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Climate Change and Tourism: Where We Are Now and How to Enable Positive Change to Low Carbon Tourism

Addressing climate change through tourism activities is critical to reducing emissions, conserving natural resources, supporting economic resilience, promoting education and awareness, fostering collaboration and innovation, and enhancing the adaptive capacity of destinations. By adopting sustainable practises, the tourism industry can contribute to global efforts to mitigate climate change and create a more sustainable future. To achieve this, stakeholders need to be educated on how to approach low carbon tourism (LCT) and how the EU Erasmus+ project VINCI contributes to knowledge transfer in this regard.

The EU recognises the importance of low-carbon tourism for sustainable development, climate change mitigation and the preservation of natural and cultural heritage. Through policies, funding and the promotion of sustainable practises, the EU aims to make the tourism sector greener and more resilient. The EU has taken important steps that demonstrate its commitment to change. Here are some important points:

1. **Climate targets:** The EU is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving carbon neutrality. The *European Green Deal* aims to make Europe the first carbon-neutral continent by 2050, with low-carbon tourism playing a crucial role.
2. **Sustainable tourism policies:** The EU has implemented guidelines and policies to foster sustainable tourism practices. The EU Tourism Sustainability Strategy ensures that tourism contributes to sustainable development and addresses climate change through energy efficiency and environmental impact reduction.
3. **Funding and support:** The EU provides funding and support for a number of low-carbon tourism related projects. The European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund invest in sustainable tourism infrastructure, energy efficiency and training initiatives. On the other hand, Erasmus+ helps to train and upskill stakeholders.
4. **Certification and labeling:** The EU encourages the use of certification and labeling schemes to promote low-carbon tourism. The EU Ecolabel certifies accommodations and campsites that meet specific environmental criteria, helping consumers identify eco-friendly options.
5. **Research and innovation:** The EU invests in research projects related to low-carbon tourism. Programs like Horizon Europe, support research on sustainable tourism practices, renewable energy solutions, and low-carbon transportation to reduce the tourism sector's carbon footprint.

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Six reasons why tourism should address climate change.

1. **Reducing emissions:** The tourism industry is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, mainly through transport and accommodation. By addressing climate change in the tourism sector, we can work to reduce these emissions and mitigate their impact on the environment.
2. **Protecting natural resources:** Tourism often takes place in environmentally sensitive areas such as forests, coastal regions and wildlife habitats. By promoting sustainable tourism practises, we can minimise the negative impacts on these ecosystems, conserve natural resources and protect biodiversity.
3. **Economic resilience:** Many communities and countries rely heavily on tourism as a source of income and employment. Climate change threatens these tourism-dependent economies through rising sea levels, extreme weather events and altered landscapes. By addressing climate change, we can help ensure the long-term viability and resilience of these economies.
4. **Education and awareness:** Tourism provides an opportunity to educate and raise awareness among travellers about climate change and its impacts. By integrating sustainability practises into tourism activities, we can inspire and empower travellers to make greener choices both on their trips and in their daily lives.
5. **Collaboration and innovation:** The tourism industry involves various stakeholders, including governments, businesses and local communities. By addressing climate change within this sector, we encourage collaboration and innovation in the development of sustainable tourism practises and technologies. This can lead to the introduction of cleaner and more efficient energy sources, waste reduction strategies and sustainable transport options.
6. **Ability to adapt:** Climate change is already leading to changes in weather patterns and environmental conditions. By considering climate change in tourism planning and management, destinations can better adapt to these changes and minimise negative impacts on the visitor experience and local communities.

A case study project on Low Carbon tourism - the Erasmus+ project VINCI - Virtual & Augmented Reality Trainers Toolbox to Foster Low Carbon Tourism & Related Entrepreneurship

To support this, the EU has decided to fund the project VINCI - Virtual & Augmented Reality Trainers Toolbox to Foster Low Carbon Tourism & Related Entrepreneurship, which aims to use Virtual and Augmented reality (VR / AR) technologies to promote low carbon tourism, support entrepreneurship, improve capacity building and facilitate knowledge transfer in the tourism industry. By providing tools and resources for trainers and mentors, the project aims to promote sustainable practises, raise awareness and contribute to the overall transition towards a more sustainable and low-carbon tourism sector. To achieve its objectives, the project VINCI received Erasmus+ funding, which enabled seven European institutions from six different EU Member States to share their complementary expertise to develop a novel set of digital training resources on Low Carbon Tourism and related entrepreneurship.

The VINCI project is therefore developing a freely accessible virtual toolbox that combines a range of digital training resources including Virtual and Augmented reality-based LCT case studies, country-specific LCT fact sheets and a novel e-learning course specifically designed to promote best practises for the low-carbon tourism sector. The VINCI toolbox will serve as a resource for entrepreneurs and tourism professionals, providing them with practical guidance, training modules and best practises for implementing sustainable initiatives in their businesses or destinations. The use of Virtual and Augmented Reality technologies provides an innovative educational experience for reducing carbon emissions in the different phases of tourism, i.e. the planning phase, the traveling (transport) phase and the destination phase.

The project VINCI focuses on capacity building through the provision of training and skills development opportunities for tourism professionals, entrepreneurs and local communities. It aims to improve their understanding of low-carbon tourism concepts, sustainable business models and the effective use of virtual and augmented reality technologies in the tourism context. The aim of VINCI is to create a platform where educators, entrepreneurs, industry experts, researchers and policy makers can share their knowledge and experiences to develop innovative solutions to the challenges of climate change in the European tourism sector.

To keep yourself informed about the VINCI project, its upcoming free National Seminars as well as to download freely available project results, please check our webpage www.vinci.eumecb.com

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