its main environmental achievements.

One of the company's main results from EMAS concerns a strategic issue: the long-term improvement of awareness of both environmental and social issues, and the impact this can have in the overall sustainability of the company's services. Indeed, it is not just the impact on in-house staff (335 employees and 570 tour leaders), but also the greater impact it has on clients and business partners. Without this long-term vision and work, preserving unspoilt nature to continue offering tourist services would be impossible.

Studiosus has three internal committees composed of employees from different areas. One addresses environmental issues at the company's head office in Munich, while the other two are focused on the product and the environmental and social aspects of the travel component. It is within such a transversal approach that ideas are generated and specific actions for environmental improvement are defined.

As Ms Magdalena Schuster, one of the people responsible for sustainability, underlines, "through the management system, we have a better understanding of our impact and better knowledge when we send customers to destinations; this allows us a better assessment of our performance and entails an increased capacity to adopt actions". The continuous recording and management of data allows for both in-house comparison over time and benchmarking with other companies. These data are commonly used by the management in the company's assessment.

Ms Magdalena Schuster also highlighted a direct benefit regarding regulatory relief. Because of EMAS, Studiosus is exempted from performing the compulsory energy audit foreseen by the EU Energy Efficiency Directive and national legislation. In 2012, the company became the first cultural tours operator to make the production of its entire catalogue, as well as all the earth-bound and water-bound travel connected with tours all over the world, carbon neutral by offsetting carbon emissions through donations to a climate protection project. Moreover, all business travel conducted by the employees and by tour guides is compensated, as are the Munich office's paper consumption, postal sending of advertising media, and give-away products for customers.

Finally, even if it is not easy to determine whether customers choose Studiosus mainly because of its environmental and social responsibility, Ms Schuster clearly sees that these are part of the customers' expectations and that they influence the level of satisfaction; with a 60% return rate for questionnaires, 95% of customers are satisfied with the environmental responsibility of the services and 98% with their social responsibility.

BENEFITS OF EMAS FOR THE TOURISM SECTOR

EMAS offers various benefits for organisations operating in the tourism sector. It specifically:

- Supports the optimisation of resources (energy, water and materials), and therefore reduces usage costs.
 - Facilitates compliance with the environmental requirements established by tour operators (pre-assessments and checks within the procurement process).
 - Facilitates the organisation's compliance with legal requirements and provides an extra check through the activities carried out by the EMAS verifier and the EMAS Competent Bodies.
- Is compatible with other eco-labels and sustainable management tools in the tourism sector and is also a good framework for considering social actions.
 - Increases the level of staff participation and interaction with other stakeholders, facilitating good integration of the business into its local context.
 - Can contribute to customers' loyalty, particularly with those customers who take environmental good practices into account as an important part of tourism services.
 - Creates potential for innovation as it deeply integrates environmental thinking into business processes.

OUTLOOK



The tourism sector plays a key role in the economy of local communities and can help it shift towards a more circular and sustainable economy; at the same time, companies in the sector can also improve their competitiveness and business resilience.

This can be achieved through **the implementation of Best Environmental Management Practices (BEMPs)**¹⁰. BEMPs provide specific guidance for the tourism sector based on actions and techniques that have been implemented by frontrunner organisations and proven successful. Organisations can use the document **to identify the most relevant areas for action and find detailed information on best practices to address their environmental impacts as well as environmental performance indicators and related benchmarks of excellence** to track sustainability improvements. EMAS-registered organisations must take the BEMPs into account when implementing their environmental management system, but any organisation is free to access them and identify potential opportunities for improvement.

The European Commission has developed a specific website where organisations can find practical tools and instant information on how to make a hotel or restaurant more environmentally friendly.

Another way to innovate and improve environmental performance is to participate in specific working groups, for example within existing EMAS Clubs, workshops and other meetings organized by EMAS Competent Bodies, or other environmental sectoral platforms such as tourism associations, circular economy platforms, etc.

Last but not least, interaction and networking with other interested parties such as customers, NGOs or neighbours' associations can give the organisation a different perspective and may be the source of future actions and improvements.

For more information on EMAS, the process to register and its benefits, please visit the EMAS website: emas.eu.

¹⁰ BEMPs Documents are prepared by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission. The one for the tourism sector is available at: <http://susproc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/activities/emas/documents/TourismBEMP.pdf>

A shorter version with a set of practical steps to improve environmental performance is available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/takeagreenstep/zip-en/SRD%20English%20Web.pdf>



Publications Office

ISBN 978-92-76-17902-3



9 789276 179023
doi:10.2779/76398