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**THE  
ENERGY  
& WATER  
AGENCY**

# ConsumeLess

## Report 4: ConsumeLess Label Feasibility

Project Contract Ref No: EWA 188/2019



## Abstract

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The ConsumeLess Project aims to significantly reduce energy, water and waste generated by tourist influx specifically in coastal and tourist areas through the development of an ecolabel label ConsumeLess. Currently, the label is assigned to private and/or public entities participating in the initiative which apply specific energy, water and waste sustainable management actions in their activities, offering to tourists a choice of services able to minimize the consumption of water and energy and the generation of waste which are then classified as “ConsumeLess entities”. The **purpose** of this paper is to deliver a feasibility assessment for the ConsumeLess label so to keep the label sustained after the official closure of the project. The feasibility must be creative and innovative feasibility and shall identify options to project partners so that the label can self- sustain itself after the closure of the project in the long run. The **strategy** delivers an action plan with recommendations via the sections: Background Purpose, A Situational Analysis with respect to existing environmental sustainability labels in the tourism sector, Identification of the Target Markets and how these will be engaged during and after the implementation of the feasibility assessment, Positioning Statement of the ConsumeLess Label, Identification of management and implementation options for ensuring the post project viability of the label, Economic considerations for identified options considering the costings for the implementation of the action, and potential revenues to be generated through the implementation for the action, Ranking of identified options more specifically identification of the most feasible option (based on multi-criteria analysis) and Recommendations.

**Key words:** energy, water, waste, nexus, consumption, consume less, Interreg, Mediterranean region, tourism, national heritage, environment, guidelines, Albania, Greece, Italy, Malta, Spain,

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# 1 Introduction & Purpose

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## 1.1 Introduction

The Energy and Water Agency (EWA) of Malta is the Lead Partner of the ConsumeLess Project which started on the 1st of November 2016 and will end on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2020. The ConsumeLess Project: Consume Less in the Mediterranean Touristic Communities (in short - Consume-Less) aims to significantly reduce energy, water and waste generated by tourist influx specifically in coastal and tourist areas through the development of an ecolabel label; the ConsumeLess label. Currently, the label is assigned to private and public entities participating in the initiative which apply specific energy, water and waste sustainable management actions in their activities, offering to tourists a choice of services able to minimize the consumption of water and energy and the generation of waste which are then classified as “ConsumeLess entities”. Further information on the label can be obtained from <https://www.consumelessmed.org>

## 1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this paper is the development of a feasibility assessment for the ConsumeLess label to keep the label sustained after the official closure of the project. The feasibility must be creative and innovative feasibility and shall identify options to project partners so that the label can self-sustain itself after the closure of the project in the long run.

The strategy shall incorporate the sections and action plan recommendations:

1. Background Purpose
2. A Situation Analysis with respect to existing environmental sustainability labels in the tourism sector
3. Identification of the Target Markets and how these will be engaged during and after the implementation of the feasibility assessment
4. Positioning Statement of the ConsumeLess Label
5. Identification of management and implementation options for ensuring the post project viability of the label
6. Economic considerations for identified options considering the costings for the implementation of the action, and potential revenues which might be generated through the implementation for the action
7. Ranking of identified options more specifically identification of the most feasible option (based on a multi-criteria analysis)

## 2 The Strategy

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### 2.1 Situation analysis

With respect to existing environmental sustainability labels in the tourism sector, there exist more than 150 quality labels worldwide designating tour operators, beaches, nature reserves, where the more widespread test criteria are energy and water saving measures, waste avoidance, resource efficiency and preservation of the natural environment. The ConsumeLess project applied a preliminary comparative review of the most spread tourist labels focusing on environmental criteria has been done according the following issues:

- Management
- Geographic coverage
- Number of certified facilities
- Categories of facilities involved
- Mandatory and voluntary criteria
- Different levels foreseen for the label (e.g. standard, gold, platinum)
- Topics (water, waste, energy, society, management, cultural heritage...)
- Monitoring and conformity assessment.

The general framework of the ConsumelessMed label criteria was based on *a comparative analysis of three selected labels* that were found to be the most interesting and spread labels providing well developed environmental standards, that is EU ecolabel and Green Key at International level and Eco-Certification at National level (Malta):

- EU ecolabel has about 800 certifications and is the official European Union label and is awarded to accommodation establishments and campsites and the verification process and assignment of the certificate is performed by the national partner organizations, e. g. environmental ministries.
- Green-Key has about 2.400 certifications and it is an eco-label available worldwide, awarded to leisure infrastructure such as hotels, hostels, campsites, holiday parks, small accommodations, conference centres, restaurants and attractions.
- Eco-certification is the national scheme for ensuring the environmental, socioeconomic, and cultural sustainability of hotels and farmhouses on the Maltese Islands and has been recognized by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC). The scheme was launched by the Malta Tourism Authority in 2002 and today represents approximately 16% of hotel accommodation or 22 hotels, and 7 farmhouses in Gozo. The scheme was updated in 2008 and again in 2012 where it was revised to be in line with the GSTC criteria. Third party audits are carried out every two years to ensure that hotels and farmhouses are meeting the requirements of the scheme.

### 2.2 Feasibility assessment

The label is assigned to private or public operators (tourist service providers) which apply specific energy, water and waste sustainable management actions in their activities, offering to tourists a choice of services able to minimize the consumption of water and energy and the generation of waste and to better know and appreciate local products during their stay.

According to the **ConsumelessMed label operational criteria** the promoters of the label in each tourist area are the public administrations, together with local key actors representing the tourist and environmental sectors. All of them become members of the local ConsumeLess Committee, committing themselves to manage the label implementation and identify a person responsible for the coordination of the activities. Their main tasks inside the committee are:

- providing technical support
- awarding the label
- promoting at territorial level the label and the facilities awarded
- monitoring the application of the label's criteria and the reached results.

At the end of the project, based on the transferring and capitalization activities, it will be evaluated if the existing framework conditions will allow to set up an international ConsumeLess Committee representing all the Med area involved in the project.

Facilities willing to apply the ConsumelessMed label should sign a ConsumelessMed adhesion form including the following commitments:

- implementation of mandatory and voluntary actions aiming to reduce waste, water and energy consumption, including the upkeeping of good practices that have already been implemented
- management must ensure that the employees are aware of the establishment's environmental undertakings and behave in a more sustainable way
- implementation of communication activities: ConsumelessMed label must be displayed in a prominent place, information materials about the environmental commitment and the ConsumeLess initiatives must be visible and accessible for guests and published on web.

Facilities signing the adhesion form must:

- identify a person in charge of the ConsumelessMed label implementation (label manager) and (if needed) the other figures supporting him/her, and
- make a self-audit identifying existing management activities aiming to reduce waste production, to increase separate collection, to reduce water and energy consumption (mandatory) and quantifying current waste production and water and energy consumption (voluntary), on the basis of a specific monitoring check list (one for each category of tourist service providers). This analysis will be the first step for the following monitoring activities.

The **ConsumelessMed label Technical criteria** represent specific mandatory and voluntary requirements about waste, water, energy, organic and local food and other eco-products, and management that are referred to the five different categories of tourist service providers that has been identified, namely Hotels and accommodation, Camping sites, Cafes and restaurants, Food and handicraft shops and Beach resorts.

A specific set of criteria are mandatory and must be satisfied. These criteria must be easily met by the facilities and represent the minimum requirements to guarantee an improvement in the prevention and reduction of waste, water and energy consumption.

It would be possible, under exceptional circumstances, for a first-time applicant to require for a dispensation if one or more mandatory criteria have not been reached. In this exceptional case the management must provide documentation clearly explaining the reasons for not having reached

the criteria as well as a plan of action for reaching the required level within 6-12 months. Voluntary criteria are more challenging and encourages the business to constantly make an extra effort to lower the environmental costs and to reduce environmental impact in and around the company. Mandatory and voluntary criteria cover five areas:

- Energy
- Water
- Waste
- Organic and local food and other eco-products
- Management and communication.

### **2.3 Identification of the target markets**

The ConsumelessMed label can be awarded to the following categories of service providers:

- Hotels and accommodation
- Camping sites
- Cafes and restaurants
- Food and handicraft shops
- Beach resorts.

### **2.4 Positioning of the ConsumeLess Label**

The label is assigned to private or public operators (tourist service providers) which apply specific energy, water and waste sustainable management actions in their activities, offering to tourists a choice of services able to minimize the consumption of water and energy and the generation of waste and to better know and appreciate local products during their stay.

The ConsumelessMed label has been conceived as a simplified, but fully integrated, version of the existing national and international certification systems. It aims to encourage an easier implementation (and communication) of sustainability measures by tourist service providers that could become a first step towards more complex labelling system like the European Ecolabel.

### **2.5 Identification of management and implementation options**

The post project visibility of the Label is ensured according to the following actions:

- After one year, the monitoring checklist used for the preliminary analysis must be filled in again. The label manager will briefly describe the measures adopted in order to satisfy mandatory and voluntary criteria, also using quantitative indicators (when possible) to better specify the reached results. The compiled checklist must be sent to the ConsumeLess Committee that will check it through an off-site audit. Additional on-site audits should be organized by the committee on a minimum sample of facilities (20%-25%).
- As an alternative, all the monitoring phase (including the first preliminary analysis) could be managed directly by the ConsumeLess Committee appointing auditors in charge of compiling the checklist during on-site visits organized for all the involved facilities.

For the first year of application the facilities must report and show that at least all mandatory criteria have been satisfied. It would be possible, under exceptional circumstances, for a first-time

applicant to require for a dispensation if one or more mandatory criteria have not been reached. In this exceptional case the management must provide documentation clearly explaining the reasons for not having reached the criteria as well as a plan of action for reaching the required level within 6-12 months. In order to keep the facilities engaged, the ConsumeLess Committee can decide to ask them to develop (every 1-2 years) a new voluntary action or to set a new target improving quantitative results related to mandatory criteria (e.g. increase energy efficient light bulbs from 50% to 70%, add a new category of waste collected separately or reduce the number of single use products served at the restaurant).

## 2.6 Economic considerations for the options

Considering the costing of the implementation of the action and potential revenues which might be generated through the implementation for the action, we must say that, according to the ConsumeLessMed label economic criteria, the ConsumeLess committee will be in charge of the ConsumeLessMed label management and update and could be financed by public funding and/or by annual fees required to the awarded facilities. A satisfactory number of benefits for the applicants is identified, that includes:

- Promotional activities: The ConsumeLess Committee will organize a local communication campaign in order to promote the label and the facilities awarded. On a broader level (regional and national), the ConsumeLess project will develop a marketing strategy aiming to promote the ConsumeLess tourist model.
- Use of the label: All the facilities signing the agreement and implementing the label following the steps described (monitoring, audit, communication) can use the ConsumeLessMed logo for their promotional materials and initiatives.
- Technical support: The ConsumeLess Committee will organize training courses and help desk activities about the ConsumeLessMed label criteria and management rules. If needed, specific onsite support could be arranged with some facilities requiring a help in the application of the label criteria.

The Committee can support facilities also organizing purchasing groups in order to help them to buy specific equipment (LED light bulbs, water flow reducers, organic waste composting bins etc.) getting better terms of payments:

## 2.7 Communication materials supplied

A ConsumeLess Kit of communication materials will be delivered to the facilities implementing the label. The kit will contain:

- standard communication materials - window film (mandatory) and a plaque (suggested) displaying the label, posters (cm 35x50) highlighting the main label criteria (mandatory), informative brochure about the ConsumeLess model (mandatory).
- communication materials, specific for each category of tourist service provider - menu/breakfast table cards (suggested), room cards (suggested), stickers or shelf labels (suggested).
- customized items, specific for each category, enhancing the mandatory actions' implementation: e.g. sugar bowls, carafes for tap water, bins for waste separated collection, doggy bags for food leftovers (at least one item is mandatory).



- customized items to be distributed to guests and customers: e.g. reusable bags, flasks, block notes including ConsumeLess tips, funs, portable ashtrays (at least one item is mandatory).

The customized items, together with any other kind of incentives promoting the label (e.g. discount campaigns) can be chosen by each local ConsumeLess Committee depending on their preferences, if they are coherent with a resource efficient approach and with the effective implementation of ConsumeLess measures.

Furthermore, tourism service providers having internal branding communication policy will be given specific guidelines in order to incorporate their branding into customized ConsumeLess communication materials.

## **2.8 Ranking of the identified option**

More specifically identification of the most feasible option (based on multi-criteria analysis), includes the ConsumeLess Labelling process to be well planned, a low-cost action compared to the benefits. However, it must truly reflect the ConsumeLess process and “not be a Label” alone. The Label must be communicated to the social media and the booking portals (e.g., TripAdvisor, Booking.com, Expedia).

The ConsumeLess Labelling process adopts a bottom up information monitoring approach in the territories implementing the model, to collect information (both quantitative data and qualitative feedbacks) on the development of the label and demonstrative measures. This kind of approach represents a starting point towards the development of a broader monitoring system like the European Tourism Indicators System (ETIS), aiming to better describe and monitor the tourism impact and the sustainability performance of the area.

### 3 Recommendations

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1. The ConsumeLess Label must be communicated to the social media and the booking portals (e.g., TripAdvisor, Booking.com, Expedia), but in addition it is extremely important for its the successful implementation, to reinforce development of alliances with well-positioned, knowledgeable distribution channels in the greatest extent possible.
2. Most distribution channels provide information for: prospective tourists; bundled tourism products; and establish mechanisms enabling consumers to make, confirm and pay for reservations. A distinction of tourism distribution channels can be made between those that are direct and indirect in character, that have potential to influence travel patterns and behaviour of specific travel markets, including of course the ones involved in the ConsumeLess Label.
  - Direct channels normally link suppliers and consumers without the aid of channel intermediaries. Such channels normally involve suppliers developing and maintaining direct information and sales contacts with consumers in specific target market areas.
  - Indirect distribution channels (e.g. travel agents, tour operators and wholesalers) involve a wide range of organizations communicating and selling products to consumer markets on behalf of tourism suppliers and destinations (Gee et al, 1989; Michie and Sullivan, 1990).
3. The promotional activities of the ConsumeLess tourist model must include the organisation of a local communication campaign by the ConsumeLess Committee, to promote label and facilities awarded. On a broader level (regional and national) the ConsumeLess project will develop a marketing strategy aiming to promote the ConsumeLess tourist model. However, there is no clear answer to the question which type of tourism distribution channel should best be used, and it is important for the people responsible of the ConsumeLess Labelling Process to understand the product preferences, the prior experiences, perceived risks, travel package price thresholds, use of unique or novel destinations, and market support needs of channel partners and their customers prior to forming their marketing strategy.
4. Interesting studies considered the use of online information sources relative to more conventional ones. The application and extension of Information Technology (IT) in the tourism sector (Katsoni and Venetsanopoulou, 2012; Buhalis and Zoge, 2007) has favoured the dissemination of information on tourism destinations and their promotion, mainly through the World Wide Web, that some consider to be the ideal source for the distribution of such information. Nonetheless, a considerable part of the studies produced on the new IT deal with the possibilities that this IT can offer to market tourism destinations. The Internet has intensified the complexity of the travel decision making process, as it has become an important channel for travellers' information search (Gretzel et al., 2006; Xiang et al., 2008;) creating an environment whereby online information providers such as tourist boards, hotel and resort websites, travel agents, bloggers and magazines actively compete for attention to attract searchers and ultimately, bookers.
5. It will be useful for the promotion of the ConsumeLess Labelling process to rely on multiple information channels depending on consumers' socio-demographic characteristics (Katsoni, 2011). The ConsumeLess Labelling process adopts a *bottom up* information monitoring approach in the territories implementing the model, to collect information (both quantitative data and qualitative feedbacks) on the development of the label and demonstrative measures.

The studying the information taken by the above policy in parallel to the successful segmentation of the tourism market, reviles to have important implications from the managerial perspective at the ConsumeLess Label process. This information can increase the economic impacts from travel and tourism at the destinations, and lead to the adoption of the necessary measures to reinforce the forms of information analysed in this study in order to attract the most suitable target market. The implementation of the forms of communication analysed requires the collaboration of diverse tourist agencies, and the close collaboration with the Destination Management Systems (DMSs) or the Destination Management Organizations (DMO) integrating all information in a manner that can meet the needs of tourists (Luo and Zhong, 2015).

6. Factors such as social media, mobility, and use of Word-of-mouth (WOM) through narratives in a variety of consumer-generated media (CGM) are very important to forming an effective ConsumeLess Label marketing strategy and diffusion of good practices. In such a keen competitive environment, it becomes imperative for the ConsumeLess Label to find new ways to distinguish themselves from others for their long term and sustainable success. Social media, mobile devices, the increasing adoption of smart phones, and other emerging channels of information, communication and distribution, impose enormous impact on travel planning by supporting new behaviour in all aspects of tourist consumption. ConsumeLess Label policy makers should focus attention on multiple distribution channels, both online and offline, and incorporating marketing policies regarding a variety of consumer-generated media (CGM), such as social media, mobility, and use of Word-of-mouth (WOM) by creating and promoting stories through narratives in the whole spectrum of communication applicable (Gretzel, 2006; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010).
7. There is always need for the ConsumeLess Label policy makers to have an adaptive behaviour in response to the ever-changing technological environment, to create a recommendation system for ConsumeLess travel, by understanding their role as initiators, facilitators, coordinators and educators for tourism operators and for e-tourism activities.
8. In finishing:
  - Posting the Label: The ConsumeLess Ecolabelling must be posted in multiple physical locations (e.g., front desk or windows of hotel) and be well designed, as it use can save up to 50% of energy, up to 30% of water, up to 50% of waste to be transported to waste sites, leading to an eco-friendly tourism.
  - Expand pilots to seven: Malta is a small and well-organized country; hence there is no need for excess bureaucracy. Three types of activities will help the implementation of the ConsumeLess Label: (i) Local Councils to promote the ConsumeLess concept to stakeholders, (ii) Fostering effective communication between localities which can acquire the label and promote it, and (iii) well-coordinated pilots. Given that Marsaskala is one of the four local councils (Marsaskala, Cospicua, Rabat, Zabbar) promoting the ConsumeLess Label, it is proposed to expand the group of pilots and include St. Julians, Sliema, Gzira for a full ConsumeLess uptake of the Label, to a total of seven local councils in 2020.

## 4 Authors

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### 4.1 Prof. Marc Bonazountas

Profile: 47 years of academic and professional experience. Born in Athens Greece (GR, 1945); GR/USA citizen; Civil Engineer; World-wide experience; Expertise in the entire spectrum of civil/environment sciences/engineering; technologies of GIS/Geoinfo; ICT/space/Copernicus; Policy/Law; Management of large scale EC projects; Authored 600+ publications; On the editorial board of several scientific journals; Languages: Fluent in Greek, English, German, French, basics in Italian & Flemish; World-wide experience in 60+ countries and 35+ international organizations.

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Focus: (i) Management of large-scale interdisciplinary projects (e.g., space/geoinformation/Copernicus, environment, civil protection, security/CIP, aerosystems, shipping, aviation, security); Policy & Economics, EU-/world-wide experience. (ii) Development of new large H2020 projects, (iii) EC and governments support to major national projects development/implementation, (iv) work in environment domains combined with Geoinformation (e.g. web Geomatics, S[pace/Copernicus) for policy and technologies development as added value products (e.g. [MRV](#) emissions platform via Copernicus).

### 4.2 Prof. Vicky Katsoni

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#### **4.3 Mr. Dylan Schembri**

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