



# HOW SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP CAN SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

ARTICLE PRODUCED IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE EYSET PROJECT.

# EYSET

Empower Youth organizations through  
Social Entrepreneurship in Tourism

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Co-funded by  
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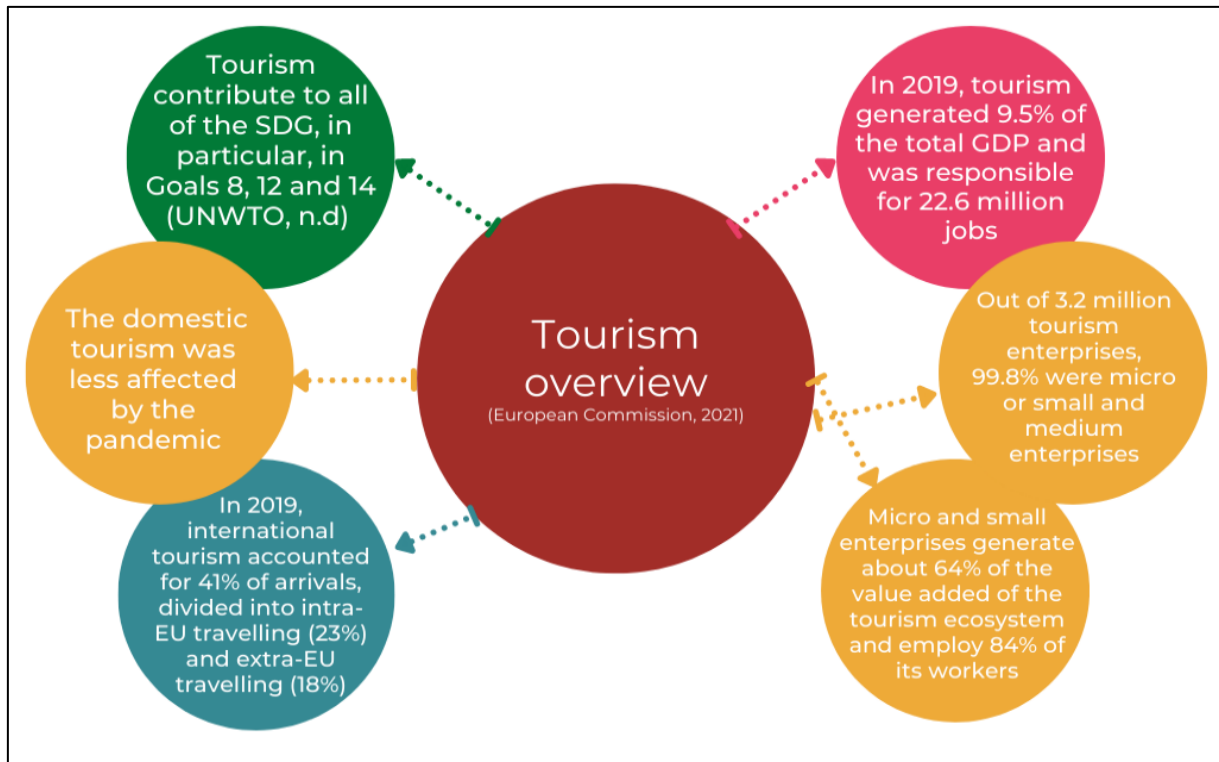


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## HOW SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP CAN SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Tourism is a major economic force worldwide. In 2019, tourism generated 9,5% of the total GDP and it has a major social impact as well. It was responsible for 22.6 million jobs in 2019.<sup>1</sup> (European Commission, 2021). In the image below, some statistics from the European Commission, showing the importance of tourism in Europe.



*Tourism overview. Source: European Commission, 2021.*

As OECD (2021) points out, sustainable tourism should not be considered a special form of tourism, but rather, all forms of tourism should strive to be more sustainable. Long-term sustainability requires a suitable balance to be struck between the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development. It requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is an ongoing process that requires constant monitoring of impacts (economic, social and environmental) to capitalize on opportunities and respond to challenges as they arise and inform future policy responses.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> European Commission (2021), Scenarios towards co-creation of transition pathway for tourism for a more resilient, innovative and sustainable ecosystem, Brussels, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10089-2021-INIT/en/pdf>

<sup>2</sup> OECD (2021), Managing tourism development for sustainable and inclusive recovery. Paris: OECD Publishing. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1787/23071672>

As there is still a paucity of research in tourism and social entrepreneurship, it is important to continue finding synergies between these two sectors and how they can complement each other. This is even more relevant at the moment, as the European Commission puts a considerable emphasis and attention in the upcoming years, with funding opportunities for stakeholders. Moreover, social economy and social enterprises are seen at forefront to play a major role in the future in the transition of the tourism industry to set the example to bring sustainability (social and environmental perspective) in the spotlight rather than be seen merely from an economic perspective.

Governments can contribute to create the conditions for tourism social entrepreneurship to flourish; develop policies that support and encourage the development and operation of social enterprises as part of an inclusive and sustainable tourism system; and assist in the creation of institutional conditions that encourage, legitimize, and synergize social entrepreneurship. Moreover, governments should be interested in creating the social and institutional conditions to facilitate tourism-oriented social entrepreneurship. According to Dredge, those reasons include:

- Social entrepreneurship builds social and economic resilience and is a way that social problems can be addressed with minimal government resourcing.
- Social entrepreneurs are often closer to the problems, they are more grounded and often have deeper understandings of the issues, and they have unique insights into how such issues can be effectively addressed.
- Supporting social entrepreneurship and creating the enabling conditions for it to flourish is a way that governments can indirectly address social issues using market-based solutions.
- The way that policies across different sectors work together (or not) has an impact on the overall level of institutional support for tourism social entrepreneurship.<sup>3</sup>

The question is now: what comes next for sustainability in tourism? Most of the answers can be indeed found within our sector. Social economy enterprises have already demonstrated that they can contribute to achieve it in various ways. One of the approaches worth looking at is the Regenerative Tourism; a concept that goes beyond "not damaging" the environment and that looks to actively revitalize and regenerate it, resulting in a positive impact on local communities and economies: sustainable regeneration.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Dredge, D. (2016). Institutional and Policy Support for Tourism Social Entrepreneurship . In R. D. Pauline J. Sheldon (A cura di), Social Entrepreneurship and Tourism - Philosophy and Practice (p. 19). Springer. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-46518-0>

<sup>4</sup> Acciona. (s.d.). Regenerative tourism: discovering the world sustainably, [https://www.activesustainability.com/sustainabledevelopment/regenerative-tourism/?%20\\_aadin=02021864894&\\_adin=11551547647](https://www.activesustainability.com/sustainabledevelopment/regenerative-tourism/?%20_aadin=02021864894&_adin=11551547647)