

# The Role of Non-governmental Organisations in Development Tourism Sector

## A Comparative Study Between Bulgaria and Egypt

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There are two main parts of the article that present the Bulgarian and Egyptian non-governmental organisations in the field of tourism.

The legislative framework and conditions for registration of such organisations as well as their role in the overall management of tourism in both countries differ.

Special attention is paid to non-governmental organisations, which are created in Bulgaria and Egypt on a trade, product and territorial basis, and their roles in development tourism sector.

*Keywords: Bulgarian and Egyptian non-governmental organisations, tourism associations, development of tourism.*

A review of the Universal Declaration of the Right to Development reveals the basic details of it, which is at the heart of popular participation and fair distribution of the benefits of development, which is directly related to non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

- NGOs are like any organization that is primarily intended to support or advocate for or engage in an activity of public or private activities without any business or profit goal.

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- The Universal Declaration of the Right to Development establishes commitments for Governments to promote and boost participation and the provision of fundamental rights, which indicates the basic responsibilities of governments for participatory mechanisms in general and NGOs in particular.
- The NGOs have emerged as a mechanism for economic transformation on the one hand, for dealing with marginalized groups, and for breaking the centralization of the state on the other hand.
- The NGOs are often charitable or service organizations and their administrative structure is usually a non-profit, cooperative or informal enterprise, and are now a partner in international life in the social, cultural and humanitarian fields as well as their role in promoting development.

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Hence, the researchers focused on the role of NGOs in the tourism field, so the argument of this paper revolves around the main question *“Are there any differences between Bulgaria and Egypt in that role for these organisations in tourism?”*

The article hopes to reveal that answer based on a comparative study of both countries, which highlights the similarities and differences between Bulgaria and Egypt. The choice of comparison was based on the similarities and rapprochement between the two countries, where each country is a tourist destination, and the researchers rely on a series of steps in order to access the scientific facts related to both countries, by comparing legal frameworks for NGOs and analysing their roles in the tourist development sector.

## **I. Bulgarian nonprofit organization and tourism Conceptual background**

One of the reasons for the vague definition of NGO is that NGOs are a diverse group of organizations that defy generalization, ranging from small informal groups to large formal agencies. NGOs play various roles and take different shapes within and across different societies<sup>1</sup>.

NGOs should meet the following criteria: to have an institutional structure, to be of private nature, to not share profit, to be self-governed, to be managed by volunteers. Like all organisations, NGOs vary greatly in terms of mission, size, mode of operation and impact<sup>2</sup>. NGOs are non-profit groups, organized by societies or individuals to see and find all basic needs that are not being achieved by either the government or private sector. Some provide goods, while some render

services, or both<sup>3</sup>. These organizations are involved in socio-economic development, are altruistic and do not distribute profits. They are prohibited by law to distribute any excess income to executives and board members. A nongovernment organization is not controlled by either the government or the private sector and is not inspired by profit generation<sup>4</sup>.

Because there are many definitions of NGOs, the research uses 'legal entities whose primary objective is one other than generating profit through their activity and allocating that profit among their members'. These could be organizations established on a voluntary basis which are independent from the government and the power structures within a country. NGOs are engaged in various entrepreneurial activities, provided that these activities are in line with and intended to meet the objectives which the entities were set up for.

In addition to the public bodies which are in charge of tourism governance, the Bulgarian Tourism Act (TA) provides for the establishment of other organisations which engage in tourism governance at a regional level and of tourist information centres<sup>5</sup>.

*The organisations for regional tourism governance (ORTG)* are voluntary organisations which operate by applying the principles of mutual assistance and cooperation to the benefit of their members and the public and engage in activities related to the creation of regional tourism products, regional marketing, and advertising on a specific territory that is identified as a tourist region. *Tourist information centres* are established to provide information to tourists and to advertise and promote tourism on a specific territory. Tourist information centres operate within a national network by applying common standards<sup>6</sup>.

The rules for the establishment, registration, structure, activity and termination of non-profit legal entities are set in the Bulgaria's Non-profit Legal Entities Act (NPLEA)<sup>7</sup>. Non-profit legal entities are organisations established as associations or foundations to engage in the implementation of activities to some public or private benefit. The structure of non-profit legal entities is determined in their statutes and constitution.

*Tourism associations* must be established, registered, managed, transformed and terminated in compliance with the Non-profit Legal Entities Act<sup>8</sup>.

Tourism associations must be entered into a public register which is part of *the National Tourism Register*<sup>9</sup> kept by the Ministry of Economy,

Energy and Tourism. The scope of activities of tourism associations includes activities designed to coordinate the creation and marketing of tourism products and to provide information to tourists; to develop and implement various tourism-related initiatives and projects; to protect the interests of and to represent their members as provided for by the law.

Tourism associations may be established<sup>10</sup>:

- On a regional or local basis;
- According to the branch they operate in;
- According to the product they offer;
- According to their trade.

Tourism associations may be members of the organisations for regional tourism governance which operate in the territory of their headquarters.

The Tourism Act stipulates that branch tourism associations shall bear a specific name; act as an association of persons on a branch principle; avoid engaging in any activities which are misleading or are in conflict with moral standards. Branch tourism associations may be established by entities operating as:

- Hotels and restaurants;
- Tour operators and travel agents.

### **Bulgarian non-governmental organisations in the sphere of tourism**

Tourism associations in which government power structures are not involved are also called non-government organisations (NGOs) in the sphere of tourism. They are established on a voluntary basis and are independent from the government or its power structures. The rules for the establishment, registration and operation of such entities are set in the Non-profit Legal Entities Act. The first non-government tourism organisation which was set up in Bulgaria was the Bulgarian Tourist Chamber (1990).

National tourist associations are established on the basis of their physical location (territory) and the trade they operate in. They could be classified into three major groups:

#### *Group one: Branch and trade tourist associations*

The Bulgarian Tourist Chamber (BTC)<sup>11</sup> is a non-profit association of Bulgarian and foreign legal and physical persons. The majority of

branch organisations are members of the association, which determines its significance as an organisation. The Bulgarian Tourist Chamber has commissions which provide consultancy in hotel and restaurant management, staff training, financial and economic issues, and business programme development. The Chamber assists small and medium-sized companies in obtaining funds and loans. The main objective of the association is to offer solutions to strategic and current problems faced by the tourist business and to defend the interests of employers and business owners in the sphere of tourism.

The Bulgarian Hotel and Restaurant Association (BHRA)<sup>12</sup>, is an association of hotels, tourist complexes, family hotels and restaurants. The Bulgarian Hotel and Restaurant Association cooperates actively with a number of government and non-government organisations. It processes and provides information to Bulgarian and foreign business partners; ensures the participation of its members in all tourist fairs and exhibitions which are held at home and abroad; selects and disseminates statistical and other data which would be useful to the members of the association; and provides legal assistance on tourism-related issues. The association is actively involved in organizing and promoting different tourism-oriented events. It was also the first professional organisation in the sphere of tourism to bestow awards for hotel and restaurant management (the annual BHRA awards have been given out since 1996).

The Bulgarian Association of Travel Agents (BATA)<sup>13</sup> is a member of the Universal Federation of Travel Agents Associations and is actively engaged in international tourism-related activities. It was also a co-founder of the Balkan Federation of Travel Agents Associations (BAFTAA). BATA has standing committees which deal with tourism legislation, relations with ministries, municipalities and NGOs, international cooperation, membership, work with new members, training and qualification, transport and ticketing, professional ethics and protection of members.

#### *Group two: Product tourist associations*

The Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism (BAAT)<sup>14</sup> was established in 1998 to promote the development of different types and forms of alternative tourism. The Bulgarian Association for Rural and Ecological Tourism (BARET)<sup>15</sup> is an entity engaged in promoting the development of rural and ecological tourism in the rural regions

of the country. The Bulgarian Association of Balneotourism (BAB)<sup>16</sup> was established in 2000 in Pomorie to protect the interests of and to provide information to all its members. As the name of the organisation suggests, its primary objective is to preserve the traditions in and promote the further development of balneotourism in the country.

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### *Group three: Regional tourist associations*

The Regional Tourist Association Stara Planina was established in 1992 with the assistance of the Swiss Embassy as a union of five municipalities in the Stara Planina region and was later joined by another three municipalities. The focus of its activity is on sustainable tourism development and tourist destination management<sup>17</sup>.

The Pirin Tourist Forum (PTF) was established in 1997 as a result of the implementation of a three-year Project on environmental and sustainable tourism in the Pirin and the Rila Mountains, funded by the British Know-How Fund on an initiative of the Ministry of Environment. Its members include 12 municipalities from the Pirin mountain region<sup>18</sup>.

The Rhodope Regional Association was established in 2003 in Smolyan to promote sustainable tourism development in the District of Smolyan. The association is also engaged in preserving the natural, cultural and historical heritage in the Rhodope Mountain and tailoring that heritage to meet the needs of modern tourism, thus ensuring livelihood and income for local citizens<sup>19</sup>.

The Bourgas Regional Tourist Association was established in 1998 as a union of tourist associations and regional branch organisations in the district of Bourgas. The aim of the Association is to support and encourage tourism development in the Bourgas region. The association organizes and holds the Regional Tourism Forum and the 'Your Vacation' Tourist Fair.<sup>20</sup>

The Bourgas Regional Chamber of Tourism was established on 17 April 1992. Its activities focus mainly on issues related to illegal (un-registered) tourism companies and unlicensed transport operators, the quality of the tourist product which is offered, and protecting the environment and the cultural and historical heritage<sup>21</sup>.

The Varna Chamber of Tourism was established in 1991 to unite, on a voluntary basis, branch organisations, and physical and legal entities operating in the sphere of tourism as well as schools and universities which provide training in tourism or tourism-related professions. This

chamber was also the founder of the Black Sea Tourism Forum and Tourexpo-Varna<sup>22</sup>.

## **II. Egyptian NGOs and tourism**

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1/2019 We can divide the status of tourism in Egypt in four stages, as follows:

*Phase 1:* This period, which lasted from 2000 to 2004, witnessed a significant decrease in the number of workers in the tourism sector out of the total number of workers in Egypt, ranging between 3% and 3.8%. This was primarily due to this period of serious incidents at the local and international levels, including the terrorist attacks in Egypt and September 2001 in the United States of America<sup>23</sup>.

*Phase 2:* This period was from 2005 to 2008. The number of employees in the tourism sector witnessed a significant increase in the number of employees in the other sectors, ranging from 5.8% to 6.4%<sup>24</sup>. In addition, the tourism sector ranked fourth in terms of capacity to generate new jobs (12% potentially), which led to a high rate of expenditure on goods and services in the country<sup>25</sup>.

*Phase 3:* This phase continued from 2009 to 2011, saw the growth of the tourism sector continued in terms of its ability to absorb employment, reaching a peak of 12.6% of the total labour force in 2010<sup>26</sup>.

*Phase 4:* This phase continued from 2012 to 2014 and was accompanied by a fall in the number of workers, which reflected on the tourism sector negatively and then the decline in the size of employment in this sector, due to the impact of the revolution of January 25, 2011 and aftermath of violence and instability owing to the revolution of 30 June 2013<sup>27</sup>. The year 2013 in Egypt was the worst of its kind due to the follow-up of political and security events related to the stability of the state, forcing some foreign countries, especially European ones, to ban travel to Egypt. Decreased hotel concerns and cancellations of bookings, along with less tourism as reflected in employment (regular and irregular) in general soon followed.

There are some important results through those stages mentioned earlier; the decline of the Egyptian tourism sector after the events of June 30, 2013 decreased the number of foreign tourists, including Russians

coming to Egypt (although most of them wish to visit Egypt after the stability of the political situation in the country)<sup>28</sup>.

Egypt has traditionally been a popular destination for Russian tourists. In 2010, more than 2.5 million Russians visited it, but numbers fell sharply after the January 25, 2011 and the Russian plane crash in 2015 (the tourism sector in Sharm el-Sheikh has lost \$4 billion over the past two years since the crash of a Russian passenger jet)<sup>29</sup>. The official Russian data revealed that the number of tourists heading to Egypt in the first quarter of year 2011 rose nearly 42% compared to the same period in 2012 and reached 575,000 tourists.<sup>30</sup>

The latest data showed that the number of tourists in the first half of July 2013 fell to 378 000 tourists compared to 515 000 in the same period of 2012. The situation has gone from bad to worse, and it seems that the dream of approaching the pre-revolutionary rates when Egypt received nearly 15 million tourists is out of reach.<sup>31</sup>

### **The Egyptian NGOs Law and its restrictions**

The NGOs need funding to achieve their desired goals. However, Law No. 84 of 2002 on non-governmental organizations prohibits them from obtaining local funding without the permission of the government. This has resulted in a lack of financial independence of these organisations and accepting aid from the Ministry of Social Affairs, which has extended its influence and control over those organisations.

At the same time, we find most of the charitable work in Egypt. Rarely outside the religious framework, these organisations rely on external funding (although the Egyptian regime accepts foreign aid, it denies that right to NGOs). In that regard, Act No. 84 for 2002 was enacted Non-governmental organizations are also prohibited from obtaining external funding without the permission of the government. This means that only the country and some NGOs affiliated with it are entitled to external funding after obtaining permission from the government.

And in the case of establishment of NGOs through foreigners, there is the condition of holding a permanent or temporary residence permit, in addition to other main requirements.<sup>32</sup> In addition, violation of this law obliges the Ministry of Social Affairs to dissolve the organisation and reserve its property and funds. As for NGOs which are not registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs and accept foreign funding, they are subject to law.

The new law of 2017 provides for the establishment of the 'National Organisation for the Regulation of the Work of Foreign Non-Governmental Organisations'. It includes representatives of the main national security services in Egypt, the General Intelligence, the Ministries of Defence and the Interior, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Central Bank<sup>33</sup>. This organisation oversees the work of non-governmental organisations, including any funding or cooperation between Egyptian associations and foreign entities. The law prohibits Egyptian government agencies from entering into agreements with NGOs without the approval of the National Organisation for the Regulation of the Work of Foreign NGOs.

### **Egypt Tourism and Environment Development Association and its role in Development in Tourism**

The first Egyptian association to develop tourist communities to create generations of incubators for tourism, the Egypt Tourism and Environment Development Association is also the first Egyptian institution to implement the principle of sustainability in tourism. The Association has major objectives to achieve them at the level of the tourism sector, because of its great importance to the national economy and contribution to raising the rate of development within the community. It was established in 2006 in order to 1) contribute to the promotion of tourism and environmental awareness and attention to training and human resources development 2) work to communicate with civil society organizations and institutions that work in marketing the Egyptian tourist industry through the establishment of festivals, and 3) provide training courses and research work to improve the level of performance and raise the quality of the Egyptian tourism product and create a community dialogue<sup>34</sup>.

Since its establishment, the Association has been monitoring and following up the management of environmental projects that may serve Egypt as a country with developmental ambitions in the field of the environment, which could bring it to the forefront of the world in this area, especially as the Egyptian environment is in need of research and development projects in order to achieve the development goals for contributing the creation of new projects for a better environment and tangible progress. The Association works to establish 'the principle of production and

progress' in two main areas, tourism and the environment; both are generating huge profits, create new projects and contribute to the employment of millions of young people<sup>35</sup>.

The Association launched a 'Social Networking Project with the Bedouin of Nuweiba (South Sinai)' – the first stage started in Jan 2013 and ended in April 2014 - this is considered the first sustainable tourism project in Egypt. The project is under the supervision of the Ministry of Tourism and the Governorate of South Sinai and the Egyptian Tourist Revitalization Authority in partnership with the Ministries of Culture, Environment, Social Solidarity, Education and Health, Chambers of Tourism, hotel companies, and the Egyptian Union of tourist chambers.

The project aims to narrow the convergence of views between state institutions and Bedouin society, highlight the importance of the tourism creation to the national economy, spread awareness among the people of South Sinai, face behaviours that may negatively affect tourism, develop the communication skills of the Bedouin citizen, and encourage communication between Bedouin culture and other cultures<sup>36</sup>.

A cooperation protocol was signed between the association and the Egyptian Tourist Revitalization Authority in January 2015 to implement the second phase of the project in January 2015. The vision of the implementation of the second phase (January 2015 to December 2015) is the following:<sup>37</sup>

1. Workshops with Bedouins to promote tourism, cultural, environmental and health awareness.
2. Tourism seminars and human development within youth centres.
3. Practical courses in hotels (training Bedouin youth to work hotel).
4. Field visits to Bedouin communities in Nuweiba and valleys.
5. Bedouin dinner to communicate with the people of Nuweiba.
6. Training Bedouins on handcraft works to raise the quality of the production and to establish workshops (Nuweiba - Tarabin - Almozina) and marketing the Bedouin products.
7. Trips for young Bedouins to Cairo and other provinces inside Egypt.
8. Support young people and gifted children in sports and art.
9. Cleaning campaigns and planting trees.
10. Medical convoys.

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II. Agricultural development of Nuweiba and interest in planting medicinal plants.

The third phase began in January 2016; the objectives of the third phase are creating productive entities within the Bedouin community and highlighting the institutions of the tourist, environmental and cultural sectors, in addition to creating a new tourist product, and developing the communication and educational skills of the Bedouin, encouraging its interaction with other cultures and societies, and providing them with services in various fields.

In 2017, the Association held seminars and workshops in Wadi Magra for tourism and environmental awareness for children and adults in order to create generations of incubators for tourism and preserve the beauty of nature and rationalize the consumption of energy and natural resources.

The Association also held a series of seminars and workshops at the Nuweiba Culture Palace for Bedouins and schoolchildren for tourism and environmental awareness and organized a cultural competition aimed at promoting national belonging and encouraging young people to excel and succeed in practical life after studying to serve Egypt.<sup>38</sup>

### **Conclusion**

There are many challenges in Egypt such as a lack of policies in the tourism sector in general, and a development mechanism besides the Ministry of Tourism in particular. We can conclude that there is a weakness in public policy performance in adopting policies supportive of NGOs with the government, and this is clear through the Egyptian law regarding the NGOs, which impede their works and progress.

The NGOs play a vital role in society by focusing resources and providing services to community needs without regard to profit. They do not distribute profits or dividends. Instead, they retain any earnings or surplus revenues to achieve its goals. NGOs aid in the development and upkeep of the economic and society aspect of the tourism sector. In general, NGOs have strong connections to their local communities and through these ties and communications, non-profits are able to accomplish local development and outreach in the field of tourism.

If we compare Egyptian and Bulgarian NGOs, there is a significant lack of the Egyptian NGOs numbers which operate in the field of tourism, and this is due to the numerous restrictive laws regarding these organisations. By contrast, there are many NGOs in Bulgaria, and this

is due to the existence of fixable laws and regulations which support tourism and other fields.

For instance, the new Egyptian law No. 70 of 2017 regulates the work of NGOs and other institutions which are in the field of civil work. All associations are prohibited from engaging in activities that 'harm the national security of the country, public order, morals or public health'. From the provision these are vague and loose terms that could be misused in restricting legitimate activities such as tourism.

*NGOs in  
Development  
Tourism Sector*

In Bulgaria, these organizations with the Ministry of Tourism are playing a role in development and promotion through many plans implemented in the tourism sector, and the Egyptian government has to do the same. The Bulgarian experience should be used in this area, although Bulgaria is a small country and has a small population compared to Egypt.

The Egyptian Tourism and Environment Development Association has focused on communication with the Bedouin (South Sinai) in its project and did not work on international marketing for tourism industry and focused on internal issues, and this is clear in its policy as well as its objectives, but it needs to concentrate on how to make a real marketing effort to attract tourists whether inside or outside Egypt.

Finally, Egypt, a large country and a significant tourist destination, cannot rely on the government alone to tourism back again but must give permission to those organisations to work together for this.



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## Notes

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