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# Social and economic regeneration of the Mediterranean after the crisis:

Shared methods and tools for relaunching  
a sustainable post COVID-19 tourism  
model

*Operational handbook*



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With financial support from



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## List of acronyms

<b>BLUEMED</b>	Research and Innovation Initiative for the promotion of the blue economy in the Mediterranean Basin
<b>CPMR</b>	Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>ETC</b>	European Territorial Cooperation
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>ICZM</b>	Integrated Coastal Zone Management
<b>IMC</b>	Intermediterranean Commission of the CPMR
<b>ITD</b>	Integrated Territorial Development
<b>MD</b>	Ministerial Declaration
<b>MEET</b>	Mediterranean Experience of EcoTourism
<b>MENA</b>	Middle East and North Africa
<b>MSP</b>	Maritime Spatial Planning
<b>NDICI</b>	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>TA</b>	Technical Assistance
<b>UfM</b>	Union for the Mediterranean
<b>UNSDGs</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
<b>UNWTO</b>	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
<b>WESTMED</b>	Maritime Initiative for the Western Mediterranean



## Executive summary

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Development dynamics and trends in the Mediterranean, as in the rest of the world, have suffered a severe slowdown since 2020. In many cases, they have taken the form of a sharp reversal following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the social and economic crisis that has ensued.

The pandemic crisis has weakened economic sectors that are considered vulnerable as they are more than others influenced by different variables. The Mediterranean basin and the countries of the three continents bordering it have not been spared by the crisis, and in this context one of the hardest hit sectors has been tourism. Consequently, many of the measures adopted by national governments have focused, on the one hand, on income support for workers in the tourism sector and, on the other, on support mechanisms for the activities linked to the sector (directly or indirectly).

At the same time, many Mediterranean countries, especially within the framework of multilateral and supranational initiatives, have been preparing recovery plans to tackle the post-pandemic phase and beyond.

This Handbook has been prepared with the support of a group of experts, based on some basic principles and approaches such as:

- The importance of embedding a prominent local dimension in the post 2020 tourism sector context, by adopting a territorial approach aiming to enhance not only coastal and maritime tourism but also inland areas.
- The commitment to build a more resilient and inclusive tourism sector, leveraging renewed interest in sustainability.
- The consideration that, despite competition among States and players of the sector, cooperation is acknowledged and needed to make the tourism offer more qualitative and sustainable.
- The need to focus on the skills of the sector's operators and the private business world.
- The need to increase awareness on the shift towards sustainable tourism not only of policy makers but also local communities.

To be fully beneficial for the territories, countries and the Mediterranean region at large, sustainable and innovative tourism should therefore take into account some critical aspects such as:

- New forms of tourism, targeting not only international visitors, but also, and above all, local visitors and operators, so as to make the overall sector more resilient; Indeed, domestic tourism is providing a much needed boost to help sustain many tourism destinations and businesses, and will continue to be a key driver of recovery in the short to medium term.
- Integration and synergies with other related sectors (e.g. agriculture, fisheries, restauration, transport, infrastructures for energy efficiency, etc.) to maximise the added value of local tourism (e.g. pescaturism, ecotourism, supporting immaterial heritage such as the Mediterranean diet, underwater tourism...).
- Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) are operational governance tools that can help local ecosystems and communities; in this sense, there is a need for promoting greater integration of policies and sectors in order to maximize and rationalize the sustainable use of local assets and marine/coastal space by tourism businesses.
- As the impacts of climate change are expected to be severe for coastal communities across the Mediterranean, sustainable tourism business models and practices are to adapt to the increased challenges that they will have to face (e.g. involving more resilient and adaptive infrastructures, services/products offered, skills and capabilities, etc.).
- Digitalisation should be properly considered given that data and market intelligence will be vital Climate friendly, while sustainable travel experiences have further boosted the demand for "slow tourism" and outdoor, nature-based destinations.



## Introduction

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This Handbook stems from the need to identify common tools and methods for relaunching tourism throughout the Mediterranean region, as a solution for dealing with the negative impacts of the global COVID-19 crisis. Repercussions are not only an economic nature but are also social and environmental. This has led to the conviction that the key for the identification and the implementation of measures for economic recovery is to undertake virtuous paths to expand and strengthen cooperation among countries and territories. This seems to be the only alternative to reduce the incidence of vulnerability in sectors that are affected by variables that are often unpredictable. This approach will naturally have to take into account the specific features of each territory, the traditions of local communities and the governance systems within the different countries.

Coastal and maritime tourism plays a central role in the dynamics and development processes of territories. In this document, coastal and maritime tourism is hence considered a common denominator on which to base reinforced cooperation activities between Mediterranean countries at regional, national and subnational levels.

This work counts with contributions from representatives of International Organisations, Countries, and European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) Programmes and projects. On the one hand, they best represent the needs of the territories in terms of planning and governance tools; while on the other, they share the results of positive experiences in terms of (i) concrete implementation of pilot initiatives for the enhancement of the sustainable tourism supply chain at local and basin level, and (ii) the identification of communication channels to promote a closer connection between the levels of government and civil society.

The contributions reported in this handbook were presented and shared during two specific meetings of a small group of experts, held between 2020 and 2021. The experts shared the conviction of the centrality of revising coastal and maritime tourism strategies to adapt them to the new context generated by the pandemic crisis. To be concretely consistent with this theoretical assumption, tools and measures need to be identified in order to trigger virtuous processes for a real and effective recovery. In this context, territories, civil society and public and private stakeholders, are considered as the main references to ensure the sustainability of adopted actions and measures.

In this sense, the main overarching and recent strategic frameworks considered as necessary common points of reference for the 42 Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Member Countries – and summarised in this handbook, are:

- The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>1</sup>, with specific reference to those strictly related to sustainable tourism<sup>2</sup>.
- The second UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy, of 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021<sup>3</sup>.
- The second UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Action, of 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021<sup>4</sup>.
- The Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a new approach to a sustainable blue economy in the EU – Transforming the EU blue economy for a sustainable future, of 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021;
- The European Green Deal.

In addition to this, in order to better understand the state of the art, the level of implementation of the identified strategies and the pathway towards the achievement of identified shared objectives, the following documents and reports were reviewed, among other:

- The UN Sustainable Development Goals Report (2021)<sup>5</sup>.
- The UfM Report “Towards a Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean region” (2021)<sup>6</sup>.
- The EC Blue Economy Report (2021)<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unwto.org/tourism4sdgs>

<sup>3</sup> The Declaration is available in the following web site:

<https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Declaration-UfM-Blue-Economy-EN-1.pdf>



In line with these strategic frameworks, the following experiences were analysed at different territorial levels:

- Regional implementation measures in terms of the development of an economic revitalisation strategy starting from a green transition.
- The specificities of island territories with respect to the conceptualisation of tourist flows and focusing on the issue of seasonality.
- Governance and strategic projects promoted within the framework of the main cooperation programmes in the Mediterranean.
- Experiences from organisations focusing on the development of thematic and territorial initiatives, such as the Travel Foundation.

The main points that emerged and that are developed in the last part of this handbook relate to the need to:

- Provide concrete tools to implement strategies and policies to relaunch the tourism sector.
- Decrease the distance between policy makers and operators in the sector.
- Improve, strengthen and adapt the skills of the sector's operators.
- Offer operational means to launch sustainable and quality projects.
- Educate local communities to develop internal tourism.

Ultimately, this handbook aims to demonstrate that the ongoing crisis is to be considered as a real opportunity to be seized and to identify structural measures that can contribute to make economic sectors classically and structurally more resilient, such as coastal and maritime tourism. This, despite the negative effects of the pandemic and therefore the need to identify measures to cope with similar external shocks in the future, thus increasing, for example, investments in research and strengthening health systems.

On this basis, this handbook is developed as follows:

- Firstly, a review of the main studies and analyses focused on the effects of the pandemic, specifically on tourism; These informations are essential in order to understand the general context created by the pandemic and in which to intervene with effective measures to support the tourism sector; In addition to this, the contents of the main strategic framework documents are reported, considered as useful references for the identification of policy lines at regional, national and subnational levels. At the end of the first part, suggestions are reported for initiatives to be adopted as well as a “check list” as a useful exercise and contribution to the capacity building process that will involve all the main players involved in the tourism sector.

<sup>4</sup> [https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/UfM-ministerial-declaration-ENV-CA\\_final-1.pdf](https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/UfM-ministerial-declaration-ENV-CA_final-1.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.sdindex.org/reports/sustainable-development-report-2021/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://medblueconomyplatform.org/vkc/news/leaflets-full-reports-towards-a-sustainable-blue-economy-in-the-mediterranean-region-86e076de8d/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/it/publication-detail/-/publication/0b0c5bfd-c737-11eb-a925-01aa75ed71a1>

- Secondly, an analysis of some cooperation projects and initiatives related to coastal and maritime tourism, as a concrete possible implementation of the policy lines identified at strategic level that can also be replicated and transferred to other territorial contexts, with a focus on some case studies. At the end of the second part, some recommendations for the identification of specific recovery measures and a “check list” as a further useful exercise and contribution to the above mentioned capacity building, specifically focused on projects.
- Third and last the description of operational tools for the revitalisation of the tourism sector. The goal of this part is to provide concrete avenues for developing effective and structural initiatives to revitalise the sector and will be the focus of capacity building sessions involving all the main stakeholders concerned.

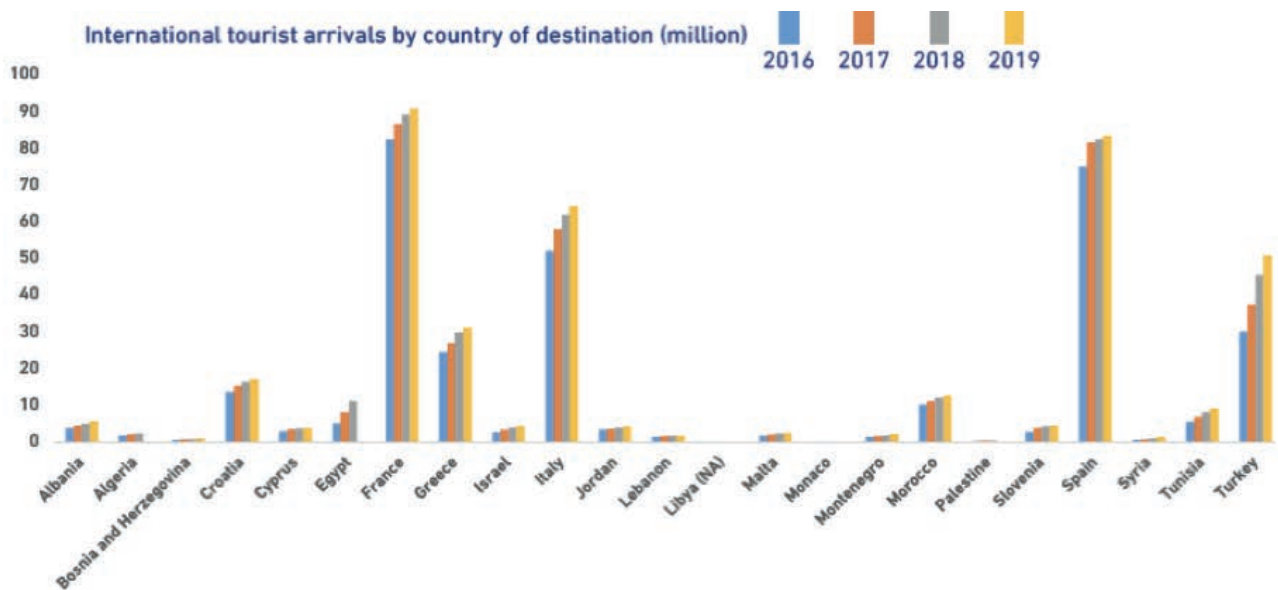


## COVID-19 crisis: impacts and effects on the tourism sector

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In general terms, the crisis linked to the COVID-19 pandemic has increased socio-economic inequalities, generating more poverty and discrimination all over the world, and especially in the Mediterranean region. The socio-economic impacts of the pandemic have been particularly strong: Indeed, the measures taken to slow down infection rates have put entire sectors and industries, such as tourism, in serious difficulty.

According to the 2021 edition of the UfM report “Towards a Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean region”<sup>8</sup>, Tourism is the primary economy sector in the Mediterranean region, representing 30% of global tourism flows and hosting the world’s leading tourist destinations



While this figure is extremely significant, there are remarkable weaknesses such as volatility caused by climate change (e.g. coastal erosion) and global shocks (financial crises, pandemics, etc.) that require structural changes towards more ecologically sustainable and socially resilient models. The models should be grounded on local strengths and should assure domestic returns.

The specific vulnerability of tourism places it at the forefront of the crisis. Therefore, many studies and analyses have been carried out by international, regional organisations and institutions in order to identify the main measures needed to address the socio-economic recovery of the sector, and with the specific support of the levels of government that are responsible for implementing these measures.

Furthermore, according to the OECD Report “Rebuilding tourism for the future: COVID-19 policy responses and recovery”<sup>9</sup>, unemployment and precarity in the tourism sector have risen throughout the OECD area, creating even more difficulties for young people searching for jobs, but also and in particular for the over-50s category, who are at risk of losing their jobs with little chances of rejoining the labour force.

<sup>8</sup> [https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/UfM-Towards-a-Sustainable-Blue-Economy-in-the-Mediterranean-region-EN\\_v2.pdf](https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/UfM-Towards-a-Sustainable-Blue-Economy-in-the-Mediterranean-region-EN_v2.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=137\\_137392-qsvjt75vnh&title=Rebuilding-tourism-for-the-future-COVID-19-policy-response-and-recovery&\\_ga=2.143958517.1988424164.1627317836-1866749793.1626725957](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=137_137392-qsvjt75vnh&title=Rebuilding-tourism-for-the-future-COVID-19-policy-response-and-recovery&_ga=2.143958517.1988424164.1627317836-1866749793.1626725957)

In this context, initiatives such as the MENA-OECD Governance and Investment for Development programme<sup>10</sup> are particularly relevant and should be further supported and strengthened. This programme supports reforms to achieve the general objectives of social and economic development. It is aimed at supporting all countries in the MENA region that intend to strengthen their governance capacity through various means. Firstly, it supports the improvement of public policies and the performance of public institutions, including by increasing their efficiency, transparency and accountability. Secondly, it promotes a better management of public state resources and stimulates interactions between public and private sectors, and between government and citizens. In this framework, in addition to immediate measures to support the tourism sector, the attention of the Mediterranean Countries is also shifting towards the development of measures to promote a sustainable long-term recovery, including the cancellation of travel restrictions, the restoration of confidence and the rethinking of the tourism sector for the future. For the latter, this starts, for example, with the revival of domestic tourism which, according to the OECD, represents about 75% of the countries' tourism economy and is the one that should recover most rapidly. Domestic tourism is the main opportunity to drive recovery, particularly in countries, regions and cities where the sector represents a significant part of the labour market and businesses. The crisis having impacted the whole tourism ecosystem, the reopening of destinations will therefore require a joined-up approach. Tourism businesses and workers are benefiting from economic incentives packages and many governments are also introducing tourism-specific measures as reported in the OECD analysis.

National governments and the industry seem to be focusing their efforts on the following actions:

- Lifting travel restrictions and working with businesses to access cash support measures, and implementing new health protocols for safe travel and helping to diversify markets.
- Restoring traveler confidence and stimulating demand through new, safer and simpler industry narratives, visitor information apps and domestic tourism promotion campaigns.
- Preparing comprehensive tourism recovery plans to rebuild the image of destinations, encouraging Innovation and investment, and rethinking the tourism sector, in order to adapt ways of travel and movement to the current context and to live the tourist experience in all its forms.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/mena/governance/>



These actions are essential, but in order to successfully relaunch the tourism economy and get businesses back on their feet, more needs to be done in a coordinated manner as tourism services are highly interdependent. The travel and tourism industry together with governments should continue to strengthen their coordination mechanisms to support businesses, particularly smaller ones, and workers. Particular attention should also be given to the most sensitive/vulnerable destinations in the recovery phase. Looking ahead, the measures put in place today will shape tomorrow's tourism. Governments must already now consider the long-term implications of the crisis, staying ahead of sustainable digital developments, supporting low-carbon transition and promoting the structural transformation needed to build a stronger, more sustainable and resilient tourism economy.

As described more in detail below, these initiatives will undoubtedly be able to contribute to the achievement of internationally defined goals (such as the SDGs) and make strategies defined in macro-regional contexts more concrete.

**GOAL  
1**

**NO POVERTY**

As one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world, tourism is well-positioned to foster economic growth and development at all levels and provide income through job creation. Sustainable tourism development, and its impact at community level, can be linked with national poverty reduction goals, those related to promoting entrepreneurship and small businesses, and empowering less favored groups, particularly youth and women.

**GOAL  
2**

**ZERO HUNGER**

Tourism can spur agricultural productivity by promoting the production, use and sale of local products in tourist destinations and its full integration in the tourism value chain. In addition, agro-tourism, a growing tourism segment, can complement traditional agricultural activities. The resulting rise of income in local communities can lead to a more resilient agriculture while enhancing the value of the tourism experience.

**GOAL  
3**

**GOOD HEALTH  
AND WELL-BEING**

Tourism's contribution to economic growth and development can also have a knock-on effect on health and well-being. Foreign earnings and tax income from tourism can be reinvested in health care and services, which should aim to improve maternal health, reduce child mortality and prevent diseases, among others.

**GOAL  
4**

**QUALITY EDUCATION**

A well-trained and skillful workforce is crucial for tourism to prosper. The sector can provide incentives to invest in education and vocational training and assist labor mobility through cross-border agreements on qualifications, standards and certifications. In particular youth, women, senior citizens, indigenous peoples and those with special needs should benefit through educational means, where tourism has the potential to promote inclusiveness, the values of a culture of tolerance, peace and non-violence, and all aspects of global exchange and citizenship.

**GOAL  
5**

**GENDER EQUALITY**

Tourism can empower women in multiple ways, particularly through the provision of jobs and through income-generating opportunities in small and larger-scale tourism and hospitality related enterprises. As one of the sectors with the highest share of women employed and entrepreneurs, tourism can be a tool for women to unlock their potential, helping them to become fully engaged and lead in every aspect of society.

**GOAL  
6**

**CLEAN WATER  
AND SANITATION**

Tourism can play a critical role in achieving water access and security, as well as hygiene and sanitation for all. Sustainable Consumption & Production (SCP) and resource efficiency principles are at the core of these actions. The efficient use of water in the tourism sector, coupled with appropriate safety measures, wastewater management, pollution control and technology efficiency can be key to safeguarding our most precious resource.

**GOAL  
7**

**AFFORDABLE  
AND CLEAN ENERGY**

As a sector that requires substantial energy input, tourism can accelerate the shift toward renewable energy and increase its share in the global energy mix. SCP and resource efficiency are at the core of these actions. Consequently, by promoting sound and long-term investments in sustainable energy sources, tourism can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, mitigate climate change and contribute to innovative and new energy solutions in urban, regional and remote areas.

**GOAL  
8**

**DECENT WORK  
AND ECONOMIC GROWTH**

Tourism is one of the driving forces of global economic growth and currently provides for 1 in 11 jobs worldwide. By giving access to decent work opportunities in the tourism sector, society –particularly youth and women – can benefit from increased skills and professional development. The sector's contribution to job creation is recognized in Target 8.9 "By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products".

**GOAL  
9**

**INDUSTRY, INNOVATION  
AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

Tourism development relies on good public and privately supplied infrastructure and an innovative environment. The sector can also incentivize national governments to upgrade their infrastructure and retrofit their industries, making them more sustainable, resource-efficient and clean, as a means to attract tourists and other sources of foreign investment. This should also facilitate further sustainable industrialization, necessary for economic growth, development and innovation.

**GOAL  
10**

**REDUCED INEQUALITIES**

Tourism can be a powerful tool for community development and reducing inequalities if it engages local populations and all key stakeholders in its development. Tourism can contribute to urban renewal and rural development and reduce regional imbalances by giving communities the opportunity to prosper in their place of origin.

**GOAL  
11**

**SUSTAINABLE CITIES  
AND COMMUNITIES.**

A city that is not good for its citizens is not good for tourists. Sustainable tourism has the potential to advance urban infrastructure and universal accessibility, promote regeneration of areas in decay and preserve cultural and natural heritage, assets on which tourism depends. Greater investment in green infrastructure (more efficient transport facilities, reduced air pollution, conservation of heritage sites and open green spaces, etc.) should result in smarter and greener cities from which not only residents, but also tourists, can benefit.

**GOAL  
12**

**RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION  
AND PRODUCTION**

A tourism sector that adopts sustainable consumption and production (SCP) practices as well as resource efficiency (water, energy, waste etc) can play a significant role in accelerating the global shift towards sustainability. To do so, as set in Target 12.b of Goal 12, it is imperative to "Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism which creates jobs, promotes local culture and products". The Sustainable Tourism Programme (STP) of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP) aims at developing such SCP practices, including resource efficient initiatives that result in enhanced economic, social and environmental outcomes.





# Goals

## GOAL 13

### CLIMATE ACTION

Tourism contributes to and is affected by climate change. It is, therefore, in the sector's own interest to play a leading role in the global response to climate change. By lowering energy consumption and shifting to renewable energy sources, especially in the transport and accommodation sector, tourism can help tackle one of the most pressing challenges of our time.

## GOAL 14

### LIFE BELOW WATER

Coastal and maritime tourism, tourism's biggest segments, particularly for Small Island Developing States' (SIDS), rely on healthy marine ecosystems. Tourism development must be a part of Integrated Coastal Zone Management in order to help conserve and preserve fragile marine ecosystems and serve as a vehicle to promote a blue economy, in line with Target 14.7: "by 2030 increase the economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism".

The actions put in place by the European Union (EU) to revitalise relations between countries in the Mediterranean region also deserve specific attention as they are primarily aimed at tackling the effects of the pandemic in a geographic area the stability has important consequences for Europe itself. These are the main objectives of the new Agenda for the Mediterranean<sup>11</sup>, which also envisages renewed cooperation in managing migration trends, promoting peace and security in the Mediterranean, as well as supporting economic development that offers greater opportunities to all, with particular attention to young people and women. In an attempt to achieve these objectives, the EU has set aside a budget of EUR 7 billion for the period 2021-2027 from the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) programme<sup>12</sup>, which could be further increased over the next ten years thanks to additional private and public investments.

A milestone for the Euro-Mediterranean region is the adoption of the second Ministerial Declaration on the Sustainable Blue Economy by the 42 UfM Member Countries, on the 2nd February 2021<sup>13</sup>.

## 2021 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy

The 2nd UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy was adopted by the 42 Euro-Mediterranean countries on the 2nd February 2021. The objective of this ambitious declaration is to reinforce the existing process and to call for new joint actions to speed up recovery of the blue economy sectors in the Mediterranean as well as to ensure its long-term sustainability.

The declaration covers the following priority areas of cooperation jointly identified by the 42 UfM member countries:

- governance and the future of sea basin strategies in the Mediterranean region
- marine research and innovation, skills, careers and employment:
- sustainable food from the sea: fisheries and aquaculture
- sustainable, climate-neutral and zero-pollution maritime transport and ports
- interactions between marine litter and the blue economy
- coastal and maritime tourism
- Maritime Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Zone Management
- marine renewable energies
- maritime safety and security of blue economy activities
- sustainable investment in the blue economy.

In particular, the Ministerial Declaration, in relation to coastal and maritime tourism, stems from some extremely relevant considerations, which were subsequently incorporated into the Report "Towards a Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean region". In particular, the fact that the pandemic has cut international tourist arrivals in the first eight months of 2020 to a decline of 70% if compared to previous years, which shows that this crisis could deviate existing outlooks.

<sup>11</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news\\_corner/news/new-agenda-mediterranean-council-approves-conclusions-renewed-partnership-southern\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news_corner/news/new-agenda-mediterranean-council-approves-conclusions-renewed-partnership-southern_en)

<sup>12</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/factsheet-mff-multiannual-financial-framework-v09\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/factsheet-mff-multiannual-financial-framework-v09_en.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Declaration-UfM-Blue-Economy-EN-1.pdf>

## COASTAL AND MARITIME TOURISM (Quoting)

As regards coastal and maritime tourism:

54. Ministers highlight that coastal and maritime tourism is one of the major economic sectors for Mediterranean countries with their accessible and attractive coastlines and coastal cities, but that this sector has significant impacts on the environment and local population;

55. Ministers highlight that preserved marine and coastal ecosystems and marine cultural heritage contribute to the attractiveness of coastal areas;

56. Ministers recognise that relevant policies, including research and innovation, must acknowledge the impacts of tourism activities on coastal areas, and the vulnerability and complexity of the coastal and maritime ecosystems;

57. Concerned by the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector and indirectly on other blue economy sectors, Ministers agree to:

- a.** promote policy coordination, stakeholder collaboration and cooperation mechanisms to strengthen the resilience of the tourism sector in the Mediterranean;
- b.** develop comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and statistics schemes and promote the digitalization of the sector;
- c.** implement sectoral strategies and action plans to green and reduce carbon emissions from the whole tourism industry, including tourism-related maritime transport;
- d.** address seasonality and over tourism by promoting the diversification of the tourism offer, encouraging experience-based and slow tourism as well as associating the hinterland;
- e.** promote eco-tourism and niche tourism, including activities such as pesca-tourism, culinary tourism, and sport tourism, among others;
- f.** promote fiscal and investment policies to support sustainable coastal and marine tourism.

With specific reference to tourism, the economic stakes are very high, as the Mediterranean basin is responsible for more than 50% of the world's tourism turnover. If we consider the case of the member Countries of the EU, it is worth recalling some data that make things clearer. These are values and statistics contained in a detailed study carried out as part of a UNWTO project, based on data for 2016. Five countries of the European Union rank in the top ten as favourite destinations for tourists globally and of these, three face the Mediterranean: Italy, Spain, and France, respectively with 52, 75, and 83 million visitors every year. The case of Spain is particularly relevant since, in addition to being the second most popular destination in the EU, it is the third most popular destination in the world after France and the United States. With 16% of the total turnover in the EU, corresponding to around EUR 55 billion, the Iberian State is also the clear leader among Mediterranean countries. Italy ranks third in Mediterranean Europe (after Spain and France) and in recent years has seen a positive trend in new arrivals, particularly from Asia.

The Italian turnover related to tourism is about EUR 36 billion. Greece is also a popular destination in the EU. What probably constitutes a differentiating element for Greece compared to the Spanish and Italian cases is the impact on GDP of tourism-related turnover in the country and the links existing between tourist flows and migration.

In this context, the synergies that can be activated between the various bodies and organisations that bring together different countries and promote cooperation in a win-win approach is crucial.

Finally, on the 17th of May 2021, the European Commission launched a new sustainability approach for the Blue Economy in the productive and industrial sectors linked to the seas, oceans and coastal areas. A more sustainable Blue Economy is essential to achieve the goals of the European Green Deal and ensure a green and inclusive recovery from the pandemic<sup>14</sup>.

## **A new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU - Transforming the EU's Blue Economy for a Sustainable Future**

The Communication sets out a detailed agenda for the blue economy to:

- Achieve the objectives of climate neutrality and zero pollution notably by developing offshore renewable energy, by decarbonising maritime transport and by greening ports. A sustainable ocean energy mix including floating wind, thermal, wave and tidal energy could generate a quarter of the EU's electricity in 2050. Ports are crucial to the connectivity and the economy of Europe's regions and countries and could be used as energy hubs.
- Switch to a circular economy and reduce pollution – including through renewed standards for fishing gear design, for ship recycling, and for decommissioning of offshore platforms and action to reduce plastics and microplastics pollution.
- Preserve biodiversity and invest in nature - protecting 30% of the EU's sea area will reverse biodiversity loss, increase fish stocks, contribute to climate mitigation and resilience, and generate significant financial and social benefits. Environmental impacts of fishing on marine habitats will be further minimised.
- Support climate adaptation and coastal resilience – adaptation activities, such as developing green infrastructure in coastal areas and protecting coastlines from the risk of erosion and flooding will help preserve biodiversity and landscapes, while benefitting tourism and the coastal economy.

<sup>14</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_21\\_2341](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_2341)

- Ensure sustainable food production - sustainable production of and new marketing standards for seafood, use of algae and seagrass, stronger fisheries control as well as research and innovation in cell-based seafood will help to preserve Europe's seas. With the EU sustainable aquaculture strategic guidelines now also adopted, the Commission has also committed to growing sustainable aquaculture in the EU.
- Improve management of space at sea – the new Blue Forum for users of the sea to coordinate a dialogue between offshore operators, stakeholders and scientists engaged in fisheries, aquaculture, shipping, tourism, renewable energy and other activities will stimulate cooperative exchange for the sustainable use of marine environment. A report on the implementation of the EU Directive on Maritime Spatial Planning will be issued in 2022, following the adoption of national maritime spatial plans in March 2021.

All productive sectors of the Blue Economy, including coastal and maritime tourism, should aim to reduce their environmental and climate impacts. Climate and biodiversity challenges require healthy seas and the sustainable use of their resources, e.g. to create alternatives to fossil fuels and conventional production chains, and to allow ecosystems to thrive. The transition to a sustainable blue economy requires investments in innovative technologies; this can create new opportunities for jobs and green growth across the Mediterranean region if cooperation processes across the basin are intensified.

The European Commission's Communication on a Sustainable Blue Economy sets out a detailed agenda of initiatives aimed at:

- Achieving climate neutrality and pollution reduction targets;
- Moving towards a circular economy and reducing marine pollution;
- Preserving biodiversity and investing in nature;
- Support climate adaptation and resilience of coastal areas;
- Ensure sustainable food production;
- Improving the management of maritime spaces.

Following the above, the table below reports on some suggestions for the identification of concrete initiatives to undertake.



# Suggestions for concrete initiatives to be promoted and undertaken to relaunch sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean region

## At international level

- To strengthen the cooperation and exchange of information among international and supranational organisations and institutions, through, as an example, the identification of regular meetings at technical level in order to:
- Share ongoing initiatives to assess potential synergies and collaborations in order to maximise their impact;
- Identify common actions both to influence and steer political decision-making process and to promote concrete synergetic actions;
- Ensure a constant link between near geographical areas.

## At national, regional and local governance level

- To strengthen participation in multilateral and collaborative frameworks at international level, to share knowledge and medium- and long-term initiatives to revitalise the tourism sector and to identify structural measures to limit the effects of the vulnerability of the tourism sector and protect it from particularly unfavourable international circumstances;
  - To promote initiatives to improve governance and to strengthen the decision making process in a multilateral cooperation context.
- These initiatives are aimed at strengthening the participation of the different levels of national governments in the international frameworks of governance in the Mediterranean, through preliminary and continuous liaison at national level. This will allow to concretely contribute to the reflections and actions for further improving governance tools as well as to promote concrete actions also in terms of projects with local, national and basin impacts.

## At technical level

Local communities should be involved systematically by local associations, through specific initiatives, to be promoted in accordance with the territorial institutions, in order to improve the awareness concerning the importance of an active involvement of civil society in every relaunch process (i.e. domestic tourism, promotion of territories).

In this sense, a constant link between the institutional level and local organisations and associations can encourage the adoption of initiatives through which the involvement of civil society and local communities is guaranteed. These dynamics should play an increasingly leading role in development initiatives.

# Check list for the capacity building process

Topic	Answer	Follow up	Final comments
Are there information available on the impact of the pandemic on tourism in your Country?	YES	What are the main results collected?	Please describe
	NO	Importance of the availability of data to identify the most appropriate relaunch policies	
Are there information available on the main strengths and weaknesses of the tourism sector in your Country?	YES	what is the context that emerges from this information?	Please describe
	NO	The identification of tools to improve knowledge of the sector is also relevant for monitoring the effectiveness of the policies implemented	
Has your country already adopted measures to relaunch the tourism sector?	YES	What are the measure adopted?	
	NO		
Which of the UNSDGs can be achieved through effective policies to relaunch tourism?	(Use UN SDGs table for reference)		
How is the achievement of the UNSDGs monitored in your Country?			
According to your experience, what initiatives should be taken within multilateral cooperation frameworks?			

# Ongoing initiatives, programmes, projects supporting the shift and recovery of the tourism sector in the Mediterranean

Based on the exchange within the group of experts, some of the most significant experiences have been promoted by international institutions and organisations, countries, regions and by specific cooperation project partnerships. These projects/initiatives, briefly described in the box below, based on sustainability and participative principles and approaches, provide important inputs, outcomes, good practices, and solutions to frame the sustainable recovery of the tourism sector in the method used and the results achieved.

## Main initiatives, programmes, projects

PLATFORMA<sup>15</sup> – the pan-European coalition of towns and regions active in city-to-city and region-to-region development cooperation – to develop a specific tool on Integrated Territorial Development (ITD) which included also specific training session addressed to civil servants that was held in Casablanca in 2018. In this context, ITD means development models that integrate different concepts: sustainability, participatory approach, multilevel governance and also cross-sectorial planning as key aspect to be considered in this present handbook.

In this context, the role of CPMR Intermediterranean Commission (CPMR-IMC) is fundamental with respect to the following aspects:

- To ensure the concrete and effective involvement of the local levels of government of Mediterranean countries in these activities;
- To effectively contribute to the identification of technical-operational tools and shared methods to positively affect the dynamics of territorial development.

In particular, during the meeting held on 4 February 2019 in Barcelona, the CPMR-IMC decided to launch the “Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance”<sup>16</sup>, a coalition based on the relevance of multilevel governance and cooperation in the Mediterranean, as fundamental drivers for ensuring a better future for the populations from the Mediterranean and the European Union.

The Alliance was created through collaboration between the leading Mediterranean associations of Regional and Local Authorities and two Euro-Regions<sup>17</sup>.

The activities planned in the handbook and related capacity building activities could allow and facilitate the inclusion in this

<sup>15</sup> <https://platforma-dev.eu/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://cpmr-intermed.org/download/medcooperationalliance-declaration/>

<sup>17</sup> The Alliance is composed by the regions of the Intermediterranean Commission of the CPMR, the Euro-Région PyrénéesMéditerranée, the Adriatic Ionian Euroregion and the networks of local authorities MedCities and Arco Latino.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.meetnetwork.org/>



Alliance of other key territorial players and Institutions, actively involved in the Mediterranean region, to work together towards the integration of emerging sea basin, macro-regional strategies and other connected initiatives and cooperation instruments, in order to build a common, more cohesive and co-owned Mediterranean macro-region. These cohesive dynamics could be an interesting framework of action to move towards a sustainable recovery of the tourism sector in the Mediterranean.

A further significant step in this direction was represented by the online conference-debate held last November 2020, in the framework of the 25th anniversary of the Barcelona Process, with Mediterranean institutional, political and territorial key stakeholders to support multi-level governance for transnational cooperation in the region.

During the last two programming periods (2007-2013 and 2014-2020), the Cooperation Programmes affecting the Mediterranean have supported the implementation of projects particularly relevant for the strengthening of cooperation between different players in the Mediterranean region, in terms of objectives, impacts and involvement of stakeholders of the different territories. Above all, they have also allowed the establishment, development and strengthening of networks at basin level. The new programming period (2021-2027) therefore makes it necessary and appropriate to reflect on how to strengthen the results previously achieved, especially in terms of impact, and how to capitalise, transfer and valorise the significant heritage of tools and methods developed in the field of tourism now consolidated.

In particular, the multilevel dimension of tourism should be highlighted with positive effects on the environment, local economic development and empowerment of communities.

In this regards, the MEET network<sup>18</sup> is a relevant initiative that represent an effective way to capitalize the main results of the funded projects, dealing with some specific strategic issues such as proximity in tourism, exploiting the full potential of innovation (e.g. gamification of tourism) but also integrating the Green Deal principled in the Tourism sector, for instance (e.g. sustainable mobility)<sup>19</sup>. The capitalization activities should impact specifically on local operators and communities that need to be properly trained to better structure, organise, plan, manage, market and communicate their destinations. Furthermore, an important topic to deal with is the coordination/complementarity among allthe initiatives/programmes in the Mediterranean to capitalize and maximise the impacts of the results achieved and to transfer them in the whole Med area, investing in specific initiatives to enhance the liaising/mainstreaming<sup>20</sup>.

As to the BLUEMED initiative, the Preliminary Implementation Plan<sup>21</sup> has been recently issued, including some priority actions linked to environment and Tourism. Cross-sectoral planning for Tourism is considered a very interesting topic but this requires the involvement also of the so-called "enablers". At this regards, ITC and governance are key aspects to be considered as well as infrastructures and fundraising. Finally, skills and capacity building represent another important component to be taken into deep consideration.

<sup>19</sup> This network is a spin-off of ENPI CBC Med funded project. It is an association of Protected Areas across the Mediterranean basin.

It acts primarily as a platform for the promotion and development of ecotourism, supporting protected area managers through exchange, capacity building, advocacy and tools for ecotourism product development and management.

<sup>20</sup> In this sense, from the Interreg MED transnational Programme standpoint, a tangible contribution can come from PANORAMED.

PANORAMED is an innovative intergovernmental project that has been continuously working on defining shared policies and actions to cope with challenges efficiently and fostering sustainable growth opportunities of the Mediterranean Region since 2017.

One of its strategic themes is "Coastal and Maritime Tourism;" exploiting its respective results, documents, data, experience, etc. can also be most relevant in the particular instance of this handbook.

Furthermore, the WestMED initiative supports several projects on Blue Growth. In terms of suggestions for this handbook, fostering technology and the use of big data, as already mentioned, seems to be very appropriated. Also, it is important to support souther capabilities and allow for local sustainable initiatives to grow through time. “Local Authorities should finally support the acceleration of innovation for local businesses and actors in the sector (tour operators, service providers, etc) towards new business models, products and services. In doing so, local tourism must strive to generate higher socio-economic returns for local communities, while fully protecting and preserving local valuable ecosystems. In addition, a strong focus on the development of sustainable infrastructures (material and immaterial) should be granted’.

Finally, the Travel Foundation<sup>22</sup>, a UK-based organization working globally in the field of tourism, has the main purpose to identify better tools to manage tourism, especially in the upcoming phase for tourism recovery, following the pandemic. In this sense, holistic accounting of both costs and benefits of servicing tourism demand is key for understanding and managing the implications of future growth. One of the most relevant result of the activities of the Foundation is the report “Destinations at Risk: The Invisible Burden of Tourism”<sup>23</sup> and its related training and data collection methodologies.

In the framework of the Interreg MED Programme, the governance project PANORAMED devoted specific activities related to Coastal and Maritime Tourism. For this topic, Key Policy Paper have been prepared.

The CoEvolve4BG project, funded in the framework of the ENI CBC MED Programme and which is strictly linked to the CO-EVOLVE project funded in the framework of the Interreg MED programme, aims at the identification of specific measures to support the economic environment related to this sector in pilot areas to relaunch activities that have been stopped due to the pandemic. A specific focus was presented concerning Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Maritime Spatial Planning (ICZM/MSP); in this sense, their correct implementation could well contribute to make tourism more sustainable in coastal areas, while considering to a full extent the interaction of activities linked to tourism.

BEST MED project focuses on the governance of tourism in the Mediterranean, particularly as concerns the management of tourism data. The analysis carried out before the current crisis already highlighted the fragility of the mainstreaming tourism system, which are even more evident now. Recently, the crisis has demonstrated that there is a strong need for cooperation between North and South (e.g. cruise tourism) in the Mediterranean for this to be considered as a whole single area.

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.blued-med-initiative.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/blued-med-preliminary-implementation-plan\\_version-complete.pdf](http://www.blued-med-initiative.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/blued-med-preliminary-implementation-plan_version-complete.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk/invisible-burden/>

The DESTIMED+ project, building on the experience of MEET and DestiMED initiatives, is focused on the integration of policies between tourism and conservation departments of 9 Mediterranean regions, and specifically on improving and promoting ecotourism in Protected Areas (PAs). The main results are the preparation of analysis and materials about the ongoing trends around policy integration in the involved regions and it will set up a Mediterranean Ecotourism Consortium of Regions (with the support of the CPMR-IMC).

The WINTER-MED project focuses specifically on promoting sustainability in Mediterranean islands, through an integrated transnational strategy for the development of all year round sustainable and responsible tourism in Mediterranean island destinations. The main focus of the project is the implementation of capacity building and policy learning, supported by a transnational exchange of experiences and capitalisation actions to facilitate the transition from the current season overuse of insular destinations to an alternative, sustainable, all year round use of territories.

As to some initiatives adopted in specific context, specifically the insular territories, the experience gained by the Balearic Island could be considered a good practice to be transferred in other similar context. The Balearic Island, in fact, in order to face the pandemic, adopted two level response: first, a focus on jobs' protection, giving support to companies with cashflow needs and specially affected by social restrictions' measures. In a second level, health & safety protocols were prepared for all sectors, particularly attending the ones belonging to the tourism value chain to reinforce the perception of safety by potential tourists. Besides, the Balearic Islands Agency for Tourism launched three online marketing campaigns between June and November 2020 to encourage the return of tourists and reinforce our brand as a safe destination (#ganas de volver, #timeisnow, #soon). The greatest experience in tourism policy was the Pilot Plan for the Safe Restart of Tourism, an attempt of our regional government to establish one of the firsts air bridges with our principal markets, particularly with Germany. Through this Pilot experience we created an air bridge between the Balearic Islands and Germany allowing for the reactivation of the touristic activity in Summer 2020. This Plan had a very positive outcome with an economic advertising impact of more than 35M€ in Germany and the UK and a total viewing scope that exceeded 58 million people. As to the budgetary period 2021-2027, the Balearic Islands made an important step at the last EU's Committee of Regions, to lead the Mediterranean islands on their claim to be treated as peripheric territory, as insular and frontier territories as we are, just as other ultramarine territories in the EU which receive important benefits in terms of European funds. It could be useful to enhance the collaboration of Mediterranean islands so to learn of each other's experiences and apply the best practices, while we get a stronger position for negotiation with countries and supranational organizations.



# Case studies showcasing the identification of tools and the implementation of specific measures to develop the tourism sector in the Mediterranean

## THE PROJECT AT A GLANCE:

PANORAMED is based on the awareness that the Mediterranean region is characterised by:

- Diversity of geographical, socio-economic and political contexts that vary significantly from one country to another;
- Co-existence of a large number of stakeholders dealing with different dimensions of governance;
- The concentration of different programmes, projects, networks, organisations and platforms operating without a common framework, which undermines the integration of results at the policy level.

This framework makes it increasingly urgent to coordinate activities and policies that contribute to the sustainable socio-economic development of the region in order to protect and enhance its resources, through the strengthening of the institutional capacity of stakeholders and their involvement in an effort of discussion and integrated planning at transnational level.

In this framework, the contribution offered by the Interreg MED Programme is PANORAMED, a platform project aimed at building and consolidating a permanent and innovative dialogue and a shared decision-making process between public authorities and national and sub-national stakeholders, for the identification and implementation of common approaches, policies and projects on two specific themes considered strategic for the area: Coastal and Maritime Tourism and Maritime Surveillance.

## PANORAMED MAIN FIGURES:

Partner Countries: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Montenegro, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain

Partners: 12

Budget: 9 M€

Main deliverables: “Med Positioning Paper” as a result of a survey for the future of cooperation governance in the Mediterranean<sup>24</sup>.

Main concrete results: Launch of Strategic projects on tourism (SMARTMED and BEST MED)

Expected impact: enhancement and reinforcement of the institutional capacity of public authorities;  
coordination among initiatives and strategies in the Mediterranean;  
improvement of the cooperation with the South shore of the Mediterranean.

<sup>24</sup> The survey has just been launched.



## THE PROJECT AT A GLANCE:

Co-Evolve4BG is a project funded in the framework of the 2014-2020 ENI CBC MED Programme. It is based on the awareness that the growth of tourism in the Mediterranean, especially in coastal areas, and the effects of climate change will continue to affect landscapes, soil and coasts stability/erosion, put pressure on species and water resources, and increase waste and pollution discharges into the sea. In this context, the Co-Evolve4BG project aims at analyzing and promoting the co-evolution of human activities and natural eco-systems in touristic coastal areas, towards sustainable development of tourist activities based on the principles of Integrated Coast Zone Management (ICZM) and Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP), promoting at the same time Blue Growth in the Mediterranean. The analysis and the demonstration actions aim at the enhancement of sustainable coastal and maritime tourism development fully exploiting the Blue Economy potential, promoting the creation of business and job opportunities in the field of ecosystem-oriented services, coastal and maritime tourism, coastal management and adaptation to climate change.

Co-Evolve4BG takes advantage from the methodology of the CO-EVOLVE project that was funded by the Interreg MED Programme and extend its main actions towards the South & East Mediterranean through the integration of new pilot areas. Finally, Co-Evolve4BG is part of a wider project, "Med Coast for Blue Growth" labelled by the 43 Countries of the Union for the Mediterranean.

## Co-Evolve4BG MAIN FIGURES:

Partner Countries: Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Spain, Tunisia.

Partners: 9

Budget: 2,9 M€

Main deliverables: training addressed to partners and local actors involved in the pilot actions to develop sustainable tourism in the target areas

Expected impact: Conflicts among tourism and other uses of coastal and maritime spaces will be tackled and conditions for more sustainable and responsible tourism in coastal areas will be set.

# Specific recommendations:

To support the recognition of the specificity of the island dimension in the context of initiatives to revitalise tourism, strengthening cooperation between these territories and promoting specific proposals for the development of the islands.

To put in place specific initiatives to capitalize the main results achieved in the implementation of cooperation projects, as specific responsibility of the ETC Programmes.

To strengthen cooperation among cooperation Programmes.

## Check list for the capacity building process

Topic	Answer	Follow up	Final comments
According to your specific experience, what characteristics must a project have in order to be effectively responsive to the need to relaunch the tourism sector?			
What are the priorities to be pursued in the context of policies to revitalise the tourism sector?			
Can you suggest an initiative or project worthy of replication for its capacity to improve the tourism sector?			



## Emerging operational tools, methods and technologies for the revitalisation of the tourism sector

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It is commonly agreed that tourism could effectively contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly addressing all three perspectives of sustainability encompassing the economic, social and environmental dimensions.

It is also agreed that tourism makes important economic contributions and generates jobs and development in destinations. One of the great challenges is how to implement tourism without causing negative externalities and/or harming the environment, while still benefiting the host regions and populations.

The tourism industry is currently undergoing a deep transformation which should be further assisted and accelerated, to ensure its full sustainability and allow for better quality jobs and growth across the Mediterranean.

Innovation will play a key role in this transformation, which includes planning and implementing sustainable tourism activities involving all concerned stakeholders, and reducing the consumption of energy and water. The overarching principle and goal of innovation should also help to reduce impacts on biodiversity and natural resources, while contributing to their conservation.



To foster the ability of the sector as a whole in assessing, reflecting upon and adapting to global challenges, a **number of relevant tools** have been developed and shared through time:

- **Destination management** tools and practices are commonly used to support Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) in their complex tasks of assessing the trends in local tourism, foreseeing potential challenges and adapting the existing services, products, infrastructures and policies to ensure sustainable tourism at the local levels;
- Data management and **measurement of tourism performance** is an essential component of such tool boxes, with the increasing role of local sustainable tourism observatories emerging as enabling factors for sectoral stakeholders to set clear visions and monitor advancements;
- **Innovation platforms and knowledge sharing** tools have also emerged through time across the Mediterranean enabling practitioners to access virtuous practices internationally;
- **Business ecosystem accelerators** and incubators of innovative products and services are also common tools and practices in the sector to foster sustainable innovation.

Furthermore, a number of key **challenges imply the need of rethinking business as usual** for the sector, which provides strong incentives for further acceleration of disruptive change in the sector:

- **Climate change calls for greater mitigation and adaptation** of the sector, in order to address the persisting pressure posed to 'traditional' tourism business models;
- **The COVID-19 pandemic crisis** has wiped out 'traditional' forms of mass-tourism based on international visits and long-haul air transport, including the cruising sector;
- **Stringent regulation in ecosystem preservation** is also imposing a complete revolution in the means of access and transportation for visitors, calling for greater form of innovation towards sustainable infrastructures and zero-waste models for local operators;
- **The green revolution is a game-changer** when it comes to local tourism models and more traditional offers, promoting unique opportunities to fully adopt sustainable and green tourism models;
- **Increasing international policy cooperation across countries**, including through sea basin strategies, is paving the way for cooperation in spatial planning inland and over the sea.

Despite this, a number of **opportunities remain largely untapped** and could be further explored in order to boost sustainable and innovative business models for tourism destinations across the Med:

- **Sustainable tourism operators are growing but remain jeopardized** across the region, with a lack of strong networking across the basin and limited visibility of the existing offers;
- **Small-scale cruising models have not scaled-up** yet at the sea basin level and their potential effects remain limited to some areas and operators;
- **Educational role of tourism**, i.e. the link of sustainable offers and schooling, remains an exception rather than the norm, with huge unexpressed potentials across the Mediterranean.

Last and not least, the powerful **role of digitalisation** has just scratched the surface of the tourism sector, with potential impacts that are bound to accelerate in the near future:

- **Disintermediation** of destination and visitors from international operators has certainly shown already massive impacts, but the extent to which 5G and big data can reshape the tourism experience is still far from being fully discovered – and certainly not implemented enough;
- **Augmented reality** and its impact on remote experiencing of local tourism assets is certainly at its infancy, which represents strong potential for a whole range of new services/products;
- **Drones (submarine, aerial, terrestrial)** and their full application to the tourism sector is still largely unexplored, with wide room for innovation as well as challenges to be screened;
- **Artificial intelligence** and its impact in revolutionizing tourism planning across the board is another field to be fully explored, which will certainly explode commercially in the future.

Digital and enabling technologies seem to clearly help to connect people with more information, people, and experiences, faster than ever before. Digitalization can certainly play an essential part in the innovation towards sustainable tourism services and products economically, socially, and environmentally speaking.

As tourists search for more authentic travel experiences, technology will provide the opportunity to deliver highly customised products and experiences to travelers in existing and new destinations. Equally, tourists will have more transparent and comparable information available when making decisions about where to travel and wanting to contribute to lowering their carbon footprints, how to get there (in the most environmentally friendly manner), what type of accommodation to choose, where and what to eat, what attractions to visit, and when is the best time to do so.



## Toolkit to develop the capacity building of the players involved for relaunching a sustainable post COVID-19 tourism model

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The main purpose of the Handbook is to provide operational tools to the different players involved in the tourism sector to support them in the identification, implementation and monitoring of initiatives to relaunch its socio-economic recovery related to the field after the pandemic.

In this sense, the key is to upgrade skills for:

- The definition of tourism policy lines that can structurally improve the sector, tackling (namely) its vulnerability and deep dependence on economic, political and social circumstances;
- The programming of resources through relevant multiannual development plans;
- The definition of strategic projects to deal with the main challenges of the sector;
- The overall management of projects, including complex ones, which can, in a virtuous circle, enable the political decision-makers to improve their actions towards more sustainable economies and societies relying partly on tourism.

The approach to be developed for this purpose stems from the need to:

- Operationalise the medium and long term strategic recommendations emerging from ministerial decisions (UfM Ministerial on Sustainable Blue Economy, February 2021) on the basis of a process of sharing and negotiation among the countries of the Mediterranean basin.
- Strengthen the cross-sectoral nature of specific themes and areas of intervention, such as sustainable tourism, with respect to strategic policy areas such as the sustainable blue economy.
- Provide shared tools and methods for the concrete application, in countries and in specific territorial contexts, of principles shared at strategic and political level.
- Increase the involvement of local actors in the development processes of territories and develop the necessary synergies with every component of the institutional and economic-productive at the benefit of the entire region.
- Create opportunities to qualify the skills of national and local actors to make them capable of responding to the challenges posed by the global and local market and to the new development scenarios in the tourism sector.
- Create concrete project opportunities to apply the above principles and set the path towards a sustainable recovery of the tourism sector, and beyond.
- Involve local communities in the process of relaunching and developing a sustainable model of tourism.
- Engaging across government, private sector, civil society and other partners – and prepare for changing business models and governance structures to meet new and different demand.
- Communicating actions to rebuild investor and consumer confidence.

In the light of the above the themes for the improvement of the capacity building are:

- **Governance**, in order to strengthen a multilevel approach through the involvement of the main players at international and national/local levels;
- **Improvement/building capacity/diversification of skills**, especially digital skills aimed at strengthening and diversifying the ways in which territories can be visited and allow people to travel differently.
- **Public-private partnership**, in order to impress a long-term vision to the main initiatives promoted and also to facilitate the identification of the main common territorial needs in terms of sustainable tourism; this will imply the need to consider new forms of tourism and first of all the definition of specific targets (international, national or local) in particular to make tourism as resilient as possible.
- **Development of synergies and complementarities**, in order to understand the relations of tourism with other related sectors, and how the latter can be mobilized to contribute to the sustainability of tourism on the medium-longer term.
- **Involvement of territories and local communities at benefit of countries and the entire region**, (with specific reference to young people and women, especially to improve their employability).
- **Support the collection, sharing and updating of local relevant tourism-related data**, as an essential tool to assess strengths and weaknesses in local offers and back up development strategies to be discussed with relevant stakeholders.
- **Support the acceleration of innovation for local businesses** and other socio-economic actors in the sector (tour operators, service providers, etc), towards the re-definition of fully sustainable (environmentally secure and profitable) business models, products and services.

Considering the information and the inputs reported in this Handbook, at the end of the process undertaken in the same, a synoptic framework is reported below. As a first element, one can find the main target groups that play a relevant role in the relaunch of tourism policies and in the identification of concrete initiatives. They are divided by geographical level of interest and potential impact (Mediterranean and sub-national level).

For each of the identified target groups, the following are reported:

- The specific responsibilities deriving from the role played.
- The objectives to be pursued to correspond to the responsibilities as reported above.
- Possible operational tools that can be used in the short and medium term to promote effective action for the relaunch and structural development of tourism.

This "map" is strictly functional to the tools offered by the checklists reported in the previous paragraphs and may constitute concrete elements of guidance on the contents of this Handbook.

# Mediterranean level

Target group	Main responsibilities	Goal/s	Tools
Responsible organisations for the implementation of cooperation programmes and projects (Mediterranean level)	Setting relevant priorities in the programming and implementation of programmes and projects ensure the continuous and active involvement of key institutions/partners participating in programmes and projects	Strengthening cooperation in the region provide tools for the implementation of development and cooperation initiatives through the promotion of quality projects	Development of networks of operators and practitioners promotion of and exchange of practices and experiences promotion of joint initiatives support for the definition of marketing strategies to develop local assets and respect fair cooperation and competition across destinations

Target group	Main responsibilities	Goal/s	Tools
Private sector	Promoting investments also to ensure sustainability of the initiatives undertaken	Contribute to the creation of a favourable economic and social environment to attract investment improving the supply of tourist services, also through the strengthening the skills of workers and operators in the sector	Better understanding of the market evolution and potential niches to be addressed to develop sustainable offers Development of green and 'circular' models (products and services) to strengthen local offers implementation of initiatives to improve new skills (digital skills) for practitioners

# National level

Target group	Main responsibilities	Goal/s	Tools
-Public Institutions (national level)	-Definition of policy lines -Identification and implementation of annual/multiannual financing programmes	-Recovery of tourism sector -Structural strengthening of the sector addressing vulnerability factors -Technical and financial sustainability of the initiatives undertaken -Strengthening inter-institutional relations at regional, national and international level -Involvement of local communities to strengthen the impacts of the initiatives undertaken -Policy improvement	-Setting up and maintaining sustainable tourism monitoring mechanisms (e.g. observatories) to assess performance through time and to collect information on supply and demand -Support for initiatives to develop public-private partnerships to improve related services -Encouraging initiatives for the green conversion of public and private buildings and infrastructure -Strengthen the participation in international governance and consultation forums

Target group	Main responsibilities	Goal/s	Tools
-Local communities/civil society	-Contribute to the implementation of the initiatives	-Strengthen their awareness of the potential of territories -Improve their active involvement in the implementation of the initiatives undertaken -Ensure their participation in improving the dynamics of social development	-Creation and development of synergies at local level with the business environment -Creation of aggregation entities for the promotion of initiatives at territorial level -Creation and development of networks with similar organisations in other countries/regions

## Siteography

<b>BLUEMED Initiative</b>	<a href="http://www.blued-med-initiative.eu/">http://www.blued-med-initiative.eu/</a>
<b>Bologna Charter</b>	<a href="http://www.bolognacharter.eu/">http://www.bolognacharter.eu/</a>
<b>UfM Blue Economy Platform</b>	<a href="https://medblueconomyplatform.org/#gsc.tab=0">https://medblueconomyplatform.org/#gsc.tab=0</a>
<b>UNSDGs</b>	<a href="https://sdgs.un.org/goals">https://sdgs.un.org/goals</a>
<b>UNSDGs – Focus on sustainable tourism</b>	<a href="https://www.unwto.org/tourism4sdgs">https://www.unwto.org/tourism4sdgs</a> <a href="http://tourism4sdgs.org/#">http://tourism4sdgs.org/#</a>
<b>WEST MED Initiative</b>	<a href="https://www.westmed-initiative.eu/">https://www.westmed-initiative.eu/</a>



