Reducing the tourism carbon footprint
Hersonissos, Greece
Mayor Zacharias Doxastakis

Hersonissos, a small municipality 25km from Heraklion in Crete, has put energy-efficiency high on its agenda. Since the town joined the Covenant of Mayors in 2011 many projects have been developed to increase the quality of life of the citizens and the well-being of the many tourists that visit the area. Indeed, Hersonissos is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Greece, hosting 6.5% of the tourist beds in the country, which corresponds to more than 5 million overnight stays. The massive influx of tourists and tourism professionals causes a large increase in the energy-demand and consumption and has thus led the Municipality to take action.

Tourism plays a very important role in our local economy especially in times of economic crisis. At the same time it is a very energy-consuming sector. This is why we decided to take action as part of our commitment to the Covenant of Mayors objectives. Partnering with hotel units to reduce the tourism carbon footprint seemed to us the most effective option to offer our citizens and visitors a clean environment while stimulating the local economy. Zacharias Doxastakis, Mayor of Hersonissos

In recognition to the important role of tourism industry in the local economy, the Municipality of Hersonissos has signed three voluntary cooperation agreements with large hotel units. The agreements set a framework for joint actions between the hotels and the Covenant of Mayors team, in which the tourism units commit to providing data on energy consumption in order to calculate the tourists’ carbon footprint.

In June 2013, during the Energy Days, the three hotels were awarded the Municipal Energy Award for their contribution to the strategic energy planning of the municipality. At a later stage, the municipal authority will also award the hotel that has been able to reduce the most its energy consumption with a
Municipal Energy Efficiency Prize exclusively for the hotel industry. Likewise, a financial incentive in the form of a reduced municipal tax rate for hotels spending less energy is under consideration – given the austerity circumstances – and is expected to come into effect in 2015, following an open call for participation for the tourism industry in the area.

In order to further reduce energy consumption in the tertiary sector, the municipal authority has prepared a door-card design ready to be printed by hotels with an energy saving message that will raise awareness amongst visitors. The hotels will be able to put their logos on the door-card along with the municipal logo and their own message in various languages. The municipality hopes that this action will make tourists more aware of their carbon footprint.

In parallel, Hersonissos is working in collaboration with the University of Patras on the elaboration of a “Tourism Satellite Account Study”, the first of its kind in Greece. This study is developed as a tool for measuring and monitoring the development of the tourism industry and its contribution to the national Gross Domestic Product. The study will provide the local Covenant of Mayors team with detailed data on energy consumption in the tertiary sector. By now, 60% of the beds of 5-star hotels in Hersonissos have provided energy consumption data (electric power, gas, petrol and water consumption). This study expands to 4-star and 3-star hotels. The outcome of the study will be presented by the end of 2013.

Hersonissos – Key facts

- Permanent population is 21,135 and de facto population is 53,337, since 32,202 people are moving to Hersonissos annually to work in the tourism industry for 4-7 months.
- Hersonissos hosts 25% of the hotels of Crete and 33% of Heraklion airport arrivals.
- In 2009 Hersonissos hosted 5,370,715 overnight stays which corresponds to 6.5% of the tourist beds in the country
- The Municipality has been awarded the European Energy Award in May 2013.
- Joined the Covenant of Mayors on 18 April 2011.

As a signatory to the Covenant of Mayors the municipality of Hersonissos commits to reducing its CO₂ emissions by 25% by 2020

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