



**Sustainable
tourism**

**Interreg
Euro-MED**



Co-funded by
the European Union

D.3.3.2. Cross Network Alliance for Governance in Sustainable Tourism

Policy recommendations

Work sessions

Marseille (France), 24 April 2024

Poreč (Croatia), 15 October 2024

2024 REPORT

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**GREENING
ISLANDS**



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1. Information of the report

Project	Dialogue4Tourism. Institutional dialogue on Sustainable Tourism and Governance in the Euro-MED area Interreg Euro-MED Programme
Deliverable date	Work sessions: Marseille (France) organised by Region SUD. 24/04/2024. Poreč (Croatia) organised by IPTPO. 15/10/2024. Deliverable: 17-03-2025
Deliverable number	D.3.3.2. Cross Network Alliance for governance in Sustainable Tourism. Policy recommendations – 2024.
Work Package	WP3-Coordination
Activity No.	Activity 3.3. Activity “Liaising – Active dialogue with initiatives, strategies and other Programmes (in collaboration with the Community4Tourism project)”
Partner responsible	• WP3 leader: EPLO (Greece) • LP/WP2 leader: Legado Andalusí FPA (Spain)
Organizers of the activities reported	Partner Region SUD, France. Partner Institute of Agriculture and Tourism, Croatia.
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2. Glossary

AF - Application Form

AOs - Associated Organisations

AVITEM- Agence des Villes et Territoires Méditerranéens Durables

BG - Blue Growth

C4T - Community4Tourism Project

D4T - Dialogue4Tourism Project

DG – Directorate General

DMO – Destination Management Organisation

ELA FPA - El legado andalusí Andalusian Public Foundation

EPLO - European Public Law Organization

EUSAIR - EU Strategy for the Adriatic- Ionian Region

EUSALP - EU Strategy for the Alpine Region

GIS - Geographic Information System

IDP - Institutional Dialogue Project

IPTPO - Institute of Agriculture and Tourism of Poreč

JS – Joint Secretariat

LP - Lead Partner

NECSTouR - Network of European Regions for Sustainable and Competitive Tourism

NSTO - Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories

SME – Small Medium Enterprise

SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals

SH - Stakeholders

SOs - Specific objectives

TP - Thematic Project



UfM - Union for the Mediterranean

UNWTO - United Nations World Tourism Organization

WG - Working Group

WP - Work Package

3. Introduction and contextualization

The Cross Network Alliance is one of the activities programmed under the Work Package 3-Coordination of the Dialogue4Tourism Project of the Mission Sustainable Tourism of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme.

The Interreg Euro-MED is a European Territorial Cooperation Programme that supports **transnational cooperation across Mediterranean** borders. The Programme brings together **partners from 69 regions of 14 countries from the Northern shore of the Mediterranean with a common objective: a climate neutral and resilient society for the benefit of its citizens.**

The Programme funds projects are willing to bring solutions to address 4 complimentary missions and to find concrete and shared solutions to global challenges such as the transition towards a climate-neutral and resilient society.

The 4 missions are the following:

1- Strengthening an innovative sustainable economy

Improving innovation capacities in our Mediterranean territories is a necessity to strengthen and consolidate a knowledge society.

2- Protecting, restoring, and valorising the natural environment and heritage

Nature contributes to a healthier and more resilient society. The preservation of ecosystems allows to mitigate natural disasters, diseases, boost resilience and regulate climate, thus reducing risks to human societies.

3- Promoting green living areas

Sustainable development, management of living areas and an integrated vision of the territory energy transition are crucial to the quality of life of Mediterranean citizens.

4- Enhancing sustainable tourism.



Tourism is a key sector in our territories, both in terms of protection and valorization of natural and cultural resources and support.

The Dialogue4Tourism Project is one of the eight projects approved under the Governance Priority of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme.

The Mission Enhancing Sustainable Tourism addresses the development of sustainable tourism as a transversal issue, as it is the only Mission integrating all the 4 Specific Objectives (SOs) of the programme:

S1.1: Consolidating a competitive innovation ecosystem,
S2.6: Supporting circular economy,
S2.4: Promoting climate change adaptation and risks prevention,
S2.7 Enhancing nature and biodiversity,

Each mission integrates two governance projects (the Thematic Community Project and the Institutional Dialogue Project, allocated under the governance priority), plus the Thematic Projects that have started to be approved through different calls (these allocated under the programme's priorities of Smarter and Greener Mediterranean).

Dialogue4Tourism is the "Institutional Dialogue Project" of Mission 4 "Enhancing Sustainable Tourism". It comprises 3 Work Packages, as per the Programme's new guidelines, namely: WP1 – Reuse, WP2 – Transfer, WP3 – Coordination.

Its overall objective is to increase the coordination level and institutional capacity of public authorities, multi-level bodies, Programmes, Strategies, and Initiatives in the Mediterranean aiming to transform tourism into greener, smarter and more resilient, embracing the fourfold approach of the mission: circularity of tourism services, environmental neutrality, sustainable ecosystem services, and cultural and natural preservation of resources.

Dialogue4Tourism capitalizes on Panoramed WG5 on Sustainable Tourism, Roadmap & the "Toolbox for tourism governance", KPP, BEST MED, Med Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (NSTO), SMARTMED-Smart Tourism Business Model, Tourism of Tomorrow Lab, NECSTouR, HP Sustainable Tourism Community-Search the MED Data Base, etc.

This approach goes beyond existing practices in the sector/Programme area/participating countries based on the following guidelines:

1. it reinforces **sustainability and resilience** in the sector through the mobilization of tourism related key actors and with regards to a portfolio of (studied, tested or ready to transfer) solutions clustered to achieve; increased innovation capacity, circular economy transition, climate change adaptation and protection of natural resources.
2. it introduces **novel cooperation models and mechanisms**
3. it follows the principles of the newly introduced Euro-MED **governance projects' architecture**, including dedicated actions to improve the governance of tourism



4. **networking and advocacy** is systematized and expands beyond national and beyond Mediterranean level, supported by the activation of institutional schemes enhancing Dialogue4Tourism Project.

The Activity 3.3. **establishes a Cross Network Alliance for sustainable tourism between Initiatives, Strategies and Other programmes, in collaboration with the Joint Secretariat of the Interreg Euro-MED and the Community4Tourism Project**, to support liaising and synergies with a wider ecosystem expanding beyond Euro-MED area.

Dialogue4Tourism Project has mapped potential synergies with actors from the: EU/EC, North/South MED, Black Sea, WESTMED, EUSAIR, EUSALP, territorial and cross-border programmes to establish a working group for the production of policy papers. The 26 Associated Partners are the key to this activity for streamlining policies besides with the National Contact Points that can also be involved.

In the frame of this activity, **workshops are being organised in collaboration with Community4Tourism Project so as to achieve concrete results and recommendations**. These results will be communicated to respective programmes and feed advocacy opportunities. Further activities, including participation in external events, are envisaged.

This Activity will also support the JS efforts towards a flagship mechanism, aiming at funding opportunities for Tourism Transformation, as well as the **Advocacy Activities of A3.4** through the production of policy recommendations and other conclusions, such as the ones included in the present document.

This document represents the inaugural edition of the 'D.3.3.1. Annual Main Conclusions' Paper on Workshops and Activities of the Cross-Network Alliance for Tourism' for the year 2023. During this year, this Cross-Network Alliance was defined in greater detail and the first actions took place. The primary event highlighted herein is a public session held on October 4th, 2023, at Europe House in Podgorica (Montenegro), as part of the Dialogue4Tourism event, 8 **Dialogue4Tourism Project Institutional Dialogue on Sustainable Tourism and Governance in the Euro-Med area WP-3 Deliverable 3.3.1. Activity 3.3**

In this report, we present policy recommendations derived from the conclusions of two work sessions of the Cross Network Alliance working group, organized by Dialogue4Tourism during the year 2024. Additionally, these recommendations complement the key recommendations outlined in the White Paper on Tourism and Climate Change of the Dialogue4Tourism Project – 2024.



4. First reported event: Round table on the Cross Network Alliance, an open dialogue with initiatives, strategies and other Programmes in the MED organised by the partners Region SUD (France) and EPLO (European Public Law Organization, Athens Greece) in Marseille 24/4/2024.

The **main objectives of this event** were fostering cooperation and strengthening institutional capacity for sustainable tourism in the Euro-MED region. Through open dialogue and collaboration, the work session aimed to enhance synergies among key stakeholders, including European Commission bodies, regional authorities, chambers of commerce, and thematic projects of the Sustainable Tourism Mission of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme working towards a more sustainable tourism model. By bringing together representatives from various programs, strategies, and initiatives, the event sought to reinforce cross-network alliances and improve coordination at both policy and implementation levels.

A crucial objective was to support the integration of sustainable tourism policies into broader macro-regional strategies. The discussion focused on increasing institutional capacity and governance efficiency.

In addition to fostering cooperation, the event aimed to provide a platform for showcasing the main objectives of the Thematic Projects NaTour4CChange and Cool Noons. A special focus was given to this key project, which explores urban tourism adaptation in response to rising temperatures in the Mediterranean. By sharing concrete examples of ongoing work, the event sought to inspire further collaborations and facilitate knowledge exchange among institutions and stakeholders.

In this sense, the round table on the Cross-Network Alliance on Sustainable Tourism became a forum for “An open dialogue with Initiatives, Strategies and other Programmes in the MED” moderated by Alexia Spyridonidou (European Law Public Organisation, EPLO, partner of Dialogue4Tourism Project, Interreg Euro-MED Programme) with the participation of: **Ramune Genzbigelyte-Venturi DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs. Unit GROW G1 – Tourism and Textiles (European Commission); Linos Voskarides Policy Officer in DG Mare, Unit A2: Blue Economy Sectors, Aquaculture and Maritime Spatial Planning (European Commission); Arnaud Terrisse Community4Tourism Project (Interreg Euro-MED Programme); Gianluca Saba (Comune di Genova, Italy) Urban Agenda-Sustainable Tourism Partnership (European Commission); Valentina Schippers (City of Haarlem, Netherland) Coordinator of the Urban Agenda Partnership on Innovative and Responsible Public Procurement (European Commission); Alessandra Sensi Union for the Mediterranean (UfM); Patricia di Biase Interreg Next Med Programme and**



Snejana Apolostova Deputy Mayor of Varna, Bulgaria. In the same, it was made clear the message of the Sustainable Tourism Mission focused on the promotion of cooperation in the Euro-MED and beyond, to increase the coordination level and institutional capacity of the policy level to make tourism greener, smarter, and more resilient. After a brief presentation of each strategy and institution, the participants in this round table were asked about the developments within their organisations for supporting sustainable tourism in the MED, like further cooperation and potential calls for funding to finish with a discussion on the different proposals for synergies in the near future.

This official work session counted on the final remarks by Curzio Cervelli, Coordinator JS of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme that highlighted the importance of collaborative events and actions to strengthen joint efforts among the Macro-Regional Strategies in the MED and South-Mediterranean area. In this sense, he remarked the relevance of the transnational approach as well “that it is complementary to local aspects.” He focused his speech too on initiatives to find the synergies with the Thematic Projects of Interreg Euro-MED in order to reach concrete solutions for the future of sustainable tourism.

The Thematic Projects of this Mission will further benefit from the institutional support given by Dialogue4Tourism Project engaging key SHs in the transferring multilevel governance actions. In this sense, the event count with the presentation of the Thematic Project of the Sustainable Tourism Mission of Interreg Euro-MED Programme “Cool noons. Adaptation of the urban tourism offer to face the heating in the Mediterranean” by Giulia David from AVITEM (Agence des Villes et Territoires Méditerranéens Durables, Marseille).

The event also sought to reinforce the role of cities and regional governments in managing tourism sustainability. Local authorities from different Mediterranean countries shared their experiences in balancing economic growth with environmental preservation and cultural heritage protection. Discussions included approaches to mitigating the effects of overtourism, promoting responsible procurement in tourism, and developing integrated destination management strategies.

The target audience: Representatives of other Programmes / Strategies / Initiatives at MED level and beyond, partners of D4T and C4T Project, partners of the Thematic Projects, Associated Partners of D4T Project, local and regional stakeholders of Marseille, collaborative networks, National Public Authorities, and European Commission.

5. Second reported event: Round table “The role of the local and regional governments in enhancing Sustainable Tourism. How can we enhance multi-level governance?” organized by IPTPO (Poreč, Croatia) 15/10/2024.



The round table, titled “The Role of Local and Regional Governments in Enhancing Sustainable Tourism. How can we enhance multi-level governance?” featured **Loris Peršurić**, Mayor of the City of Poreč, **Dr. Marko Paliaga**, Mayor of the City of Rovinj, **Cristina Vojić-Krajcar**, Marketing Manager at the Istria Tourist Board, **Josep Rodríguez** from the Barcelona Provincial Council, **Dr. Giuliano Tallone** from the Lazio Region, and **José Francisco Benítez** from the Ministry of Tourism and Andalusia Exterior. The panelists discussed activities in their areas, cities, and regions related to promoting sustainable tourism development as representatives of local and regional authorities. It was emphasized that multi-level governance is challenging but necessary for fostering sustainable tourism development. Dr. **Kristina Brščić** (IPTPO) moderated this round table. The session aimed to identify the best practices in sustainable tourism by showcasing successful initiatives from different regions. It sought to enhance multi-level governance by exploring strategies for better cooperation between local, regional, and national authorities. Strengthening collaboration between governments, tourism boards, and stakeholders was a key focus, along with addressing challenges in implementing sustainable tourism policies and proposing viable solutions. The discussion emphasized the promotion of sustainable tourism policies that balance economic growth, environmental protection, and cultural preservation. Participants leveraged regional expertise to create adaptable and effective tourism strategies while highlighting the importance of community engagement in tourism planning.

The target audience: Policymakers, public administrators, and representatives from local and regional governments, as well as stakeholders from the tourism sector, including destination management organizations (DMOs), tourism boards, and private sector entities involved in sustainable tourism development., partners of D4T and C4T Project, partners of the Thematic Projects of the Sustainable Tourism Mission, Associated Partners of the Mission, local and regional stakeholders of Poreč, collaborative networks, National Public Authorities, and European Commission.¹

6. Institutions and projects engaged in the WG of the Cross Network Alliance for Sustainable Tourism - year 2024 (speakers & contributors in the round tables)

- DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs. Unit GROW G1 – Tourism and Textiles (European Commission);
- DG Mare, Unit A2: Blue Economy Sectors, Aquaculture and Maritime Spatial Planning (European Commission);
- Community4Tourism Project (Interreg Euro-MED Programme);

¹ Report D.3.3.1. Annual Main Conclusions’ Paper on Workshops and Activities of the Cross-Network Alliance for Tourism 2024. Interreg Euro-MED Dialogue4Tourism Project



- Comune di Genova, Italy) Urban Agenda-Sustainable Tourism Partnership (European Commission);
- City of Haarlem, Netherlands) Coordinator of the Urban Agenda Partnership on Innovative and Responsible Public Procurement (European Commission);
- Union for the Mediterranean (UfM);
- Interreg Next Med Programme.
- Council of Poreč (Croatia)
- Council of Rovinj (Croatia)
- Istria Tourist Board (Croatia)
- Interreg Euro-MED JS
- Interreg Euro-MED Community4Tourism Project.
- Interreg Euro-MED Cool Noons Project
- Regional Ministry of Tourism and Andalusia Exterior (Andalusia, Spain)
- Interreg Euro-MED Nature4CChange Project

7. Summary of conclusions of the WG of the Cross Network Alliance for Sustainable Tourism – year 2024

- **Governance and coordination are essential**
Strengthening governance mechanisms through collaboration among European programs, decision-makers, and stakeholders ensures better policy integration and financial synergies for sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean.
- **Sustainability requires a multifaceted approach**
Sustainable tourism must address environmental, economic, and social dimensions, including climate change adaptation, digitalization, local community engagement, and economic resilience.
- **Policy frameworks are key drivers**
The European Green Deal and various regional climate and tourism plans play a crucial role in shaping tourism regulations and driving sustainability efforts.
- The **Interreg Euro-MED Thematic projects of the Sustainable Tourism Mission** play a crucial role in developing innovative solutions and sharing best practices, supported by the Governance Projects of this Mission. These Projects work to transfer the results of the Thematics to the policy frameworks at local, regional, and EU levels.
- **Technological and circular solutions can mitigate environmental impact**
Sustainable innovations such as solar energy, smart water and waste management, electric boating, and responsible tourism certification help reduce the carbon footprint of tourism.
- **Tourism needs to align with local communities' needs**
Balancing tourism growth with local community well-being is crucial.



Strategies such as visitor flow management, destination diversification, and off-season tourism promotion help prevent over-tourism.

- **Private sector and academia must play a pivotal role**
Collaboration between policymakers, businesses, and academic institutions is essential to drive innovation, develop best practices, and ensure effective policy implementation for sustainable tourism.
- **Increase liaising activities.** Actors need to embrace liaising in their processes. The liaising could be ***enhanced by the ETC programmes of the region by incorporating such working packages in the articulation of projects***, following the recommendations of the MED Positioning Paper produced by Panoramed.
- **Tourism in the Mediterranean is diverse and requires tailored solutions**
The Mediterranean region comprises thousands of destinations with varying economic dependence on tourism. Sustainable tourism policies must be adaptable to the unique needs of both coastal and inland areas.
- **Transferability must be considered from the start**
When designing sustainable tourism solutions, it is crucial to plan for their transferability to other regions. Clear guidelines and tools must be developed to help stakeholders implement these solutions effectively.
- **Sustainability is more than environmental impact**
Sustainable tourism should not only focus on minimizing negative environmental impacts but also on generating positive contributions to local communities, such as cultural preservation, economic growth, and green regeneration.
- **Data-driven Governance is essential for decision-making**
Access to reliable data is a major challenge, but it is crucial for shaping policies, assessing tourism's economic impact, and improving sustainability strategies. Enhancing data-sharing mechanisms at the European level is a key priority.
- **Climate change adaptation must be a priority for tourism destinations**
Tourism strategies must not only focus on decarbonization but also on long-term adaptation measures. Coastal erosion, biodiversity loss, and extreme weather events require urgent attention and proactive planning.
- **Economic sustainability must be integrated into tourism policies**
Encouraging tourism models that support local businesses, traditional craftsmanship, and gastronomy is key to ensuring that tourism contributes to local economies without harming social and environmental balance.
- **Public-Private Partnerships enhance tourism management**
Collaboration between local authorities, private companies, and international organizations plays a crucial role in developing and implementing sustainable tourism strategies. Initiatives such as the Spanish Smart Tourist Destination Network demonstrate the power of innovation and cooperation.
- **Local and regional authorities must lead** Sustainable tourism development is a complex multi-stakeholder process. Local and regional authorities must lead by fostering cross-sector collaboration, integrating data-driven strategies, and ensuring policies align with long-term economic, social, and environmental goals.



- **Innovation and smart technologies are key to Sustainable Tourism**
The use of big data, digital tools, and smart tourism initiatives can improve decision-making, enhance visitor experiences, and optimize resource management. Investing in innovation helps destinations become more resilient and competitive in a rapidly evolving tourism landscape.

8. The “Euro-MED Sustainable Tourism White Paper – 2024. On Tourism and Climate Adaptation” highlights several actionable strategies to drive tourism transformation

- **Multi-stakeholder collaboration:** Create platforms for dialogue among regional authorities, businesses, and communities to align efforts and pool resources.
 - **Sustainable practices:** Incentivize eco-friendly initiatives through certifications and alignment with global frameworks like the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
 - **Digital innovation:** Adopt smart tourism technologies—such as data analytics and digital tools—to enhance visitor experiences and manage tourism flows.
 - **Community engagement:** Involve local residents in planning to ensure tourism reflects cultural values and delivers community benefits.
 - **Monitoring and evaluation (M&E):** Implement robust metrics and real-time reporting to track progress and refine strategies.
 - **Advanced tools for policymaking:** Equip authorities with tools like Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and predictive modeling to strengthen decision-making.²

9. Key governance recommendations to drive tourism transformation derived from the insights and discussions held during the work sessions of the Cross Network Alliance for Sustainable Tourism – year 2024. Additionally, these recommendations complement the key recommendations outlined in the *White Paper on Tourism and Climate Change of the Interreg Euro-MED Dialogue4Tourism Project – 2024*.

- To enhance the work in sustainable tourism of groups as the **Programme Coordination Mechanism** established to ensure the effective coordination, management, and alignment of the different Interreg Programs. In this

² The Interreg Euro-MED Sustainable Tourism White Paper. White Paper 2024 on Tourism and Climate Adaptation. Interreg Euro-MED Dialogue4Tourism Project.



context of European funding programs, such as Interreg, it ensures that the objectives, strategies, and implementation of projects are harmonized across various participating regions and programs. This role is essential for collaboratively capitalizing and mainstreaming on solutions and tools delivered by the project.

- A coordinated approach Interreg Euro-MED Programme and other Interreg Programmes together with the European Commission, through **DG MARE** and **DG GROW**, should strengthen their joint efforts in promoting **sustainable tourism (ST) and blue growth (BG)** by integrating **green transition, social sustainability, and local community engagement** into tourism strategies. **DG MARE** is focused on **developing sustainable maritime and coastal tourism**, ensuring that blue growth aligns with environmental and social objectives. **DG GROW** works for enhancing the **competitiveness and resilience of tourism businesses and destinations**, fostering innovation and knowledge-sharing among stakeholders. A coordinated approach will accelerate the transition towards a **climate-resilient, socially inclusive, and economically viable tourism sector**, aligned with the **European Green Deal and the EU's climate goals**.
- **Tools and case studies from the Thematic Projects of the Interreg Euro-MED Sustainable Tourism Mission** are crucial contributions to drive the green transition in the Mediterranean.³ In this sense, **early integration of transferability** is crucial to incorporate transferability considerations from the very beginning of these projects addressing sustainability. This involves not only developing tools and solutions but also creating comprehensive guides that allow stakeholders to understand how to apply the solutions in different contexts. By providing a clear vision of the future and demonstrating how to transfer knowledge and strategies to other realities, the actions may have a lasting impact.
- **Promote integrated approaches to Sustainable Tourism and Green Regeneration:** It is essential to continue supporting the municipalities from the public level in the development of sustainable tourism by adopting integrated strategies that combine environmental regeneration with community benefits. Emphasizing green regeneration, such as preserving Posidonia on the Mediterranean Coast and building resilient coastal infrastructure, will help mitigate the effects of climate change and contribute to protecting the Mediterranean coastlines. Posidonia Oceanica is a marine plant endemic to the Mediterranean Sea, essential for the health

³ The Interreg Euro-Med Program has been at the forefront of addressing these challenges, funding innovative projects that foster climate adaptation and sustainability in the tourism sector. This European Territorial Cooperation Program aims to make the Mediterranean region smarter and greener and to improve the governance between its stakeholders. Through its Sustainable Tourism Missions in 2 programming periods, from 2014 and on, the Program has invested over €50 million in initiatives that not only mitigate climate impacts but also enhance the resilience of tourism-dependent communities.



of coastal ecosystems that is facing various threats, such as pollution, coastal urbanization, boat anchoring, and climate change. Conservation measures include protecting marine areas and regulating tourism.

Additionally, ensuring efficient distribution and management of funds across various administrative levels will maximize the effectiveness of these initiatives and guarantee that resources are allocated where they are most needed for long-term sustainability.

- **Promote standardized sustainability indicators for effective Regional Coordination:** It is vital to continue working towards the establishment of common sustainability indicators across regions, as exemplified by the collaboration between the Regions of Andalucia, Valencia, Catalonia, and Navarra (Spain). Standardizing environmental impact measurements might provide a more consistent and reliable assessment of tourism's effect on natural spaces and communities. Sharing these conclusions at the European level may enhance regional strategies and also foster a more unified approach to sustainability, ensuring that best practices are applied effectively across the continent.
- **Ensure sustainability in economic integration:** To effectively integrate sustainable tourism solutions within the economic dynamics of local and global markets, it is essential to design ecotourism packages that align with both sustainability criteria and economic feasibility. By creating packages that are not only environmentally responsible but also economically viable, as demonstrated by the Interreg Euro-MED Destimed project, the tourism industry can promote long-term growth. It is important to continue refining these packages while ensuring they can be adapted and commercialized in various markets, making them attractive to both local economies and international tourists while maintaining sustainability.
- **Advanced tools and methodologies for policymaking in climate adaptation.** To Equip policymakers and DMOs with Geographic Information Systems (GIS), climate modeling, and predictive analytics to assess climate risks and inform regional adaptation plans. In this sense, the Interreg Euro-MED “Cool Noons” Project proposes cool paths as a new way to explore and live the Mediterranean cities that are facing climate changes and increasing heat waves with the main goal of offering a renovated approach to urban tourism and enhancing urban resilience. As a crucial phase of Cool Noons, the five pilot cities – Budva, Dubrovnik, Imola, Marseille and Lisbon – identified one or more paths, chosen according to tourist interest and best thermal comfort. The mapping started off with green areas and spots that are considered cooler. Then, proceeded to identify preexistent paths or mapped new itineraries in the cities, in order to attract visitors to less-explored areas merging the needs of visitors and locals, with great attention to creating a better living experience for the residents, who would benefit from the solutions that will be implemented during the following phases of Cool Noons. The **Cool Noons Paths** share a **common methodology** (based



on least-Cost method, Optimal Regional Connectivity, as well as more important data such as heat-related metrics, Copernicus Climate Services, tourist origins, refreshing buildings etc). But Cool Noons pilots had the possibility of making autonomous decisions in the customization of the methodology, with the goal of matching and creating connections with key tourist points and planning the eco-cultural Cool Noons itineraries.

- **Promote fiscal and investment strategies.** In alignment with the contribution by the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) in the round tables commitment to support the implementation of innovative fiscal policies and dedicated investment mechanisms is necessary. These efforts can take as examples the UfM-backed initiatives such as grant schemes, low-interest financing, and public-private partnerships that drive infrastructural and technological advancements. By fostering investment in green and resilient tourism models, these strategies contribute to the region's transition toward a more sustainable and diversified economy. Building on the UfM's focus on youth empowerment and digital transformation, we confirm the recommendation of creating capacity-building programs that equip young entrepreneurs with the skills and tools needed to innovate in the tourism sector. On the other side, by integrating digital solutions and entrepreneurship support, these efforts contribute to inclusive economic growth and long-term sustainability in the Mediterranean region.

10. Thematic cross-analysis of key recommendations

If we conduct a **thematic cross-analysis** of these recommendations in relation to the *Gaps and Growth Opportunities Report* of the **PANORAMED Governance Platform** (*Interreg MED Program*)- produced by the **Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds of Croatia** and **Regione Toscana – Direzione Attività Produttive**—the report suggests that **shaping individual projects into communities with a unique identity** can both **enhance motivation and strengthen their internal impact**, while also **improving their external perception and evaluation**. This aligns with the efforts currently being undertaken by the **Interreg Euro-MED Program through its Sustainable Tourism Mission**.

According to the “Gaps and growth opportunities report” of PANORAMED, seasonality and overtourism are primary characteristics of most tourism-related activities.

Seasonality itself is not necessarily an issue, but the related problems are very much so. An unbalanced overflow of tourism puts an increased pressure – environmental, social, economic – on the affected areas. When looking at statistics, what seem like manageable numbers in terms of yearly averages, can mean unmanageable problems during high seasons. Seasonality and overtourism are hard to deal with in terms of EU-level actions, since they are usually local issues with big differences in their causes, durations and possible solutions to their



problems, even within a country. A way to possibly address these gaps is to keep all these differences in mind when planning for the next programming period; and instead of relying on year-old statistics, keeping up to date with available tourism data. Experts suggest bottom-up data collection, for

Based on the recommendations and conclusions of the Cross Network Alliance in Tourism (2024), seasonality remains one of the biggest challenges in tourism today, leading to overcrowded destinations during peak months while leaving tourism infrastructure underutilized in the off-season. This imbalance places significant environmental, social, and economic pressure on popular destinations, affecting local communities, ecosystems, and resources.

The issue is particularly difficult to manage because it varies greatly by region, depending on factors like climate, cultural events, and travel trends. While seasonality itself is not inherently problematic, the extreme fluctuations in visitor numbers create challenges such as overtourism, environmental degradation, and economic instability for businesses that rely on tourism revenue.

To tackle this issue, many regions are promoting alternative forms of tourism to distribute visitor numbers more evenly throughout the year. For example, **bicycle tourism, culinary tourism, and wellness tourism** are being developed to attract travelers outside of traditional peak seasons. Similarly, **smart tourism solutions**—which leverage technology and data to manage visitor flows—are being implemented to prevent overcrowding and enhance the visitor experience.

Another key strategy is **promoting lesser-known destinations** to encourage tourists to explore beyond the usual hot spots. By investing in the infrastructure and marketing of these areas, governments and tourism organizations aim to create a more balanced flow of visitors, reducing the strain on overburdened locations.

At the EU level, addressing seasonality requires a **bottom-up approach** that involves collecting real-time data and adapting policies to the specific needs of each region. With better insights into changing travel patterns, authorities can develop targeted solutions, encourage off-season travel, and ensure tourism remains a sustainable and beneficial industry for all.

Finally, following the “growth opportunity: Transnational cooperation” presented in this report by Interreg MED Program - PANORAMED Governance Platform larger collaboration between multiple countries allows the creation of communities with a shared identity and a common goal, that can learn from each other and produce results that benefit larger regions, **we would like to reaffirm from the WG of the Cross Network Alliance for Sustainable Tourism the need for strengthening of the Coordination Mechanism among Interreg programs in order to achieve a more cohesive and efficient collaborative effort.** By maintaining and enhancing this coordination, it might be possible to ensure that all programs work in alignment, sharing knowledge, resources, and best practices. This will foster a more integrated approach to addressing common challenges,



such as sustainable development and regional growth, and will allow for the maximization of synergies across different initiatives in sustainable tourism. Continuity in this collaboration is essential for delivering lasting and impactful results that contribute to the long-term goals as climate resilience and circular economy in the tourism of the MED Region.

11. Acknowledgements

The partners of the Interreg Euro-MED Dialogue4Tourism Project would like to thank the Interreg Euro-MED Joint Secretariat, the Interreg Euro-MED Community4Tourism Project, the Thematic Projects of the Interreg Euro-MED Sustainable Tourism Mission, all the institutions, regional and local governments, authorities, speakers, and contributors in the round tables that are part of the working group of the Cross-Network Alliance for Sustainable Tourism. Without their collaboration, this contribution to the future of the governance in sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean region would not have been possible.