

MITOMED+ Policy Paper

Towards a Mediterranean Integrated Management Model for Sustainable Maritime & Coastal Tourism

(Final version)

I. INTRODUCTION AND MAIN AIMS

The MITOMED+ “Models of Integrated Tourism in the Mediterranean” project aims to improve sustainability and responsibility in the field of maritime and coastal tourism (M&C). The partnership includes Tuscany Region (Lead Partner), ANCI Toscana (IT), Girona University (ES), Andalusia Region (ES), Institute of Agriculture and Tourism (HR), Larnaca District Development Agency (CY), NECSTouR (BE), Intermediterranean Commission of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe - CPMR-IMC (FR), CNR-IBE-Institute of Bioeconomy (IT).

The activities of the project aim to:

- increase knowledge and social dialogue on the development of M&C tourism to improve decision-making in partner regions;
- improve the planning of M&C tourism at the destination level and its coordination at the level of transnational governance;
- integrate project results into local, regional and national policies;
- set up a M&C tourism model in the MED area.

In the framework of the Sustainable Tourism Community of the Interreg MED Programme, the [MITOMED+](#) project developed a **Management Model on Sustainable M&C Tourism**, in cooperation with its partners, NECSTouR, the CPMR-IMC, the overall partnership, and other actors from relevant projects and initiatives. The goal of this Management Model is to improve sustainable and responsible maritime and coastal tourism management and planning in the Mediterranean area, capitalizing upon the results and outputs of past and current EU and MED projects, initiatives and policies related to sustainable tourism management.

This model builds on the [Athens Declaration of Interreg MED’s Sustainable Tourism Community](#) (2017). It intends to contribute to reaching its third objective “**to strengthen planning and management practices towards sustainable tourism**” by improving knowledge on data, products, services and policies through an assessed set of indicators developed by MITOMED+.

The **policy paper** advocates for a collective commitment of tourism stakeholders towards the Mediterranean Integrated Management Model on M&C Tourism and aims to deliver a legacy for Europe beyond 2020, thus further contributing to the implementation of the [United Nations’ 2030 Agenda](#) its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and its implementation at European, Mediterranean and local levels.

II. POLICY FRAMEWORK

This policy paper, elaborated by MITOMED+ partners:

1. **Acknowledges and supports the implementation of the M&C Tourism Management Model** in line with UNWTO objectives, with the aim to: ensure tourism sustainability, establish a competitive edge, spread the benefits of tourism, improve tourism yield and build a strong and vibrant brand identity¹.

2. **Acknowledges** the [CPMR Intermediterranean Commission \(IMC\) Political Agenda 'Promoting Sustainable Tourism in Mediterranean Regions'](#) recognizing the need for:

- An integrated approach to the co-evolution of human activities and natural systems in coastal and maritime areas;
- A more coordinated action of Public Administrations of all levels to achieve sustainable tourism;
- A better knowledge concerning the tourism sector (data/indicators);
- Strengthening the sustainability and culture aspects of the tourism sector while applying the principles of [Integrated Coastal Zone Management \(ICZM\)](#) and [Maritime Spatial Planning \(MSP\)](#), and promoting innovative forms of tourism (e.g. eco-tourism, cultural itineraries, protection & promotion of cultural heritage);
- Mainstreaming sustainable tourism in emerging strategies and initiatives or frameworks of cooperation at Euromed scale;
- A full exploitation of innovation and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for an enhanced digitalization of the tourism sector.

3. **Recalls** the principles of several policies and instruments regulating Coastal and Maritime activities, about sustainable tourism, including the Barcelona Convention, the Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) Directive, the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Protocol, the [UNEP/MAP Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development](#), the EU Blue Growth Strategy, the [BlueMed Initiative](#), the [Bologna Charter Initiative](#) and the Integrated Regional Development policies on sustainable tourism.

4. **Acknowledges** the outcomes of the MITOMED Project, on which the main results of MITOMED+ were built: promoting the integrated management of M&C tourism by improving knowledge on data, products, services, and policies through an assessed set of indicators based on the NECSTouR model. Such a model has proved to be successful in providing a set of cross-sectoral indicators to standardize the collection and comparison of tourism data on Mediterranean M&C tourism sustainability and competitiveness.

¹ In connection with the first point, another key aspect to consider is making tourism a driver for inclusive and sustainable development. Regarding the second element, destinations that are well managed, are able to identify the markets that work best for their own economic, environmental and social development, their strengths and weaknesses as compared to destinations aiming at similar types of demand. Hence destinations are able to identify and put into practice a competitive edge.

5. Acknowledges the NECSTouR '[Interregional strategy 2019-2021 for the Sustainable Tourism of Tomorrow](#)'. Being the 75% of NECSTouR's members maritime Regions, this document details joint goals and joint actions to deliver solutions to common EU destination challenges. Among these, one can identify: territory preservation in a smart and sustainable way, implementing evidence-based policy decisions and using traditional data for increasing the efficacy of policies, stimulating talents as drivers for territories' sustainability and competitiveness, promoting users safety and business resilience, and balance the preservation of places, products and people by ensuring the socio-cultural sustainability of the tourism offer. NECSTouR's strategy also focuses on coastal and maritime destinations and hence delineates five priorities, the so-called "[Five -S for the Sustainable Tourism of Tomorrow](#)": 1. Smart Destinations, 2. Socio-cultural Balance, 3. Skills and Talent, 4. Safety and Resilience, 5. Statistics and Measurability.

6. Builds on the Athens Declaration of Interreg MED's Sustainable Tourism Community, and especially aims to contribute to reaching its third objective "to strengthen planning and management practices towards sustainable tourism" by the end of 2019.

7. Supports the implementation of the measures to address the main challenges identified by the Interreg MED Sustainable Tourism Community and its policy recommendations, which are based on the work and final results obtained by the Community:

- [Ensuring an effective monitoring of tourism sustainability in the Mediterranean Region;](#)
- [Promoting alternative tourism models to reduce anthropic pressure in the Mediterranean region;](#)
- [Tourism as a strategic driver for inclusive, responsible and sustainable growth in the Mediterranean region;](#)
- [Governance as a tool for sustainable and responsible tourism in the Mediterranean region.](#)

8. Recognizes and recommends the 5 principles of NECSTouR's [Barcelona Declaration "Better Places to Live, Better Places to Visit"](#), supporting Regions in addressing regional challenges related to balancing people, places and business.

9. Takes into consideration all the initiatives and frameworks of cooperation aiming to promote the sustainable development of Mediterranean territories and sustainable tourism in particular, such as the [West Med Maritime Initiative](#), the [European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region](#), the [MED Cooperation Alliance](#) as well as the work of the [Union for the Mediterranean](#) on blue economy ([UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change](#) – 2014; [UfM Ministerial Declaration on Blue Economy](#) – 2015).

III. KEY POLICY MESSAGES

We, members of the Interreg MED project MITOMED+, belonging to the Interreg MED Sustainable Tourism Community, advocate for the following political messages:

1. **The European Union** must consider the irreversibility of the negative impacts of tourism on Mediterranean coastal areas and **increase its efforts and investments** in order to harmonise, simplify and help the implementation of sustainable tourism policies at national, regional and local levels. On the one hand, this implies considering the situation at local level and the specific geographical context of the Mediterranean, as proposed in MITOMED+'s M&C Tourism Management Model. On the other hand, sound and integrated investments from the EU are encouraged, not only through the EU Cohesion policy and territorial cooperation but also through other instruments (blue and green bonds, private funding incentives, etc.). In this sense, the EU should also consider the introduction of a more specific and substantial line of funding for Sustainable Tourism in the EU budget for the 2021-2027 programming period, to face the challenge of managing tourism sustainability more effectively in the future and fully cope with territorial needs.

2. The **Interreg MED programme, the DG GROW of the European Commission and the future European Parliament Intergroups** on Tourism and Seas Rivers Islands and Coastal Areas, as well as all emerging strategies and Initiatives at Mediterranean level tackling sustainable tourism, should continue supporting the dissemination, implementation and adaptation of the M&C Tourism Management Model at Mediterranean level. MITOMED+ project's tools – the use of which is strongly recommended – are available to that end (e.g. Green Beach Model toolbox, sustainable tourism indicators and online platform) for the post 2020 programming period. Both the model and tools can be replicated throughout the whole of the Mediterranean, due to their potential for comparing data and trends at destination level, between destinations, and over a given period of time.

3. **States** must build on the specificities of local tourist destinations when defining their Tourism strategy. This means ensuring a real comprehensive and informed approach taking into account regional and local actions plans.

4. **Regions** need to set up macro-thematic and multi-sectoral European and Mediterranean strategies considering all relevant actors and not only the destinations or Destination Management Organisations (DMO), so that they can fully improve and manage the economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism. To do so, they need to work on governance, competitiveness, innovation, sustainability and inclusion.

5. **Adaptation capacity**, which is one of the main features of territorial vulnerability of coastal areas, is the component on which coastal Public Administrations can have higher influence when facing the challenge of climate change. In this perspective, Public Administrations must measure the sustainability of their tourist destinations using a sample of indicators and adapt their strategy according to these data.

6. The first step to be taken in a tourism destination committed to be sustainable is **having a 'sustainable overtime' form of governance**. For this, stakeholders need to be identified and, a destination development group and partnerships should be established so as to be transformed and evolve into a Destination Management Organisation.

7. **Looking forward to the running and emerging macro-regional strategies and sea basin initiatives promoted by the EU and Mediterranean Partner Countries**, it is paramount to foster and to substantiate cooperation tools to make the actions taken by coastal Administrations more efficient in dealing with coastal integrated management and protection, maritime space management, adaptation to climate change, along the way of sustainable development. Mediterranean Tourist destinations, suffering even more from the negative effects of climate change, must create and implement a Sustainable Tourism Development Strategic Plan adapted to their local specificities so as to ensure tourism sustainability, establish a competitive edge, spread the benefits of tourism, improve tourism yield, and build a strong and vibrant brand identity.

8. A **Sustainable Tourism Development Strategic Plan must be as horizontal and integrated as possible** in order to achieve economic development for residents without putting at risk again their wellbeing and the tangible and intangible elements of their environment, whether natural or cultural. This should be done following the 5 different steps identified within the MITOMED+ M&C Tourism Management Model:

- step 1: Setting up a leading and collaborating structure (e.g. DMO);
- step 2: Carrying out an assessment in the destinations to evaluate the status quo of the destination as far as sustainability is concerned;
- step 3: Developing a shared vision with related budget and timeframe;
- step 4: Formulation, consultation and approval of the Sustainable Tourism Development Strategic Plan
- step 5: Monitoring and evaluation

9. **Public administrations** at all levels need to keep supporting with their commitment and actions the launching and implementation of cooperation initiatives and frameworks at Mediterranean level that can foster sustainable maritime and coastal tourism management: works and forthcoming Ministerial declaration of the Union for the Mediterranean on Blue Economy, the WestMed initiative, BlueMed and the EUSAIR priority actions (pillar 4).

10. All entities and stakeholders involved in Sustainable Tourism should **strengthen cross-sectoral and public-private cooperation** for the implementation of MITOMED+ key policy messages, in line with and contributing to Sustainable Development Goal number 17 "Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development".

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