



Project co-financed by the European
Regional Development Fund

WP6 CAPITALISATION

Deliverable 6.2.2 – Capitalisation Report

Beneficiary 1 – Lazio Region

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Deliverable 6.2.2 – Capitalisation Report

Contracting Authority



The deliverable was prepared and submitted to Lazio Region by SL&A Turismo e Territorio and Francigena Service



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1. STATE OF THE ART OF TOURISM DATA MANAGEMENT

1.1 Analysis of needs: conclusions and recommendations of Activity 3.1

The “study phase” of WP 3 examined existing methodological approaches to tourism data management and analysed previous projects and experiences in tourism data knowledge, in order to find gaps and needs in data collection management and to identify the main methods, systems and outputs of previous MED projects.

In deliverables 3.1.1 and 3.1.2, the state of the art and gaps in data collection and management in the tourism system were analysed from the perspective of five areas: Official Statistics data, Open and Big Data, Sustainable Tourism Indicators, Mediterranean Tourism Observatories and EU funded projects.

Firstly, there is a need to gather more relevant and standard data at regional level, on a robust and regular basis. Indeed, standard methods of data management, if shared among the Mediterranean regions, could help local policymakers to gain reliable and holistic knowledge of the dynamics of destinations, pertinent not only to the tourism sector but also to other sectors that deliver relevant information. Armed with this grassroots regional knowledge and data, regions could influence the development of tourism policies and, more broadly, sea-basin and macro-regional strategies. Consequently, there is a need for better governance at national and regional levels in order to establish and implement strategies of data management.

Secondly, a complete picture is needed, along with the availability of sustainability indicators, which should be regarded from both the demand and supply sides, in order to provide information and tools for local policymakers, stakeholders and tourists.

With regard to local policymakers, tools are required in order to better understand to what extent the tourism ecosystem can materially contribute to the achievement of EU sustainability objectives, and what the related costs of this transition may be. Stakeholders can benefit from tools that enable them to manage the processes of the customer journey, from awareness to advocacy. Tourists need tools not only for planning and booking their travel, but also for enjoying their experiences: tourists become the co-creators of valuable data.

Furthermore, observatories in the Mediterranean area should create more networking activities and deepen cooperation at various geographical levels, from both same-country and cross-border perspectives.

Finally, there is still a serious gap in Big Data management, due to difficulties encountered in public coordination and policy, issues related to data ownership, and the high level of skilled staff required.

As stated by the Interreg MED Sustainable Tourism Community, “Lack of data availability at local level, lack of political commitment and financial investment for monitoring, and low skill levels in human resources to appropriately manage measurement and data collection are the gaps to be filled¹”.

For these reasons, measuring and monitoring the impacts of tourism dynamics, including in relation to other sectors, is the route to improved governance and management of sustainable tourist destinations. It is with this in mind that deliverable 3.1.2 provided some key recommendations which would allow BEST MED partners to move forward in the following areas:

- A set of sustainable indicators, covering the main sustainability parameters, focusing on information already available for most destinations and taking into account the ETIS supplementary indicators for “Transnational Cultural Routes”
- Online platform: using an existing platform and working to upgrade it by sharing tools and information with other projects
- Development of the MED Sustainable Path and Cultural Routes Model (MED S&C Path Model)
- Big Data sources: researching methodologies used by other projects, in order to collect and combine Big Data sources
- Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (MED NSTO): contributing to the development of a MED network and feeding into the Virtual Tourism Observatory (VTO)² launched by the European Commission in 2015.

¹ Source: Deliverable 3.1.1: Diagnosis – State of the art on the collection and management of tourism data –

² The VTO is a tool developed to support policymakers and businesses in the elaboration of improved strategies for a more competitive European tourism sector by providing access to a broad collection of information, data and analysis on current trends in the tourism sector. It includes the latest available figures on the sector's trends and volumes, economic and environmental impact, and the provenance and profile of tourists. The data is divided into five sections: Country profiles, Tourism statistics illustrated, Eurobarometer surveys, Studies and reports, and More data sources.

Based on these recommendations, BEST MED partners have worked to facilitate the transferability and capitalisation of knowledge produced by the Interreg MED Sustainable Tourism Community projects.

1.2 The findings of Local Coordination Meetings (LCMs)

The Local Coordination Meetings (organised as part of deliverable 6.2.1 by each BEST MED project partner) provided a picture of the current situation in the data management sector relating to Observatories in the partner countries.

Furthermore, the LCMs aimed to bring together local, regional and national tourism observatories and bodies involved in sustainable tourism data collection and monitoring in order to consolidate the Mediterranean Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (MED NSTO). These meetings served both to engage and encourage new observatories to join the MED NSTO and to maintain contact and exchange with observatories already participating in the initiative.

The meetings started with a presentation of the BEST MED Project and an introduction to the MED S&C Path Model. These were followed by a description of the process that led to the creation of the MED NSTO, including key moments such as the Technical Workshop (December 2020) and the International Technical Workshop (December 2021) organised by Lazio Region with the support of the CPMR-IMC, whose reference document was the [Reflection Paper on the MED NSTO](#). The key points of this Reflection Paper were also discussed, and the Info Hub was presented. The latter is a digital platform that collects and systemises key resources, news, information, and knowledge related to sustainable tourism data monitoring and management in a resource centre, in order to facilitate cooperation, sharing of best practices and capacity-building among the MED NSTO's participants and stakeholders. The resource centre currently takes the form of a web page on the Interreg MED virtual platform (BEST MED section), with links to all existing online platforms relating to tourism (including the UfM Blue Economy platform).

The project partners and observatories illustrated their work on tourism data management, explained the thematic areas they focus on when collecting data, and discussed what they need in terms of sustainable tourism data analysis in order to achieve better policy-making strategies and management of tourism flows. Finally, each participant was informed about the project's upcoming activities, and participants who were still not part of the Network were invited to join it.

The first Local Coordination Meeting was organised by the Faculty of Tourism of the University of Maribor (Slovenia) on 23 March and 2 June 2022. The GoodPlace Sustainable Tourism Factory³ and the company Arctur attended the two events entitled “Slovenia Green certification and sustainable tourism data: lessons learned for the BEST MED Open Platform”, presenting their work and discussing their priorities and future steps. The primary purpose of the GoodPlace Tourism Factory is to implement sustainable principles in the Slovenian, European and global tourism sectors. Together with the Slovenian tourist board, GoodPlace developed the Slovenia Green certification scheme. Its ongoing work aims to find reliable ways of measuring the carbon footprint of Slovenian tourism and mitigating climate change. Arctur is a Slovenian private company with over 30 years’ experience in high-tech innovation-driven culture. Its desire to put technology at the service of tourism led to the development of the Tourism Impact Model (TIM): a tool with over 300 indicators that uses data to provide a complete picture of the factors affecting destinations by generating positive and negative impacts. The company’s current priority is to make the collection of sustainable tourism data as automated as possible through the use of satellite data.

The second Local Coordination Meeting was organised by the Andalusian Ministry of Tourism and El Legado Andalusí, and took place in Málaga, Spain, and online on 29 March 2022. The Andalusian Tourism Analysis and Statistics System (SAETA) and the Tourist Intelligence System of the province of Jaén (Andalusia)⁴ took part in the event and discussed their priorities and needs. SAETA identified its priority issues as tourism supply and demand, social and environmental pressure, and the production of forecasts, while the Tourist Intelligence System’s priority has been to support the sector with targeted marketing campaigns and by producing studies and reports. They agreed that the Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories needs to provide stability and offer opportunities to learn, share and advocate for better data-based governance of tourism destinations.

The third Local Coordination Meeting was an online event organised by the Greek Ministry of Tourism on 14 April 2022. Along with regional stakeholders - namely the Bank of Greece, the

³ GoodPlace Sustainable Tourism Factory expressed its intention to join the NSTO by adding its name to the list of participants on the InfoHUB

⁴ These Observatories expressed their intention to join the NSTO by adding their names to the list of participants on the InfoHUB

Region of Attica, and the Department of Climate Change of the Ministry of Environment and Energy - the meeting was attended by the Aegean Sustainable Tourism Observatory and the Hellenic Statistical Authority. The Aegean Sustainable Tourism Observatory is an INSTO UNWTO⁵ partner observatory which focuses on data relevant to tourism and its impact (economic, environmental and social) on destinations, while the Hellenic Statistical Authority focuses on the production of statistics pertinent to public policymaking, through the use of administrative and other data sources and new technologies. The establishment of a Greek Network of all stakeholders collecting and monitoring tourism data was also suggested during the meeting.

The fourth Local Coordination Meeting was organised by the University of Algarve, Portugal. Between 22 April and 2 May 2022, the University collected information about the observatories' activities and priorities by means of telephone calls and an ad-hoc survey. The Algarve Sustainable Tourism Observatory, Alentejo Sustainable Tourism Observatory (ASTO)⁶, Centro Sustainable Tourism Observatory (OTSCP), and Açores Sustainable Tourism Observatory (OTA) all handle data which is useful for the study, analysis and monitoring of tourism performance from a sustainability perspective.

In particular, the Observatory of Algarve wishes to contribute to the objectives of the 2027 Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Portugal and to ensure relevant information for stakeholders and the population of the region. The Centro Sustainable Tourism Observatory also addresses the needs of stakeholders; specifically, OTSCP wishes to identify stakeholders' training needs and create dedicated courses. The shared objectives are to identify operational gaps, contribute to the definition of new sustainable tourism policies, and investigate the dynamics that could directly impact quality of life in the destinations. The Observatories collaborate with a large number of universities, associations, private companies and public administration bodies.

The fifth Local Coordination Meeting was an online event organised by the Croatian Chamber of Economy on 26 April 2022 and attended by the Croatian Sustainable Tourism Observatory (CROSTO), the Croatian Institute for Tourism and representatives of the Intermediterranean Commission of the CPMR. The Croatian Sustainable Tourism Observatory collaborates with

⁵ The Aegean Sustainable Tourism Observatory expressed its intention to join the NSTO by adding its name to the list of participants on the InfoHUB

⁶ The Algarve Sustainable Tourism Observatory and ASTO are both INSTO members, and they expressed their intention to join the NSTO by adding their names to the list of participants on the InfoHUB

various Croatian and international institutions; as a member of the INSTO UNWTO and a participant listed on the InfoHUB, it highlighted the need to determine a common methodology for measuring indicators, organise institutional stakeholders by means of local working groups, and raise public awareness of the importance of data measurement. The Institute for Tourism is the only public science institute in Croatia specialised in tourism research and consultation. Its experience is based on scientific study and continuous research; it took the decision to join the MED NSTO following the meeting, in which problems with data collection at local level were also discussed.

The sixth Local Coordination Meeting was organised by the National Tourism Organisation of Montenegro and the Statistical Office of Montenegro (MONSTAT) in Podgorica, Montenegro, on 27 April 2022. Numerous stakeholders attended the meeting, including the Chamber of Commerce of Montenegro, with its Committee for Tourism and Hospitality, which is directly involved in gathering information and proposing policy in the field of tourism and hospitality. The Airports of Montenegro⁷ also joined the meeting as an important stakeholder in terms of data collection on passenger numbers, aircraft operations and modes of transport. The session was also attended by representatives from hotels, travel agencies, wineries and tourist organisations in Podgorica and Kotor, along with representatives of the company responsible for the implementation, training and maintenance of international standards and management systems.

The National Tourism Organisation of Montenegro identified its priorities in terms of data management for sustainable tourism planning and management as the facilitation of a more balanced distribution of costs and revenues in local communities, and the de-seasonalisation of tourism. The MONSTAT representatives identified the harmonisation of statistical data with European regulations and the calculation of satellite accounts in tourism as the observatory's primary needs. Topics addressed during the meeting were strategic marketing for the development of sustainable tourism (marketing tools and metrics, market research, digital strategies) and the implementation of new policies to strongly encourage the redistribution of tourists from the coast to inland areas through the development of cultural tourism. Stakeholders pointed out that there was not enough connection between them and the

⁷ MONSTAT, the National Tourism Organisation of Montenegro (a BEST MED partner) and Montenegro Airports expressed their intention to join the NSTO by adding their names to the list of participants on the InfoHUB

institutions in terms of collecting the tourist data needed to conduct appropriate campaigns and create strategies in their businesses.

The seventh Local Coordination Meeting was organised by the Lazio Region on 18 May 2022. Of the eighteen observatories⁸ and stakeholders that took part in the meeting, eleven discussed their priorities and needs in terms of sustainable data collection and management. All the regional observatories are working with the Italian Ministry of Tourism and the Italian Statistics Agency (ISTAT) on the Tourism Digital Hub project to create a platform that connects the entire tourism ecosystem. The common objectives are the construction of a system that produces useful data for both policymakers and suppliers, to combat seasonality, and to develop sustainable tourism. To this end, according to ISTAT, a special task force coordinated by Austria is working to define a measurement of sustainability which is valid for all EU countries.

The observatories exchanged methods and opinions and discussed current difficulties in data management: lack of coordination and official data availability, diversified approaches, and inadequate interoperability. The MED NSTO objectives were presented as solutions to the current challenges: the need for more prompt and up-to-date information; the need to minimise efforts by keeping every partner informed of ongoing projects and results obtained; the need to avoid duplicating the results recorded and produced by other national and international projects, but rather to re-group information contained in different platforms and make it available to other observatories. Most of the observatories expressed their intention to join the MED NSTO⁹.

The Calabria Region, which has supported and made efforts to proceed on the course taken by the NSTO, organised the eighth stakeholders' workshop, "Rete degli Osservatori sul Turismo Sostenibile – Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories – WP6 Capitalisation", on 8

⁸ ASTAT Bolzano – Provincial Institute of Statistics of the Alto Adige Region; Tourism Observatory of the Calabria Region; Italian Union of Chambers of Commerce of the Emilia Romagna Region; Friuli Venezia Giulia Region; Regional Data Collection (RADAR) of the Lazio Region; Liguria Region; Marche Region; Tourism Observatory of the Piemonte Region; Tourism Regional Agency "PUGLIAPROMOZIONE" of the Puglia Region; Information System for Data Collection and Processing (SIREN) of the Sardinia Region; Tourism Observatory of the Sicily Region; Tourism Observatory of the Tuscany Region; Veneto Regional Federated Tourism Observatory (OTRF); Bilateral Tourism Board of Lazio Region (EBTL); Digital Innovation Observatory in Tourism; Italian Statistical Agency (ISTAT); Attractiveness Research Territory of the Emilia Romagna Region (Art_ER); Italian Ministry of Tourism.

⁹ Observatories listed as participants on the InfoHUB are: Tourism Observatory of the Calabria Region, Veneto Regional Federated Tourism Observatory (OTRF), Regional Tourism Agency of Lazio, Tourism Observatory of the Sicily Region, Observatory of Tourism for Islands Economy, Regional Tourism Agency "Pugliapromozione" of the Puglia Region, Digital Innovation Observatory in Tourism

September 2022, with a focus on the MED NSTO and its Memorandum of Understanding. In the three sessions, local stakeholders presented their areas' contextual landscape with regard to data collection and data management in the form of accounts of their work and experiences. One of the highlights of the Calabrian workshop is the importance of involving the private sector in the initiative. As demonstrated in the local context, some private stakeholders are already using the data vacuum caused by the disconnection among local observatories to produce interesting results. The private sector's agency over open data is already translating into concrete efforts towards a greater understanding of tourist behaviour in general terms, and a few local initiatives are starting to connect the dots between the context and sustainable tourism. As can be inferred from the Calabria Region Stakeholder workshop, capacity building also means working towards data literacy in both tourism supply and demand. The Calabria Region Tourism Observatory underlined the need to raise awareness about the data necessary for a better understanding of who our visitors are, and why, when and how they arrive. It is therefore fundamental for our tourism sector to be fully aware and strive to broaden and improve its approach to data collection. This is crucial for the NSTO too, and serves to highlight the importance of data granularity.

Similarly, during this workshop, the MED NSTO project was introduced to the audience: its bottom-up approach, research and surveys, goals, criteria and how the project will now evolve from the definition phase to become a working entity through a Memorandum of Understanding and MoU commitments.

At the conclusion of this workshop, three organisations signed the MoU immediately: Rete Turistica Destinazione Sila, Eurispes Regione Calabria and La Catasta Pollino. In addition, four more organisations are due to sign the MoU: Altrama Italia, Crotone Chamber of Commerce, Confederazione Nazionale dell'Artigianato (CAN) and Demoskopika.

In addition to the Local Coordination Meetings, information about the observatories' activities was also gathered through a survey shared before and during the International Policy Conference on 21 June 2022. Twelve observatories replied to the survey, including the Observatoire de l'Agence du Tourisme de la Corse, which did not participate in the LCMs but expressed an interest in joining the Network. Tourism activity on both the supply and the demand side, seasonality, and the social and environmental pressure produced by tourism are the primary concerns of the observatories that replied to the survey. All the observatories work with statistical data, while half of them make use of sustainability indicators. A priority for almost

every observatory is to produce useful information for stakeholders, and they believe that the MED NSTO is useful for sharing good practices, networking, and elaborating shared projects to seek funding. Three observatories were already part of the MED NSTO, and nine more were interested in joining.

During the Local Coordination Meetings, the observatories agreed that there is a lack of coordination between the bodies involved in tourism data collection and a shortage of available data. At the same time, observatories and institutions need to work on sustainability indicators, create a common methodological framework, and harmonise tools, partly to enable them to carry out benchmark analyses. Understanding tourism indicators, economic parameters and marketing metrics via cooperation between public and private sectors is essential for the efficient collection and management of data in order to better understand sustainable tourism, for integrated and sustainable tourism planning, to mitigate seasonality and to connect coastal and inland regions. Because of this, training for public and private stakeholders about sustainable indicators and sustainable tourism planning and management is considered essential.

2. BEST MED RESULTS

2.1 Tools for re-using knowledge

Activity 6.2 “Network of national and regional Sustainable Tourism Observatories” of the BEST MED project aimed to lay the foundations for the creation of the Network on the basis of a participatory approach, defining priorities, goals and the framework for cooperation between public authorities and private stakeholders.

The participatory process of the BEST MED project was designed in three stages, not necessarily interdependent:

- The implementation of BEST MED’s outputs regarding data management, indicators and tourism observatories (MED S&C Path Model, indicators for Cultural Paths sustainability, the Info Hub).
- An analysis to provide information on tourism observatories and existing standards of data management at various levels through a number of case studies.
- An exchange of ideas and proposals to identify priorities and goals for the development of a Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories at the Mediterranean level.

In this sense, the MED NSTO should be seen as a strategic tool to support planning and decision-making, to improve multi-level dialogue for better coordination on sustainable policy, and to support tourism destinations.

Inter alia, the most important results of the BEST MED project to date are:

- The [BEST MED Open Platform](#), a web platform to promote data analysis and networking.
- The [MED S&C Path Model](#), whose objective is to achieve integrated planning and management of cultural routes and other physical or thematic pathways in Mediterranean destinations, while adhering to sustainability values.
- The creation of the [Mediterranean Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories](#).

BEST MED Open Platform

The BEST MED Open Platform is an IT tool for data analysis and networking. The platform is user-friendly and the organisation of data is easy to understand. It enables the measurement of performance and benchmark cultural routes by monitoring the social, economic and environmental outcomes of the BEST MED project. The logic behind the platform is the digitalisation of the MED S&C Path Model by bringing together the data visualiser, graphic maps,

ordered lists, full-text search, route dashboards, evaluations wizard and, in particular, integration with the MITOMED+ platform. BEST MED “Cultural routes” data are contained in a repository of indicators which can be displayed and evaluated. The other level of data collection and analysis concerns destinations.

Comparable databases can be used to encourage sustainable tourism and improve policy planning, as well as to measure a cultural route’s compliance with the criteria and indicators of the MED S&C Path Model.

MED S&C Path Model

The fine-tuned version of the MED S&C Path Model is based on the work carried out in previous WPs; it includes guidelines to improve the use of data and a clear sustainability approach for tourism planning at different levels.

The model is built upon previous outputs:

- Experiences of relevant past projects (e.g. the platform developed within MITOMED+) were collated and updated into a toolkit.
- Data and indicators included in the latter were then tested through pilot actions in partner areas.

The resulting toolbox was consolidated into the MED S&C Path Model, whose main focus is the integration of tourism planning in broader development strategies. The final version of the 26 indicators presents 4 categories: Management, Economic, Socio-Cultural and Environmental. Each partner has a different approach and data collection processes, and uses different sources of data: for this reason, it is necessary to work within a common framework throughout Europe / the Mediterranean region, partly in order to procure financial support, which is necessary for shared data collection.

The creation of the MED NSTO

As previously mentioned, the state of the art in data management for tourism observatories was analysed by the first WP3 activity.

These studies of existing methodological approaches to the collection and management of data, along with the results of other MED projects, led to the first technical workshop on Data Management for Sustainable Tourism in December 2020 and to a preliminary concept for the MED NSTO. Initial proposals of actors and stakeholders to involve, and the MED NSTO’s structure and perspectives, were outlined in this document, as in the appendix.

The first Technical Workshop was followed by the "BEST MED Seminar on MED NSTO development and data management standards" in December 2021; the discussions and exchanges that took place during and after these two events formed the basis for the creation of the "[Roadmap towards the development of a Mediterranean Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories](#)", presented during the International Policy Conference on 21 June 2022.

The Roadmap explores practical steps that can be taken by BEST MED's NSTO partners and observatories to consolidate the Network and ensure its continuation after the conclusion of the project. It provides guidelines for obtaining further support and resources to fund the implementation of the MED NSTO's key activities and proceed with its promotion.

The document, along with insightful details of two other documents (the Granada Charter and the Memorandum of Understanding), will be further discussed in section 4.

In terms of tools, BEST MED has developed the Info Hub, including a library section, news, and a map of Tourism Observatories (22 registered Observatories and Entities to date)¹⁰, which could be used at planning level to map target recipients of best practices in data management for tourism planning, with a particular focus on tourism observatories, within the future Interreg Euro-MED Institutional Dialogue Project on Tourism (IDP).

The future plan is to develop the Info Hub and transform it from a "Resource Centre" into a "Knowledge Centre" thus establishing a virtual networking space to be utilised by the Network in order to facilitate and boost cooperation among all relevant stakeholders and experts working in the sustainable tourism data management sector, and to share best practices and capacity building.

¹⁰ <https://best-med.interreg-med.eu/info-hub/tourism-observatories/>

3. DATA MANAGEMENT FOR TOURISM PLANNING

3.1 Capitalisation of experiences in data management

In order to improve tourism planning and data management systems and to make sector policies more effective, it is necessary to standardise the collection and use of data. To this end, the participatory approach used in the development of the MED NSTO provided knowledge of different experiences, which can be used to capitalise the BEST MED outputs on the basis of good practices in sustainable tourism planning, Big Data management and the work of research centres. Indeed, developing collaborations, building communities and creating synergy among projects are the main aims of the MED Sustainable Tourism Community.

The Committee on Transports and Tourism of the European Parliament¹¹, referring to possible ways for the tourism sector to recover from the Covid crisis, indicated four main actions: investment in digital infrastructure, implementation of emerging technologies, development of digital skills, and elaboration of tourism data strategy. Tourism is an information-intensive sector which generates a vast amount of data; this data is strategic for the decision-making of destinations, and for this reason several projects within the MED Sustainable Tourism Community are currently working on data and indicator management.

During the Seminar “Developing a Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories in the Mediterranean¹²”, BEST MED invited experts from other projects¹³ to share their experiences.

Key aspects and proposals from the aforementioned projects are highlighted below, since the aim of this Capitalisation Report is to design a content and dissemination strategy in such a way that tools and best practices are replicable and may be adopted in the proposals of the MED NSTO.

- ✓ The importance of **sharing experiences** and lessons learned, of identifying and elaborating technical and methodological solutions, and of **integrating data** across operators, without forgetting the quality of combined data and privacy issues.

¹¹ Tourism Manifesto - Call for action: Accelerate social and economic recovery by fostering sustainable tourism development, Brussels, 26 November 2020 - <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/215782/Manifesto-Paper-Concrete-Investment-Proposals-provisional.pdf>

¹² Rome, 16 December 2021

¹³ ESSnet Big Data Project; Maritime Tourism Research Centre – University of the Aegean; HERIT_DATA Project; SMART DESTINATION Project; DestiMED PLUS Project; CROSTO – Croatian Sustainable Tourism Observatory; Department of business statistics MONSTAT, Montenegro; Tourism of Tomorrow Lab; National Tourism Agency and National Observatory for Tourism, Italy; International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO); Italian Statistics Agency; NECSTouR; Tourism Transition Pathway; Panoramed Projects.

- ✓ The statistical sector requires the integration of **new data sources**, innovative micro-services, further integration of sources from smart systems, **real -time data** analysis, new research areas for tourism statistics, and the use of satellite images.
- ✓ The importance of creating an **umbrella platform**, instead of building new apps to add to existing instruments. It is important to develop user-friendly integrated online tools.
- ✓ The need for **robust coordination and involvement between public institutions at different levels**. There is a need for **political commitment** to sharing data, and for governance in the definition of rules, skills and competences for data transformation.
- ✓ It is important to focus on **methodologies** rather than focusing on tools to be developed, in the course of day-to-day work.
- ✓ The importance of highly **participative and interactive processes**, and of identifying synergies between the tourism sector and other sectors. To develop governance in a participatory and integrated manner, institutions should be guided towards data-oriented organisation.

The observatories¹⁴ involved in the BEST MED project and the MED NSTO initiative shared and transferred their expertise during the International Policy Conference on 21 June 2022. They provided evidence of the urgent need to apply the proposals outlined above, and of the key role played by data management in tourism planning.

The satisfaction and wellbeing of local residents was among the central themes under discussion: some of the observatories linked data measurement to communities' desired futures, and to the future that can be created by policies.

Each observatory stressed the importance of harmonising data among the various regions and agreed that one of the biggest challenges is the lack of planning measures based on indicators, while underlining the usefulness of technology to build data-driven strategic planning models.

Some of the regions participating in BEST MED project activities found it useful to build on the MED Sustainable and Cultural Path Model, because this evidenced the fact that sustainable goals

¹⁴ Tourism Observatory of the Calabria Region; Statistical Office of Montenegro – MONSTAT; Croatian Sustainable Tourism Observatory – CROSTO; South Aegean Sustainable Observatory; Observatory on Tourism for Islands Economy - OTIE; Alentejo Sustainable Tourism Observatory - ASTO; Turismo Andaluz; Tourism 4.0.

must go hand-in-hand with new ways of planning and of building governance, and that there is a need for multi-level governance in which European bodies and regions cooperate.

On the basis of these challenges, the observatories anticipate that the MED NSTO will be a valuable way of sharing a common methodology for the analysis and evaluation of current situations and planning proposals, providing a shared dataset, using similar rules for reporting, creating a common platform for benchmarking, exchanging views on policymaking and results. By collaborating with the MED NSTO, they anticipate cooperation with organisations involved in data collection for the exchange of ideas, information, best practices, tools and models of data management relating to sustainable tourism. They hope that the MED NSTO will extend its work on the use of Big Data and tourism satellite accounts to measure sustainable tourism experiences and models.

4. NETWORK OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM OBSERVATORIES

Good governance and better policies are prerequisites for the success of the Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories, which should be understood as the creation of a community for the transfer of good practices into policy at different levels. The need for several levels of integration, clusters between sectors, growing value rather than growing quality, and a change of culture are key issues in response to the question: “Why the MED NSTO?”

As mentioned previously, the “Roadmap towards the development of a Mediterranean Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories” was produced in order to outline steps that can be taken by BEST MED partners and observatories participating in the MED NSTO initiative to consolidate and provide continuity for the network after the project’s conclusion in September 2022. The document was developed on the basis of the Reflection Paper¹⁵, which suggested an evolutionary path for the MED NSTO, with the ultimate goal of creating a structured organisation on multiple levels.

With the final objective of transforming the simple, informally coordinated MED NSTO system into a more structured and multi-level organisation, the Roadmap envisions three phases and sets out a number of concrete actions to consolidate each phase.

- In Phase One, the MED NSTO is organised in a non-legally formalised and “horizontal” structure, and its activities are guided by an organisation (or a group of organisations).
- In Phase Two, the MED NSTO could be established as a specific consortium funded by EU and national/regional resources within a new project proposal to be submitted, with a focus on further developing the MED NSTO working tools.
- Phase Three could possibly follow up with the coordination and management of the MED NSTO as a legally constituted entity or similar with a more stable organisational structure, including a scientific committee and an annual budget.

During the initial phase - in the final months of the project and immediately after its conclusion - the Best MED Partner Lazio Region will lead the organisation, relying primarily on the participants’ desire for cooperation and on funding from its promoters. In this initial phase, it is essential to identify and engage with opportunities for new cooperation and funding. Because of this, the Roadmap envisages actions to ensure cooperation among the Best MED partners and

¹⁵ December 2021

observatories in pursuit of the network's activities, promotion, search for new cooperation schemes and initiation of new joint plans of action.

Steps towards the consolidation of phase one concentrate on three main tools for cooperation: the Granada Charter, the Memorandum of Understanding, and the Interreg Euro-Med Governance Projects. While the Granada Charter delivers simple political messages and policy recommendations to policymakers in Europe and the Maritime Regions, the Memorandum of Understanding concretises the preliminary commitment of partners and observatories alike to the implementation of the MED NSTO.

The approval and signature of a Memorandum of Understanding between the partners of the BEST MED project (as promoters of the initiative) and observatories or bodies working with data is the first step in the consolidation of the network of observatories. The analyses and activities carried out within the BEST MED project highlighted the obstacles currently encountered by observatories when attempting to collect and analyse sustainable tourism data. The MED NSTO Memorandum of Understanding details these obstacles, along with the tools and actions that signatories should adopt in order to fill the gaps identified. The document intends to give concrete expression to the preliminary commitments of the two types of signatories – partners and observatories – to the implementation of the MED NSTO. By signing the MoU, partners and observatories undertake to acknowledge the MED NSTO as the framework for future cooperation, to promote and mainstream the work of the MED NSTO, and to participate in meetings when required. The engagement of each signatory organisation will be based on the actual competences on which they can act, according to their function and legal status. The engagement of key players through the Memorandum of Understanding strengthens the MED NSTO initiative by giving it a more solid and participatory basis, and helps to set the stage for future collaboration and next steps.

The BEST MED partnership also worked on the Granada Charter, a document containing clear and simple messages directed to European policy design, institutions and Maritime regions. The document includes a section on data sharing, harmonisation and interoperability geared to Mediterranean Observatories, and a section of policy recommendations aimed at the engagement of stakeholders to boost the development of the Mediterranean Network. In fact, as highlighted during the Final Policy Conference, long-term collaboration is needed not only among observatories, but also between the private and public sectors, in order to collect comprehensive and up-to-date data that is usable and transferable into local policies.

The MED NSTO is intended to connect with other relevant initiatives in the field of sustainable tourism planning and data management, and its work seeks to contribute to other ongoing initiatives such as the EU Transition Pathway for tourism and the implementation of the Glasgow Declaration. In this respect, the conclusions of the Stakeholders' Workshop (Del. 6.2.1) provided interesting inputs for the constitution of the NSTO. The first input was a comparison with the UNWTO **INSTO experience**, which provided very useful examples of network-building and proposed a regional coordination system. Consequently, the setting of a cooperative framework for collaboration between the MED NSTO and the UNWTO INSTO was included in the Roadmap as a future goal, in order to ensure coherence between the two initiatives by means of regularly exchanging information, publicising each other's results and instigating synergies.

Furthermore, to achieve consolidated governance of the NSTO, there are several important prerequisites:

- To think of MED NSTO users and their expectations as the basis for understanding what contribution each partner can make and what kind of data MED NSTO seeks to analyse and aggregate, and for what purpose.
- To produce a business plan.
- To focus on data tools and sources that are useful for the MED NSTO.
- To consider a peer learning process in order to fill the gap between developing indicators and helping different stakeholders to learn from said indicators.
- To explore more synergies with UNWTO.
- To develop a modular project proposal and a typology for testing or transfer, mainly focused on the consolidation of the MED NSTO, which could provide specific resources for activities and for skilled staff to work on building this critical mass of data, new analysis and useful content to support decision-making systems, events etc. for better data management.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this Capitalisation Report is to transfer and capitalise the experiences, know-how and outputs of the BEST MED project and to contribute in the long term to the development of MED NSTO. It sets out the pre-conditions and any technical, operational and policy requirements needed to implement the proposal of the Network.

As stated in the Roadmap towards the development of a Mediterranean Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories, the Interreg Euro-Med Governance Projects are intended to provide long-term financial support to the MED NSTO and continue its work in the framework of the planning period 2021-2027. Through the Institutional Dialogue Project (IDP) under the Tourism Mission, it may be possible to design and implement an advocacy strategy to continue promoting the MED NSTO among national and regional observatories and key actors, in order to gain new adherents to the network. The Tourism Thematic Community Project (TCP) could develop a so-called “Join the MED” knowledge hub and database, monitoring and collecting knowledge gained and initiatives started during the 2014-2020 period.

Finally, in view of the projects mentioned above, and in order to make significant progress towards the development of sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean region, the following recommendations arose from the project:

- ✓ Build a governance framework that facilitates the development of a sustainable and resilient tourism ecosystem in the entire Mediterranean region by engaging multiple actors: public and private bodies, research organisations, members of the community and other relevant contributors outside the tourism community but intersecting with the sector (e.g. environmental experts and academics). To this end, it is important that the EU and national, regional and local authorities support sustainable tourism development through adequate and coordinated funding and legislation, contributing to a better balance between socioeconomic development and environmental preservation and to the achievement of the EU’s objectives for green and digital transition in the sector.
- ✓ Support the development of host communities, partly by providing the conditions for a more balanced distribution of costs and revenues within the communities. To do this, host communities need to be involved in the development of tourism planning and offer.

- ✓ Monitor¹⁶ tourism sustainability through the collection of data and the implementation of dedicated tools and methodologies to improve the management of cultural routes, specifically supporting the implementation of the BEST MED S&C Path model as a tool to measure impact (both positive and negative), and subsequently incorporating sustainability principles into the planning and management of routes and destinations. This will also potentially be a useful way of supporting the development of cultural pathways, because cultural heritage directly supports sustainable local development and helps to reduce seasonality and redistribute tourist flows.
- ✓ Commit¹⁷ to recognising the MED NSTO as the framework for future cooperation and strengthened dialogue to promote and mainstream the work of the MED NSTO, participate in ad-hoc meetings, and use BEST MED Open Platform to increase the sharing, harmonisation, and interoperability of data. The participation of private actors in MED NSTO should be encouraged as a way to foster the exchange and transfer of knowledge, as well as to bring public policy into contact with business policies.
- ✓ Support the work undertaken by the UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO), in order to develop more networking activities and deeper cooperation at various geographical levels.
- ✓ Provide¹⁸ capacity building and skills training for tourism professionals, with a particular focus on data collection, management and literacy, and with the ultimate aim of boosting evidence-based decision-making at destination level, while avoiding unequal data development and use across the observatories.

¹⁶ Targets of this recommendation may be destinations and managers of cultural routes

¹⁷ Targets of this recommendation may be tourism observatories and, more broadly, bodies / entities / organisations dealing with tourism data monitoring / management across the Mediterranean basin

¹⁸ Targets of this recommendation may be national and regional authorities