

DestiMED Project

Mediterranean Ecotourism Destination: main components
(joint planning, monitoring, management and promotion) for a
governance system in Mediterranean protected areas

WP4/Deliv 4.4.1: Minutes of the Regional Transferability Event (22-23
October 2019 – Rome, Italy).

Coordinated by:



WWF Mediterranean

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Contributions from: all PPs.

DestiMED Project Partners:



(lead partner)



4.4.1 MINUTES OF THE REGIONAL TRANSFER EVENT

DestiMED REGIONAL TRANSFER EVENT

22-23 October 2019 – Rome, Italy



1. Background and Context

The Regional Transfer Event of the DestiMED Project was organized by WWF Mediterranean and Regione Lazio at Villa Celimontana, in Rome, on October 22nd and 23rd 2019.

The main objectives of the Regional Transfer Event were the following:

1. Transferring the main outcomes/achievements of the project to the relevant stakeholders
2. Promote further discussions and experience sharing among relevant regional stakeholders
3. Discuss needs, gaps and further capitalisation and collaboration opportunities

The Regional Transfer Event brought together a total of 98 people from government to business and conservation community, representing entities from most of the Mediterranean Region.

2. Discussion Flow & Outcomes

Following a welcome from Regione Lazio representatives, three opening speeches were made by:

- Enrica Onorati (Lazio Region, Italy)
- Jelena Sobat (Ministry of Tourism of Croatia)
- Elena Di Raco (National Tourism Agency - Italy)

The speeches highlighted the importance of the project from the national, and regional perspectives and highlighted some of the key policy and governance issues addressed by DestiMED.



Figure 1. Welcome speech from Jelena Sebat (Ministry of Tourism of Croatia)

SESSION I – TRANSFERRING THE MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PROJECT

The first panel session gave an overview of the project, highlighting main achievements and transferring the main results and methodological approaches, including the DestiMED standard and the Ecological Footprint Calculator. The session was chaired by WWF Med (Mauro Randone) and included the following participants:

- Iacopo sinibaldi (Regione Lazio)
- Carla Danelutti (IUCN Med)
- Jeremy Sampson (Travel Foundation)
- Alessandro Galli (Global Footprint Network)
- Antonios Barnias (Samaria National Park)
- Elton Caushi (Albania Trip)

The presentation, including the main outcomes of the project can be downloaded from [here](#).



Figure 2. Introductory session (WWF med, Lazio Region, IUCN Med and The Travel Foundation)

As part of the transferring activities, and in addition to the overall introduction, the Global Footprint Network team remained available during both days of the event, to showcase and test the Footprint Calculator to interested participants, that could try in real-time on the PC provided.

SESSION 2-3 THINK TANKS

The sessions aimed to promote further discussion and exchange among the participants on priority topics covered by the project. The session included three parallel THINK TANKS on the following topics:

- Impact Monitoring
- Governance
- Product Development & Capacity

Participants were split into groups and facilitated discussions took place, after a brief introduction to each topic. Key recommendations have been provided and can be summarised as follows:

Monitoring think tank

Facilitator: Audrey Scott

DestiMED Presenter: Alessandro Galli, GFN

Introduction presentation: Overview of the Ecological Footprint Calculator developed to measure environmental impact of MEET ecotourism packages.

Remaining Challenges and Problems:

- Measures environmental impact only. Doesn't take into consideration other pillars of sustainable tourism (e.g., socio-economic, cultural preservation, etc.). Need tourism net impact.
- Need comparison with other types of tourism packages (e.g., mass tourism, mainstream, etc.) to really show that ecotourism packages have a lower impact. How to get data for this?
- Needs LOTS of resources and time to collect data for the EF calculator to be effective and accurate. This can be very challenging for the LEC to manage.
- Outside of a specific project (with funding), need to find ways to incentivize the private sector (service providers) to provide data and take the time to work with the LEC on measuring and monitoring.
- Challenge of engaging the private sector more and helping them understand the benefits to them of providing data and using the EF calculator to improve their sustainability.
- Mass tourism is still the norm and is expected to continue to grow in the Mediterranean. Need educate consumers/travelers and change behaviors towards ecotourism options.

Recommendations:

- 1. Socio economic criteria should be further integrated in the monitoring process.**
 - Expand the monitoring process from only environmental to include socioeconomic impacts.
 - Incorporate climate change indicators into the monitoring process.
- 2. Importance of the “numbers” (to understand if the product is sustainable, to improve the product, for marketing, etc.). Focusing on the tangible results can help engagement of private sector and government.**
 - Use numbers and data more with politicians, decision makers, private sectors and tourism marketing organizations to influence policy, management and planning. Need to know how to interpret numbers to each target audience so that they are meaningful and may impact their decisions or behaviors.
 - Create a benchmark level or baseline numbers so that it's possible to compare tourism impact results and know what a “good” EF result would be – both for ecotourism and mainstream tourism packages.
 - Need to create more incentives for private sector to provide data and see the benefits of monitoring and improving sustainability. Education and capacity building for private companies on how to proactively use the EF calculator and benefits of operating more sustainably. Perhaps increased visibility, awards, marketing tools for the private businesses who provide data and go through the EF and monitoring process.
 - Promote and market the quality and uniqueness of the travel experience because it is ecotourism and focused on connection to nature, culture and people vs. just the sustainability aspect of the package. Travelers want first to have a great experience, and if they can do so in a way that reduces their negative impact that's an even better sell.
- 3. What is needed is a framework of co-management and participation, although players may vary from country to country based on local context (e.g., politics, funding, etc.)**

- Need to create multi-level governance frameworks that are flexible to changing local conditions and contexts (e.g., strong government support and financing vs. weak or none). There needs to be a combination of conservation, private and management sectors to be effective. Players may change based on local context. Perhaps involve the Chamber of Commerce as the role of the private sector instead of relying on a few private companies.
- Create a coordination group to collect data to distribute the work and resources needed beyond just the LEC.

4. **Scale up to the destination and scale up on the 4 pillars of sustainability.**

- More integration of monitoring between the ecotourism package and the destination. Perhaps incorporate other monitoring systems/methodologies for a full or holistic picture of how tourism is impacting the destination.
- Ultimate goal is for monitoring to include the 4 pillars of sustainable tourism (sustainable management, socioeconomic impacts, cultural impacts, environmental impacts).
- Increased interest in destinations, municipalities and tourism boards on the importance of measuring and monitoring the net impact of tourism. The goal: more support from the destination for monitoring and better alignment of policy and promotion toward ecotourism development (vs. mass tourism approach).

5. **Simplify the process without diluting the data.**

- Simplify the data collection process to make it easier for the LEC/coordinators and private sector to complete the process. Need to find a way to do this that maintains the integrity of the EF calculator methodology and monitoring, but in a simplified and easier way.

6. **Work towards a certification.**

- **Expand on EF calculator and other monitoring processes towards an actual certification.** This is a long journey, but the process will provide opportunity for improvement and cooperation. And, the end result of a certification will be an incentive for public and private sectors to get involved and participate.
- Better integration with ETIS, GSTC, European Charter for Sustainability and other existing criteria and methodologies.

Policy Inputs:

- **An improved legislative framework is necessary.** Involve conservation, management and private sector for coordinating data collection and monitoring.
- **Further political commitment to promote ecotourism.** Integrate the monitoring data and tools into the decision-making at policy level.
- **Dedicated funding for monitoring is needed.**

Other considerations:

- **Determine how new EU sustainable business financing taxonomy can be used for ecotourism businesses.** Possibility to integrate the EF calculator and monitoring into this process?



Figure 2. Monitoring think tank

Governance think tank

Facilitator: Jeremy Sampson

DestiMED Presenter: Carla Danelutti

Recommendations:

1. **Local Ecotourism Cluster (LEC):** Private-public partnership is at the core. We need to provide guidance on how to make those partnerships negotiate function more effectively, and we need to focus on tangible results that incentivize the private sector, not only economic.
 - Better involve the public and private sectors and increase cooperation.
 - Involve private sector as a whole, not just tourism service providers involved in the ecotourism package. Perhaps engage with the Chamber of Commerce or other private sector associations.
 - Build on existing momentum to come together around other issues and challenges on a destination level.
 - Look at how PAs as destinations can be seen as an example for other DMOs.
2. **Regional Ecotourism Cluster (REC):** Increase coordination among different divisions and departments within public sector structures. Identify complementarities and shared strategies and ensure someone has budget for cooperation.
 - Integrate and align with existing regional development plans (when they exist). Influence decision-makers when development new regional development plans so that ecotourism development and management is incorporated and a priority.
 - Need to influence regional level tourism marketing and promotional plans as their agenda is usually about increasing tourist numbers vs. managing tourism numbers and sustainability.
 - Share case studies of what has worked successfully so other regions can benefit and learn.

3. **Mediterranean Ecotourism Cluster (MEC):** Make the most of the frameworks already in place (Bcn Conv, WestMED, PanoraMED) to get a broader impact. Leverage the power of visibility, collective voice, and communications to showcase results and elevate the agenda.

Policy Input: Task force at regional to oversee better integration of funding streams across departments.

- Strengthen LEC support.
- Involve tourism boards so that tourism promotion is aligned with ecotourism development and managing net impacts of tourism.
- Improve destination management and bring stakeholders together to work around a common agenda.



Figure 3. Governance think tank

Product Development and Capacity Building think tank

Facilitator: Daniel Noll

DestiMED Presenter: Luca Santarossa

General Remaining Challenges, Problems and Areas of Improvement

The following items were not incorporated into the 3 main recommendations presented during Session 3.

- Feedback and lessons learned from paying customers PAs (and their packages) should be shared across the MEET Network so that PAs may learn from the market experiences of others.

- Define measures for the health of the MEET Network, not just the health of individual PAs and packages. This will enable the linkage between individual product/package success and the overall health of the network.
- Evolve training based on current experiences, with a focus on the needs and interaction with the market.
- Consider improving the documentation of adjacent impacts and awareness outside the MEET Network. For example, if techniques (like impact monitoring) are incorporated by other organizations tour operators outside the MEET Network.
- Greater effort in MEET Network branding and awareness through simple giveaways or souvenirs.
- Consider establishing a network-wide DMC which incorporates all participating MEET Network PAs.

Recommendations:

1. **Initiative to better systematize the relationship between LECs and ITOs**, including standardized ITO selection criteria, contracts, distribution of roles -- with the intent of stabilizing and evolving the LECs in the MEET ecosystem.
 - Address: Parks often don't have the capacity for logistics, nor selecting the ITO. Local authorities ought to be more involved in this. (NOTE: This may also connect to a policy consideration.)
 - Clarify the rights and obligations between ITO and LEC and parks. Formalize all agreements.
 - Consider park-specific ITO criteria.
 - Take advantage of overlaps in DestiMED / ECST stakeholder forum. Advance the principles of DestiMED and the MEET Network via other existing mechanisms like ECST. The concern and opportunity: to enable parks to achieve multiple stakeholder forum objectives at once while employing MEET principles (particularly those regarding the LEC).
2. **Initiative to bring greater consistency into the testing process and mechanism**, including tester selection criteria, consistency of testing and evaluation framework— and integration into a lightweight, abbreviated rapid product development framework.
 - Streamline testing, ensuring continuity between each round of testing, rather than a variation of opinions and mindsets from round to round due to variability of testers. This approach sometimes confuses parks and ITOs.
 - Reduce/shorten product development and testing cycles focusing on experience “touchpoints” (i.e, 6 days isn't needed to test a 6-day product; instead 1-3 days might suffice.)
 - Consider integrating multiple packages (multiple parks or MEET Network members) into a cross-Mediterranean itinerary to capitalize on tourists traveling a long distance and seeking a longer itinerary.
3. **Integrated initiative to address financial sustainability and market viability** to support that sustainability, and examination of increased package flexibility to support both.
 - Itinerary / package variation and flexibility issues were repeatedly raised. (Including whether the standard package should be 3-5 days, or whether shorter packages or even individual package components ought to be offered.)
 - Consider package flexibility. What happens when an activity is included by the ITO that is not formally in the package?
 - Consider market viability and also modeling visitor flow and itinerary length, comparing to estimated based on market analysis. Use this feedback and analysis to adjust itinerary length.
 - Commercial partner involvement will be required up-front regarding product variation.

Policy Input:

To enable scaling to the regional level, a task force to involve regional administrations to take the lead on the process, including easing (removing barriers to SMEs) and supporting policy.



Figure 4. Product development think tank

SESSION 4 – POLICY ROUNDTABLE

A fourth panel discussion focused specifically on policy aspects, relevant to the Project. An initial presentation of the DestiMED policy paper was made and then regional actors shared ongoing initiatives and provided feedback on the policy priorities to implement ecotourism in Mediterranean PAs.

Claudia Guzzon (CPMR) moderated a panel composed of:

- Erica Peroni (Lazio Region, Italy)
- Jelena Sobat (Ministry of Tourism, Croatia)
- Sylvain Petit (SMILO)
- Barbara Pais (EUROPARC Federation)
- Raffaele Mancini (Plan Bleu)



Figure 5. The Panellists of the Policy Session

The key elements that emerged from the Policy Panel can be summarised as follows:

- There is a strong need of a common policy framework together with incentives/funding to promote ecotourism activities in the region. Integrated management tools and plans are also very important.
- Fragmentation is an issue among relevant competences and responsibilities in public administration (different departments). Intersectoral collaboration is needed to exploit complementarities.
- We need to have dedicated financial resources and integrate monitoring systems, with multilevel governance, which is crucial for the long-term vision of tourism management.
- It is important to clearly have in mind our target (to whom this policy recommendations are addressed). The right interlocutors (EU, other levels) need to be identified and engaged.
- Participatory approach is fundamental to involve both private sectors and local stakeholders (e.g. Island Committee of SMILO, community consultations of EUROPARC).
- The main barriers to link tourism and conservation are lack of vision, lack of trust and lack of capacities/competences → need of human resources and capacity buildings
- Lack of source of funding compromises the sustainability in ecotourism planning and management, there is a strong need for dedicated financial resources.
- ERDF will probably be the main contributor to regional funding to Protected Areas in the next programming period.
- Given the complexity of the sector, it is key to have a shared vision and building strong partnerships (convincing investors to consider sustainability as core)

Relevant feedback and inputs coming from the 3 parallel sessions discussions (governance, product development and impact monitoring), will be integrated in the Policy document.

4. Closing Speeches

Moderator: Luca Santarossa (Federparchi)

Speakers:

- Giampiero Sammuri (Federparchi, EUROPARC Italy)
- Luigi Cabrini (Global Sustainable Tourism Council)
- Claudia Guzzon (Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions)
- Vito Consoli (Lazio Region, Italy)

Mr. Cabrini underlined that both MEET and DestiMED the involvement of local communities has been a pillar, and this needs a comprehensive approach, that was developed in the DestiMED standards. Also, the GSTC standards take into account such involvement, so the high consistency between the DestiMED standards and the GSTC ones. In order to make such involvement effective, it is important to foresee “capacity building” actions, like training for instance. How to “market” sustainability is one of the challenges, and one element is to underline that “quality” (when requiring good environment status) has a cost. Moreover, the involvement of business-related actors is crucial for long lasting sustainability, as well as to replicate such an approach in other areas.

Claudia Guzzon highlighted that the issue of making sustainable the current pattern of tourism (that is clearly showing its negative impacts) is now on top of the political agendas, both of EU and of Mediterranean countries. She therefore suggested that DestiMED experience must be shared with undergoing and future regional actions, such as WestMed, PanoraMed, etc.

Mr. Sammuri is proud of the results achieved by this project, to which Federparchi has brought its full contribution. He points out the high costs of the current model of tourism industry (overcrowded, quick getaways, wastes and emissions, etc.) for the environment but also for local communities. He recalls the very positive experience of the “European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas” approach launched by Europarc more than 20 years ago and with a large diffusion in Italy (16 out of the 24 National Parks have got it). He underline the strong link between high quality of a tourism product and the high level of sustainability of the same product, but to assure it one important element is the “interpretation”, i.e. the support that must be given to a visitor in order to make him/her understand the high value of the environmental (and cultural) attractions he/she is visiting.

Mr. Consoli summarized the work of Destimed and MEET with few words: participation – i.e. the importance of putting together different levels of public administration (from the single Park management authority till the European Union) and of different sectors (public, private, research); passion – he always perceived such huge involvement not only on the Lazio region staff but also in the representatives of the Parks involved as pilot areas and in all the project partners; synergy – i.e. trust in the reasons for looking at the sustainability as an important competitive factor in marketing the tourism in the parks; networking among different territories – for trying to imagine the future of tourism in the Mediterranean region, and to propose some concrete and viable solutions to keep the attractiveness of our destinations but adapting the tourism-driven consumption to the specific features of such geographical context. Mr. Consoli ends in announcing that the DestiMED-Plus project proposal has been selected for funding by the Interreg MED Programme, and this will allow the scaling up of the DestiMED approach at the sub-national (regional administration) level.

5. General conclusions

During the two days, a few priorities emerged regularly in different sessions, below is a summary of the most regularly recurring ones.

- Scaling up emerged as a priority in most sessions particularly at the regional level, in terms of governance and participation. More cross regional cooperation is also needed to get stakeholders to learn from each other, a platform to share lessons and experiences among regional players could help in this sense.
- All stakeholders need to be engaged at the same level when scaling up to the regional level. We need to have alignment among the relevant governance structures but also with marketing/tourism boards.
- Another recurrent remark referred to the necessity to find the right compromise to maintain the quality of the ecotourism experience, while implementing the monitoring methodology and at the same time to simplify the monitoring processes to keep it sustainable for the operators and PA managers.
- There is also a need not to lose the continuity of the projects, we should capitalise on existing results and not reinvent the same methodologies and approaches.
- Success is being measured at the park level, but we also need to go beyond, particularly assessing the engagement of local communities.
- Further work needs to be done to integrate better socio-economic criteria in the DestiMED standard.
- The projects need to aim to become self-sustaining, beyond EU funding. The sustainability aspect needs better marketing in order to allow it to thrive on its own.

The recently approved DESTIMED+ project addresses many of these priorities as it aims to capitalise on existing results to scale up to the regional level and to further improve the monitoring and overall sustainability aspects of the model developed in DestiMED.



Figure 6. Ceremony for the distribution of Diplomas to the Participating PAs and ITOs

ANNEX 1. AGENDA

DESTIMED Regional Transfer Event & THINK TANK AGENDA

22-23 October 2019

Villa Celimontana, Via della Navicella 12, Rome, Italy

DAY 1, 22 OCTOBER 2019

13:00 - 14:00

Registration and Welcome Lunch

14:00 - 14:30

OPENING SPEECHES

- Enrica Onorati (Lazio Region, Italy)
- Jelena Sobat (Ministry of Tourism of Croatia)
- Elena Di Raco (Agenzia Nazionale del Turismo)

14:30 - 16:00

SESSION 1 – DestiMED Project Outcomes

- ❖ Overview of project key results and outcomes
- ❖ Case studies and testimonials from project participants
- ❖ Open Q&A and discussion

16:00 - 16:30

Coffee Break

16:30 - 18:30

SESSION 2 - Parallel Think Tanks (Breakout Sessions)

1. Impact Monitoring
2. Governance
3. Product Development & Capacity

18:30

Networking Event

DAY 2, 23 October 2019

09:00 - 10:30

SESSION 3 - Think Tanks Reporting and Open Discussion

- ❖ Summary and recommendations from Session 2 Think Tanks
- ❖ Open Q&A and discussion

10:30 - 11:00

Coffee Break

11:00 - 12:30

SESSION 4 - Policy Round Table

Presentation of the DestiMED Policy Paper: Cinzia De Marzo

Panel session: *Regional leaders discuss Think Tank recommendations and outcomes of the DestiMED Policy Paper*

Moderator: Claudia Guzzon (Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions)

Panelists:

- Erica Peroni (Lazio Region, Italy)
- Jelena Sobat (Ministry of Tourism, Croatia)
- Sylvain Petit (SMILO)
- Barbara Pais (EUROPARC Federation)
- Raffaele Mancini (Plan Bleu)

12:30 - 13:00

CLOSING SPEECHES

Moderator: Luca Santarossa (WWF Adria)

- Giampiero Sammuri (Federparchi, EUROPARC Italy)
- Luigi Cabrini (Global Sustainable Tourism Council)
- Claudia Guzzon (Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions)
- Vito Consoli (Lazio Region, Italy)

13:00 - 14:00

Buffet Lunch

14:30 – 18:00

MEET GENERAL ASSEMBLY (**only** MEET Network members and DestiMED pilot actions)



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