

EMPLOYMENT IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRIES,  
MAIN CHALLENGES AND POLICY ISSUES

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All speakers at this Conference have agreed, in one way or another, and from different perspectives, that **people** constitute a key element in the successful development and management of tourism. This is surely a correct statement; people are at the heart of tourism supply, over and above transport, accommodation and other infrastructure required to satisfy tourists. Even the most modern, expensive and luxurious physical infrastructure built in the most attractive location would fail to satisfy the tourists, and therefore fail to be commercially successful, if the men and women managing it and delivering the services to the tourists conduct their work in an inadequate manner.

At the same time, one of the main objectives for developing a tourism industry in any location, whether in a rich, industrial nation or in the most remote region of a developing country is or should be employment generation, i.e. providing **jobs to the local people** in order to improve their standard of living. Yet, little and insufficient attention has been paid so far to examining the complex issues regarding employment in the tourism industries, such as recruitment policies, regulatory aspects, education, training and career development, or even some of the tourism specific issues of seasonal fluctuations, part-time labour and multi-employment which are so unique to the tourism industries.

There is a **continuous change in the role of people** in the production, marketing and delivery of tourism services, the speed and depth of which are likely to accelerate in the future. Most of these changes come from outside the sector, i.e. they are driven by external political, economic, sociological, environmental and especially technological factors, and to some extent too by changing consumer patterns. And most of the time changes occur in the tourism industries long before they are anticipated by policy makers and private sector managers, before employees have

received the necessary re-training or updating, affecting therefore their performance and their prospects for adequate career development. In many other cases, the tourism industries are not sufficiently fast in adapting to the changing external circumstances surrounding it or in adopting new technologies due precisely to the inadequacy of the people managing it.

A general, global employment policy applicable to all countries and destinations is out of question, since the overall national and development context seem to exercise a major influence in the type of employment policy required, depending also on the type and size of tourism enterprises existing at the destination. One key differentiating element is the social appreciation of tourism jobs. Thus, a tourism occupation that in a developed country may appear as unskilled and receive a relatively low social rating and low salary, in a developing society may be considered as a good job, requiring a number of skills not common in that society and hence be socially appreciated and well paid. Another key difference is between major multinational tourism companies and smaller enterprises, the latter being often family-run, with a less professional structure, lower productivity and lower remuneration levels.

After listening to the very valuable presentations made at this Conference, as well as taking into account the results of the UNWTO survey, I have come to the conclusion that the main challenges and policy issues that need to be addressed are the following ten:

1. To include the employment creation objective more explicitly and in quantitative terms in the national and local tourism development strategies and programmes.
2. To develop new tourism products and services, with a high labour content, a high labour multiplying impact, a high level of sustainability, achieving at the same time good price competitiveness.
3. To identify not only the direct, but also the indirect types of jobs that can be generated in such a diverse sector that includes so many different activities, products, services, locations and size of companies, from the very small to the huge multinational, and that has many upstream implications;

4. To define standards for the quality of work and for work organization, and induce employers and workers to adopt such standards in order to ensure, at the same time, decent work and high tourist satisfaction;
5. To cope with the rapid speed of technological changes and the impacts these may have on labour productivity.
6. To cope with the impacts of globalization and more specifically with the labour mobility across frontiers, i.e. immigrant workers, that are becoming common in all regions of the world.
7. To establish fair and decent remuneration levels and raise labour competitiveness in the sector as compared to other economic activities.
8. To examine carefully the need to establish special regulations applicable to employment in the tourism industries: if found necessary, to determine which type of regulations (e.g. regarding working hours, flexible schedules, safety at work, etc) and to establish a concerted process for consulting employers and employees.
9. To adapt educational curricula and capacity building policies and programmes to the evolving needs of the tourism industries.
10. To establish statistical and monitoring systems for measuring in a periodical and reliable manner at least the following variables: employment numbers by age, gender, etc. quality levels, productivity levels, remunerations, training needs, etc.

Governments, including the administrations responsible for tourism, for employment and for education, should work together and with employers and employees of the various tourism industries and their segments in order to anticipate the changes and to subsequently determine their implications in terms of human resource development for the coming years. And this is an exercise that ought to be undertaken on a periodical basis and as often as the pace of change affecting the industry is rapid, as is the case now, for instance. An overwhelming objective should be to satisfy all the conditions to ensure decent work, as stipulated by ILO across the UN system for all sectors of economic activity.

The World Tourism Organization is ready to assist its Member States and Affiliate members in these efforts, and I am happy to say that we count with the collaboration of the International Labour Organization within the general cooperation agreement established between the two organizations.

Some Member States may wish to work jointly with UNWTO and ILO in order to investigate in more depth the various challenges relating to tourism employment as briefly outlined above. This would allow us to establish a kind of pilot methodology and reporting guidelines on tourism employment that may serve as a model to other nations. In the future, UNWTO, ILO and other international agencies could assist Member States in applying these methodology and guidelines to examine their own tourism labour market.

In conclusion, national governments and the tourism private sector should be in a position in the next few years to place employment, together with sustainability at the heart of tourism development policies, thus ensuring that tourism fully contributes to the MDGs.

Thank you.