

## QualityCoast Award 2012 –Jury Report

Applicant	<b>IERAPETRA</b>	Country	<b>GREECE</b>	Date Application	December 2011
Report	Jury members: Nikolaos Trihas and Ioanna Madala (GR) and Albert Salman (NL) Local expert: Maria Antonaki (GR) Assessment team: Mariola Ptak, Daniela van Elburg			Date Report	June 2012
Categorie		Score	Excellence		
<b>NATURE</b>		<b>7,9</b>	<b>NO</b>		
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>		<b>8,0</b>	<b>YES</b>		
<b>IDENTITY</b>		<b>8,3</b>	<b>YES</b>		
<b>SOCIO-ECONOMICS</b>		<b>8,4</b>	<b>YES</b>		
<b>AVERAGE RESULT</b>		<b>8,1</b>			
<b>AWARD 2012</b>		<b>QualityCoast GOLD Award for excellence in Environment, Identity and Socio-Economics</b>			

### GENERAL ASSESSMENT & COMMENTS

#### THE JURY EVALUATION PROCEDURE AND JURY REPORT

On the basis of all information provided by applicant, the QualityCoast Assessment team has prepared a draft Assessment report and a draft score sheet. This score is proposed by the QualityCoast assessment team, who has tried to give fair judgments on the basis of international references but also taking into account national constraints.

Jury members and Local Experts are identified and appointed, based on their knowledge of the applicant's territory and performance.

Local Experts are requested to consider information provided in the Application Form and in the draft Assessment Report, and to check, verify and validate or propose changes in the score given for each indicator.

Next, Jury members are invited to review the draft Assessment Report and score sheet, and to add their comments and recommendations. The Assessment report and score sheet are adjusted on the basis of this work, and this results in the Jury report.

The QualityCoast Jury hopes that the applicant will give consideration to the Jury recommendations included in this report, and take measures in the following years, since the Jury recommendations will be taken in special consideration in any next application for a QualityCoast Award.

This Jury Report will be provided to the applicant and will be published in [www.qualitycoast.info](http://www.qualitycoast.info).

The QualityCoast Jury congratulates the applicant with the result.

This QualityCoast Award is a recognition for the high level of tourism quality and sustainability, in particular in terms of nature and landscape, environment, local identity and cultural heritage.

### **GENERAL JURY RECOMMENDATIONS**

In order to maintain and improve this high level, the Jury would like to make the following general recommendations to all QualityCoast Destinations:

#### **QualityCoast Ambassadors**

The value of the QualityCoast Award for you as a sustainable tourism destination will highly increase if you are able to find one or more prominent people who are prepared to be involved in the development of new, eco-friendly (or even sustainable) vacation products together with the EUCC, and to promote your destination as "QualityCoast Ierapetra Ambassador".

#### **QualityCoast Committee**

The Jury recommends to establish a local QualityCoast Committee on order to provide a think-tank and discussion platform for sustainable tourism on the implementation of the QualityCoast Jury Recommendations. A local QualityCoast Committee could also help promote synergies between stakeholders, based upon the principles of integrated coastal zone management (ICZM) and contribute to the prolongation of the QualityCoast Award within two years. Within a next QualityCoast application in autumn 2013, the Jury would like to see involvement of the Committee and also to see the work of the Committee reported.

We suggest that this Committee would represent:

- the local government (highest possible level),
- the local business sector
- independent expertise on nature conservation and management
- independent expertise on cultural heritage and landscape interests
- independent expertise on environmental issues.

**DETAILED SCORE**

<b>NATURE</b>	<b>7,9</b>
1. NATURE CONSERVATION	6,7
2. CONTACT WITH NATURE	8,4
3. GREEN POLICIES	8,0
4. OPEN LANDSCAPES	7,4
5. LIGHT & NOISE MANAGEMENT	9,2
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>8,0</b>
6. BLUE FLAGS & BEACHES	9,0
7. WATER MANAGEMENT	8,1
8. SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION	7,4
9. WASTE & RECYCLING	8,4
10. CLIMATE & ENERGY	7,3
<b>IDENTITY</b>	<b>8,3</b>
11. CULTURAL HERITAGE	7,7
12. TERRITORY & TRADITION	7,5
13. LOCAL IDENTITY	8,6
14. HOSPITALITY & SATISFACTION	8,0
15. HUMAN RIGHTS & JUSTICE	9,5
<b>SOCIO-ECONOMICS</b>	<b>8,4</b>
16. TOURISM	8,9
17. DESTINATION MANAGEMENT	6,9
18. BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT	7,8
19. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	8,5
20. HEALTH & SAFETY	9,7

## DETAILED COMMENTS & OPINIONS

### NATURE

#### NATURE CONSERVATION

Terrestrial nature surface is very significant; it is up to 80% of the total land of Ierapetra. Moreover, 25% of the terrestrial nature surface is protected nature areas and part of Natura 2000 network and 10% of marine waters are protected under Natura 2000. The local government carries 100% responsibility for the areas protected under Natura 2000.

#### CONTACT WITH NATURE

The community of Ierapetra recognizes how important is to teach young people about sustainability, therefore ca 60% of the schools are implementing environmental education programs, which includes ca 30% of elementary schools and ca 90% of high schools. Moreover there is an open Centre for Environmental Education in Ierapetra, which has designed and implements sustainable education programmes. There are various opportunities for taking part in guided nature excursions: to Chrisi island, Koufonisi island, Sarakina gorge, Cha gorge, Ag. Ioannis waterfall, Anatoli village, Selakano forest, Bramiana dam, Schinokapsala village. The visitors have different opportunities for hiking and biking as well as for birdwatching and marine wildlife observation. Studies are made to improve the accessibility and labelling of hiking (30) and cycling routes (130km), in areas of natural beauty as canyons, trails, surrounding area monuments of historic or natural interest. The destination has special facilities for disabled people. The overall efforts of the municipality in this criterion are recognized as very satisfying.

#### GREEN POLICIES

Periods of fishing ban are introduced in order to support sustainable fisheries. Further improvements are planned via a plan for sustainable fisheries and measures for the protection of some fish population. There are also protection measures for the turtles in the beaches in order to secure their path to the sea.

When speaking about eco-building concept we can say that this is here an old tradition, which is still kept and is being combined with modernization and improvements that are nowadays possible. The traditional architecture of the buildings is adapted to the Mediterranean climate. The villages and the city of Ierapetra are oriented facing to the south for better use of the sun and protection from the northern winds. Today, local engineers have the knowledge to design bioclimatic buildings, using local materials, exploiting the positive aspects of the Mediterranean climate, improving the best conditions of thermal and visual comfort. Also, studies have been made for the improvement of sewerage and installation of biological treatment units.

#### OPEN LANDSCAPES

The percentage of non-build area is very high - up to 80% of the land. No human-made structures in the marine domain either. The municipality is engaged in various studies and measures to protect and restore open landscapes, both in small settlements and open areas.

#### LIGHT & NOISE MANAGEMENT

Ierapetra is quiet and safe place. There are no noisy events in the location. The nearest airport is located 60 km away from Ierapetra.

### RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JURY

- Create print informational material for the importance of the conservation of Natura 2000 protected landscapes, signs in these areas, brochures, etc.
- Enhance scrutiny about the observance of behavioural rules in protected areas
- Instigate the synergy of local bodies i.e. cycling club, mountaineering club to further develop nature-related alternative forms of tourism and activities i.e. ecotourism, agrotourism, mountain tourism, adventure tourism, trekking, bird-watching, etc.

## ENVIRONMENT

### BLUE FLAGS & BEACHES

Many of the sandy beaches are still very quiet, eight of them awarded with a Blue Flag every year. The bathing water quality, according to EEA/ EU Bathing Water Directive, has excellent status in 85% and Good status in 15% of the beaches. Special facilities for disabled people are available on "Ierapetra 1" and "Analipsi" beaches. There are studies for special constructions for disabled to be placed every 100m at all beaches of the destination.

Recycle bins for paper, aluminium, plastic are available at all Blue Flag beaches. Also ashtrays for cigarette butts are placed on beaches. The Blue Flagged beaches are cleaned once or twice daily during the high season.

### WATER MANAGEMENT

The percentage of the population connected to the water waste treatment plants is relatively high: 100% of Ierapetra city (50% of total population) and 50% of the villages (Ierapetra municipality/2011). To support saving water activities there is open deposit for the collection of rain water for the use of greenhouses.

### SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

The frequency of the public buses is satisfactory. In the application there is no information about any efforts to introduce more sustainable ways of transportation.

### WASTE & RECYCLING

There are bins for separate waste collection. There is also a plastic recycling factory. About 50% of the municipal solid waste is recycled or composed and in the high touristic season the percentage of recycled/or composed solid waste reaches 85%. This is very high compared to the national average of 19% recycled or composed municipal solid waste.

A pilot program has started using Household Bio-waste Containers (Bio-Bins 330 lt.) - in order that local households make their own compost. This first phase of this program will be evaluated in a year.

### CLIMATE & ENERGY

The total installed power in the territory of solar photovoltaics (PV) is about 5.7 MW. Ca 25% of the total energy used for public buildings and services is renewable energy. There is a program, established through the new law for investments, in which program the local government provides subsidies to entrepreneurs interested to place photovoltaic panels. The subsidy is about 40% of the total investment.

Moreover, due to the increased levels of sunshine of the area around the year, the majority of buildings use solar panels to cover the heating need.

The Municipality has promoted the main programme for energy saving of the national government. In this framework is included the provision of certifications for energy quality buildings.

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JURY

- More sustainable ways of transportation should be introduced in the destination. The topography of the city is ideal to offer public services of "hire bicycles". The municipality has to prioritize the related infrastructure works, which are already discussed.
- The use of solar energy could be further increased mainly in flat roofs.
- More frequent bus routes in the touristic areas during summer time; build more and repair some of the existing bus stops.

## LOCAL IDENTITY

### CULTURAL HERITAGE

The destination has a number of important cultural features which are attractive for tourists for example the Venetian fortress, the Archaeological Museum, the Venetian wall, the Napoleon house, many Byzantine churches, the Kapsa Monastery, the Muslim fountain, the Old town of Ierapetra. The destination invests in restorations of ancient monuments and traditional houses. Also, actions are being planned to improve the functionality of monuments as well as enhance and maintain the traditional aspects of them, by the reface and reconstruction of main buildings, like the Napoleon House. There are also plans to improve the surrounding area of these heritages in order to suggest walking city routes to visitors to grasp the essence of the old town of Ierapetra.

### TERRITORY & TRADITION

The traditional way of cultivation in agriculture is still present. Ierapetra municipality has a number of small scale cultural and historical landscapes, that have been maintained in this state since 1900 and earlier, for example the Old part (kato mera) of Ierapetra, traditional inland villages, olive fields and wine yards.

### LOCAL IDENTITY

Ierapetra is a warm and welcoming place which can offer various attractions and local food for tourists. The destination has numerous of local food and pottery products which are available on the local market. Around 90% of the local restaurants are promoting and serving local traditional dishes.

Although there is no a specific brand name of local product the general perception among Greeks and visitors is that the quality of agricultural products of Ierapetra is really high. This is related to raki, wine, oil, olive oils, grapes, tomatoes, vegetables, honey, herds, fish, etc. The majority of them are produced and consumed locally by locals and local enterprises. However, there are product categories that are distribute in whole Europe and Greece mainly not as piece goods. Despite the fact that all these products, traditional dishes and sweets may not exist only in this region of Crete, the quality of these in the area is extremely high in contrast to the most heavy touristic areas.

There are different traditional cultural events and festivals too. And also the local Cretan lingual idiom is here preserved.

### HOSPITALITY & SATISFACTION

In the rate zoover, the value of 7.2 refers to the town of Ierapetra. The Municipality of Ierapetra includes also nearby destinations, which received higher rate. Results from a branding project in 2010, which used focus groups and questionnaires to locals, indicated that locals are positively predisposed towards tourism and claim to be very helpful and friendly to visitors, with strong feelings of hospitality. This comes as a result of the absence of industrialisation of the tourism sector in the region.

There are a lot of repeat visitors in the area (as hotel owners said). Upon completing of the tourism research this summer clear statistics will be available Namely, in a broader cooperation with the local Department of Commerce and Marketing of the Technological Educational Institute of Crete and the Municipal Tourism Committee and the Hotel Union of Ierapetra, surveys will be conducted to measure visitors' satisfaction and their whole experience in the destination. On the other hand, another survey will be carried out among residents in order to understand their perceptions, attitudes and satisfaction level towards the destination and the present tourism in the destination. All the above with help to reformulate the branding policy of the destination with a sustainable and coherent way among visitors and locals.

### HUMAN RIGHTS & JUSTICE

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JURY

- Within the necessary infrastructural works, it could be suggested to construct cycling routes to existing monuments.
- Pedestrian walks to the surrounding landscape could be suggested too.
- Each of nearby destinations could have a different identity and attract the interest of different kind of target groups by offering different competitive advantages.
- The authenticity of people and natural environment, the absence of industrialization of the tourism sector in the region, enhance the feeling of hospitality which could be strengthened by educating the local stakeholders. This could increase in a long term base the repeated visitors.
- Better approaches could be developed to encourage and enable visitors to popularize their positive experiences after visiting the destination.
- The destination could take an advantage of its natural and cultural characteristics in order to differentiate the current tourism product of the area (see, sand, sun) by developing special and alternatives form of tourism (e.g. ecotourism, agro-tourism, religious tourism, cultural tourism etc).
- Although the very successful VisitIerapetra page was created on Facebook and the information about Ierapetra were updated on Wikipedia, the presentation of the destination in social media/review sites and their management could be further improved. Furthermore, it is possible to increase the existing on line available information regarding the destination's attractions and entertainment alternatives offered in the city around the year.
- The "Quality Label of Cretan Cuisine" Certification could be introduced to local restaurants and taverns which verifies the quality level of Cretan cuisine they offer. This certification aims to establish in the minds of residents and visitors of the island and strengthen the reputation of Cretan diet model. It will also increase the rising demand for the provision of authentic Cretan cuisine and the development of culinary tourism. It would beget a clear competitive advantage to the destination identity in terms of quality and reputation.
- In this light, the "Cretan Breakfast" could be introduced and adopted by local hotels as a sign of quality and local identification.

## **SOCIO-ECONOMICS**

### **TOURISM**

Ierapetra provides many attractions for tourists. The municipality organize few unique events for local people and for visitors to enjoy for example local celebration of St George (religious holiday), festivals in villages with emphasis on folklore and traditional local gastronomy, annual cultural events of Ierapetra city called "KYRVEIA", annual week dedicated to cultural heritage of immigrants living in our area, annual beach party, blessing of water ("fota").

### **DESTINATION MANAGEMENT**

There is a Municipal Tourist Committee involving different stakeholders.

The municipality is currently cooperating with the Technological Educational Institute of Crete and Hotel Union of Ierapetra to capture the image of Ierapetra, researching locals and visitors. Getting such information, will hopefully contribute to an understanding between the existing and the desirable identity of the destination. The needed actions are not yet known, as multi-surveys will be conducted during the forthcoming tourist season. However, the results will indicate clearly a SWOT analysis of the destination.

### **BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT**

Strong points are that local tourism enterprises are sourcing mainly locally produced food and drink and their active participation in energy saving measures: the usage of LEDs for lighting has been increased in the recent years.

In Ierapetra there is one hotel awarded with an eco-label.

### **COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

Active committees exist in the various villages involving politicians and citizens.

The destination has also an online municipal service which allows the community to be involved and participate in discussions and decision making by posting their opinions and suggestions. Anyone can send emails with suggestions to the local council related to issues he/she is not satisfied with or with suggestions for improvements.

### **HEALTH & SAFETY**

Ierapetra is considered as a safe place.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JURY**

- The Jury recommends continuing the brand managing procedure by creating a clear SWOT analysis of the destination and employing a better targeting strategy.
- Fam trips should be organized during low season in order to familiarize the travel media, tour operators and travel agents with the destination and experience what Ierapetra has to offer first hand.
- More active interaction between authorities, stakeholders and locals (in a bottom-up approach) in order to suggest and recommend actions to enhance sustainability and the coherent identity of the destination.
- Owners and managers of hotels and other tourism enterprises could be encouraged to apply for eco-labels as Green Key and Travelife, which will further increase the image of Ierapetra as a green destination.