

Circular Economy and the Tourism Sector in the EU and Greece

M. Vitoraki¹, A. Skordilis²

1. Environmental Studies Program, DERE – The American College of Greece,
Ag. Paraskevi
2. Circular Innovative Solutions -Afroditis 8 15341
Ag.Paraskevi

Presenting author e-mail: mvitoraki@gmail.com

Abstract

Circular economy has become a central theme of contemporary societies, in the context of sustainable development, aiming at the transformation of economic systems from the current unsustainable, linear model of “take – make – dispose” to the circular model which aims “to enable effective flows of materials, energy, labor and information so that natural and social capital can be rebuilt.” (Ellen MacArthur Foundation)

The circular economy is not just about the implementation of resource efficient, smart technologies in some economic activities and sectors, but it requires a broader and more eco – oriented design of alternative solutions over the entire life cycle of products and the adoption of circular production and consumption patterns within the entire economic system. The CE therefore depends on the development of new types of business models.

In Greece and the EU countries Tourism plays an important role, as a main driver to economic growth and job creation. Tourism is one of the world’s largest economic sectors: it is responsible for almost ten percent of all economic income in the world every year. Due to the current linear business model, Tourism is also associated with a high ecological, carbon and water footprint and can create great pressure on local resources. Besides land use, it extensively demands resources such as water, energy and food. Moreover, tourism activities result in increased waste generation, as well as noise and air pollution.

Sustainable tourism in harmony with nature and the landscape, which is geared towards sustainable management and thus relies on resource efficiency and climate protection, offers the best prerequisites for making a lasting contribution to regional added value.

In this presentation, we will explore various options for the transition to a more circular tourism economy in Greece. In this regard we will discuss the opportunities for small and medium-sized tourism businesses to adopt circular economy ideas, and to identify good practices in applying circular economy solutions, especially in relation to the fields of accommodation and food services.

We will also try to identify and present Greek initiatives in the tourism sector that adopt the approach of circularity by developing and implementing circular economy elements.

Key words: circular economy, tourism, sustainability, natural capital, material flow

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