



DestiMED PLUS

*Project
report card 3*

June 2022

STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE FOR A THRIVING MEDITERRANEAN ECOTOURISM

Improving integration between tourism and conservation policies

The [DestiMED PLUS](#) project has been working to improve the levels of integration between tourism and conservation policies by supporting the creation of ecotourism experiences in Mediterranean Protected Areas (PAs). In nine pilot parks the project has addressed the often conflicting interests of the conservation and tourism sectors using a collaborative approach: regionally, gathering conservation and tourism departments in each project-related regional administration to form Regional Ecotourism Coordination tables (RECs), and locally using the [MEET Network](#)'s collaborative approach and framework for ecotourism development to establish Local Ecotourism Clusters (LECs). In the brief accounts on the following pages we illustrate how these mechanisms work in four of the project's pilot regions and protected areas.

To shape the Mediterranean region into a leading ecotourism destination

whose tourism and conservation policies are integrated, however, an additional governance body is needed beyond the LEC and REC. This is the [Mediterranean Ecotourism Consortium](#) (MEC) which allows regional or national authorities to advocate for integrated ecotourism policies at Mediterranean scale and exchange best tourism practices. The MEC, hosted by the [CPMR Intermediterranean Commission](#) tourism task force, supports the policy and governance conditions of the MEET model so that it can be adopted, deployed and aligned throughout the Mediterranean.

DestiMED Plus has developed the [Mediterranean Ecotourism Policy Roadmap](#), a strategy to guide the MEC's objectives and activities, to expand the conservation and economic benefits of sustainable, respectful and nature-oriented tourism across the region.

Recommendations for regions

DestiMED PLUS recommends that the regional administrations that are part of the MEC, or that wish to be part of it, should demonstrate their commitment by:

- ▶ Signing the [Memorandum of Understanding](#) of the DestiMED PLUS project to ensure the continuity of the activities of the MEC and its Policy Roadmap developed within the project.
- ▶ Signing the [Glasgow Declaration](#).
- ▶ Signing the [Granada Charter](#) for the development of cultural tourism in Europe.
- ▶ Answering the [EC consultations](#) to influence funding programmes.
- ▶ Participating in the tourism transition pathway, by answering the published [Call for commitments and participation](#).



LEARNING FROM POSITIVE EXPERIENCE IN CATALONIA

In terms of governance, the REC improves integration between regional tourism and conservation policies, and supports the conditions for ecotourism to thrive in PAs. The [Garrotxa Volcanic Zone Natural Park](#) in Catalonia has one of the most fully developed RECs of the DestiMED PLUS pilot actions. The Park administration works with the Catalan Ecotourism Board, a consultative and advisory body established in 2015 to help Catalonia become a more sustainable destination. The Board is a clear example of a mature REC with well-established mechanisms of ecotourism governance at regional level, promoting collaboration between private companies and public bodies and overseeing decisions which, while not binding, serve as a basis for the development of tourism policy in PAs. The Garrotxa LEC also serves as an example for other pilot actions and is supported by a focus group of the [European Charter for Sustainable Tourism](#). The LEC works to promote the Park as an area with a distinctive and coherent traditional culture and identity and, as part of the project, has been able to consolidate the regional tourism strategy and to support the Park in creating new tourism products.

THE STRENGTH OF COOPERATION IN CORSICA

A well-planned protected area which can manage tourism and visitors with minimum impact is an important enabling condition for ecotourism development. The [Bouches de Bonifacio Nature Reserve](#), Corsica, is managed by the Environment Office of Corsica which supervises and monitors visitors according to a clear mandate and a national development plan. DestiMED PLUS has built on this existing capacity and addressed coordination between institutional conservation and tourism bodies, the Park's cooperation with local service providers and the scarce awareness in the tourism sector regarding conservation issues. A successful Local Ecotourism Cluster (LEC) was formed, a private-public tourism partnership coordinated by the PA managing body and including multi-sector stakeholders. The Environment Office of Corsica and Regional Tourism Agency managed to work together and were involved in a virtuous project in a successful way. The LEC focused on existing cooperation with service providers to build relationships with the tourism sector and clarified and communicated the role of the PA to increase the awareness of regional stakeholders.

"Thanks to the work between the public and private sectors and the work with new methodologies in cooperation, we have been more efficient, agile and, above all, resolved in decision making and action planning."

Joan Pijoan, Garrotxa Volcanic Zone Natural Park, Generalitat de Catalunya

"The LEC has successfully created an ecotourism product in a protected area. It's the first time in Corsica that such a product has been created collectively. As part of this LEC a lot of stakeholders are involved, including civil society, the private sector, an environmental organisation and public authorities. Thanks to DestiMED Plus, we built a strong participative scheme and we established a constructive dialogue."

Sébastien Leccia, Corsican Environment Agency

Bouches de Bonifacio Nature Reserve, Corsica.
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Garrotxa Volcanic Zone Natural Park, Spain.
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North Karpathos and Saria Island, Greece.
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LOCAL COLLABORATION AND ADDED VALUE IN GREECE

Landscape and nature are key elements in the promotion of Greece as a destination, but tourism development is strongly driven by the tourism sector with little or no cooperation with the conservation sector. The [Natura 2000 site North Karpathos and Saria Island](#) is managed by MADPA, the agency for Protected Areas management in the Dodecanese region. MADPA operates a visitor centre and carries out visitor monitoring, but before the DestiMED PLUS project there was little local awareness of ecotourism. However, when the PA became a catalyst for the development of the LEC, supported by the Region of South Aegean and local authorities, participatory planning and a common vision characterized a high level of local collaboration towards the development of an ecotourism strategy. The LEC organized events for local service providers and used the project to demonstrate the benefits of ecotourism, increasing awareness of conservation issues in the tourism sector.

On the island of Crete, meanwhile, an ecotourism package had already been successfully developed in Samaria. This was a valuable model for the “young” DestiMED PLUS pilot [Biosphere Reserve and Natura 2000 site of Western Asterousia](#). The potential for integrating aspects of ecotourism and visitor management from the beginning, the importance of a participatory process, local ownership, and common decision-making framework gave a great boost to engaging local stakeholders in destination management. Building on the experiences of Samaria and Asterousia, the Region of Crete is working to develop a platform which will showcase carefully selected ecotourism routes under the name Sustainable Crete. Given the effort made so far and the benefits that are foreseen by the development of Crete as a Mediterranean ecotourism destination, it is certain that the REC will continue to operate even when DestiMED PLUS has ended.

“In Karpathos LEC, the majority of the active tourism sectors are represented. Cooperation has led to productive discussions towards the establishment of Karpathos island as a Mediterranean ecotourism destination. Without great collaboration, the smooth completion of the project, with added value for Karpathos island, could not have been achieved.”

Eleftheria Nikitara, READ S.A.,
Development Agency of South Aegean Region

“Local stakeholders are involved in a participatory process of identifying the routes of Sustainable Crete that will promote our cultural and natural heritage. We would like to develop this initiative because in Crete there is no information about ecotourism and this is something that the local community has asked for.”

Vasiliki Madoulka, Region of Crete

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DestiMED PLUS supports the MEET Network
www.meetnetwork.org



DestiMED PLUS project partners

