

## **The role of regions in tourism management**

### **Opening Concept Note**

#### **OBJECTIVE**

This Forum is not intended to discuss tourism per se. Rather, it aims to examine the role regions play in turning tourism into a driver of territorial development, social cohesion, and sustainability, and to explore which functions correspond to them or could correspond to them. The region is becoming established as the fundamental space for strategic planning, acting as a connector between the national and local levels. From the regional level, the market is observed and a competitive brand is built that gives identity to the territory. From the regional level, investment in infrastructure is promoted to benefit both visitors and residents. The region can also establish public–private management bodies that enable operations adapted to the realities of the tourism product. The proposed debate therefore seeks to examine how, from the regional scale, tourism potential is transformed into factors of development.

#### **CONCEPTUALIZATION**

Contemporary tourism policy has evolved from a tool of simple promotion into a factor of territorial development. The debate should therefore focus on the capacity of regions to act as strategic coordinators capable of transforming heritage and natural assets into components of a cohesive productive system. The region is thus defined as an articulating space that translates national guidelines into operational actions with real impact, ensuring that tourism is not an isolated activity but a transversal axis that promotes innovation, skilled employment, and territorial balance.

A fundamental function of the region is horizontal coordination, understood as the capacity to integrate tourism with other strategic sectors. The regional government is

responsible for overcoming siloed management by aligning policies in transport, spatial planning, culture, environment, and economic development. This integration ensures that infrastructure investment and heritage protection are not designed in isolation from tourism realities, but instead form part of a single framework that enhances territorial competitiveness and residents' quality of life.

Exercising this responsibility requires a shift from purely administrative management to executive governance of the territory. The region must assume responsibility for designing a long-term vision that provides coherence to the destination by implementing binding standards of quality and sustainability across the entire economic fabric. By leading public–private collaboration, the region overcomes fragmented initiatives and builds a strong brand identity capable of competing in global markets.

Finally, the role of the region is consolidated through the use of data intelligence and monitoring systems for decision-making. The regional challenge lies in the capacity to manage tourism flows and their impacts through resilience indicators that ensure resource preservation. Ultimately, the proposed debate invites a reconsideration of the region as the technical and political authority that ensures tourism functions as a genuine engine of development, leading the governance of a model that is authentic, sustainable, and inclusive.

## QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

- How should the region exercise its technical authority to ensure that tourism planning is binding?
- Which horizontal coordination instruments are most effective in breaking down siloed management between departments?
- How can regions lead public–private collaboration that goes beyond mere commercial promotion?
- What financing systems and resilience indicators should the region implement to ensure the social return of tourism?