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Activity 6.4. – Granada Charter on Sustainable Tourism

Deliverable 6.4.2 – Granada Charter

**Project Partner: Conference of Peripheral Maritime
Regions – Intermediterranean Commission**

This Charter has been developed by the IMC-CPMR, through the external expertise of Anysolutions and with the help of the BEST MED project partners.



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1. PREAMBULE

The Global Situation

The implementation of a **governance framework that promotes sustainable and resilient tourism ecosystems in the whole Mediterranean area** is of foremost importance. In fact, the combined impacts of climate change, overtourism, seasonality, excessive dependence of local and regional economies on tourism, and the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic, are calling for a **shift and diversification of the tourism management model** in this region which needs to ensure the protection of cultural heritage while contributing to support local communities development and the creation of a shared European Cultural Identity.

Tourism a Driving Force for Change

Recent policy developments and initiatives both at European and International levels support the development of sustainable tourism products, models and itineraries, such as cultural routes. These actions reflect the growing concerns of our society to **balance socioeconomic development with environmental preservation**. The implementation of adequate legislation to regulate and guide sustainable tourism development ensure that policies, actions and programmes help conserve and safeguard cultural, natural and biodiversity assets while being sensitive to the needs of the sector. In footnote¹ is presented a non-exhaustive list of the main initiatives, strategies, regulations, programmes and entities that are actively working at European, national and regional levels, toward a greener, safer, more sustainable and more competitive tourism sector and Mediterranean region as a whole.

Culture as Tourism Strength

Culture and tourism have a mutually beneficial relationship that can strengthen regions and countries' attractiveness and competitiveness. Cultural heritage directly supports local sustainable development, in particular through the development of tourism products. Sustainable paths and cultural routes improve the attractiveness and sustainability of such places and bring multiple actors to work together. In addition to having a lower environmental impact and offering greater security in the face of health crises, cultural routes can bring great benefits to tourism destinations as they contribute to reducing seasonality and redistributing tourist flows, extending the touristic seasons and their geographical scope.

Management of Cultural Tourism

In order to improve the management of cultural routes (as well as the social, economic and environmental impacts related to them), route managers and regional policymakers need to be able to **monitor sustainability through the collection of data and the implementation of ad-hoc tools and methodologies**. In this sense, the BEST MED Sustainable and Cultural (S&C) Path Model, developed in the frame of the BEST MED Interreg project, can be used as a reference for replication in Mediterranean destinations. This model fosters an integrated planning and management

¹ Among many others can be cited: the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#), the [UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories](#) (INSTO), the [European Green Deal](#), the [Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development](#) (MSSD 2016-2025), the [EU strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region](#), the [WEST-MED initiative](#), the [EU integrated Maritime Policy](#), the [Maritime Spatial Planning Directive](#), the [Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management](#) (ICZM), the [dossier of UfM on Blue Economy](#), the [Declarations of CPMR Intermediterranean Commission \(2020, 2021\)](#), the [opinion of the European Committee of the Regions on sustainable tourism](#) as an important step up to the adoption of new **European Sustainable Tourism Framework**, the recommendations of [PANORAMED](#) regarding better governance for smarter tourism, the [MED 2050 Strategy](#) developed by [Plan Bleu](#) project on a sustainable Mediterranean in 2050 and transition issues, the [EC Tourism Transition Pathway](#) and the [Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme](#). Several programmes (e.g., Interreg MED Programme, Euromed Programme, etc.) and organizations (Med Sustainable Tourism Community, the Alliance of Mediterranean Cooperation, etc.) are also actively working toward a greener, safer, more sustainable and more competitive Mediterranean region.

of cultural routes, and contributes to a better governance and a more sustainable development of cultural and economic activities, while protecting natural resources.

Role of BEST MED on Cultural Tourism

The Interreg MED Programme, from which the BEST MED project takes its origins, has been set-up to foster sustainable growth in the Mediterranean region through supports to projects developing innovative concepts and practices and promoting a reasonable use of resources. Accordingly, BEST MED builds upon the works and results of previous projects on data management such as MITOMED+2, DESTIMED3 or CO-EVOLVE4I, among others. BEST MED also contributes to the core objectives of the new Interreg Euro-MED 2021-2027 programme⁵ to make the Mediterranean smarter and greener, to contribute to the transition towards a climate-neutral and resilient society, and to fight the impact of global changes on Mediterranean resources while ensuring a sustainable growth and the well-being of its citizens.

2. PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CHARTER

Sustainability and Ecosystem-Based Management Principles

Sustainability and ecosystem-based management principles shall be the basis of any tourism management model.

Incorporating sustainability principles into the planning and management of cultural routes and other physical or thematic paths in Mediterranean destinations, enable the balanced development of cultural and economic activities along the route, while protecting the natural resources of its surrounding environment.

Policy recommendation: support the implementation of BEST MED S&C Path model as a much-needed tool to measure the full spectrum of impacts (whether positive or negative) that routes, pilgrimage ways and other types of paths generate in Mediterranean regions.

Cultural Routes

Cultural Routes are at the heart of cultural tourism development in Europe. Established on cultural and social principles as promoted by the Council of Europe, Cultural Routes represent a source of innovation, creativity, small-business creation, cultural tourism products and services development especially in rural areas and less-known destinations.

Policy recommendation: promote the development of Cultural Routes to favour the connection between coastal and hinterland destinations, and to redistribute tourist flows to less crowded destinations (therefore fighting overtourism in coastal areas) or sparsely populated areas, while making tourism a lot less dependent on seasonal factors in the Mediterranean region.

Participatory Approach and Cooperation

The adoption of a **participatory approach and cooperation** between different stakeholders is crucial for sustainability monitoring and for an efficient governance of tourism at regional and transnational levels.

Policy recommendation: involve multiple actors from different governance levels, including public and private entities, research organisations, and the civil society, but also other relevant contributors external to the tourism community, such as environment experts and academia.

Monitoring Cultural Routes

Monitoring is key to achieving a sustainable management of cultural routes. By monitoring sustainability in an integrated and interoperational way, route managers and regional policymakers can take evidence-based decisions to manage routes and assess the social, economic and environmental impacts, both positive and negative, related to

² <https://mitomed-plus.interreg-med.eu/>

³ <https://destimed.interreg-med.eu/>

⁴ <https://co-evolve.interreg-med.eu/>

⁵ <https://interreg-med.eu/about-us/futureinterregmedprogramme/>

them. The BEST MED S&C Path Model includes a five step-by-step implementation framework to ensure the results stemming from monitoring sustainability are in fact used to improve tourism management.

Policy recommendation: Evaluate the sustainability of your cultural route or path by using a set of criteria that describe the desirable situation that routes should comply with and according to which the gaps and necessary improvements will be defined. These criteria shall cover and fall under the pillars of sustainability (sustainable management; economic sustainability; socio-cultural sustainability; environmental sustainability).

Data Sharing, Harmonization and Interoperability

To improve tourism governance in the whole Mediterranean area and unlock the power of evidence-based decision making at destination levels, **it is necessary to connect the existing tourism observatories and entities and increase the sharing, harmonization and interoperability of data in all the Mediterranean area.** The use of Big Data will provide relevant information to tourism companies for the development of new products, services or business models, while it will enable policymakers and authorities to create value out of these data and improve sustainable tourism management.

Policy recommendation: Boost the development of the **Mediterranean Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (NSTO)** to be implemented in the framework of the BEST MED project; support the work undertaken by the UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO); promote standard for tourism data collection in all the Mediterranean area; and improve the skill level of human resources to properly manage measurement and data collection.

Capacity Building and Skills Training

There is a growing need to **increase the capacity building and human resources skills of the tourism industry** to face the challenges (covid situation, global crisis, etc), and meet the demands of the sector and the society (green and digital transition objectives).

Policy recommendation: Provide capacity building and skills training to tourism professionals, companies and key stakeholders involved in governance, including cultural routes/paths staff. These trainings should address thematic such as sustainability monitoring, data collection and analysis, as well as participatory and cooperative approaches and integrated cultural heritage management.

Target Audiences

The present Charter addresses three main **target audiences:** (i) the management structure of the cultural routes or the association/ legal entity in charge of its management; (ii) policy makers at local, regional and national levels; and (iii) any relevant EU and MED policy making stakeholders and BEST MED partners.

3. WAY FORWARD

We, the representatives of the Authorities/Entities that are the signatories of this Charter, hereby state:

- Our willingness to use BEST MED Open Platform, to promote, share and use BEST MED S&C Path Model and apply its principles, but also to encourage public awareness and knowledge of sustainability issues in tourism through communication and training, preventing and/or mitigating the negative social impacts of tourism by consulting, engaging and empowering local communities to influence decisions on tourism development and operations that may affect their livelihood and society.
- The commitment to work toward the implementation at destination level of an efficient multi-level governance and cross-sectoral integrated approach capable of uniting requests and efforts between local and regional levels, public and private sectors, and between cultural and natural conservation interests and tourism industry.

- The willingness to implement joint transnational actions, to share more interoperable data and exchange knowledge and best practices on sustainable tourism management, specifically on the promotion, support and management of sustainable routes and cultural paths in the Mediterranean region. These actions shall effectively contribute to the work of the Mediterranean Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (NSTO) and promote the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe Programme.
- The commitment to work, in cooperation with EU institutions and relevant actors at the national, regional and local levels, toward a common vision that contributes to a greener, more resilient, and inclusive Europe along with a flourishing tourism industry that protects and improves historic, traditional and natural heritage.

4. FINAL PROVISIONS

- This Charter has been drafted in English and translated into French and Spanish; the translation in other languages, strongly recommended for its dissemination, must be based on the official English version.
- This Charter is to be signed by the Legal Representatives of the BEST MED Project and is open to other Authorities/Entities for formal adhesions. The adhesion to this Charter will remain open beyond the closure of the BEST MED project.

5. ANNEXES

1. NSTO Reflection Paper
2. NSTO Roadmap
3. BEST MED S&C Path Model