Enhancing SUStainable tourism attraction in small fascinating med TOWNS

SuSTowns

**Priority Axis 3: Protecting and promoting Mediterranean natural and cultural resources
3.1: To enhance the development of a sustainable and responsible coastal and maritime tourism in the MED Area**

Methodology to apply the TQM approach in the sustainable tourism management and governance

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1. INTRODUCTION

Background

This methodology is developed within the framework of the project: **Enhancing SUStainable tourism attraction in small fascinating med TOWNS (SuStowns)**, financed by the ERDF in the framework of the Interreg MED programme 2014-2020. The project is implemented in a consortium of 9 partners, led by ANCI Lazio, and has a duration of 32 months from 01/11/19 to 30/06/22.

The project aims to develop tools of planning and management of tourism that avoid the decline of the small, fascinating Mediterranean towns[1] promoting sustainable and quality tourism. Capitalizing existing tools and applying the most innovative techniques of the total quality management system to public policies; the project will encourage participatory processes of planning and promotion of the small, fascinating Mediterranean towns, based on the principle of sustainability and the enhancement of local cultural heritage.

The consortium is composed of:

- ANCI Lazio (Italy), coordinator
- Musol Foundation (Spain),
- BSC, Business Support Centre, Kranj (Slovenia),
- Development agency of eastern Thessaloniki's local authorities – Centre for the development of human resources and the support of local economy (Greece),
- Association of Albanian Municipalities (Albania),
- The most beautiful villages of Italy (Italy),
- Aragon Federation of towns, counties and provinces (Spain),
- Island Development Agency Ltd (Croatia),
- University of Algarve (Portugal),
- Make it Better, Association for Innovation & Social Economy (Portugal).

The project is aimed at 445 actors among public entities at local, regional and national level and civil society organisations from Italy, Spain, Albania, Greece, Slovenia, Croatia and Portugal. The project consists of 4 different Work Packages, and in the framework of the Work Package 3 "Testing" (WP3), the partners will promote 19 pilots (2 pilots per each partner) in collaboration with the local authorities, in which local action plans will be developed in order to prevent and tackle the decline of tourism using a participatory approach based on the Total Quality Management (TQM) methodology. In each pilot municipality, sustainable tourism products and experiences will be designed and promoted through marketing campaigns. Subsequently, in the WP4 Transferring, the learning generated in the pilot municipalities will be disseminated nationally and internationally through seminars, courses and providing advice to new municipalities that want to join the project. Furthermore, in the WP5 "Capitalisation", these lessons will be systematised in a sustainable tourism model that will be proposed and disseminated to the regional and national authorities

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[1] This methodology uses town(s) and village(s) indistinctly

together with recommendations for the improvement of its public policies on sustainable tourism

The MUSOL foundation is in charge of the overall coordination of the WP3 Testing, which aims at defining an effective participatory approach for tourist strategies and policy-making based on existing tools, in order to tackle the tourism demand decline modelled by the TALC[2] and to promote the sustainable management of time-sustained tourist flows, providing guidelines and practice-based models for dissemination and capitalisation at local as well as at regional and national levels. The approach will be built on the lessons learnt, best practices and tools produced by the partners in other EU-funded projects as well as their own experiences mentioned later in this methodology to capitalise the results achieved in previous collaborative projects, addressing one of the requirements of the 3rd Interreg Med call for Modular projects, through which SuSTowns is funded.

Methodology's Objectives

The WP3 intends to elaborate local action plans (LAP or Local AP) to prevent the tourism decline in the pilot fashion small towns according to a common methodology and using a participatory approach based on local focus groups. Furthermore, sustainable tourist packages/itineraries will be designed and promoted. The results of the implementation of the action plans in the different pilots will be evaluated and capitalised in other villages. An updated version of this methodology will be also published.

The WP3 includes 5 activities, among these activities the first is the activity "3.1 Elaboration of a methodology to apply the TQM approach in sustainable tourism management and governance". The TQM entails criteria, tools and processes for improving competitiveness and tourism quality. The TQM is well consolidated in the private sector as well as being increasingly experimented as an innovative approach for policy making in the public sector. The TQM has been selected by the consortium as the most suitable approach to address the internal-external and global-local challenges of the small towns in low density areas and islands, focusing on how to prevent tourism decline in these small towns where the project is targeted.

The methodology (deliverable 3.1.1) is detailed in this document and describes the method to apply in the pilot municipalities where it will be tested by each partner jointly with the local governance tools for the promotion of sustainable tourism. Local focus groups (LFG) will be formed and supported by each partner to elaborate local tourism action plans as well as to define and promote concrete tourism packages and services based on quality standards[3] to prevent the tourism decline. Finally, the methodology will be updated according to the results of the pilots for the project's dissemination and replication in other municipalities.

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[2] Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle Model
[3] Based on "Los pueblos más bonitos de España" and "I borghi più belli d'Italia" (among other similar criteria)

Use of this methodology

The aim of this methodology is to guide the elaboration of the action plan in a town to tackle the tourism decline and to provide a method for elaborating an action plan to address the situation in order to enhance new tourism products and experiences. At the same time as boosting a participatory approach within the different actors of the tourism value chain and boosting an innovative way of governance and quality system management.

The users of this methodology will be: initially the partners of the SuSTowns project jointly with the local authorities of the pilot towns; secondly the tourism experts who will support the villages in elaborating the plan; thirdly the stakeholders that will be involved in the process for designing the action plan of each pilot. Finally, those managers, directors dealing with tourist destination management and any kind of tourism stakeholders interested in following this guidance document in order to implement it in other villages, which might need to tackle similar challenges. So, after the evaluation of the implementation of the action plans in the different SuSTowns pilots, the capitalisation will foster the use of this methodology broadly in the MED community and beyond.

This publication consists of three parts: the first part regarding the common framework where the concepts are explained; the second part focused in the stakeholders, who are the main actors of this method; and finally the steps to elaborate the action plan for the town. Following these parts the way to use this methodology is straightforward:
- To read about the common theoretical framework to have a common understanding of sustainable tourism (section 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK).
- To know the importance of the stakeholders, who they should be and what role they will have (section 3. STAKEHOLDERS and step 1)
- To follow the steps for elaborating the plan (Step 2, step 3 and step 4)
- To understand the need of monitoring the implementation of the plan (step 5) to continuously improve the actions' impact.
- To communicate with the stakeholders as well as with the project's partners (step 6).

This document is a guide, a method to simplify the elaboration of the action plan, so that each town can adapt it depending on its own characteristics, needs and resources. At the end of the methodology, in the action plan sum-up sub-section, there is a check-list of the minimum content that the action plan should include. Once the methodology is applied, an action plan promoting sustainable and quality tourism must be produced, which will be the main document to follow in order to tackle the (tourism) decline of the villages.

Although this methodology will be used during the execution of the SuSTowns project, after the implementation of the action plans of the different pilots, it will be also evaluated and, may be updated to improve its applicability to future capitalised villages.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In any guidance document, it is always worth making sure there is a common understanding of the basic concepts upon which this methodology is based. The definitions are extracted from the study "European tourism: recent developments and future challenges" (Weston et al., 2019):

What is tourism?

> The UNWTO defines tourism as "the activities of persons identified as visitors. A visitor is someone who is making a visit to a main destination outside his/her usual environment for less than a year for any main purpose [including] holidays, leisure and recreation, business, health, education or other purposes. … This scope is much wider than the traditional perception of tourists, which included only those travelling for leisure." (UNWTO, 2010)

> Tourism includes the activities, private or professional, of individuals and businesses supplying services to the visitors, as well as the activities of the visitors themselves during their travel and stay away from the area where they usually live or work.

Who are the visitors?

> Visitors are generally subdivided into two groups:

> 1. Tourists, are visitors staying away from their main home for at least one night. These include both domestic and international visitors.

> 2. Day visitors, also called excursionists, are visitors spending at least three-hours away from their home and, although normally considered as domestic, this can include cross-border or international trips. This group can be further sub-divided into two groups; those spending:
> - over three hours away from their home, who are often visiting areas outside their normal environment, and
> - under three-hours away from home, who are more likely to be visiting their local area.

> Visitors in all the groups can be visiting for the purposes of holidays, leisure, recreation, business, etc.

What is a tourism destination?

> An area which is separately identified and promoted to tourists as a place to visit, and within which the tourism product is coordinated by one or more identifiable authorities or organisations.

What is considered as Tourism industry?

The tourism industry does not represent a single industry but a group of industry classifications, which to a greater or lesser extent rely on tourism as their main source of income.

The UNWTO list of tourism associated industries (or activities) are:
1. Accommodation for visitors
2. Food and beverage serving activities
3. Railway passenger transport
4. Road passenger transport
5. Water passenger transport
6. Air passenger transport
7. Transport equipment rental
8. Travel agencies and other reservation services activities
9. Cultural activities
10. Sports and recreational activities
11. Retail trade of country-specific tourism characteristic goods
12. Other country-specific tourism characteristic activities

Tourism Destination Life Cycle

In addition to the basic definitions, the methodology is intended to tackle the tourism decline, so for that it is necessary to know the meaning and scope of decline and therefore to explain the evolution of tourism destination theory. Although, there are many other theoretic models[4] of development and evolution of a tourism destination, Richard Butler's model was chosen as the most suitable and will be hereafter.

The term 'Tourism destination life-cycle' was first mentioned in the Butler model[5]. The model, one of the most used and cited in the world of tourism research has become very influential in tourism and clearly has major implications for sustainable tourism. In general terms, the model establishes a positive relationship between the increase in the number of visitors and tourism development, especially in terms of accommodation. It also suggests the existence of a hierarchy of tourist centres based on their level of development, the type of existing accommodation, the degree of participation of local and foreign entrepreneurs and the status of visitors.

[4] There are many other theoretic models by Biossec, Chadefaud, Gormsen, Plog, Cohen, Santana…
[5] R. W. Butler: The Concept of a Tourist Area Cycle of Evolution: Implications for Management of Resources. Canadian Geographer, 24, 5 (1980)

The model has 6 phases:
1. Exploration
2. Involvement
3. Development
4. Consolidation
5. Stagnation
6. Post-stagnation

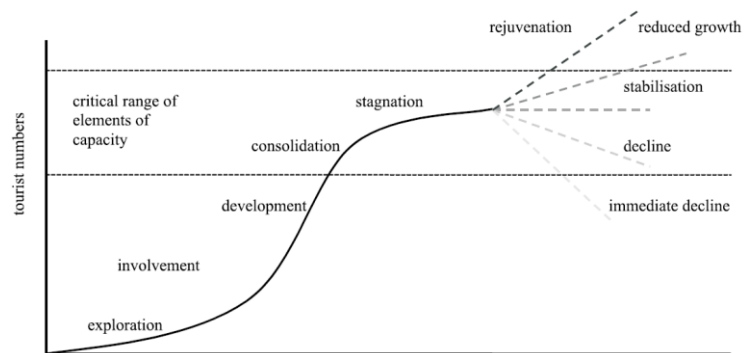See the representation in Figure 1 Life Cycle Butler's model.

Figure 1 Life Cycle Butler's model

The evolution depends on many, internal or external, factors; in particular the model also suggests that each stage of the cycle has implications for tourist flows, the relationship between residents and visitors, the change's grade in the destination and the involvement of external stakeholders. While a destination passes through each stage, the evolution factors become more and more complicated to analyse because there are more interconnections between different areas and sectors not included in the tourism governance or are too far from the tourism managers to have control, access or even just information. The difficulty lies in the diagnosis of the actual stage, by measuring a correct set of variables. An excessive use of data or a wrong-driven analysis will easily lead to an irrelevant diagnosis of the current state and consequently, to an incorrectly-targeted marketing strategy. Resources and valuable time will be lost along with the solution for facing possible decline. (Avdimiotis, 2009)

The SuSTowns project is focused on the Post-stagnation phase, therefore, this phase is explained below, while the other phases can be found in literature[5]. According to the Figure 1 Life Cycle Butler's model, the main concepts in post-stagnation are Decline and Rejuvenation, hence here below is an explanation of each.

Decline

From the stagnation point onwards there are 2 basic possibilities: Decline in various forms or rejuvenation (regrowth of the destination). Decline can be slow or rapid, and regular visitors are replaced by people seeking a cheap break or visitors (day trippers). Rejuvenation implies more effort on the part of tourism managers in an integral approach and, moreover, generally a cash injection from either a private company or the government or any other source (lately there are crowdfunding campaigns intended for these purposes), in order to develop more sustainable strategies based on lower visitor' numbers and to create a new attraction within the destination to boost its appealing again.

Declining destinations have been redefined as 'destinations with a certain tradition in providing tourism, but characterised by one or more negative trends'. This implies that the negative trend does not necessarily refer to a decrease in demand, as in the original lifecycle model, but can be associated with a variety of factors.

For instance, **signals of decline** can be represented by:
- ➢ a decrease in the elements defining the former quality of the destination; in the case of SuSTowns villages, this quality is defined by the criteria of the quality standard (Table 6 Quality Criteria)
- ➢ a decrease in the competitive success of the destination (market share);
- ➢ a difficulty in assuring sustainable tourism offer;
- ➢ a decrease in the average tourist expenditure;
- ➢ a decrease in arrival number;
- ➢ a decrease in foreign investment;
- ➢ a difficulty facing seasonality

According to this "decline" definition, destinations which are still profitable might also be declining or under acute threat of decline. Therefore, the decline of tourist destinations will be considered from a structural viewpoint. Reasons for decline can vary depending on the different situations.

Decline can be caused both by external factors, basically linked to changes in the global tourism market or exogenous variables, and internal factors, peculiar to the specific destination. For example:

External factors could be the following:
- Causes beyond one's control (wars, epidemics, earthquakes, climate change or political changes, etc.), like the *COVID19*[6] situation right now in most of the countries around the world.
- The appearance of new emerging destinations or competitors, with a newer offer, of quality, and at competitive prices. Indeed, a competitive price with good marketing can have a high and fast impact on a consolidated destination, so keeping an eye on competitors' strategies (although we cannot change them), will be an advantage in order to plan better our destination.
- Negative publicity; this is increasing due to social networks where a post can go viral in a matter of hours and where something false or fake can be interpreted as true.
- The growth of budget airlines and cheaper accommodation in new emerging markets.

Internal factors could be:
- Product obsolescence with respect to requirements of demand. The new trends in tourism demand in recent years, with a preference for:
  - individually-planned holidays rather than package tours. People want to decide for themselves what to do and do not want to be limited to the plans made by tour operators;
  - the quality of tourist services of traditional or mature destinations;
  - experiencing the 'real' and 'authentic', rather than the artificial mass tourist experience;
  - visiting areas that have not been environmentally damaged;

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[6] https://covid19.who.int/

- activity-based holidays. Many tourists no longer seek just sunbathing and nightlife but want complementary activities (excursions, cultural visits, sports, etc.)
- offering sustainable experiences, plastic-free products…

- The increasing physical deterioration/degradation of the natural environment and heritage, like beaches contaminated with waste and plastics
- Congestion: reaching/exceeding the carrying capacity threshold, which is not only common in well-known cities like Barcelona, Paris… but also in small towns and villages.

In some cases, such as in small islands, competition may be strong, due to the mass tourism model that was widely developed in the past. Tour operators can easily gain control of such destinations and push price policy as they wish. The lack of differentiation of tourism products (mostly due to mass production) places small islands in a global competition, where 'price' makes the difference[7]. Effective planning and management of a destination imply the use of any available tool in order to detect early signals of decline[8] and take preventive measures with the purpose of rejuvenating the destination. Of course, policies to be implemented may differ greatly depending on the nature of the factors underlying the decline. Some of them, especially external factors, are not predictable, and are, therefore not controllable in advance. In such cases, an effective communication process can be very useful in order to refocus the image of the destination among actual and potential visitors. In other cases, it is actually possible to identify trends likely to lead to a decline within an estimated time.

Rejuvenation

After the stagnation point if the mature destination wants to avoid continued decline, there are various solutions that can be implemented:
- Stabilisation, due to the application of piecemeal measures which do not address the root of the problems but only the most evident effects
- Rejuvenation, which is a radical approach, leading to the adoption of measures which even entail a new tourism model based on sustainability and the integration of tourism with the environment, the economy and the local population; a regeneration project headlined by the action plan that will be an outcome of this methodology.

The evolution of a destination life-cycle depends on the following indicators[9]:
- the form of development (mass tourism, alternative forms);
- investments (private, foreign, local entrepreneurs);
- demand trends (solo travellers, authenticity, explorers, adventure, seniors, only adult…);
- planning, policy and management;

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[7] I. Spilanis , H. Vayanni , P. Spyropoulos , I. Syrakis : The Position of the Greek Tourist Product in the European Market. 2006
[8] See Early Warning System in STEP 2 – ASSESSMENT of section 4. METHODOLOGY
[9] C. Cooper, J. Fletcher, D. Gilbert, S. Wanhill: Tourism: Principles and Practice. Essex: Pearson Education Ltd., 1998

- governmental policy (open, transparent and innovative governance);
- accessibility of the destination;
- impacts (positives and negatives) from tourism to the destination;
- competitive destinations.

Sustainable Tourism

The concept of sustainable tourism has been gaining ground since its first appearance in the 1990s, producing offshoots such as responsible tourism, ecotourism and solidarity tourism as the concept has evolved. However, the common ground shared by all definitions is the key role played by visitors and their goals, motivations and activities that impact in the territory visited.

The most accepted definition for 'Sustainable Tourism' is the following: "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities". (UNWTO, 2019c)

At the same time the term sustainable, addresses the goal of sustainability, which is achieved through responsibility. Following this is the arise of responsible tourism which requires a responsible attitude on the part of travellers and, in particular, travel industry professionals, who must develop a business model that contributes to the conservation of natural, sociocultural and economic territorial resources. However, there is a gap between the concept of sustainability and its actual implementation into a real world that became evident in the second decade of the last century; "easier said than done" and what prevails is that responsibility means "sustainability in action".

It is important to balance the three dimensions of sustainability without jeopardising the sustainability concept, and acknowledging different stakeholder interests (often conflicting), so, in site-specific consultation on a case-by-case basis will be necessary to ensure this balance.

The United Nations considers these endeavours very important for managing our resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life-support systems without compromising the ability of next generations to meet their own needs. So, they designated 2017 the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development to promote working towards achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals included in the United Nations 2030 Agenda. But, as "One swallow does not make a summer", one

year does not make the change, therefore from now on tourism must be sustainable or it cannot exist.

Some tourism data

According to UNWTO data, global tourism has now grown for nine years in succession, with international arrivals reaching 1.4 billion in 2018, two years ahead of forecasts. Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing sectors of the global economy.
According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), the tourism industry was worth $8.8 trillion in 2018 (around €7.9 trillion), outperforming the global economy for the eighth consecutive year (WTTC, 2019).Europe is ranked as the world's number one destination for international arrivals, with 713 million in 2018, over half the global total, growing by 6% in 2018. Early indications are that 2019 will see further growth, although forecast of growth for the European regions 2019 – 2022 shows that growth is expected to slow to between 2 and 4% over the next four years (ETC, 2019).

As well as being the world's largest destination, visits to EU countries are not equally distributed, with the top three (France, Spain and Italy) accounting for around 40% of total visits. Southern/Mediterranean Europe saw the strongest growth, with increases of 8% in arrivals (289,4M in 2018) and 7% in receipts (187M€ in 2018). It is worth noting that around 80% of tourist arrivals are generated from within the same region, so around 530 million trips are Europeans visiting other European destinations (UNWTO, 2019a).

Figure 2 EU Top Regions tourist arrivals in 2017 (Source: Eurostat)

Tourism is responsible for 5% of global CO_2 emissions, around 75% of which is from the transport sector; air travel alone accounts for 40% of the industry's emissions. Over half of trips were made by air (58%), an increase of 12% since 2000, predominantly at the expense

of land transport which fell by 10% over the same period to 37% (UNWTO, 2019a). With this data there is increased concern over sustainability, both in terms of capacity and environmental impact.

Tourism plays a major role in the European economy, not only in terms of economic growth through visitor spending, but also by contributing to regional development and employment. Thus, tourism has impacts and interdependencies in many areas of government, including transport, environment, consumer protection and regional development. Policies in these areas have not always been coordinated when considering the potential impacts on tourism, so recognising sustainable tourism as crucial to achieving EU energy and climate policy objectives (among others) and, rethinking tourism in order to be responsible, will help to aim for coordinated actions among different areas. It is important to highlight that the economic benefits of tourism, have become more visible through the introduction of Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA)[10].

In fact, the challenge is to create appropriate strategies, solutions and business models facing the estimate data foreseen for the coming years. The industry must adapt to new ways of thinking, and more importantly acting. It is necessary to develop plans for tourists to be more environmentally sustainable and socially respectful when travelling (from the moment they envisage travelling until the experience has ended) as well as to engage residents to embrace this aim. In short, becoming a sustainable tourism destination, implies integrating competitiveness, innovation, technologies, inclusivity and accessibility as the main topics of the destination management.

Total Quality Management

Total Quality Management (TQM) is defined as a management approach to long-term success through a management system focused on the customers. In a TQM system all members of an organisation (managers and employees) participate in improving processes, products and services. TQM brings and provides at suitable environment to boost employees for a continuous improvement on competencies and skills in order to offer high value-added products and services to clients. The 'Total' means assembling different departments to improve operations to cooperate between each other and the 'Management' implies executives and leaders who must actively aim for quality as a key characteristic for improvement through funding or investment, trainings, goal selling and ad-hoc cross-multifunctional teams as well as active management participation to ensure this internal practice. TQM uses strategy, data, and effective communications to integrate the quality discipline into the culture and activities of the organisation. The quality is defined by customers' requirements, so having tools like check sheets, control charts, histograms, cause-effect or scatter diagrams…should give enough data to analyse and make the right decisions. TQM is an ongoing process of detecting and reducing or eliminating errors within the supply or product chain, while improving customer' service and ensuring employees continuous learning.

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[10] Tourism Satellite accounts are the main statistical tool for measuring the economic value of tourism. They encompass both direct tourist expenditure as well as tourism supply contributions (employment, business expenditure, etc.).

Figure 3 Total Quality Management principles

Many of these concepts are present in modern quality management models like ISO 9001:2015 and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) excellence model. Moreover, some of the tools and methodologies used in the TQM system are: Six Sigma, 5S and Lean Manufacturing.

The main TQM characteristics from executive management to uptake the 8 principles into its organisation are: Recognition, Ethics, Trust, Integrity, Training, Teamwork, Leadership and Communication. In fact, TQM is also an executive strategy and quality approach based on the definition of a strategy to satisfy all the stakeholders. It is worth noting the importance of the analysis of the local and global context and an "open-to-the-external-context" approach that aims at the satisfaction of all the stakeholders, not only the customers' but also the local communities, the providers, etc. Satisfying all the stakeholders necessarily leads the company to consider all the axis of sustainability: not only economic sustainability required by the internal stakeholders such as the shareholders, but also social and environmental sustainability to ensure the satisfaction of the local communities and other stakeholders. The TQM based quality management system entails many features of corporate social responsibility management systems. Therefore, the TQM implementation in the companies of the tourist sector is the most appropriate quality approach to introduce the sustainability in the management systems. This is not the only reason why the project SuSTowns opted to mainstream TQM in the project methodology. TQM pays considerable attention to the evolution of the local and global context and to the adaptation of the companies to the quick modification of the markets. Such focus is key for the tourist sector to understand when the early signs of decline appear and a rejuvenation process is required.

According to UNWTO (UNWTO, 2007:9) the main reasons for implementing a management model should be:
- Ensuring tourism sustainability;
- Establishing a competitive edge;

- Spreading the benefits of tourism;
- Improving tourism yield;
- Building a strong and vibrant brand identity.

Moreover, governance is the essential factor for the development of a project, whose fundamental basis is the preservation of the environment and all that this entails: economic growth, public and private inclusion and, of course, respect for the locals that inhabit that space and the tourists who visit it (BleuTourMed, 2017). TQM is a quality management approach that can be implemented by private (profit and no profit) sector as well as by the public sector. The most prominent features of TQM are key factors for governance, especially for the local governance of a tourist destination in order to act co-ordinately to prevent the tourism decline and start a rejuvenation process. For instance, if a Local Authority implements a TQM based (or at least partially inspired) management system, more attention will be paid to the evolution of the local/global contexts and hence, to the satisfaction of all the stakeholders, implying a reinforced communication with them. All of them are key factors for a proper governance of a tourist destination.

Being aware of this, there are several factors that must be considered for the development of the governance: the first of them is balance, based on the creation of an independent body that ensures the coordination of the process, co-ownership and support for policies that promote the goals set. This requires a multi-governance approach that can develop horizontal and vertical coordination to help structure the complex challenges the stakeholders face. The second is inclusion and, to this end, it is necessary to take into account an open, genuine dialogue and active participation of all the individuals or groups concerned. Last but not least, empowerment. This should aim at assertive leadership and participatory processes that help to elucidate the complex elements needed to make them a reality. It is also a high need to reach a contractual agreement that encourages collaboration and commitment to achieve the objectives (Wilson, BleuTourMed 2019).

Here below are the 8 principles of total quality management and how each could be applied to sustainable tourism destination management and governance:

Principle	Description	Application in sustainable tourism destination
Customer-focused	The customer ultimately determines the level of quality. No matter what an organisation does to foster quality improvement, the customer determines whether the efforts were worthwhile	The destination must have at the top of its mind the target profile of the visitors, so between all the stakeholders there should be at least 3 profiles defined to later on develop the experiences and products according to those profiles (type of person, when they could travel, how much they could spend, where they might come from, channels for marketing…). Example:

		- Tourist for disconnection: short stay for resting and disconnecting from urban area.
		- Excursionist, just occasional visit: visit the village for half a day for several reasons like gastronomy, heritage, event…
		- Active visitor: mainly adult couples or groups of friends interested in natural, active and maybe adventurous activity.
		- Passionate tourist: family or seniors who love the idea of resting peacefully, enjoying the village (gastronomy, heritage, traditions…), exploring surroundings.
Total employee involvement	All employees participate in working towards common goals. Total employee commitment can only be obtained after fear has been driven from the workplace, when empowerment has occurred, and when management has provided the proper environment. High-performance work systems integrate continuous improvement efforts with normal business operations. Self-managed work teams are one form of empowerment.	Having stakeholders' engagement is important, for example giving them a voice and ways to express needs and opinions. The Local Focus Groups must have a clear participation with the local authorities and especially the person responsible for the leadership of the action plan. Then, the message on sustainable tourism in the destination can be spread, as the first step is sharing common vision among all the people involved to co-work together to chart the tourism of the future.
Process-centred	A fundamental part of TQM is a focus on process thinking. A process is a series of steps that take inputs from suppliers (internal or external) and transforms them into outputs that are delivered to customers (internal or external). The steps required to carry out the process are defined, and performance measures are continuously monitored in order to detect unexpected variation.	Having the Local Focus Groups from the first moment to design the action plan, should allow knowledge more details from the residents, private sector and other actors of the value chain in order to have a more complete image for the assessment as well as for the monitoring of the destination.
Integrated system	Although an organisation may consist of many different functional specialties often organised into vertically structured departments, it	This methodology intends to provide new ways for governance, including changes in the executive management, by giving more autonomy to the people

	is the horizontal processes interconnecting these functions that are the focus of TQM. Every organisation has a unique work culture, and it is virtually impossible to achieve excellence in its products and services unless a good <u>quality culture</u> has been fostered. Thus, an integrated system connects business improvement elements in an attempt to continually improve and exceed the expectations of customers, employees, and other stakeholders.	involved working in small groups for a specific objective and supporting horizontal and multidisciplinary teams to maximise the impact. The idea is to dream big about the future of the destination, to create a strong sense of commitment and then to work aligned to achieve it thanks to an efficient and effective action plan. Endowing decision-making processes with legitimacy to promote substantial changes is vitally necessary
Strategic and systematic approach	A critical part of the management of quality is the strategic and systematic approach to achieving an organization's vision, mission, and goals. This process, called strategic planning or strategic management, includes the formulation of a strategic plan that integrates quality as a core component	Increasing quality in numerous segments of a tourist destination will be the way to assure quality along the value chain. The quality criteria (defined later on) for the villages is a guideline to assure quality in the destination but also within the process and for the people involved. Reaching goals must be as important as including quality in all the steps, services and products delivered within the action plan.
Continual improvement	A large aspect of TQM is continual process improvement. Continual improvement drives an organisation to be both analytical and creative in finding ways to become more competitive and more effective at meeting stakeholders' expectations. Among the most widely used tools for the continuous improvement model is a four-step quality assurance method the plan-do-check-act (PDCA) cycle: Plan: Identify an opportunity and plan for change. Do: Implement the change on a small scale. Check: Use data to analyse the results of the change and determine whether it made a difference.	Education tailored to employees in tourism, digital skills, soft skills, new ways for promotion and marketing, innovative tools for co-creation and teambuilding… different courses and tools should be included in the action plans to improve tourism actors' capacities, skills and also motivation. The more you invest in people, the more impact you will see on their performance, and consequently; the more positive impact there will be on the services and products of the destination. It is necessary to identify the initial situation and lack of knowledge of the people involved in order to choose the best trainings for them. However, creating multidisciplinary teams multiple to exchanges and personal enrichment. Capacity building,

	Act: If the change was successful, implement it on a wider scale and continuously assess your results. If the change did not work, begin the cycle again.	training employees and providing new skills and talented people should be part of integrating quality into the destination as part of addressing competitiveness. The first assessment and the continuous monitoring will allow the integration of continual improvement alongside the implementation of the action plan and also for the people involved. The steps planned for the action plan includes the PDCA method to integrate the continual improvement.
Fact-based decision making	In order to know how well an organisation is performing, data on performance is necessary. TQM requires that an organisation continually collect and analyse data in order to improve decision making accuracy, achieve consensus, and allow prediction based on past history.	*We cannot manage, what we cannot measure* (NECSTouR). Initial and periodic data on the situation of the destination is needed to have an overview in order to make decisions. The indicators must also measure quality and then strive for progress in innovation. It could be interesting to have an evaluation system coordinated by independent bodies once a year which could be done as part of the audit for a sustainable tourism certification.
Communications	During times of organisational change, as well as part of day-to-day operation, effective communications plays a large part in maintaining morale and in motivating employees at all levels. Communications involve strategies, method, and timeliness	Implementation of changes is necessary, but in order to keep people motivated, transparency and a progress report update is needed among all the people involved. A clear message regarding to the main goal can engage more stakeholders and to raise awareness in more residents and tourists.
Satisfaction of all the stakeholders	The satisfaction of all the stakeholders is a goal of TQM and it entails a close collaboration with internal and external stakeholders.	In a tourist destination, stakeholders usually include residents, associations, environmental organisations, cultural associations, etc. All the sustainability axes have to be considered in order to keep them satisfied.

Table 1 Total quality management principles

All these dimensions of the TQM system will be included in the different steps of the methodology as essential characteristics for designing an action plan.

Implementing a Total Quality Management system in the destinations will affect every aspect of the destination's performance. Benefits of a documented quality management system include:

- ✓ Meeting the tourists' requirements, which helps to instil confidence in the destination management, in turn leading to more customers, more sales, and more repeat visits.
- ✓ Meeting the village quality criteria as well as the public legal and fiscal requirements, which ensures compliance with regulations and provision of products and services in the most cost- and resource-efficient manner, creating room for expansion, growth, and profit.

These benefits can offer additional advantages, including:

- ▪ Defining, improving, and controlling processes by setting destination-wide roadmap
- ▪ Lowering costs thanks to reduced waste and preventing mistakes
- ▪ Facilitating and identifying training opportunities
- ▪ Engaging staff and more citizens
- ▪ Communicating a readiness to produce consistent results
- ▪ Communicating where the destination is (at the level of offer vs. the competition, or issues concerning tourist employees…) influences the production of consistent results among the different stakeholders.

3. STAKEHOLDERS

A tourist destination is a complex ecosystem, usually split into two main blocks of residents and visitors. But there are many other parts that must be taken into account in order to have the right picture of the destination, including all the actors of the tourism value chain, and thus to plan and act consequently.

To begin with, in a destination there is the base and shared place which is the territory itself, where everybody interconnects and everything happens, therefore human and activity impacts (positive or negative) will affect this territory which needs to be preserved and protected for future generations. In this territory the community lives, works and enjoys their free time, and tourism should contribute to improving their well-being without jeopardising their actual and future comfort and welfare (Espinosa, 2019).

Once the territory is considered as the arena where all occurs, it is essential to take note of what the report "The invisible burden" (Epler Wood et al., 2019) mentions: "The invisible burden is defined as the unaccounted for destination costs to provide local infrastructure and the protection of eco and socio-cultural systems for tourists and local people." Electricity, energy, internet connectivity, water and sewerage systems, health systems, food security, etc. seem basic, and developed countries for granted. But, while global tourism grows all this basic infrastructure threaten natural and cultural icons and moreover, not only residents use these infrastructures but tourists benefit from them too, which means that they must be considered for sustainable development and economic impact. So, in order to engage residents it will be necessary to ensure local communities' benefit when investing in tourism facilities, services or goods, as they make essential contributions to the tourism industry (e.g. through mobility services, food, traditions, crafts, etc).

On the other side, there are the visitors who should ideally enjoy the destination in a responsible way, spending in activities and local business to contribute to the well-being of the host community.

But in this big ecosystem, many stakeholders interfere, some not well aligned with the sustainable vision and without tourist awareness about the huge impact that they have on the territory, as well as on the economic and sustainable development of the destinations. Thus, to be able to design an effective action plan, the first step is to clearly identify all the actors within the tourism ecosystem of the destination and to sit and talk together to define the needs and challenges to shift the behaviour on all sides, starting from the local authorities by implementing flexible management and innovative governance models and ending with the visitors, by protecting, preserving and positively impacting the territory.

Considering this picture of the destination ecosystem, which is the target audience that should be reached for the implementation of the methodology and therefore for the definition of the action plan as well as the execution of it?

From the UNWTO Code of Ethics the stakeholders in tourism development includes:

- national governments;
- local governments with specific competence in tourism matters;
- tourism establishments and tourism enterprises, including their associations;
- institutions engaged in financing tourism projects;
- tourism employees and professionals;
- trade unions of tourism employees;
- tourists and excursionists;
- local populations and host communities at tourism destinations through their representatives; and
- other juridical and natural persons having stakes in tourism development including non-governmental organisations specialising in tourism and directly involved in tourism projects and the supply of tourism services.

In addition to the above listed stakeholders, there are different relevant target audiences that should be included for dissemination and to influence European policies like:

- Representatives from EU institutions (DG MARE; DG Growth; DG ENV; DG EASME…) that advocate and implement measures and funding programmes at the European level fostering their implementation;
- Managing authorities from other European collaboratives programmes like ENI CBC MED or other Interreg Programmes that advocate for funding programmes and fostering further exchanges and capitalisation of project results;
- Tourism ministries of EU countries and other MED countries that advocate and promote measures within their respective countries fostering its implementation;
- Representatives from the academia (e.g. researchers, professors) MED countries, regions and local destinations that are aware of the model and guide its implementation.

Regarding the SuSTowns pilots, the selected villages put the focus at the local level, so local authorities must have a relevant role in involving the stakeholders of the destination and they should assure leadership throughout the duration of the action plan by ensuring co-ownership of the process among the actors engaged in order to implement the action plans. Engaging

the Local Focus Groups is a way to launch a process committing different layers of government and different regional and/or local actors to achieving a common vision on developing sustainable tourism based on its identity, value and vision by using unique historic, natural, culinary, authentic or cultural heritage to achieve a competitive advantage in the global market.

From the Culatra 2030 initiative the following principles are defined to assure at participatory approach:

- Actor based: heterogeneous to bring interests and visions of the entire territory
- Territory based: social and historical relations between territory and its actors
- Dynamic: adaptive to the complexity, in two sides to support positives impact and to mitigate negative impacts
- Systemic: understanding the complex ecosystem and its interdependencies with other territories like similar villages, the region or the country
- Multi-sectorial: integration of the different sectors such as environmental, social, economic, political, cultural
- Multi-level: integration different scales in governance, that it will make the difference to incorporate new governance models
- Participatory and negotiated: strengthen dialogue and trust by increasing bargaining power

(Make it Better, 2009)

In order to empower key stakeholders in the design, planning and implementation of tourism activities in the territory and to build effective collaboration between all of them, a common understanding on the sustainable tourism destination concept must exists. So, to share a clearer and more comprehensive idea, some **trainings sessions** are foreseen to provide the concepts, vision and meanings of the theoretical framework of this methodology.

Considering the partners of the SuSTowns project as the first stakeholders, here below there is a list of stakeholders to be included in the action plan in every pilot:

Local governments with specific competence in tourism	The department and area in charge of tourism at the local and municipal level (depending on the size of the village it could be at the municipal level).
Local governments without direct competence in tourism	Representatives from other areas and sectors of the local government: economic development, urban planning, mobility, energy, agriculture, regulation, real estate, taxation… The more different departments that participate, the more alternative ways to face challenges and more powerful agreements the destination will reach.
Local DMO (Destination Marketing Organisation) or DMC (Destination Management Company)	DMO or leading entity public, private or mixed that so far has been fully or partially managing the destination. Destination management organisations have an important role to play in coordinating and integrating the development and

	implementation of EU policies and strategies across national sectors and across the levels of government (Spyriadis, Buhalis & Fyall, 2011).
National, regional and/or provincial authorities with tourism competencies	At least at the first meetings it would be beneficial to have the responsible authority above the local level to involve them in the commitment of the action plan and to exchange views to assure alignment with the vision of the destination management in a sustainable way.
Other local organisations dealing with the territory	Town centre management organisations, Park Authorities and Coastal and Maritime Protected Areas; Natural Park organisations, public transport agencies, tourism-related NGOs, heads of collaborative economy platforms …
Stakeholders from the tourism private sector	Tourism management: incoming agencies, tour guides… Accommodation: hotels, campsites, hostels, sharing economy associations… Technological SMEs: companies offering solutions to the tourism sector Sports: entities offering activities Establishments: souvenirs shops, workshops and crafts Other tourism enterprises
Institutions engaged in financing tourism projects	Large companies of the area (province or region), RSC from banks, banking services, other private initiatives, foreign investment experts
Tourism employees and professionals and trade unions of tourism employees	Individual employees, groups of specific jobs in tourism (like stewardess, cleaners, animators…) and associations and unions of tourism
Residents	Local populations and host communities at tourism destinations, when possible even locals with their second residence in the destination. In particular, residents (who live with the pressures of tourism on a daily basis) can intervene not only in decision-making, but also in planning and management.
Representatives from the academia and research organisations	Having professors and researchers within the stakeholders will ensure cutting-edge knowledge and beyond as well as a horizontal approach to uptake innovation. Also business schools and the education sector to expand the skills needed in the tourism sector.
Consultants and experts of different domains	Change manager, advisor in tourism governance, consultant in sustainable tourism, expert in circular economy, mentor for digital transformation etc. that can guide/support the design and implementation of the action plan

Table 2 Stakeholders to include in the action plan

In addition to all the above listed stakeholders, we should pay special attention to how involving **the visitors (tourists and excursionists).** They play a significant role, although they are highly difficult to involve in the elaboration of the action plant. However, it will be very valuable to have their view in the actions planned as well as feedback about their own experience in the towns. To this purpose, some questionnaires or surveys should be distributed between the accommodation places and the tourism services providers in order

to gather in a passive way the visitors' opinion to take into account for improvements in the action plan. These surveys should be systemised for the action plan supervisor to include in the design and monitoring process.

Identifying the stakeholders that must be involved, is not enough. The local authorities must ensure participation mechanisms for inclusive decision-making processes as well as promote effective governance through the assertive leadership of empowered agents. This can be done by specifying the mandate and role of each level of governance while building their capacity to become change-makers, and ensuring tourism policy-making processes are effective, coherent, sustainable and provide a sense of ownership. A new governance and management means: new hierarchies, defining a new (and plainer) organisation chart, creating new management and support bodies, boosting trainings and education to uptake the capabilities and skills to facing challenges and providing the necessary resources (economic and human) to assure this change and its implementation.

As all the voices must be heard, this methodology underlines a bottom-up approach due to the fact that those that are close to the actions (either suffering impacts or having its business) are the ones that have more to gain or lose, so they can be more motivated and therefore more engaged in implementing the plan. As for the local authorities, they should be proud of local support and to share information between stakeholders while building their big data capacity to promote knowledge-based policy decisions by means of an inclusive and structured consensus process involving all stakeholders. Both local and regional or national public authorities should provide liaison between different levels of governance and avoid constrains to facilitate coordination and flexible governance processes to incorporate hopes and concerns from residents and the private sector (not only large companies but SMEs and freelancers) working in tourism.

If a proposal of law is made without a holistic view, another authority, for example from the environment area, may not approve the law because it is too soft or does not contemplate the current targets required from the European Commission. In some cases, the competition authority has turned down some new regulations or laws because they are against free market and competition. There are also other effects that may not be considered, such as: being against the security/safety of the residents, because in the case of sharing economy instead of sharing the house with a community, it is done with strangers, that can become problematics with noise and disturbances; commercial affection with stores changing to adapt to the new tourists and forgetting the needs of the locals; services becoming more expensive, among others cases that could arise.

The society of the territory itself must be integrated into a set of rules, norms, policies that promote competitiveness, sustainability and inclusion and, at the same time, have education, research and innovation for the best development of residents in order to reach the state of "Better places to live, better places to visit" (Barcelona Declaration of NECSTouR, 2019).

4. METHODOLOGY

Vision

The vision for Sustainable Management of Tourism Destinations pivots on believing that:
"*Tourism planning certainly holds the key to the sustainable management of a tourism destination.*" (As Conaghan, Hanrahan and McLoughlin, 2015:103)

"Governance directly affects whether -and how- real progress is made toward securing the economic, socio-cultural and environmental goals of sustainable tourism development. In the Mediterranean context, tourism destinations have much to gain from adopting a sustainable governance approach, whereby tourism is understood as part of a broader urban or regional ecosystem and the tourism destination is conceived of as a quality place to live, work and visit." (Wilson, BleuTourMed 2019:13)

With regard to the introduction and objectives of this document and taking into account twofold prespective:
- On the one hand, the current global tourism growth up to now, which had the forecast of 500 million international tourist arrivals to Southern and Mediterranean Europe by 2030, half of which will be in coastal areas, it's extremely urgent to take action in tourism planning in order to enable destinations to chart a future course to become a sustainable and responsible tourism destination. Coastal and maritime tourism is undeniably crucial to most Mediterranean economies in terms of the revenue and jobs generated and exports and capital investments created.
- On the other hand the pandemic situation that has changed the present and short-mid term estimations. Different experts and tourism associations point out 2020 as the lowest spent in tourism in decades; international scenarios go between -58% and -78% in arrivals[11]. But it's crucial to work is on the recovery, to focus on small destinations being more sustainable and therefore, reinforcing the relevance of this methodology. So,if we wish for tourism to bring economic development, increase local economy, boost competitiveness and benefit equally residents and visitors (conventional tourism has been detrimental to local communities), we must have "Better places to live, better places to visit" as the Barcelona Declaration says (NECSTouR, 2019). Thus a change in the mind-set of all the stakeholders as well as some innovative actions in terms of governance and management are necessary in order to preserve the uniqueness of the history and cultural and natural assets of the Mediterranean that make it the world's leading tourism destination. As such, the methodology provides 6 steps to support this path for achieving smart, sustainable tourism with open-flexible governance and effective tools to engage local communities.

In short, it is urgent that we move towards "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the

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[11] UNWTO report: International Tourist Numbers Could Fall 60-80% in 2020,
https://www.unwto.org/news/covid-19-international-tourist-numbers-could-fall-60-80-in-2020

industry, the environment and host communities" (UNWTO). Shifting towards sustainable tourism would curb current overexploitation, decrease the pollution of coastal and marine ecosystems and restore a more balanced distribution of the benefits generated by tourism developments by boosting more competitiveness to improve infrastructure and create decent jobs for local and regional development.

Objective

The objective of this methodology is to provide the steps for creating the action plan to avoid the decline of the small and fascinating Mediterranean towns promoting sustainable and quality tourism. The methodology takes into account the current global trends in tourism and also considers the five most important topics in European tourism management underlined for the stakeholders' consultation in the European Parliament study "European Tourism: recent development and future challenges"[12] and the challenges for more Sustainable European Tourism described in the European Commission report "Action for more sustainable European tourism" (EU Commission, 2007). Moreover, during the writing of this methodology the COVID-19 was spread and it caused a drastic and unexpected decline in tourism, which has brought a new situation without free movement of people and therefore, with no tourism in many destinations. So, more than ever, the recovery strategy must focus on sustainable tourism, which also aims to reduce large crowds and to avoid overcrowding for health reasons that will be necessary to fulfil. Certainly, the relaunch of tourism will follow sustainable criteria and will be focus primary in small destinations, which will become crucial for the local economic recovery as well as for the tourism industry.

On the one hand, considering UNWTO as the principal institution for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. On the other hand, taking into account the specific initiative to support the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) where tourism has been included as targets in Goals: 8) Inclusive and sustainable economic growth, 12) Sustainable consumption and production and 14) The sustainable use of oceans and marine resources; but also considering the significant role of tourism to many other areas and therefore to contribute to the other SDGs (see Tourism4SDGs by UNWTO to know the details). And finally, also considering the UNWTO Code of Ethics for Tourism to guide its main objective (promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism); that it has been recently issued the Convention on Tourism Ethics[13] which convert the nine core principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism into an international convention in order to reinforce its effectiveness and implementation.

Within the objective of this document, it is worth mentioning why the methodology includes the application of the approach of Total Quality Management in the governance and management of sustainable tourism. The reasons are: to ensure sustainability in the management systems, to improve tourism performance by adapting services to the market's

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[12] Weston et al (2019)
[13] https://www.unwto.org/ethics-convention

needs, to establish differential competition and to strengthen villages image through a strong marketing brand upon a common consensual reached by all stakeholders involved.

Having this broad range of information and considerations, it is necessary to assemble it in a table which helps to visualise the most important statements to define the methodology which will guide partners to develop the action plans for the pilots of the SuSTowns project. Below is a table linking the above-mentioned declarations and directives with the SuSTowns objectives.

Ethical Principles in Tourism	'Action for more Sustainable European Tourism'	Most important topics in EU tourism management	SuSTowns objectives
Tourism's contribution to mutual understanding and respect between peoples and societies (art.4)	Using tourism as a tool in global sustainable development		The challenge of the project is to manage tourism marketing processes, avoiding the aggravating tourist impacts that result in the collapse of key public services and cultural heritage distortion.
Tourism as a vehicle for individual and collective fulfilment (art.5)	Using tourism as a tool in global sustainable development	The adoption of sustainable growth policies and practices by both private and public sectors. The uneven distribution of visitors causing both under and over tourism in destinations.	The added value of transnational cooperation is to find solutions that can provide common methodologies and tools designed to prevent small villages from being subject to uncontrolled tourist exploitation. The objectives of the project can be achieved through the good practices exchange between the partners involved, as the problems of the tourism sector are getting increasingly interconnected, especially in the Mediterranean basin.
Tourism, a factor of environmental sustainability (art.6)	Addressing the impact of tourism transport. Minimising resource use and production of waste.	The impacts of global warming and climate change, including extreme weather events, cause threat to natural areas and decreased biodiversity.	The main results of the project are to promote good practices in tackling the cumulative impacts of massive tourism, by identifying new methods that can stabilise touristic flows without burdening the environment.

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Tourism, a user of cultural resources and a contributor to their enhancement (art.7)	Conserving and giving value to natural and cultural heritage.		The project aims at ensuring that small towns and settlements, as subjects of increased tourism trends, can avoid the destruction of their sensitive ecosystems by these flows.
Tourism, a beneficial activity for host countries and communities (art.8)	Maintaining/enhancing community prosperity and quality of life, in the face of change.	The growth of unsustainable and irresponsible tourism and the impacts on local residents.	To prevent and tackle the decline of tourism as well as to avoid the disruptions to local ecosystems through the creation of tourism structures, entertainment venues and other facilities in the name of tourism, but not massive tourism.
Responsibilities of stakeholders in tourism development (art.8)	Using tourism as a tool in global sustainable development. Reducing the seasonality of demand.		The project is aimed at 445 actors with a participatory approach among public entities at local, regional and national level and civil society organisations for the pilots in Italy, Spain, Albania, Greece, Slovenia, Croatia and Portugal. Use of the Total Quality Management system which has as a principle Total employee involvement.
Right to tourism (art.10)	Making holidays available to all.		Diversify offer, open to new markets, to exploit hidden resources…
Rights of employees and professionals in the tourism sector (art.12)	Improving the quality of tourism jobs.	The need for new skills and competences in the management of tourism.	Use of the Total Quality Management system which has as a principle Continual improvement. The lessons will be systematised in a sustainable tourism model that will be proposed and disseminated to the regional authorities together with recommendations for the improvement of its public policies on sustainable tourism.

Table 3 Linking global tourism directives and statements to SuSTowns objectives

In conclusion, the aim of this methodology is to be a tool for local authorities and tourism stakeholders who seek to define innovative and impacting actions to promote responsible tourism on a local level and to pursue resilience in tourism economy. The purpose of this methodology is to be a guide for drafting and continuously improving those action plans to assure smart and responsible high-quality tourism among all (visitors and residents) for the future. "Responsible tourism refers to the awareness, decisions and actions of all those involved in the planning, delivery and consumption of tourism, so that it is sustainable over time." (TSG, 2012).

Description

This part intends to guide firstly the local authorities and then all the stakeholders involved in the process to define the action plan for the pilots which are in a decline situation or the villages which need to chart a better destination taking into account the principles of responsibility, sustainability, resilience, inclusivity and accessibility.

Firmly believing in the statements summarised in Table 3 Linking global tourism directives and statements to SuSTowns objectives, and keeping in mind the Total Quality Management principles, below are the proposed steps to produce an effective action plan:
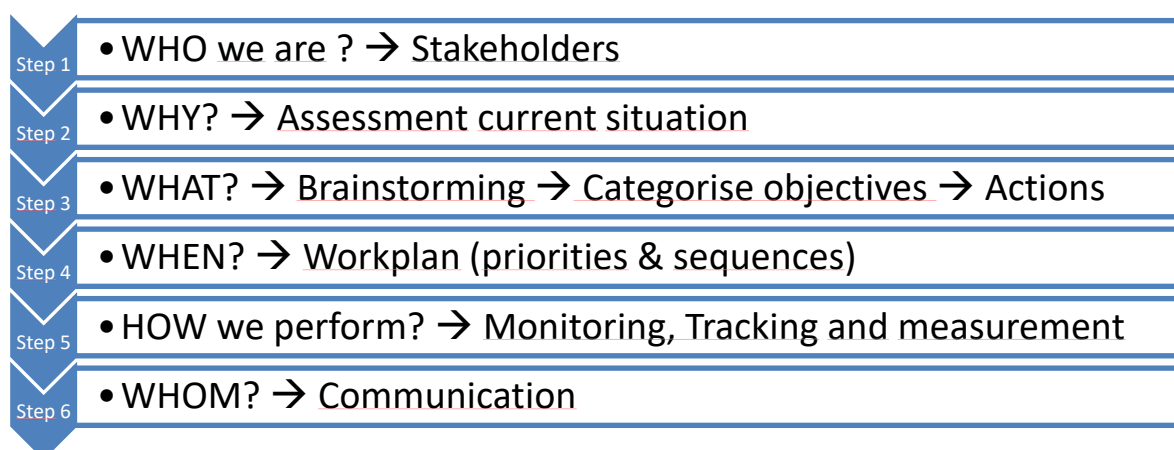
Step	
Step 1	• WHO we are ? → Stakeholders
Step 2	• WHY? → Assessment current situation
Step 3	• WHAT? → Brainstorming → Categorise objectives → Actions
Step 4	• WHEN? → Workplan (priorities & sequences)
Step 5	• HOW we perform? → Monitoring, Tracking and measurement
Step 6	• WHOM? → Communication

Figure 4 Methodology's steps

STEP 1 – STAKEHOLDERS

The currently fragmented governance of tourism is due to a lack of common vision within the entire value chain, and it implies a low representation by private companies, little citizen engagement and also an unclear leadership from the local authorities. SuSTown has the willingness to face that by ensuring an engagement from all the stakeholders to pull in the same direction towards a more sustainable destination to overcome decline and to go towards a promising rejuvenation. Towns often identify only external threats, without identifying (or realising) the internal ones; but if they don't address a new way to improve governance, which must include a variety of stakeholders, that will also become a threat for tourism

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management and hence for implementing any aligned action towards sustainability in order to preserve town's identity as well as the Mediterranean's natural and cultural assets. So, **structured and coordinated governance that empowers and train citizens and decision-makers** alike is **key for destination resilience** and well-planned tourism development that consider global challenges, social needs and local interests.

The main aims of this first step are:
- To raise awareness as much as possible in stakeholders;
- To have a common understanding of the sustainable tourism concept and TQM system;
- To include innovative governance;
- To empower local communities for the action plan' elaboration and beyond.

Section 3. STAKEHOLDERS explains who should be considered as an actor within the tourism value chain to take part in this participatory approach to engage them for designing the action plan for a sustainable destination. Once we have the list, we could face the complex situation to have a large number of stakeholders (or the contrary). But to facilitate choosing the best candidates to compose the ensemble of stakeholders for the elaboration of the action plan, the following criteria should be applied:

Who is the stakeholder's…
- ➢ power/influence on the design and implementation of the local action plans for sustainable tourism? It is low or high?
- ➢ interest in the design and implementation of the local action plans for sustainable tourism? It is low or high?

How could the stakeholder…
- ➢ contribute to design and later implement the local action plans for sustainable tourism?
- ➢ block the local action plans for sustainable tourism?

The objective is to create a matrix where the stakeholders can be placed according to the previous answers in order to easily choose those that have the highest power and interest. See an example in the following figure:
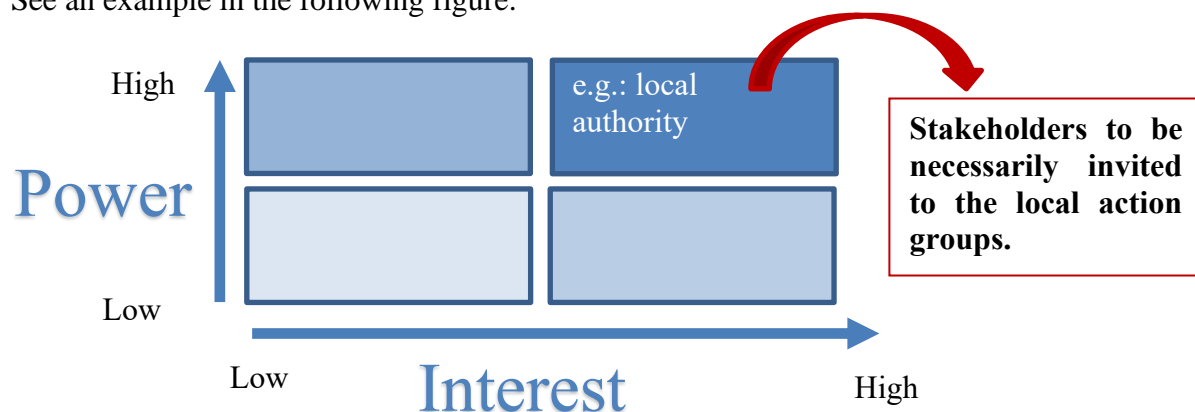

Figure 5 Stakeholders Matrix Criteria

Just as important as the stakeholders is the governance, so for this, it is necessary to have the **local authorities' commitment to leadership** as well as to endow governance systems with enough powers to make substantial decisions and to have enough opportunities for participation of all actors. So, an analysis of possible constraints must be done beforehand to allow this participatory approach as a basis of the process that will follow. It should firmly be based on Article 6 of the ICZM Protocol which mentions: "*appropriate governance allowing adequate and timely participation in a transparent decision-making process by local populations and stakeholders in civil society concerned with coastal zones shall be ensured*", so applying it to the pilot towns targeted in SuSTowns project .

"To win you need your key players on the same team pulling in the same direction"

How the pilot town or destination is going to face this first step to engage stakeholders:

1) **Local authorities meeting**[14]: the aim is to bring at the same table the different departments or areas that could have a view in the territory where the tourism activity is developed. In this meeting a shared vision on what the project aims and the criteria for the empowerment of the stakeholders will prevail. Moreover, a leader from the local authorities has to be selected to preside over the meeting and process and will be called the **Action Plan leader or manager**. This figure could also be represented by a steering committee (about 3-5 people) from the local government or authorities.

2) **Open awareness meeting with stakeholders**: the objective is to gather in the same room citizens, authorities, tourism service providers, (and even, if possible, some actual visitors), in order to explain the sustainable tourism trends and needs, the objectives of the project and, principally to explain in depth the benefits of cooperating to move further towards a sustainable tourism destination. The outcome of this meeting should be a broad list of stakeholders who could participate in the next steps according to the previous criteria. This step could be considered as an initial step to select the potential member of the Local Focus Group (LFG).

3) **Working meeting with the LFG**: an official invitation from the local authorities inviting the different stakeholders (who already participated in the awareness meeting and they have expressed their interest to participate and be involved in the project and action plan) has to be send.

The objective of the meeting is to set the basis for the co-designing the action plan. This implies some initial tasks:

✓ **Capacity building or training on the Sustainable tourism concept, the TALC model and the TQM approach**.

✓ An explanation about the **objective of the Action Plan** elaboration as well as the time foreseen to take part in the steps planned.

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[14] Use the Annex 5: Efficient meeting template

✓ To get to **know each other** in terms of experience in the tourism sector as well as the motive to take part in this participatory process.

✓ **Definition of** the trios or teams to work within the LFG, which will be called: "**3 for Action**".

It would be good to have per each area where tourism could intervene (tourism, transport, environment, health, nature, taxation, accommodation…) a minimum of three representatives: one from the public authorities, one from a private entity and a third from the residents (the last two could be held by the same person). **This composition will ensure a participatory approach as well as a broad view on the different topics addressed.**

✓ For this activity a professional facilitator or some group creation techniques will help. If the local authority responsible for leading this activity will be carrying it out, then to enable the team to work collaboratively and encourage healthy team participation they can follow this guide:

- listen and empathise
- understand the objectives of the participants
- create a safe and inclusive environment
- set and enforce behavioural guidelines
- give clear instructions
- manage time
- use the post-it technique to get answers from every person participating

These teams of stakeholders are part of the new governance in tourism management and not only for the action plan but also as the starting point for a new way to cooperate to deal with specific problem or challenge

Finally, the outcome must be a set of individual letters of commitment[15] to ensure the enrolment of each stakeholder as well as to build trust among all the actors involved. These may be different types of commitments depending on the level of governance and influence in the tourism sector. In these letters, it could also be specified that if a participant has to withdraw, then he/she must look for a replacement to take his/her role in order to assure the implementation of the task(s) defined until the end of the action plan.

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[15] See template in Annex 4: Letter of Commitment Template

✓ Tip: A digital platform within the local authority webpage could be created to support the establishment of spaces of dialogue to address conflicts and also to communicate, including innovative decision-making mechanisms for democratic participation to ensure awareness as well as transparency (in the last step this topic will be further explained) among the stakeholders participating in the action plan elaboration.

STEP 2 – ASSESSMENT

In every situation where we plan to act and to intervene by designing a common strategy to address specific objectives; some facts and figures are necessary in order to know the current situation, meaning the actual starting point of the destination where the action plan will be implemented.

The objective of this step is to have an assessment of the present situation of the pilot town because, as NECSTouR says, *"We cannot manage, what we cannot measure"*. So, the initial step for the action plan is to know the real situation of the village to answer the question of where we are, and afterwards to answer where we want to go in order to plan consequently. The evidence with actual data will allow the destination to see if the village is in a decline situation, and will give precise information about the village. The method to gather the data should be an objective method and accompanied with quality data from the field experience from citizens, experts and tourism stakeholders.

Aim:
- To assess the current situation of the village/town
- To identify decline symptoms[16]
- To obtain knowledge of the pros and cons with objective data
- To list the current tourism products (offer portfolio)

Tools:
- DPSIR or SWOT or GAP Analysis or Spider plot
- Online platforms for tourism indicators
- Quality Standards for villages
- Early warning system for detecting decline symptoms with Balanced Score Card adapted to destinations

Outcome:
- Overview of the current destination's situation with data/indicators and models

The process within this step should go as follows:
The Local Focus Group chooses one tool between: DPSIR (Figure 6 DPSIR Model), SWOT (Figure 7 SWOT Analysis), GAP Analysis (Figure 8 GAP Analysis) or Spider plot (

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[16] Check Tourism Destination Life Cycle section for details of its meaning

1. Figure 9 Radar chart example) to get the relevant information concerning the current situation of the village.
2. Local authorities provide data needed to fill the core set of indicators (plus those applicable to their type of destination).
3. LFG jointly with the local authorities complete the checklist of quality standards with the village information.
4. Local authorities and LFG list the tourism offer, detailing the current products and those potential resources that could be included in the future action plan.
5. Sharing results in a meeting with the stakeholders to agree on the common vision and finalise with the documents of step 2 that will provide the basis of the action plans.

Tools explanation:

The proposed tools here below should be used in parallel. On the one hand, tools like DPSIR, SWOT, GAP Analysis or Spider plot aims to perform the assessment of the initial status. On the other hand, the tourism indicators and the criteria of the quality standards will need data from the local authorities and official sources. All the tools together will give a trustworthy overview to follow with the joint approach within the local focus group towards the next steps.

DPSIR or SWOT or GAP Analysis or Spider plot:

DPSIR

DPSIR (drivers, pressures, state, impact and response model of intervention) is a causal framework for describing the interactions between society and the environment: human impact on the environment and vice versa because of the interdependence of the components. The idea is to apply this model to the village where the action plan will be based.
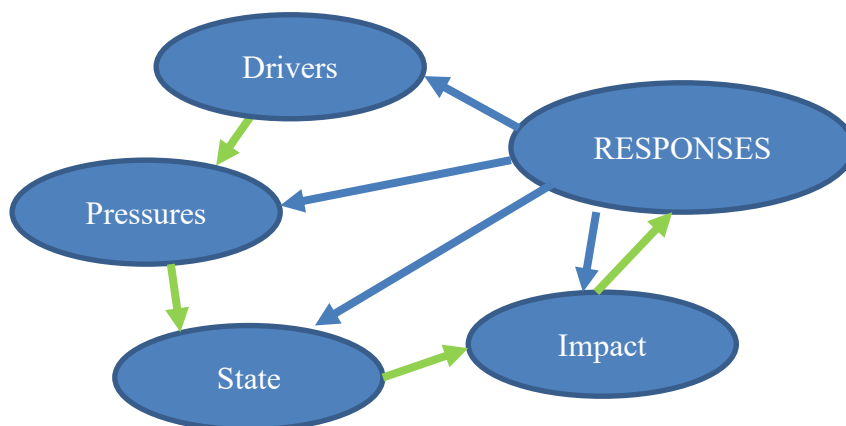

Figure 6 DPSIR Model

Driving forces: external aspects, like global trends; European challenges, like tendencies of the consumers, industry, tourism, economic growth, etc.…, that affect the destination.

Pressures: external aspects which pose a threat to the territory, the current way of life or even to business models or human behaviour, such as pollution, land-use change, population growth, etc.…, and which have a high impact.

States: the current situation of what surrounds us or the village, such as water quality, soil quality, air quality, habitat, vegetation, etc.

Impacts: situations created by human beings nowadays, such as over tourism, low-cost airlines, new profiles of travellers, global diseases provoking illnesses which affect movement of people and public health, habitat fragmentation, economic crisis, environmental damage, and biodiversity loss.

Responses: actions (usually under public authority decision) which can tackle the previous components to force some change in the human impact, such as taxes, environmental laws, specific activities regulations, etc.

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis is usually applied to companies, but it can also be applied to a situation which needs to be assessed. The objective is to gather information around 4 factors: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, to allow you to have full awareness of the situation before taking any decision, be it a strategy change, resources plan, revamping internal policies or any new action. SWOT analysis is a useful tool to discover recommendations and strategies, with a focus on leveraging strengths and opportunities to overcome weaknesses and threats.

Figure 7 SWOT Analysis

GAP Analysis

GAP analysis is also used by businesses as a formal study of what the business is doing currently and where it wants to go in the future, but it can also be applied to a destination. Such an analysis can be performed at the strategic or at the operational level of an organisation (or both). It can be conducted as follows:

- Identify the current state or situation: where we are.
- Define the ideal or desired situation: where you want to go.
- Identify the gap, i.e. what is missing for the ideal situation: what we can improve

- Bridge the gap, categorise what is needed to reach the ideal situation taking into account the current situation: the action plan

Figure 8 GAP Analysis

In short, GAP analysis is a comparison of the actual situation with a potential or desired situation. GAP analysis naturally flows from benchmarking and from other assessments. Once the general expectation of performance in a village is understood, it is possible to compare that expectation with the village's current level of performance. This comparison becomes the gap analysis.

Spider plot or Radar chart

A radar chart is a graphical method of displaying multivariate data in the form of a two-dimensional chart of three or more quantitative variables represented on axes starting from the same point. The relative position and angle of the axes is typically uninformative, but various heuristics, such as algorithms that plot data as the maximal total area, can be applied to sort the variables (axes) into relative positions that reveal distinct correlations, trade-offs, and a multitude of other comparative measures. Radar charts are a useful way to display multivariate observations with an arbitrary number of variables. One application of radar charts is the control of quality improvement to display the performance metrics of any ongoing program. They are also used in any other field to visualise strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities. For instance, in tourism, each axis could be a priority for the sustainable tourism destination, such as number of visitors, carrying capacity (tourists/residents), % of tourism within destination economy, innovation in tourism offer, number of public-private partnerships, satisfaction of the residents vs visitors, investment in tourism… and so on.
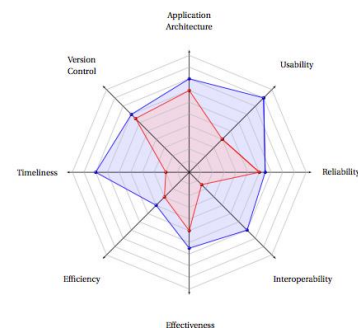

Figure 9 Radar chart example

Online platforms for indicators

While there is not yet a consensus and therefore not yet a unique tool for tourism indicators provided from the EP, Eurostat and the EU Commission (nor funds to reach this common framework), we must use the available tools defined by experts and stakeholders committed to sustainable tourism, such as previous Interreg MED projects. Currently there are many solutions online which include destination, economic, environmental, social and cultural indicators. But taking into account the knowledge gathered through the Sustainable Tourism Community, here below is a list of the most useful and user-friendly online platforms. It is recommended to check these platforms because sometimes you can find information concerning your region, area or even the destination itself.

Project	Online Tool
MITOMED+	Observation and monitoring of tourism data indicators to measure sustainability of tourism activities by developing a system and online platform of indicators https://mitomedplus.andalucia.org/mitomedplus/index.html List of indicators
HERIT-DATA	Innovative solutions to better manage tourism flows impact on cultural and natural heritages sites through technologies and big data https://herit-data.interreg-med.eu/
CASTWATER	Water management focus supporting sustainable tourism policies and practices on water efficiency in coastal areas by improving the monitoring and assessment of the water sustainability performance of the tourism sector. https://castwater.interreg-med.eu/
DestiMED	Ecological footprint methodology through an innovative approach to measure and reduce the environmental impact of tourism https://destimed.interreg-med.eu/
ShapeTourism	Interactive maps of tourism dynamics based on four dimensions: Reputation, Attractiveness, Competitiveness, and Sustainability covering the 52 Mediterranean Regions http://www.shapetourism.eu/main-output/shapetourism-observatory/
COASTING	COASTING is a capitalisation project based on the ICZM principles application, aiming at enhancing the effectiveness of a multilevel governance tool like Coast Contract (Contrat de Baie), transferring a shared methodology mostly centred on the stakeholders' involvement, and focusing tools and actions more deeply on the tourism sector sustainability and qualification. https://coasting.interreg-med.eu/
ALTER ECO	Alternative Tourist Strategies to Enhance the Local Sustainable Development of Tourism by Promoting Mediterranean Identity Carrying capacity https://quantitas.it/dev/med/cc/ro.html
CO-EVOLVE	to analyse and promote the co-evolution of the human activities and natural systems in coastal touristic areas, allowing the sustainable development of the touristic activities based on the standards of the integrated management of the coastal zone together with the management of the Marine Space. https://co-evolve.interreg-med.eu/

Table 4 Online tourism indicators platforms

You can find here below (and also in Annex 2: Tourism Indicators) the list of main indicators that should be included in the assessment. The indicators list has been based on ETIS and the above mentioned projects. They are split into 4 categories (destination management, economic value, social and cultural impact and environmental impact). The proposal from ETIS which includes 40 optional indicators[17] can be taken into account to add some specific indicators depending on the specificities of the village. It is advisable to incorporate tailor-made indicators for destination type that are relevant to assess the current destination's situation.

What it is important to have in mind is that the indicator *per se* does not give much information. It will be the comparison over years as well as with similar destinations, that will allow to see the progress and to make decision for improvements. Moreover, what makes the difference when talking about data is to ensure a reliable method for data collection to guarantee its reliability and the robustness of the information of the indicator, and therefore the reliability of local authorities and the private sector that are responsible for providing this data.

Number	Type of indicator	Criteria	Description
1	Destination Management (general)	Sustainable tourism public policy	Existence of a strategy for sustainable tourism in the tourism planning documents. Percentage of the area of the destination with a sustainable tourism action plan, with agreed monitoring, development control and evaluation arrangement (%)
2			Number of policies addressing SDGs
3		Satisfaction	Percentage of visitors that are satisfied with their overall experience in the destination
4			Percentage of residents that are satisfied with the overall tourism activity and management in the destination
5		Gender balance	Percentage of stakeholders having gender balance plans
6			Percentage of women in the tourism jobs
7			Average wage in tourism for women compared to men's employment
8	Economic value	Regulation	Official (and updated) register of license for tourism accommodation (including those for sharing economy*)
9			Percentage of tourism establishments in the destination using a voluntary verified certification/labelling for environmental/quality/sustainability and/or CSR measures.
10		Tourism flow (volume and value) and performance at destination	Relative contribution of tourism to the destination's economy (% GDP)
11			Average length of stay of tourists (nights)
12			Number of overnight stays per month
13			Occupancy rate in commercial accommodation* per month and average for the year.
14			Direct tourism employment as percentage of total employment per month.
15			Daily spending per tourist (accommodation, food and drinks, other services)
16		Quantity of work	Variation (%) of unemployment rate between months to assess low and high season

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[17] ETIS Toolkit https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/sustainable/indicators_en

17		Suppliers	Percentage of locally produced food, beverages, products and services purchased by the tourism companies in the destination
18	Social and Cultural	Social/community impact	Carrying capacity: Number of tourists per resident (over 100 inhabitants)
19			Number of second/rental homes per 1 home (1 on 1 proportion)
20			Number of beds available in commercial accommodation* in relation to residents (1 on 1 proportion)
21			Percentage of visitors that extend their stay
22			Percentage of visitors that repeat in the destination
23			Percentage of visitors participating in a cultural or traditional activity in the destination
24		Inclusion and accessibility	Percentage of tourist attractions that are accessible to people with mobility and sensorial disabilities and/or participating in recognized accessibility schemes.
25		Protection and valorisation of cultural heritage, local identity and cultural assets	Number of cultural sites and practices under some protection label and number of cultural sites and practices acknowledged to be "at risk"
26	Environmental	Climate change and biodiversity protection	Carbon footprint per euro spent (alternatively, another indicator for the average carbon footprint for the travel done to visit the destination) (Kg)
27			Percentage of tourism companies involved in climate change mitigation programs such as carbon dioxide offset, low energy systems, etc. and in responses and measures to adapt to climate change.
28			Percentage of tourist accommodation and attraction infrastructure in "vulnerable" or "fragile" areas
29			Percentage of destination (area in km2) that is designated for protection
30			Percentage of the destination area under a biodiversity protection plan
31			Use of land: % developed, % building land, % land designated as not for building
32			Percentage of visitor using non-contaminant transport (like bike or electric cars) to move around the destination
33		Waste, water and energy management and consumption	Solid urban waste produced by destination (relation of tons per person between low and high season)
34			Volume of solid urban waste recycled (relation between low and high season)
35			Water consumption (litre) per person (relation between low season and high season)
36			Energy consumption (KWh) per person per day (relation between low and high season)
37			Percentage of electric energy consumed by renewable sources
38			Percentage of accommodations that promote green attitude (recycling, waterless, renewable energy systems…)

Table 5 Sustainable Tourism Indicators

* For those under a sharing or collaborative economy (like Airbnb), the type of accommodation they offer (like a shared room or apartment or if it is a touristic apartment) should also be registered. If this number represents over 50% of the accommodation, then the daily spending should include the amount spent in the sharing economy platform too.

Quality Standards for villages

The aim of the quality standards for villages is to assure common criteria based on protection, promotion and development of the villages through tourism. On the one hand, some requirements regarding the heritage, natural and cultural and also urban and architectonic, of the village are needed. On the other hand, some criteria regarding valorisation, development, promotion and events should be included in one of the existing quality standards from different countries or regions.

In addition to *"I Borghi più belli d'Italia"* and *"Los Pueblos Más Bonitos de España"*, both quality standards provided from partners of the SuSTowns project, there is another initiative under a European collaborative project called "CHARM - Immersive experiences in European Charming Villages" which has produced a benchmarking of "beautiful" or "charming" village initiatives around the globe to provide a first draft of what the criteria set for the minimum requirements of villages under the CHARM umbrella could be, which could apply to the SuSTowns pilot villages. So, the check-list proposed is the collation of these three documents. The guiding principle of the criteria dictates that it should be practical, straightforward and not too limiting – but at the same time focused on the kinds of villages that have been chosen as pilots for the SuSTowns project.

The criteria (following the proposal from the CHARM project) will be divided into compulsory criteria (**bold**) and additional ones (*italics*).

CATEGORY	AIM	CRITERIA
Village – physical appearance	To make sure that only villages that fit in size and appearance with the quality standard qualify	**1. < 8000 inhabitants (size)** **2. Min. 10 km by car to the next city (rurality)** **3. The village has a harmony and homogenous architecture and/or a region-specific typical appearance/character of a village** **4. Integration of village in the countryside/attractive access to the village**
Village – community	To make sure that only villages where there is "local life", an intangible experience that makes it an interesting village, qualify	**5. Local handicraft, artisanry, agriculture that is accessible and can be experienced**. 6. *Living traditions and (contemporary) culture: Manifested e.g. through the existence of local associations, clubs etc. and local and genuine events*
Tourism infrastructure	To have a basis to start building a sustainable tourism product	**7. Accommodation in the village** **8. Restaurant(s) in the village** **9. First aid/ health emergency information** 10. *Existing tourism products, routes (hiking, cycling) incl. signposting** ***11. Tourist Information and/or alternative provision of information*** 12. *Grocery shopping within 10km radius* 13. *Public toilets*

Cultural & natural assets	To make sure that the villages that qualify have activities and attractions to offer potential visitors	**14. Cultural attractions (Churches, museums, historic buildings, etc.) within the village** *15. Activities to experience cultural sights and the surrounding nature*
Planning processes	To be sure that the quality standard can rely on existing organisational structures and processes	**16. Person/institution in charge of tourism, to act as a contact person** **17. Valorising and preservation plan** (having grants to preserve historical buildings is an asset) *18. Existence of a local tourism development plan/concept and/or cooperation with the regional/national tourism authorities*
Quality, Sustainability, Accessibility	For a sustainable tourism product	*19. Proof of good accommodation and service quality* *20. Accessible by public transport or other models of sustainable mobility* ***21. Sustainability is part of the tourism strategy** (having tourism data/indicators updated)* 22. Accessible tourism experience
Technological requirements	To be sure that the village takes on technology and digital transformation	*23. Existence of a tourism-oriented web about the village (preferably in English); giving the reason "why to come" (heritage, competitive difference…)* *24. Local WIFI or good mobile data reception in the village* *25. Mobile Applications concerning the village (like GPS track in Oruxmaps, Geocaching, tripadvisor…)*

Table 6 Quality Criteria

*As part of the assessment it is crucial to list the current tourism products that already exist in the village, firstly to analyse how sustainable they are or how to improve them, and secondly, to visualise the starting point for designing new products and experiences aligned with the desired destination.

In Annex 3: Tourism Indicators vs Quality Criteria there is a correlation between the measures of the quality criteria and the proposed tourism indicators.

Early warning system for detecting decline symptoms

As one of the objectives of the project is to identify if the town is in a decline situation this early warning system tool proposes to gather indicators in two categories: the current situation and beyond the state of the art. It is a dynamic analysis, which should allow the analysis of demand, supply, destination resources and innovation and organisation. The Early Warning system proposes to use a Balanced Score Card to go beyond the assessment in order to visualise the situation of a destination . The **Balanced Score Card (BSC)** is a tool that is helpful in answering, at any moment in time, the question 'how do we knowif our performance is satisfactory?". It provides a way to summarise the most critical performance measurements in a single management report linking the vision/strategy with the communication, business planning, feedback and learning. The figure below illustrates the BSC adapted to tourism destinations. For instance, imagine that a destination has planned

a vision towards a family tourism and it has defined a strategy to shift from a youth target towards a family target, so the different aspects related to the resources, demand, supply and communication should reply if the tourist destination is delivering the services to the new tourist we are targeting, if the services has been adapted to the objective and delivered in a sustainable way; if the suppliers have adapted its offer to the new target, and if the communication is reaching the new target. Then also, it will be needed to back up information with data and figures.
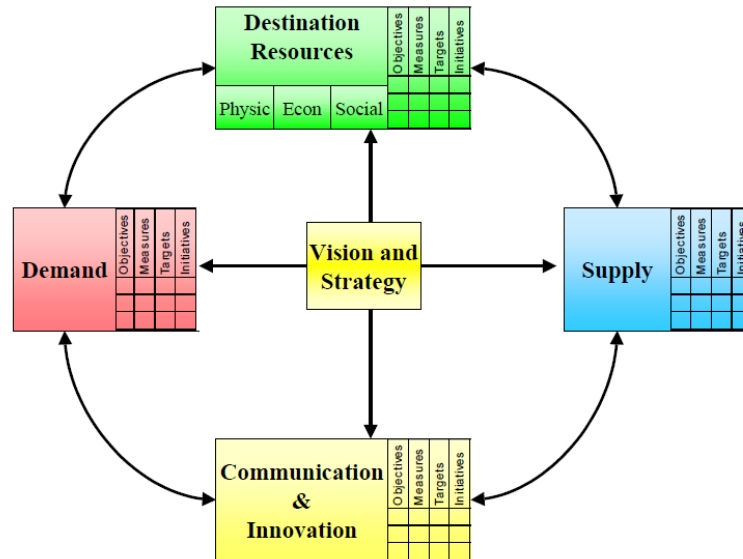

Figure 10 BSC for tourism destinations

Although, a BSC *per se* could already be a method for a whole assessment, the Early Warning System guidelines are useful to identify decline characteristics, but it is not recommended to develop the entire BSC, as that will enlarge the assessment step as well as overlap with information already gathered with the other tools (indicators, quality standard…). Furthermore, the objective of this methodology is to provide easier steps to produce an action plan, not to become very complex.

In order to support the detection of decline symptoms, please find here below a set of measures (which are part of the tourism indicators and quality criteria already defined) that should be gathered periodically (minimum once per high season or more if the destination has an out of season[18] tourism) to have this early warning system:

- ➢ Related to the number of elements defining tourism offer and the former quality of the destination:
    - o Local handicraft, artisanry, agriculture that is accessible and can be experienced
    - o Restaurant(s) in the village
    - o Number of official registered tourism accommodation

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[18] Out of high season, and aiming to distribute tourism along the year

- o Tourist Information and/or alternative provision of information
- o Percentage of visitors participating in a cultural or traditional activity in the destination
  If all these figures decrease and there aren't new products or services, that is a clear symptom of a decline situation

- ➢ Related to the economy growth and competitiveness:
  - o Number of arrivals
  - o Relative contribution of tourism to the destination's economy (% GDP)
  - o Average length of stay of tourists (nights)
  - o Occupancy rate in commercial accommodation per month and average for the year.
  - o Direct tourism employment as percentage of total employment per month.
  - o Daily spending per tourist (accommodation, food and drinks, other services)
  - o Percentage of visitors that repeat in the destination
  - o Variation (%) of unemployment rate between months to assess low and high season
    If all these figures decrease, that is a clear symptom of a decline situation

- ➢ Concerning sustainable tourism:
  - o Carrying capacity: Number of tourists per resident (over 100 inhabitants)
  - o Number of beds available in commercial accommodation in relation to residents (1 on 1 proportion)
  - o Percentage of visitors that are satisfied with their overall experience in the destination
  - o Percentage of residents that are satisfied with the overall tourism activity and management in the destination
  - o Percentage of tourism establishments in the destination using a voluntary verified certification/labelling for environmental/quality/sustainability
  - o Volume of solid urban waste recycled (relation between low and high season)
  - o Water consumption (litre) per person (relation between low season and high season)
    If this data is lower than the previous data gathered (except for the environmental data, that should be the opposite), it could mean a difficulty in assuring sustainable tourism offer as well as seasonality, hence a possible decline situation;

Tourism Offer
To complete the assessment is crucial to have a list of the current tourism offer, which must include the products and infrastructures available. The aim is to have an overview of the destination attractiveness and also to identify those resources that could be potential products to add them in the further strategy to exploit. The set of products (jointly with a new promotion strategy) will contribute to the drivers of the rejuvenation.

Taking the classification from the Arade Destination Tourism Strategy (Arade, 2006) the products can be classified as strategic (the actual ones and/or main sites), complementary (the ones that contribute to diversify the offer) or secondary (the ones only interesting for

small niche, but that could improve and enlarge the future tourism offer); the capacity of attraction decrease from the first to the third group, but through an action plan, the offer can be modified to become more charming and hence to change of a group with more attractiveness. Then, the product can be sort in different categories: environment (mountains, caves, viewpoints…), heritage (historic, ethnographic, gastronomy...), recreation&events (sport, events, cultural traditions…), and other categories depending on the characteristics of the destination.

The **final assessment will be a compendium of the information gathered** through:
- The analysis of the current situation made with some tool (DPSIR, SWOT, GAP, Spider Plot)
-The tourism indicators table (when possible from different periods or years in order to have an idea of the progress)
-The quality criteria table
- The highlighted data from indicators and quality criteria relevant for the assessment of the decline situation
- List of current tourism offer, detailing the current products and those potential resources that could be included in the future action plan
- And any other relevant quality information brought by the Local Focus Group
The assembly of all this information will be the outcome of the Step 2 – Assessment, jointly with the conclusions from the LFG during the meeting where the results have been shared. Once, the whole picture is made, which means to have knowledge of the current status of the destination, it is moment to look forward and go to the next step. Bear in mind, that the assessment is crucial to have an accurate analysis of the town and to set the starting point to shift towards a rejuvenation, so take the time necessary to collect all the information in order to have a precise assessment.

STEP 3 – OBJECTIVES

Once the village has the picture of the actual situation, it is the moment to decide what is needed to overcome the decline and to shift towards the rejuvenation in a sustainable, responsible and smart way.

In the previous sections of this document the global trends and challenges that tourism has to face aligned with the European directives in climate change, the targets of the European Green Deal, and the commitments of the Agenda 2030 of sustainable development, among others, have been highlighted. All these considerations jointly with the capitalisation outcomes from previous projects and SuSTownS' objective are the bases to define the main and specific objectives which will be the axis of the action plan.

The **main aim** of this step is:

- **To decide what kind of destination we would like to create, avoiding decline but enhancing rejuvenation jointly with a participatory process**.

To decide what kind of destination we would like to become and what kind of tourism we would like to have, have a look at the different types and forms of tourism:

There are three basic types of tourism: domestic tourism (activities of a resident visitor within the country of reference), inbound tourism (activities of a non-resident visitor within the country of reference), and outbound tourism (the activities of a resident visitor outside the country of reference). These can be combined in various ways to derive the following additional kind of tourism: internal tourism, national tourism and international tourism.

Tourism based on purpose of the visit it could be **leisure or business** and alternatives forms of tourism placed separated, it can be considered somehow as leisure too. Then depending on the main activities that will be done in the destination, the type of tourism can be: cultural, familiar, natural and rural, adventure, gastronomic, medical, religious…[19] More niches and more tourists' segmentation defined; more types of tourism are appearing. For instance, slow tourism, that merge eco-tourism with environment, nature, health and gastronomic tourism. So, the vocabulary of the types of the tourism is changing continuously in order to adapt to the market needs and to the trendy brandings, which indeed is very important for the social media networks.

The most common categories according to the purpose of the travel are:
1) Social and family leisure: Recreational or leisure tourism takes a person/family away from the humdrum of everyday life. People usually spend their leisure time at the hills, sea beaches, etc.
2) Cultural: Cultural tourism satisfies the cultural and intellectual curiosity and involves visits to ancient monuments, historical heritage, cultural events or places with religious importance, etc.
3) Sports/Adventure: People aiming to sports like playing golf, skiing, hiking, scuba diving, running, sport events and races, etc.
4) Health: People travel for medical treatment or visit places where there are curative possibilities, for example, hot springs, spa, yoga retreat, etc.
5) MICE: Business travel, people attending a conference, exhibition or convention for their business, profession or interest to enlarge their network and customers and to professional purposes.

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[19] Check for more types of tourism https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Types_of_tourism
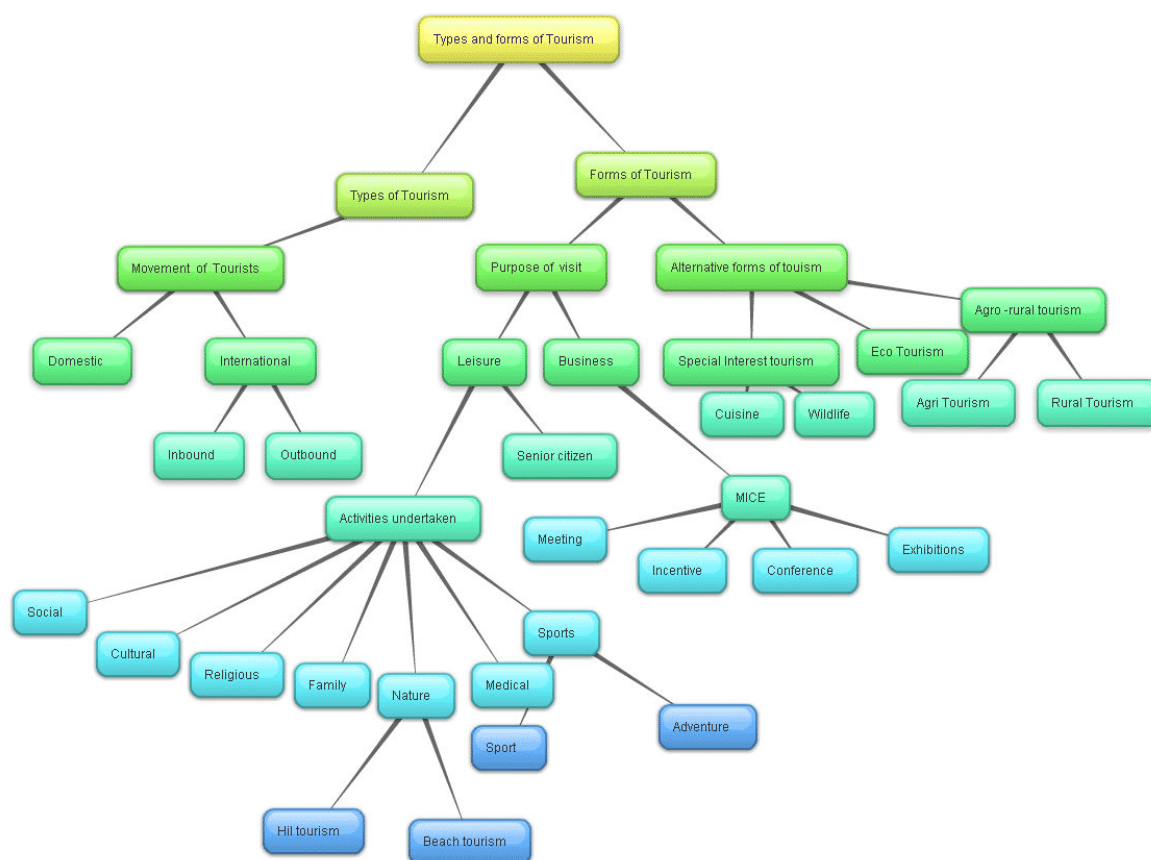
Figure 11 Types and forms of tourism

How we define the main objective and sub-objectives of the action plan?

The steps for that purpose are:
- To gather all ideas from different stakeholders using some of the tools hereafter suggested
- To visualise clear objectives and to set priorities among all the stakeholders
- To share a common vision of the main objective of the action plan and
- To dialogue to share consensus and responsibilities in the Local Focus Group who will be involved in the implementation of the action plan.

Considering the assessment done in the previous step, and the future challenges destination should tackle, does the town want to have a natural tourism? Or for families? Or sport? Cultural? Taking into account the list of tourism assets available in the town, the tourism indicators, quality criteria and some kind of assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, what would be the main characteristic that we would like to highlight? What is the value proposition from all the stakeholders involved? And to which the destination has the willingness to commit resources, time and the ad-hoc promotion to reach this objective. Is this idea, the value proposition, pulling towards a rejuvenation?

A deeper analysis of the list of current tourism offer and the potential resources having in mind the type of tourism the destination wish to have, it could help to find new ways of exploitation for the value proposition, and therefore, different ways to use these assets on

the common benefit of the destination. Were these resources undervalued? Why were these resources degraded? What is the value for the residents? What changes are needed to clean their images, revitalise them and give attractiveness again? When the site can be visit? It will give opportunity to enlarge the season? What would be the most important asset to take action to contribute to the rejuvenation? What could have short-mid impact on the number of visitors? Are these visitors aligned to the type of tourists the destination is planning to have?

In conclusion, the main objective of the action plan must tackle rejuvenation at the same time that is addressing all-year-long and diversification offer in a sustainable and responsible way.

Tip: If the village defines a creative and appealing motto/slogan[20] for the main objective (like "What Happens in Vegas, Stays in Vegas", or some other closer and more recent examples such as "I feel sLOVEnia", Croatia's "Full of life", Switzerland's "Go Natural", etc.), that can help to create a sense of place among all the stakeholders and keep the objective in mind while defining the sub-objectives of the action plan.

If we are specific in defining our goals, it will be easier to find the adequate actions and means to reach it.

Tools to produce ideas on the rejuvenation aim:
- For the brainstorming:
-     Three gold method
-     Visual and design thinking
-     Lego serious game

- For ordering and summarising ideas:
-     Sub-Objectives table

The proposed tools have to be put in practice in a meeting with all the stakeholders. This meeting is of high importance to ensure that the voices of the private entities, residents and the different actors throughout the value chain are heard and their views, thoughts and expectations for shaping the village of the future are taken into account.

The Action Plan depending on time and resources should choose one tool in order to gather the point of view of the stakeholders upon the assessment and the ideas for the objectives.

The figure below shows the different steps of the process to gather ideas which in the appropriate way will become the objectives that will compound the axis of the action plan.

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[20] Be inspired by other https://www.sloganlist.com/Tours-Slogans https://www.farandwide.com/s/europe-travel-slogans-b9729f276bb54ac7
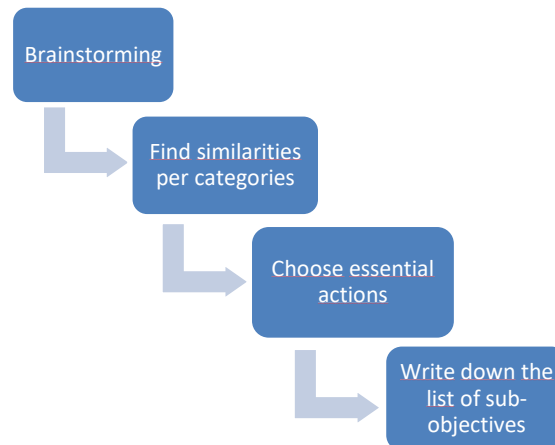
Figure 12 Ideas process breakdown

In order to facilitate this brainstorming, questions and reflections around the following topics must be considered:

- New technologies: The emergence of new technologies provides a significant opportunity to engage with tourists in ways that have not been previously possible emphasis is needed on providing the skills to encourage a policy of Attract and Disperse and the digital transformation of the sector, including products and skills for people.
- The protection of cultural and natural heritage, which one has been exploited? How? Which undervalued? Which degraded?
- Tourist pressures in the Mediterranean region: carrying capacity, types of tourist and tourism;
- Problems in urbanisation, types of business licences
- Mobility challenges: car, bikes, EV and motorhome parking, transport to get the destination, vehicles to move in the destination;
- Waste and water management: dependency on external suppliers, could it be done a transition to greener suppliers, can the local authorities incentivise (through reduction in tax) the greener behaviour?
- Pollution and climate change: all action must be aligned to the climate change targets and EU green deal;
- Reduction of cultural negative impacts: taking into account the assessment, what must be completely changed, what could offer to minimise those negative impacts?
- Control of the social gap is another factor to rethink generating diversification of assets in the destination and, likewise, seeking the participation of the older and new generations in the change; and ensuring that citizens groups have direct channels to the decision-making process and are appropriately resourced so that they are enabled in this process;
- Innovation as an engine that helps the long-running, collaboration between the public and the private sector;
- And better knowledge of the sector and the promotion of research and development.
- What new niches could be explored with the characteristics of the destination? How this micro-segmentation could contribute to tourism out of season? Some

infrastructures used only during a short period, can be opened to other tourism activities?

- The current products could be upgraded to be more sustainable or to be offered embedded with a different product to increase attractiveness? What kind of product could offer more difference to competitors?
- The local authorities can contribute to improve the tourism asset by building up new infrastructures? Giving grants for entrepreneurship? Boosting the capacity building in new skills and retention of talent? Supporting the business which apply circular economy in their activities?
- Promotion of quality gender job position

Three gold method

Give 3 post-it notes to each participant and give them 30 seconds to answer some of these questions:
- What are the 3 most important goals in order to rejuvenate the village from their point of view?
- What are the 3 main value propositions that they would like to highlight?
- What they wish to have as tourists (adults, families, solo, adventures…)? What form of tourism (leisure, healthy, sports…)?
- Among the existing tourism offer, what asset could contribute to diversify the tourism?
- What place or tradition they like the most that could become a hidden gem to attract new tourists (new niche)?
- According to tourism indicators, where is the figure that needs more attention and effort to change and improve?

Visual and design thinking

When possible, invite a facilitator in visual and/or design thinking to guide a session to identify or draw the significant steps to reach the main goal. Visual thinking helps to spark breakthrough ideas and then turn them into co-created optimum solutions
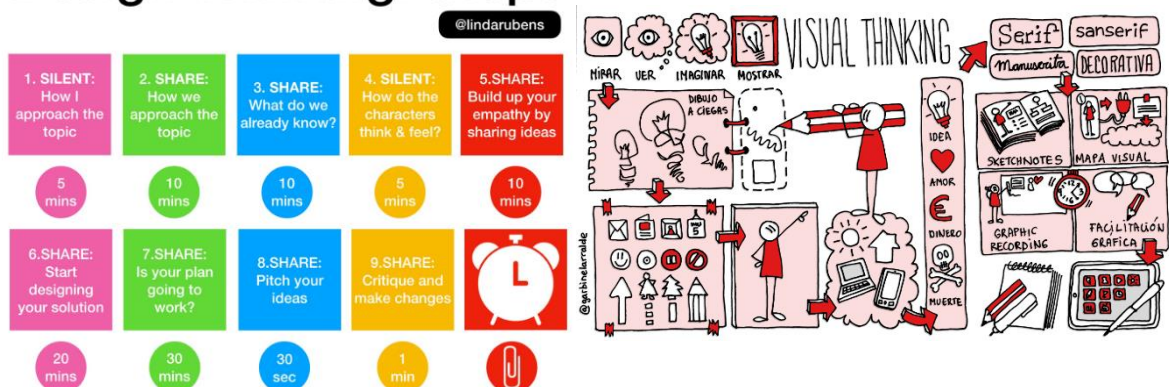

Figure 13 Design and visual thinking techniques

The questions that should be answered within this exercise are the formulated above as well as:

- Underlying those figures related to the number of elements defining the quality of the destination (we have enough artisanry exploited? Too much/less restaurants, accommodation…); Related to competitiveness and economic growth, even if we must be sustainable, how the destination tackles the number of arrivals along the year, how it will work to have more tourism jobs and more income?
- Concerning sustainable tourism: Carrying capacity, satisfaction of the residents and visitors, sustainable strategy within the suppliers and services providers, energy and water consumption, new technological solutions…

Lego serious game

The LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® methodology is an innovative, experimental process designed to enhance innovation and business performance. This method is used for group problem-solving processes in which participants are led through a series of questions, probing deeper and deeper into the subject. Each participant builds his or her own 3D LEGO® model in response to the facilitator´s questions[21]. These 3D models serve as a basis for group discussion, knowledge sharing, problem solving and decision making. The Method serves as a shared language regardless of culture or position. (LEGO Group 2020)

Figure 14 Lego Serious Game workshop

For this tool the facilitator should have in advance the type of questions mentioned above in the previous tools and at the beginning of this step, to guide the participants to produce ideas aiming to rejuvenate the destination as well as concerns about the data gathered in the assessment and the possible actions to shift towards a more diversified and out of season offer.

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[21] This method requires a trained LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® facilitator.

The previous tools allow for a brainstorming and, once we gather all the ideas, we should assemble them into categories, for instance one per each area of intervention for which we have already created the "3 for Action", or those ideas related to mobility or transport together, those more focus in environment in another, others related to marketing to get-together, the ones related to cultural&historical heritage try to assembly, those ideas of new products never explored before… The objective of this categorisation is to find similarities in order to conclude with the minimum number of ideas possible, which will become the actions (specific objectives) that allow the village to move towards the rejuvenation and thus the concrete actions that the village will need to take to ensure it gets where we want to go. **The compilation of specific objectives will compose the action plan and will be the essential part of the outcome of this methodology in order to achieve the desired situation.**

Sub-Objectives table

Subsequently, per each sub-objective we must assure that there is a SMART objective.
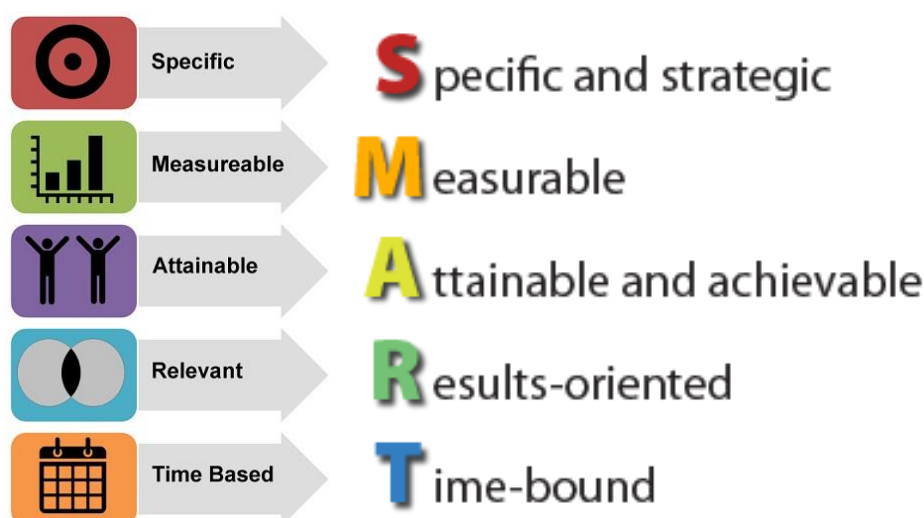

Figure 15 SMART objective

If any objective cannot answer specifically each of these characteristics, it must be rewritten or rethought in order to be as concise as possible.

Afterwards, to transform ideas into planned actions to be included in the action plan, a broader description of each objective is needed to bridge the gap between the current and the desired situation. So, for each specific objective, it is recommended to define all the possible details of the table below. The table includes the explanation of the different fields and it serves as a template that can be replicated as many times as needed.

Specific Objective	Concrete details to identify	
Number and title of the Sub-objective	**People**	For each sub-objective one person among the LFG needs to be identified as the responsible for it, as well as the group of people with which they are going to cooperate, when possible with names not only roles or positions.
	Skills & Knowledge	Do we have enough information to do the tasks or might we need trainings or other skills and capabilities? If so, will the people selected be enough to explain to the others the knowledge necessary or should we foresee some external training? Or technical assistance or support?
	Resources	Budget estimation. Area of intervention/infrastructure/equipment. Do we need extra investment? From whom? Specifically for whom or for what?
	Metrics (Optional)	Defining clear KPIs to monitor the right performance of the objective will help to achieve it. Depending on the objective, this KPI can be common to one of the core indicators or some measure of the quality standard.

Table 7 Specific Objective detailed information

This table is a tool to support the Leader of the Action Plan as well as the LFG to visualise what it's needed in every objective, and to give the inputs for an easy progress monitoring, but it can be done in general for the objectives focusing on the people, skills and resources needed; and then to identify constrains and KPIs in a global perspective for the entire action plan.

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In addition, to the previous table extra info can be foreseen regarding constrains and metrics. For the constraints, two approaches are needed:
- To define a mitigation plan for the main constraints.
- To define a contingency plan for the main risks.

In order to define a constrain mitigation plan and a risk contingency plan, the risks or hazards associated with the different objectives should be identified, as well as their degree of probability (low=1; medium=2; high=3), the level of impact on the project main goal in case the risk materialises (low=1; medium=2; high=3; severe=4), and the severity (Probability x Impact). If the resulting degree of severity is below or equal to 4, then the severity of the risk is low/medium and therefore a mitigation plan will be implemented. A mitigation plan means a series of actions oriented to attenuate the possibility of the risk materialising. If the resulting degree of severity is higher than 4, then the severity of the risk is medium/high and therefore a contingency plan will be implemented. A contingency plan means a series of actions to be implemented once the risk materialises. Please see the tables below to assess the constraints and risks identified.

Description of the Risk/Constrain	Probability A	Impact B	Severity (AxB)	Risk-Mitigation Plan	What is affected? Other Objectives?

Table 8 Mitigation Plan

Description of the Risk	Probability A	Impact B	Severity (AxB)	Risk-Contingency Plan	What is affected? Other Objectives?

Table 9 Contingency Plan

Caption:
Probability: low=1; medium=2; high=3
Impact: low=1; medium=2; high=3; severe=4
Severity: Probability x Impact ≤ 4 → Mitigation Plan;
                Probability x Impact ≥ 4 → Contingency Plan

Crisis Management
Once having said that any plan must consider constrains and risks, due to the current situation of the COVID-19, it is necessary to include a specific section on crisis management.
As it has been mentioned in the decline section, there are external factors beyond one's control like wars, pandemics, earthquakes, climate change, political changes, terrorism, etc.,

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that provoke a rapid drop of tourists, resulting in a drastic decline situation (completely unexpected) and therefore, it requires a fast reaction to manage the crisis' effect, and in a tourism destination, to manage the tourists as well as the tourism strategy.

There are two types of implications caused by a crisis:

- **Indirect**
  It happens when some crisis situation affected another area different to the destination (e.g.: a volcano eruption in an island, a terrorist attack in another town). In this case the destination is not directly affected, but it may be benefited (or not) depending on its strategy. If the emergency or crisis happened far from the destination, it may be room to attract those tourists that planned to go to the affected area, so that means to have the capacity to activate promotional campaigns jointly with the stakeholders to launch aligned messages to attract some tourists that usually go to competitors destinations. If the destination is close to the affected area or it is similar (imagine another island with a volcano, or a town that suffered already a terrorist attack); the idea to attract some tourism flow is still valid, but the messages should be more focus on the differentiation and the security that the tourist will find in the destination at this moment.

- **Direct**
  It happens when the destination is affected directly by a crisis or emergency. Then the first action must be containment, to save lives and calm people, offering listen and taking care to cover the basic needs; that means to offer infrastructures and resources to the professionals of the health system as far as possible to manage it in a coordinated way. One important issue that must be considered as soon as possible is the communication; so, to give a consensuate message to the customers, employees, residents and stakeholders with few but clear ideas to drive people towards the steps needed to overcome the first phase of the crisis. As second step is important to limit damage, imagine an earthquake, it might have other building not safe to stay, so the next step it would be to move people to a safer place. As third step it is the economic measures to support affected people and business, so as part of the communication, the crisis package of financial measures should be announced to allow people to see light and hope for the future. To invest in a good communication management is crucial in these situations to avoid confusion, wrong messages and doubts between the people, because the communication is the face of the crisis management, so to keep people informed about what happened and what is happening to overcome the situation is essential as part of having under control the crisis. When the first wave of actions is implemented, it is moment to think on the future, the recovery plan, and rethink the actions post crisis. The recommendation is to take the crisis as an opportunity to improve relations between stakeholders and to strengthen network of suppliers and providers along the value chain of your activity. More cooperate, more benefit for the destination.

Specifically for the COVID-19
The Covid-19 crisis has led to a much higher awareness of the strategic importance to keep entire value chains in Europe and as close as possible to the destination. Tourism sector has

always worked with long value chains, but what has been realised is the vulnerability and the dependency of the activity on these fixed value chains. So, if the value chain actors are closer to the destination and moreover are flexible, that will strengthen the independence and resilience of our sector to unexpected events or crises as it guarantees the adaptation to new products and services for residents and visitors.

In addition, the economic shock resulting from the Covid-19 crisis has had (and still has) very severe economic consequences on individual companies, regions and countries. This could obviously reduce the expected income for this year 2020 (and very likely for 2021), but crisis should be taken as opportunities to change the way to address global targets in a more sustainable, smart and responsible way. So, boosting economic growth after the coronavirus lockdown does not mean that green objectives must be side-lined. The coronavirus shutdown should signal a natural swerve in the direction of sustainability, circularity, resilience, smart and digital technologies and more social inclusiveness (at all levels). A really responsible re-boost of our economies requires trusted networks, commitment to local, retaining jobs, successful innovation, a renewed attractiveness tourism offer and a bet for increasing skills and digital solutions and, in addition, an enabling regulatory framework and financial plan that will allow tourism industry to adapt to this new paradigm.

Retaining competitiveness as well as jobs is a challenge for the European tourism and specially for the MED areas. The ongoing COVID-19 crisis clearly shows the strategic importance for having solid value chains but also flexible, that share same values in order to have the same goal and to pull all in the direction to re-build the strategy on the territory; initially to support livelihoods and then to sustain economic activity and create new opportunities, because tourism embraces development, promotes solidarity and foster cohesion within nations.

UNWTO recently published a report to support jobs and economies through travel & tourism, entitled "A Call for Action to Mitigate the Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 and Accelerate Recovery", from this report some guidelines have been given to tackle this crisis and to support governments, the private sector and the international community in navigating the unparalleled social and economic emergency that is COVID-19. The below recommendations will help mitigate the impact of the crisis, ensure (and where possible accelerate) the recovery of tourism and allow the sector to help drive wider societal recovery. The recommendations are divided into three key areas:
1. Managing the crisis and mitigating the impact
2. Providing stimulus and accelerating recovery
3. Preparing for the future

Among the 23 recommendations proposed by UNWTO, this methodology intends to highlight those that could be more relevant to apply in the SuSTowns pilots to tackle the two-fold situation: the previous existing decline and the current drastic crisis due to COVID-19.

First of all, as in any unexpected situation, the first thing to do is acceptance. That seems easy but it's crucial to go forward with conviction and leaving behind fears, because fears

block any thought or action to create something new. So, part of this acceptance is to become aware that we live in uncertainty, nobody knows exactly how the virus will evolve and what will be the restrictions in free-mobility, business regulations in services sector or until when there will be economic recession. But unknowing the future, doesn't mean that we cannot plan, because we can learn from the past; and in addition, this kind of pause in the tourism activity will give us the opportunity to certainly rethink the value proposition.

What the future tourism looks like? How we are going to measure success?

To drive the change effectively to achieve rejuvenation and at the same time to be a greener, responsible, smarter, more accessible destination, decisions have to be taken under this uncertain moment.

What should I do if my destination has an economy based in tourism?
Basically, the aim is to address the 3 Ps (people, profit and planet) that every economic activity should to take care. At the first glance, the planet has not changed due to COVID-19, the beaches, monuments, mountains… are remaining quiet without people and awaiting for people coming back. So, the main actions will be focused on people and profit, which both are very linked, because people are the real asset that makes a company work, so keeping the employees, it can guarantee the continuation of companies' future activity, and therefore the future profit. So, the measures proposed here below could be implemented by a government (national, regional, local) or by a company towards the citizens, resident or the companies, see what and how can be the measures:

1. **Incentivise job retention, sustain the self-employed and protect the most vulnerable groups**, by:
- Support companies' liquidity with soft loans and delaying some payments
- Postpone taxes, charges and offer fiscally advantages for the most affected sectors (like tourism)
- Develop special support schemes for self-employed workers such as exemptions, delays or reduced social security and fiscal payments.
- Incentivise employees' trainings towards new skills needed in the future (digital skills, soft skills, hygienic-sanitary…)
  Tip: How to manage a transition from offline to online as a fast reaction (no time for an exhaustive communication plan)
  1st Choose the best candidate within your organisation to support you (it could be the cook of the hotel, the spinning coach…)
  2nd Choose one platform to prioritise (Instagram, Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn…)
  3rd Following the objectives of prior containment and then recovery, start informing about the management of this crucial containment, after some days or weeks (depending on the crisis evolution), you can start sharing ideas for the recovery, what are you doing with your employees to better satisfy customer needs
  4rd Take care of the public by sharing some information through webinars, masterclasses, like a secret of your value proposition… That could be multiplied if

you promote jointly with some influencer, so your assistant on social media should identify some profile that could support you to maximise the impact of your post

5th Recreate your offer, if people cannot come, you can approach the destination to them through a gamification, through a quiz… and including a chatbot in your main webpage to help your visitors.

6th Keep loyalty through with promotions and contests.

7th Take advantage of this new paradigm to create new relationships that could become part of your value chain, as social networks are a different place, you can find a new partner whom jointly could go further with.

2. **Create new value chains**
   This crisis made tourism sector realised of vulnerability, many destinations depends on airports or cruises, limited number of providers, same kind of visitors, still many offline data to track and control activity… so, now is moment to redefine the network of the destination

- Contact with other destinations with similar characteristics of yours.
- Explore multiple suppliers, more local, greener, younger, technological… and make new partnerships.
- Invite other economic sectors to co-create solutions together, who can be a key partner in the short-mid future? For instance, Agreement with pharmacies will be needed? To create new products, why do not create a summer camp jointly with schools or universities that couldn't finished the course. A cross-sectorial collaboration is usually a win-win situation.
- More knowledge you share, more learning you acquired. So, participate in webinars, discussions, panellists to exchange ideas, reflections and you will pick interesting ideas that alone wouldn't have been possible.
- Including technology in your destination, it will become more attractive, the offer can be two-fold exploited (in life and virtually), the data will support decision-making and the destination will become more resilience. Innovation with technology is the perfect combination for competitiveness.
- Make alliances public-public, public-private and private-private; walk accompanied in difficult times, is better than alone. Co-design new sustainable and circular business models.
- A strengthened presence of entire value chains close to the destination is essential to increase the resilience of the territory as well as the society (residents, business, visitors) to unexpected events and crises which can alter global trade exchanges – as recently experienced during the Covid-19 crisis. Our collective ambition should be to bring the production of essential goods geographically closer to final users.

3. **Stimulate the recovery**
- Diversify services: open new markets never explored until now, what if we design a product that could be appealing for different niches; for instance, if a destination targeted family, why don't try something for solo-female travellers? Study the new market's needs.

- Explore undervalued destination assets nearby the destination, inland or rural areas, old buildings, paths, areas that can be reconverted to another activity… Invite residents that can have special sense of value to take part in this new co-creation.
- Promote more values and feeling than specific packages (in order to clean the mass tourism face that a destination had)
- Use new channels. Discover who is influencer through Instagram, Facebook, Twitter.
- Rethink the strategy to make the visitors as well as the stakeholders trust you
- Provide financial schemes for tourism investment.
- Keep rewarding greener behaviour, sustainability towards SDGs and the up-take of digital technologies
- Invest in talent to equip tourism workers with the right set of skills to drive the transformation (at all levels in the organisation, with a particular focus on workers in lower positions) and define new job profiles upon on the new market's needs.

The ongoing health crisis also demonstrates that data-based decision making, creativity and innovation deliver the best solutions, even more in extreme circumstances. Tourism can be a key driver to relaunch the European economy post Covid-19 and demonstrate their willingness to re-think tourism business models through their commitment to the sustainability, climate change, accessibility, inclusiveness, competitiveness, innovation and, above all, collective resilience.

The new normal is the continuous change, so if the destination has learned to be adaptive, has a strong (but not dependant) relationships with the stakeholders, has diversified and enlarged all-year-long the offer; then we can follow the path towards the tourism of tomorrow with a firm step, because the new destination's DNA has been built on resilience mode.

STEP 4 – WORKPLAN

This step aims to:
- Define the order for performing the specific objectives
- See feasibility for implementation
- Set milestones and intermediate deadlines
- Visualise what is more/less important

Seeing the feasibility of the different actions defined in the previous step, objectives, it is necessary to distinguish between priorities and sequences to establish the best order in which to perform the objectives described. It is recommended to set some milestones within the different objectives to assure the right development of the different actions. In addition, it will be necessary to define the duration of each objective as well as having interim deadlines to keep moving forward with the right pace.

In order to visualise the compendium of action to be implemented, some tools are proposed:

- Asana, Trello, Airtable[22] → Online user-friendly platforms for planning tasks. All allow multiple visualisation of the planned work.
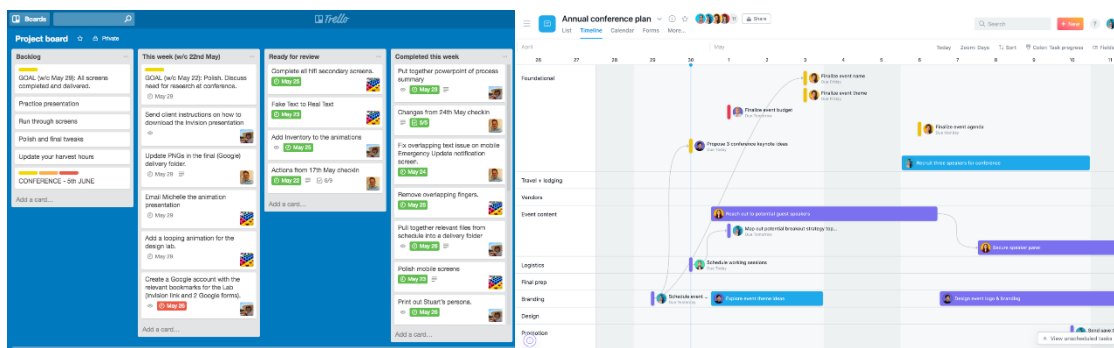

Figure 16 Screenshots of online planning softwares

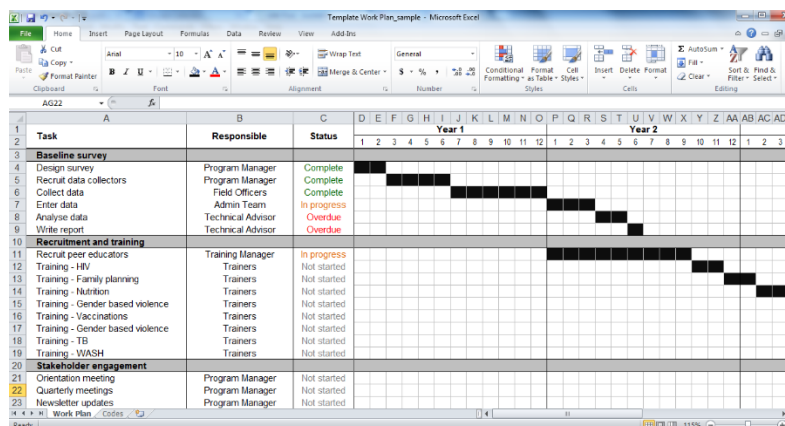- Excel → Basic tool with potential for calendar planning

Figure 17 Planning in Microsoft Excel

- Political agenda → Please take into account public events and political activities of the village (or even the region or main national events) to plan the right execution of the objectives, because in most of the objectives a joint public, private and citizens collaboration will be needed to achieve the objective.

A plan can be used to fix a target time that drives everybody to achieve the objective on schedule. However, it can be adapted if some constraint or risk arises, so the LGF should take that into account and be flexible if a deadline has to be changed in order to accomplish the objective.

In the calendar some meetings (F2F and virtual[23]) should be added to follow-up the execution. While it is true that the action plan already includes people responsible for coordinating each objective and with a clear timeline for its accomplishment, the meetings are a useful way to be updated on deviations as well as on the achievements.

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[22] Asana https://asana.com/guide Trello https://trello.com/ (both under payment), Airtable https://airtable.com/
[23] Many softwares exist in the market: Skype, GoToMeeting, Zoom, Webex, Adobe Connect, JoinMe or even WhatsApp

A calendar can support the process of achieving the specific objectives, but if it is not realistic or feasible, it will contribute to putting more pressure and stress on the people who have to implement it, so be reasonable when you set up the duration and deadlines for the objectives.

STEP 5 – MONITORING and EVALUATING

Once the plan is scheduled and written down with the consensus of all the stakeholders involved, it is necessary to take action according to it. Afterwards, in a time frame of about 3 months and depending also on your interim deadlines, keep track of your progress and make adjustments and re-set priorities along the way to adapt the planned tasks upon the appearance of constrains or needs, applying the mitigation or contingency plans foreseen in Step 4 when needed. To do this, it is necessary to measure the performance of the sub-objectives to assure that the execution is going towards the direction of the main objective. For that we have:

- the first assessment (done in Step 2),
- the tourism indicators' table and the KPIs defined in the tables of the specific objectives (Step 3)
- and the plan (Step 4)

which altogether will allow the monitoring of the action plan implementation.

The outcome of this step should be a progress report regarding the action plan or directly an updated version of the plan itself, integrating the data of the KPIs to keep monitoring for the next period. The person appointed in step 1 as responsible for the action plan must oversee the execution of this step 5.

STEP 6 – COMMUNICATION

This step is an extra step. It is not related directly to the communication plan of the project; however, it should be aligned and contribute somehow to the promotion in a different way. This step is focused on internal communication to ensure transparency among the participants of the action plan. Those mentioned in the section "people" of the specific objectives table must be aware of what is happening and what the state of the actions is to monitor if something could affect other actions or objectives.

Besides the internal communication between all the stakeholders involved in the implementation of the action plan, the details of the good practices and lessons learnt from the pilots should be gathered to transfer this valuable information to the future villages where the SuSTowns results will be capitalised. These good practices and lessons learnt can be requested in advance during step 5 while monitoring the implementation, or this task can be assigned to the communication manager of the project to take the responsibility of assembling this information at least once a year.

Moreover, the good practices and lessons learnt aim to generate citizen awareness as well as engagement from other residents or stakeholders not already involved, and to create a sense of place to love and to value what they have and to take action to protect and promote responsible tourism. Nowadays, a powerful communication tool to reach citizens and tourists is social networks, so the communication plan of the project and/or the village's tourism authorities should include this information in the material to disseminate through these social networks.

Last but not least, the good practices and lessons learnt should become a tool to ensure a common standard among tourism employees, staff and the whole value chain, and can also be used as a material for future training in the capitalisation phase.

ACTION PLAN SUM-UP

Creating an action plan is a complex task if people involved are not motivated enough or convinced that some changes are needed to boost a shift towards sustainable tourism. Hence, the importance of a capacity building for the stakeholders involved to share a strong and clear message which give empowerment to them as well as create engagement among all the people who will be responsible to elaborate and implement the action plan.

PARTICIPATION
=
INVOLVEMENT
+
MOTIVATION

An action plan based in this methodology must have the following:

Town general description

Stakeholders:
- List of stakeholders + leader of the AP pointed
- Letter of commitments
- Reports of the trainings and capacity building done
- People of the Local Focus Group (and when possible the 3 for action teams)

Assessment:
- Tourism Indicators
- Quality criteria
- List of tourism resources and offer
- Analysis using one of the tools between DPSIR, SWOT, GAP…
- Assessment about the decline situation

Objectives of the action plan:
- Summary of the brainstorming
- Needs identified
- Type and form of tourism chosen to rejuvenate the destination
- Objectives defined with people and resources needed to implemented
- Mitigation and contingency plan
- Main KPIs to monitor the progress
- (Optional) Collection of good practices to get inspiration

Workplan
- Calendar with milestones and deliverables
- Dates of the progress monitoring report
- Monitoring and tracking tools (Tourism indicators, quality criteria…)

Please find in Annex 7 this list as a checklist to support the main responsible to produce the effective action plan according to this methodology.

A good action plan will ensure:

- ✓ Effectiveness in governance
- ✓ Sharing of policies, vision and mission
- ✓ Positive impact
- ✓ Improved destination image
- ✓ Culture on innovation
- ✓ Coordination and cooperation between stakeholders for efficient and effective management
- ✓ Sense of place
- ✓ Measurement indicators for assessment and monitoring implementation
- ✓ Transparency in communication and data
- ✓ Innovation in processes (also in governance for decision-making)
- ✓ Technology uptake & Digital transformation
- ✓ New skills and trainings

Figure 18 Action Plan Sum-up

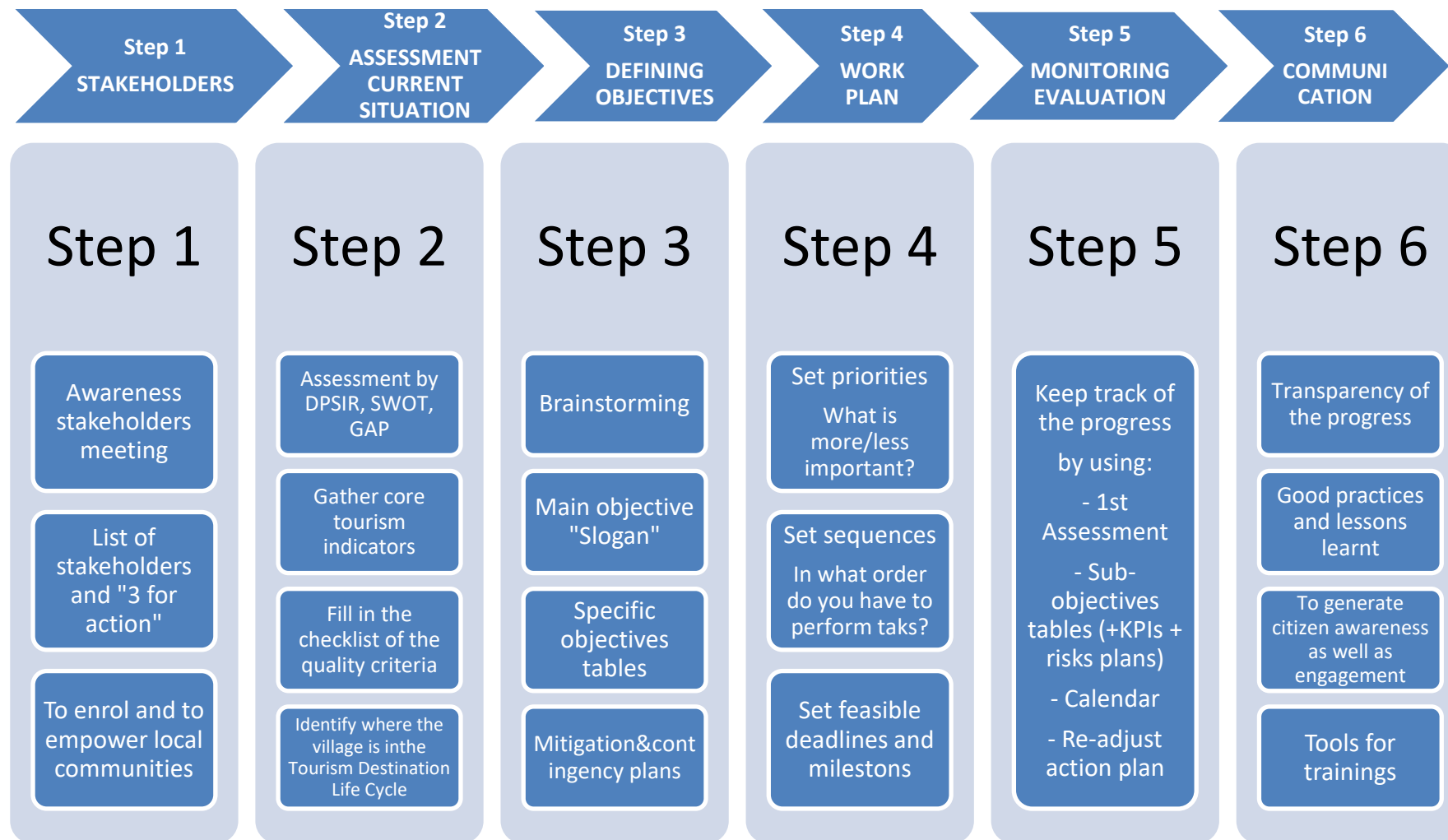Project co-financed by the European
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GLOSSARY and ABREVIATIONS

BSC	Balanced Score Card, an approach that is considered as a new form of performance measurement in businesses, an alternative to one-sided financial performance measurement. The BSC links the four important steering functions of a company to each other: translation of the vision/strategy, communication in performance networks (departments), business planning, and feedback and learning.
Carrying capacity	The maximum number of tourists that a destination can sustain beyond which there can be damage to the destination itself. Carrying Capacity is characterised by three dimensions (environmental, economic and social).
Destination Management	A management approach with the purpose of making the destination able to compete in the global tourist market through adequate structures and policies.
DMO	Destination Management Organisations play a key role in developing tourism locally and plan for the overall direction of tourism activities in the area taking into account stakeholder and resident concerns.
ETIS	European Tourism Indicator System.
ICZM	Integrated Coastal Zone Management is a resource management system following an integrative, holistic approach and an interactive planning process in addressing the complex management issues in the coastal area.[24]
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LFG	Local Focus Groups
NECSTouR	Network of European Regions for a Sustainable and Competitive Tourism
PDCA	Plan-do-check-act
Rural area	"Rural areas" by official Eurostat definition are "all areas outside urban clusters". That means that "rurality" is ONLY defined by population density and peripherality of a region and NOT by other factors, e.g. economy/agriculture or coastal/inland/mountain location. Source: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/rural-development/methodology; https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/35209/35256/Urban_rural_poster_3levels_A1_Aug2013.pdf; https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/mapapps/urban/degurba.html
STC	Sustainable Tourism Community

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[24] Job Dronkers (2019): Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM). http://www.vliz.be/wiki/Integrated_Coastal_Zone_Management_(ICZM)#cite_note-1

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Sustainable Development	A broad political objective, encompassing an intention to avoid activities that will cause long-term damage to the environment and a desire to ensure adequate quality of life for present and future generations.
TALC	Tourism Area Life Cycle Model
TQM	Total Quality Management
Village	There seems to be no legal definition of "village" in the EU or the member states, but there are usually definitions for bigger urban units through "towns" – so generally speaking a village is a settlement/community in rural area that is smaller than a "town".

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the importance and relevance of the following sources and are grateful for the assistance they have provided in the elaboration of this methodology:

Existing declarations, standards, outcomes of previous projects and documents related to sustainable and responsible tourism and governance.

The quality standards of "Los Pueblos Más Bonitos de España" and "I Borghi più belli d'Italia" as well as the GSTC Destination Criteria and the criteria of "Charming Villages" (COSME).

The 2017 Athens Declaration as well as all the documentation published (factsheets, outcomes and recommendations) by the MED Sustainable Tourism Community which aims to move towards sustainable coastal and maritime tourism by capitalising on project results and lessons learned.

The Barcelona Declaration of Tourism and Cultural Heritage: "Better Places To Live, Better Places To Visit" (2018) by NECSTouR in cooperation with Europa Nostra, ETC and ECTN.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, concerning especially:
- Target 8.9: By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates Jobs and promotes local culture and products.
- target 12.B: Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that create jobs and promote local culture and products.
- Target 14.7: By 2030, increase the economic benefits from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism for Small Island developing States and the least developed countries

The 10 principles covered in the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism adopted by the UNWTO General Assembly in 1999 and approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001 regarding the economic, social, cultural and environmental components of travel and tourism and calling special attention to Article 3 and 6, stating tourism as a factor of sustainable development and affirming the obligations of stakeholders in tourism development respectively and keeping in mind the UNWTO Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics

held in 2017 which was built around the core principles mentioned in the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, as well as working towards the advancement of a more sustainable and ethical tourism.

The Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Mediterranean (ICZM) Protocol, specifically Economic activities Art.9d: i) To encourage sustainable coastal tourism that preserves coastal ecosystems, natural resources, cultural heritage and landscapes; ii) To promote specific forms of coastal tourism, including cultural, rural and ecotourism, while respecting the traditions of local populations; and MSP Principles as well as *BLUEMED Initiative, SRIA:* The BLUEMED Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA). and in line with the the Maritime Spatial Planning, the Ecosystem-Based Management principles and the Zoning approach for planning and managing tourism areas.

The European Green Deal and have observed the European Circular Economy Action Plan and the European Strategy for Plastics as part of the Circular Economy Package.

The Regional Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Mediterranean: Objective 3.1: Develop and promote practices and solutions to ensure efficient use of natural resources and reduce environmental impacts of tourism, respecting spatial, ecological, and socio-cultural carrying capacities of the destination; Objective 3.2: Promote regulatory, legislative and financial measures to mainstream SCP in the tourism consumption and production area, to reduce tourism seasonality creating green and decent jobs and to promote local community engagement and empowerment; Objective 3.3: Raise awareness, capacities and technical skills to support sustainable destinations and green tourism services and promote the development of appropriate marketing and communication tools to ensure a competitive, sustainable Mediterranean Tourism

The 2011 White Paper: Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource-efficient transport system: although tourism is not specifically mentioned, this white paper addresses the need to make travel more sustainable, safe, secure and efficient. It also aims to connect different modes of transport and to increase capacity to carry a growing number of passengers and reduce traffic congestion.

The European Tourism Manifesto for Growth and Jobs: Point No 35: maintain long-term employment in the tourism sector with fair working conditions for all, especially in key sub-sectors where recruitment and retention remain a challenge (e.g. social protection, remuneration, equal opportunities, equal treatment etc).

Annex 2: Tourism Indicators

List of core indicators based on ETIS, MITOMED+, HERIT-DATA and own research:

Number	Type of indicator	Criteria	Description
1	Destination Management (general)	Sustainable tourism public policy	Existence of a strategy for sustainable tourism in the tourism planning documents. Percentage of the area of the destination with a sustainable tourism action plan, with agreed monitoring, development control and evaluation arrangement (%)
2			Number of policies addressing SDGs
3		Satisfaction	Percentage of visitors that are satisfied with their overall experience in the destination
4			Percentage of residents that are satisfied with the overall tourism activity and management in the destination
5		Gender balance	Percentage of stakeholders having gender balance plans
6			Percentage of women in the tourism jobs
7			Average wage in tourism for women compared with men
8	Economic value	Regulation	Official (and updated) register of license for tourism accommodation (including those for sharing economy*)
9			Percentage of tourism establishments in the destination using a voluntary verified certification/labelling for environmental/quality/sustainability and/or CSR measures.
10		Tourism flow (volume and value) and performance at destination	Relative contribution of tourism to the destination's economy (% GDP)
11			Average length of stay of tourists (nights)
12			Number of overnight stays per month
13			Occupancy rate in commercial accommodation* per month and average for the year.
14			Direct tourism employment as percentage of total employment per month.
15			Daily spending per tourist (accommodation, food and drinks, other services)
16		Quantity of work	Variation (%) of unemployment rate between months to assess low and high season
17		Suppliers	Percentage of locally produced food, beverages, products and services purchased by the tourism companies in the destination
18	Social and Cultural	Social/community impact	Carrying capacity: Number of tourists per resident (over 100 inhabitants)
19			Number of second/rental homes per 1 home (1 on 1 proportion)
20			Number of beds available in commercial accommodation* in relation to residents (1 on 1 proportion)
21			Percentage of visitors that extend their stay
22			Percentage of visitors that repeat in the destination
23			Percentage of visitors participating in a cultural or traditional activity in the destination

24		Inclusion and accessibility	Percentage of tourist attractions that are accessible to people with mobility and sensorial disabilities and/or participating in recognised accessibility schemes.
25		Protection and valorisation of cultural heritage, local identity and cultural assets	Number of cultural sites and practices under some protection label and number of cultural sites and practices acknowledged to be "at risk"
26	Environmental	Climate change and biodiversity protection	Carbon footprint per euro spent (if wanted, another indicator for the average carbon footprint for the travel done to visit the destination) (Kg)
27			Percentage of tourism companies involved in climate change mitigation programs such as carbon dioxide offset, low energy systems, etc. and in responses and measures to adapt to climate change.
28			Percentage of tourist accommodation and attraction infrastructure in "vulnerable" or "fragile" areas
29			Percentage of destination (area in km2) that is designated for protection
30			Percentage of the destination area under a biodiversity protection plan
31			Use of land: % developed, % building land, % land designated as not for building
32			Percentage of visitors using non-contaminant transport (like bike or electric cars) to move around the destination
33		Waste, water and energy management and consumption	Solid urban waste produced by destination (relation of tons per person between low and high season)
34			Volume of solid urban waste recycled (relation between low and high season)
35			Water consumption (litre) per person (relation between low season and high season)
36			Energy consumption (KWh) per person per day (relation between low and high season)
37			Percentage of electric energy consumed by renewable sources
38			Percentage of accommodations that promote green attitude (recycling, waterless, renewable energy systems…)

Regarding these 38 indicators, the local authorities must check if they can get data to fill all of them periodically, if not, some of them can be deleted and other additional indicators can be added.

Some supplementary indicators from ETIS are:

Accessible tourism

Sustainable tourism policy

Percentage of the destination with an accessible tourism strategy/action plan, with agreed monitoring, development control and evaluation arrangement

Equality/accessibility

Percentage of commercial accommodation with rooms accessible to people with disabilities and/or participating in recognised accessibility information schemes

Does the destination have an identified accessibility management office or person available to the public?

Percentage of businesses that have a budget for accessibility improvements

Reducing transport impact

Percentage of each category of transport in the destination that is accessible, i.e. public transport and private hire coaches, minibuses, taxis or minicabs

Transnational cultural routes

Destination management survey

Is your destination part of a cultural route certified by the Council of Europe?

If yes, is there any policy in place for the cultural route's visibility?

If yes, does the local community participate in this policy?

Do cultural/tourist events linked to the cultural route take place in your destination?

Is the logo of the cultural route of the Council of Europe present on the documents or visible in tourist offices?

Percentage of tourist offers available in your destination highlighting the theme of the cultural route

Enterprise survey

Is your enterprise located along a cultural route certified by the Council of Europe?

If yes, are the products of your enterprise linked within the theme/activities of the cultural route?

If yes, is the communication on your enterprise/products mentioning the links with the cultural route?

Is the cultural route promoting/making visible your enterprise/products?

Resident survey

Benefits for the community from the cultural route involving my destination

Is the community informed about the cultural route?

Is the local community involved in the actions organised within the framework of the cultural route's activities?

Are there benefits for me from the cultural route involving my destination?

Percentage of residents satisfied with their involvement and their influence in the planning and development of the cultural route

Percentage of residents who have positive or negative views on the impact of the cultural route on my destination's identity

Effect of the cultural route on the distinctiveness and local identity, culture and heritage of the destination

Effect of the cultural route on the quality of life in the destination

Percentage of residents who have positive views on the impact of the cultural route on tourism

Effect of the cultural route on cultural and tourism offers of the destination

Annex 3: Tourism Indicators vs Quality Criteria

The table below shows a correlation between the previously mentioned tourism indicators and the criteria of the quality standard for the villages:

Num.	Type of indicator	Criteria	Description	Quality Criteria Measure
1	Destination Management (general)	Sustainable tourism public policy	Existence of a strategy for sustainable tourism in the tourism planning documents. Percentage of the area of the destination with a sustainable tourism action plan, with agreed monitoring, development control and evaluation arrangement (%)	11. Tourist Information and/or alternative provision of information 21. Sustainability is part of the tourism strategy (having tourism data updated)
2			Number of policies addressing SDGs	21. Sustainability is part of the tourism strategy (having tourism data updated)
3		Satisfaction	Percentage of visitors that are satisfied with their overall experience in the destination	6. Living traditions and (contemporary) culture
4			Percentage of residents that are satisfied with the overall tourism activity and management in the destination	6. Living traditions and (contemporary) culture
5		Gender balance	Percentage of stakeholders having gender balance plans	
6			Percentage of women in the tourism jobs	
7			Average wage in tourism for women compared with men	
8	Economic value	Regulation	Official (and updated) register of license for tourism accommodation (including those for sharing economy*)	
9			Percentage of tourism establishments in the destination using a voluntary verified certification/labelling for	5. Local handicraft, artisanry, agriculture that is accessible and can be experienced.

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			environmental/quality/sustainability and/or CSR measures.	
10		Tourism flow (volume and value) and perform ance at destinati on	Relative contribution of tourism to the destination's economy (% GDP)	5. Local handicraft, artisanry, agriculture that is accessible and can be experienced. 8. Restaurant(s) in the village
11			Average length of stay of tourists (nights)	
12			Number of overnight stays per month	
13			Occupancy rate in commercial accommodation* per month and average for the year.	7. Accommodation in the village
14			Direct tourism employment as percentage of total employment per month.	
15			Daily spending per tourist (accommodation, food and drinks, other services)	10. Existing tourism products, routes (hiking, cycling)
16		Quantity of work	Variation (%) of unemployment rate between months to assess low and high season	
17		Supplier s	Percentage of locally produced food, beverages, products and services purchased by the tourism companies in the destination	
18	Social and Cultural	Social/c ommuni ty impact	Carrying capacity: Number of tourists per resident (over 100 inhabitants)	1. < 8000 inhabitants (size)
19			Number of second/rental homes per 1 home (1 on 1 proportion)	
20			Number of beds available in commercial accommodation* in relation to residents (1 on 1 proportion)	
21			Percentage of visitors that extend their stay	19. Proof of good accommodation and service quality
22			Percentage of visitors that repeat in the destination	19. Proof of good accommodation and service quality

23			Percentage of visitors participating in a cultural or traditional activity in the destination	6. Living traditions and (contemporary) culture
24		Inclusion and accessibility	Percentage of tourist attractions that are accessible to people with mobility and sensorial disabilities and/or participating in recognized accessibility schemes.	5. Local handicraft, artisanry, agriculture that is accessible and can be experienced. 14. Accessible "cultural" attractions (Churches, museums, historic buildings, etc.) within the village 15. Accessibility and activities to experience cultural sights and the surrounding nature 22. Accessible tourism experience
25		Protection and valorisation of cultural heritage, local identity and cultural assets	Number of cultural sites and practices under some protection label and number of cultural sites and practices acknowledged to be "at risk"	
26	Environmental	Climate change and biodiversity protection	Carbon footprint per euro spent (if wanted, another indicator for the average carbon footprint for the travel done to visit the destination) (Kg)	20. Accessible by public transport or other models of sustainable mobility
27			Percentage of tourism companies involved in climate change mitigation programs such as carbon dioxide offset, low energy systems, etc. And in responses and measures to adapt to climate change.	

28			Percentage of tourist accommodation and attraction infrastructure in "vulnerable" or "fragile" areas	
29			Percentage of destination (area in km2) that is designated for protection	
30			Percentage of the destination area under a biodiversity protection plan	
31			Use of land: % developed, % building land, % land designated as not for building	
32			Percentage of visitor using non-contaminant transport (like bike or electric cars) to move around the destination	20. Accessible by public transport or other models of sustainable mobility
33		Waste, water and energy management and consumption	Solid urban waste produced by destination (relation of tons per person between low and high season)	
34			Volume of solid urban waste recycled (relation between low and high season)	
35			Water consumption (litre) per person (relation between low season and high season)	
36			Energy consumption (KWh) per person per day (relation between low and high season)	
37			Percentage of electric energy consumed by renewable sources	
38			Percentage of accommodations that promote green attitude (recycling, waterless, renewable energy systems…)	

Annex 4: Letter of Commitment Template

Rf: Letter of Commitment* – SuSTowns Stakeholders

*this commitment does not entail any financial contributions or commitments other than voluntary ones

To the attention of:

Address of Pilot Coordinator

Dear Ms/Mr [surname pilot's coordinator],

We hereby confirm that [name of the Person] as [position/resident] on behalf of [entity/association, if it's on an individual basis as a resident delete it] will become a stakeholder for [village] pilot of the INTERREG-MED project "SuSTowns" led by the ANCI Lazio and which aims to develop tools of planning and management of tourism that work to avoid the decline of the small fascinating Mediterranean towns promoting sustainable and quality tourism and the enhancement of local cultural heritage by capitalising existing tools and applying the most innovative techniques of the total quality management Methodology to public policies:

[name of the Person or the entity] is aware of the need to cooperate between the different stakeholders to define and implement an efficient action plan hence [he/she/it] transmits [his/her/its] interested in receiving the support of the SuSTowns project through the different activities the project will offer and expresses willingness to participate as a stakeholder throughout the duration of the project.

In this scenario, [name of the Person] engages [him/her/it self] to:
- Participate in the meetings, trainings and workshops for the Local Focus Groups
- Commit to express needs and opportunities for the village
- Spread the objectives and boosting the involvement of more private stakeholders

In addition, [name of the person and position] of [entity/association] will act as stakeholders involved, ensuring [him/her/its] commitment in:
- Supporting the creation of tourism experiences and products by applying the SuSTowns methodology
- Implementing the Action Plan
- Replacing [him/herself] in case of withdrawal during the implementation to assure at continued engagement with the action plan development.

I firmly believe that the project SuSTowns and its methodology will support the rejuvenation of our village. In conclusion, I am pleased to manifest my full support to SuSTowns project, and I state my commitment to start acting as a stakeholder from [DATE] until June 2022 with the possibility to consider pursuing with this established cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

XXXX XXXXXX

If you have questions, please contact:
[Phone]
[Email]

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Annex 5: Efficient meeting template

Date Place		Start Time	Finish Time
Purpose of the Meeting (Title) ✔ ✔ ✔		**Attendees**	
AGENDA 1. Update about agreements from previous meeting 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. Suggestions, doubts and questions		**AGREEMENTS** --- --- --- --- --- --- --- --- ---	
Conclusions ➢ ➢ ➢		Suggestions (what I could improve?)	
Next meeting date:			
Tips:	Group meetings 1h30m max.	Hydrate yourself while talking	Combine seated and stand-up moments

Annex 6: Useful Online Inspirational Material and Tools

NECSTouR – Network of European Regions for a Sustainable and Competitive Tourism
www.necstour.eu (full of knowledge and good practices)

Sustainable Tourism Community (where Interreg MED Modular projects are capitalised)
https://sustainable-tourism.interreg-med.eu/ Here you will find the catalogue of outcomes from the previous projects and the link to their webpages

MITOMED+ https://mitomed-plus.interreg-med.eu/
ALTER-ECO http://alterecotips.com/
HERIT-DATA https://herit-data.interreg-med.eu/
CO-EVOLVE https://co-evolve.interreg-med.eu/
SHAPETOURISM project, a participative Decision Support System
http://www.shapetourism.eu/main-output/
https://shapetourism.interreg-med.eu/main-outputs

SDGs How to contribute to its achievement and to get inspired
SDG Toolkit http://sdgtoolkit.org/
Make Europe Sustainable for all https://makeeuropesustainableforall.org/
Tourism for SDGs travellers. http://tourism4sdgs.org/

Maritime Spatial Planning and Good Practices
https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/maritime_spatial_planning_en

CHARM - Discovering charming villages (Experiences for rural and isolated villages)
https://www.charmingvillages.eu/

Handbook of successful and innovative practices for a sustainable tourism inside Protected Areas   https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/Handook-Sustainable-Tourism-EN-CEETO-Interreg.pdf

SUMP Self-Assessment Tool by European Platform on Sustainable Mobility Plans
https://www.sump-assessment.eu/start

Carbon Footprint https://www.cstt.nl/carmacal

Quality Standards (extra recommendations) https://iqmdestination.com/

Investment
Anima http://www.animaweb.org/fr/missions
CAST Network https://castnetwork.eu/
FEMIP https://www.eib.org/en/projects/regions/med/trust-fund/index.htm

MED Urban Tool – Like a market place full of material and tools aiming to rethink city development in the Mediterranean http://medurbantools.com/

Annex 7: Action Plan Check List

An action plan based in this methodology must have the following:

- ➢ Town general description

- ➢ Stakeholders:
  - ☐ List of stakeholders + leader of the AP pointed
  - ☐ Letter of commitments
  - ☐ Reports of the trainings and capacity building done
  - ☐ People of the Local Focus Group (and when possible the 3 for action teams)

- ➢ Assessment:
  - ☐ Tourism Indicators
  - ☐ Quality criteria
  - ☐ List of tourism resources and offer
  - ☐ Analysis using one of the tools between DPSIR, SWOT, GAP…
  - ☐ Assessment about the decline situation

- ➢ Objectives of the action plan:
  - ☐ Summary of the brainstorming
  - ☐ Needs identified
  - ☐ Type and form of tourism chosen to rejuvenate the destination
  - ☐ Objectives defined with people and resources needed to implemented
  - ☐ Mitigation and contingency plan
  - ☐ Main KPIs to monitor the progress
  - ☐ (Optional) Collection of good practices to get inspiration

- ➢ Workplan
  - ☐ Calendar with milestones and deliverables
  - ☐ Dates of the progress monitoring report
  - ☐ Monitoring and tracking tools (Tourism indicators, quality criteria…)

Remember:

- ✓ *Let's make it happen*
- ✓ *Be a part of the change you want to see*
- ✓ *If you want to go far, let's go together*

Enhancing SUStainable tourism attraction in small fascinating med TOWNS

SuSTowns

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