

---

Supporting environmentally  
and socially responsible tourism

The experience of Vietnam



Working Paper No. 5  
May 2016



## From the “DoiMoi” to the National Tourism Development Strategy

Since the introduction of the “**DoiMoi**” (Renovation) policy in 1986, Vietnam's impressive growth has taken millions of people out of poverty. **Tourism** has been **one of the drivers of this growth**, and still possesses a huge potential for playing a leading role in the socio-economic development of the country for the years to come.

In 2011, over 6 million international tourists visited Vietnam. Notwithstanding the rapid growth in the decade 2001-2011, which has almost tripled the flux of tourists, the touristic sector is still in constant growth.

Tourism in Vietnam is a **vital sector**, being one of the few able to **create sustainable jobs** and earning opportunities outside the urban growth centres especially for disadvantaged groups, such as women, ethnic minorities, youth, rural and marginalised communities. The increased role that tourism has come to play in the economic development of Vietnam pushed the Government to take a new strategic approach in this sector.

Besides promoting living standards of the population, and generating foreign exchange, income and employment, the Government of Vietnam decided to implement a **National Tourism Development Strategy 2011-2020** divided into three main axes, which have been aiming to:

1. Create a **modern institutional framework** that supports sustainable tourism development;
2. Promote **public-private partnerships** in the tourism sector;
3. Enhance capacity building of the **human resources** for tourism management.



## Promoting tourism and preserving natural resources



Tourism in Vietnam, like in many other countries, is heavily dependent on natural and environmental resources.

It is **essential** that these **resources** are **preserved** and both visitors and hosts must be fully aware of the importance of protecting them, while operators must plan tourism investments and itineraries as not to “consume” resources.

The rapid growth of international tourism brought some challenges that the sector was not fully prepared to tackle.

Both private tourism operators and the Government of Vietnam (GoV) have realised the importance of addressing these challenges in order to offer a better product and ensure the **sustainability** in the **process of tourism development**.

The most pressing needs have been identified in the following areas:

- Better **tourism promotion**;
- **Diversification of services** and products;
- Increasing **quality of services**;
- **Improvement** in **capacity building** of human resources;
- **Conservation** of **natural, cultural** and **historic heritage**.

There was a strong need for expert advice and technical assistance in these areas, which is why the **Environmentally and Socially Responsible Tourism Capacity Development Programme (ESRT)** was put in place: a five-year initiative co-funded by the EU (11 m€) and the Government of Vietnam (GoV), the ESRT aimed at building the institutional capacity and skills needed for achieving the substantial socio-economic development benefits available from the tourism sector. In doing so, ESRT sought to pay special attention to protect and enhance the natural and cultural resources that are the basis of Vietnamese tourism.

## The project: Provision of technical assistance to the ESRT in the field of tourism, training, curriculum and material



In January 21st 2013, an international consortium led by Eureka S.p.A. supported by the Vietnam Academy of Responsible Tourism was awarded the coordination of the project EuropeAid/132378/C/SER/VN\_Lot1 aimed to support VNAT (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism) and provincial departments of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and selected provincial counterparts by:

1. **Strengthening the capacity** of the **local stakeholders**, tourism associations and the private sector for public-private dialogue and partnerships in tourism management;
2. **Achieving the sustainability** of the **vocational training system** in tourism including the VTOS standard system, responsible for tourism principles.

### Actions Realized

1. Provision of **qualified technical assistance with local know-how** in order to promote the delivery of environmentally and socially responsible tourism services. were well received by the tourism enterprises, training institutions and other stakeholders alike thus ensuring its **sustainability** in the **future**.
2. Worked in **close cooperation with** the Programme Implementation Unit to support the **ERST Programme**, providing a highly qualified pool of Vietnamese experts with strong background in Responsible Tourism, VTOS, ToT and other relevant topics, required to implement ESRT activities in line with the Programme.
3. Developed VTOS manuals and the **occupational certification** system that
4. Supported the **capacity building** process of **teachers** from tourism schools and universities in order to prepare the tourism training and education sector in Vietnam for regional and global integration and standardization of tourism services that enhance the competitiveness of the Vietnamese Tourism sector.
5. **Technical and didactic training** delivered along with onsite coaching to teachers from tourism schools.



Budget:  
646.409,00  
euros



Trainees:  
9.644



Training:  
280 training sessions  
delivered covering over  
28 different topics.

## In the footsteps of Marco Polo to become “travelers within cultures”

*“Take only photos, leave only footprints”.* This was the mantra of “ecotourism”, an “environment-friendly” movement which started to grow – in opposition to “mass tourism” – at the beginning of the 70s.

Although ecotourism has brought a more sustainable perspective on tourism, it has mostly focused on nature, without fully considering local people and their cultures.

Since the 90s, a **new wave of “sensitive travelers”** has been developing the movement of “responsible tourism”, encompassing all types of tourism (not just nature based) with the aim of delivering “better places to live in and to visit”.

The focus of “responsible tourism” has consequently moved on the creation of better places firstly for local people, and secondly for tourists. People belonging to this movement define themselves as **“travelers within cultures”** and not just simply “tourists”.

When Eurecna took the challenge of building capacity for the development of “responsible tourism” in Vietnam, the implementation of an approach enhancing the **“travel within”** and not the “mass exploitation of” Vietnamese culture just came naturally.

Since being founded at the end of the 80s, **Eurecna** has been based in **Venice**, an island whose territorial sustainability and overseas expansion over the centuries has been built on travelling.

From the time when **Marco Polo**, a Venetian merchant traveler, visited China and Indochina in the 13th century, the concept of “travel” in Venice is still synonym of **“source of knowledge”**, **“openness towards the different”** and **“cultural richness”**.

This Venetian philosophy of constantly “re-focussing” and “adapting” to the other, has been capitalized in Vietnam where a balance between limits and usage has been found in developing a “responsible cultural approach” so that continuous changing, monitoring and planning has ensured the management of tourism in a sustainable way.



## Elements of transferability

- Courses material and **know-how** acquired in the preparation of the **tourism training sessions in line with global standards and local needs**;
- **Manuals to support the National Certification Board and the Occupational Skills Start** in the occupational certification system. The manuals incorporated 240 units for the tourism & hospitality sector covering 5 levels from entry level to management; 45 new qualifications suitable for industry and colleges. The manuals were developed focussing on a flexible methodology aiming at adapting to both occupational and academic needs, in order to guarantee future sustainability.
- Technical and didactic **“train the trainers”** addressing teachers from the **tourism schools** (especially the 5 new ones) and several universities. Onsite coaching carried out to deliver effective training in workplaces.





*“The project has contributed to raise awareness and understanding of the people who work at the National Parks and Nature Reserves Areas about the responsible and sustainable tourism practices. After training courses, the positive effects of the project will spread to tourists, local communities and societies.”*

**Mr. Pham Hong Long**

Dean  
Faculty of Tourism Studies  
VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities  
Vietnam National University in Hanoi, Vietnam

*“VTOS Component also helped the teachers at the tourism institutions changing their perceptions, practicing and teaching towards integrated training and according to the competency approach. All has created an important boost to "output of tourism schools" and "input of tourism enterprises" in Vietnam increasingly close together, contributing to increasingly improve the quality of tourism human resources to meet the requirements of the mutual recognition arrangement on tourism professionals (MRA-TP) between ASEAN members.”*

**Mr. Ngo Trung Ha**

Head of Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts  
Pegasus International College (KinderWorld Education Group), Ha Noi, Vietnam



**Eurecna S.p.A.**

Via della Pila, 3/a  
I-30175 Venezia - Marghera

tel: +39 041 2919411  
fax: +39 041 5322465

[info@eurecna.it](mailto:info@eurecna.it)