

# Measuring Tourism Sustainability in the MED Area

Sustainable Tourism Community's 2nd thematic paper

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## 1. Introduction

Tourism is increasingly relevant in national agendas for its role in fostering economic growth, generating employment and its potential in valorising cultural and natural assets (United Nations World Tourism Organisation - UNWTO, 2017a). This is now also recognized at the highest international level with the UN General Assembly having adopted several resolutions acknowledging the role of tourism in sustainable development, including the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations – UN, 2015).

Despite the importance of tourism sector for the national and local economies, tourism development could jeopardize social welfare and economic growth when it is not based on the principles of sustainability (Richards and Hall, 2003; Coccossis and Mexa, 2004). Sustainability is achieved when tourism brings the largest possible benefits for tourism actors, tourists and host communities with the least possible negative social, economic and environmental impacts (UNEP/WTO, 2005). International literature recognises a range of factors that could prevent sustainable tourism development. Amongst the most important factors are the overexploitation of

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natural and cultural assets (Briassoulis, 2002), the uneven allocation of benefits and losses between tourism actors and local communities (Liu, 2003), the raising of “Dutch Disease” phenomena in highly developed tourism destinations (Capo et al. 2007; Chao et al. 2009) and the provision of tourism services that do not meet the expectations of visitors (King et al. 2006)<sup>1</sup>.

The aforementioned risk factors, which could be considered as the market failures of tourism sector (Sinclair and Stabler, 2002) or the tragedy of the tourism commons (Briassoulis, 2002), call for a more effective and comprehensive tourism management and planning (Choy, 1991). Towards this direction, SDG12 of the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015) recognises the continuous monitoring of tourism development as a priority. Monitoring ensures that deficiencies of the sector could be adjusted, irreversible damages to the environment and host communities could be avoided and the maximum of benefits could be achieved. A sufficient condition for an effective monitoring mechanism is the development of appropriate tools that could provide reliable measurements of tourism evolution and sustainability.

Despite the long-standing interest and discussion of sustainable tourism and the important advances in tourism statistics, there is as yet no standardized basis for the collection of relevant information, at either the national or subnational level. This is a significant gap, and one that limits the potential for the development of policies directed at advancing sustainable tourism (European Commission, 2014). At the Mediterranean level, the main current knowledge/data gaps on tourism is a key issue for the Interreg MED Sustainable Tourism Community in order to feed decision-making processes and propose alternative tourism models in line with policy-makers’ expectations (BleuTourMed\_C3, 2017). To this end, the following questions are expected to be answered by the Community’s projects results.

- *What are the current needs for data in the Mediterranean tourism sector?*
- *How to use data and information coming from relevant projects in the Mediterranean region in order to feed policy making processes?*

In order to trigger this elaboration, this thematic paper initially presents the main initiatives for measuring tourism sustainability carried out at an international and European level. In Section 3, particular attention is given to those initiatives set up to analyse gaps and challenges at subnational level. Finally, in Section 4 the objectives of the Community’s projects to develop data and systems of indicators adapted to the Mediterranean tourism reality are presented.

## 2. Initiatives for measuring sustainability at an international level

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<sup>1</sup> The term of “Dutch Disease” was initially used in an article of The Economist (1977) in order to describe the negative impacts that the the discovery of a large gas field in Netherlands had on the manufacturing sector of the country. The massive exports of oil made the local currency to soar, thus, having adverse effects on the manufacturing sector as its products have been rendered more expensive for exports and thus less attractive. In tourism, “Dutch Disease” could be observed at destinations where rampant tourism development drives the prices of other products upwards (housing, manufacturing) and thus making them less attractive to domestic and foreign customers (Capo et al. 2007).

## International level

Two major initiatives at an international level in terms of sustainable tourism indicators are the **Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)** and the **United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO)**. Both aim at contributing to the objectives of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

GSTC was formally constituted in 2010 as a means for establishing sustainable tourism standards. Through a global membership of UN agencies and other actors either from the supply or the demand side of tourism, it seeks to achieve best practices in sustainable tourism. The GSTC has developed two sets of criteria setting the standards of tourism sustainability among the various stakeholders. The first set targets at policy makers of the destinations and the second at private actors of the tourism sector (hotel owners, tour operators etc.) (GSTC, 2017). GSTC provides a continuous education and training programme and an integrity programme which verifies that certification programmes comply with the GSTC criteria (GSTC, 2016).

UNWTO has developed sustainable tourism indicators since the early 1990s. Lately, with the support of the UN Statistics Division (UNSD), it has put into force the initiative *Towards a Statistical Framework for Measuring Sustainable Tourism (MST)* (UNWTO, 2016). The initiative could be regarded as a follow-up of previous strategic projects of UNWTO, such as the *Tourism Satellite Account (TSA)* and the *International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics (IRTS)*. The TSA allows for the harmonization and reconciliation of tourism statistics from an economic (National Accounts) perspective, which enables the generation of tourism economic data –such as Tourism Direct GDP– and comparability with other economic statistics. The *Tourism Satellite Account: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008* provided an updated common conceptual framework for developing a TSA (UN, 2010). The MST initiative aims at developing an international statistical framework supporting the measurement of sustainable tourism taking into account the economic, environmental and social dimensions and the global, national and subnational spatial level (UNWTO, 2016). Towards the fulfilment of MST's goals an open **Working Group** of experts has been established which coordinates the engagement of key stakeholders.

Decision makers and stakeholders will benefit from the MST framework through:

- a) *The provision of a common language for discussing sustainable tourism within the tourism sector and with other key policy areas such as planning, industry, infrastructure, environment, social affairs, finance and central banks.*
- b) *The capacity to compare the performance of the tourism sector and the impacts of different policies on a consistent basis with other sectors and in different destinations and countries.*
- c) *The provision of a basis for improving co-ordination in data collection and organization (including identification of data sources and data gaps), as well as for improving institutional arrangements for the governance and management of statistics on sustainable tourism.*

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- d) *The provision of a single, coherent and complete picture of the state of sustainable tourism and its trends, in all its dimensions and across all spatial scales (UNWTO, no date).*

In order to exploit the already available data and to identify additional data gaps, an adequate statistical framework is needed to provide a common language and an organizing structure. Its starting foundation involves bridging the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable tourism through the TSA and the *System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA)*, both UN statistical standards. In this regard, the development of key concepts, definitions, classifications and indicators were established throughout five international tourism statistics conferences –Ottawa (1991), Nice (1999), Vancouver (2001), Iguazu (2005) and Bali (2009)– (UNWTO, 2017b).

The 6<sup>th</sup> UNWTO International Conference on Tourism Statistics celebrated in Manila in June 2017 marked a very significant milestone in tourism statistics. Held on the occasion of the **International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017**, and seen as a part of the next generation of official statistics, it aimed at addressing the issue of measuring sustainable tourism. The presentation of the first draft of a new statistical framework for tourism —one that integrates the various dimensions of sustainable tourism: economic, environmental and social– and across relevant spatial levels (global, national and subnational) was the core component of the conference (UNWTO, 2017c). Equally, in order to move forward, four future streams of work were identified:

- 1) theoretical design and development of the MST Framework itself and the associated statistical definitions and treatments;
- 2) pilot and case studies at country and sub-national level, which will provide important practical insights that can be taken into account in finalising the technical aspects of the Framework (this work of stream will be undertaken in parallel with the first one);
- 3) capacity building and implementation
- 4) engagement and support across countries, departments, sectors and roles – from ministers to technical experts –.

Even though all the streams of work are considered to determine the success of the MST, the last one is deemed as the factor that will determine its success. In this direction, the **“Manila Call for Action on Measuring Sustainable Tourism”**, also produced during the conference, acknowledged the importance of developing a statistical framework for measuring sustainable tourism in fostering a global common understanding for tracking progress and directing policy efforts (UNWTO, 2017c).

The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** also draws attention to the need for developing a system of information and statistics on tourism that produce robust, timely and comparable data with a good level of disaggregation. It has also been working on the development of systems of indicators to measure tourism sustainability, producing a review of statistical initiatives of eleven OECD countries from a sectorial perspective and at a country level providing a tool guide to evaluate and measure tourism competitiveness over the time and inform

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policies. Its framework for measurement is based around a shared definition of tourism competitiveness while it proposes a set of core, supplementary and future development indicators using 11 core indicators: tourism direct Gross Domestic Product, inbound tourism revenues per visitor by source, overnights in all types of accommodation, exports of tourism services, labour productivity in tourism services, Purchasing Power Parity (PPPs) and tourism prices, country entry visa requirements, natural resources and biodiversity, cultural and creative resources, visitors and National Tourism Action Plans (Dupeyras and MacCallum, 2013).

## European level

The **European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS)** is a toolkit launched by the European Commission in 2013 with the aim of improving sustainable management of tourist destinations. Being a tool of voluntary use, to be a holistic convenient tool with a multi-stakeholder approach is a key aspect in ETIS (López Palomeque et al., 2016). The monitoring results are based on self-assessment, observations, data collection and analysis by the destinations themselves. Even though ETIS does not set minimum values to be achieved and it does not include a certification process or levelling, it provides destinations with the basic information they need to monitor sustainability and to improve the management of tourism activity in terms of effectiveness using a common comparable approach. ETIS provides a comprehensive and sectorial perspective that intends to be flexible in order to meet the specific expectations of sustainability at each destination on a local scale (European Union, 2016). The first set of ETIS indicators was the result of several years of cooperation between the Tourism Sustainability Group (TSG) and the European Commission, which committed itself with its Communication 'Europe, the world's No. 1 tourist destinations – a new political framework for tourism in Europe', notably action 11, 'To develop, on the basis of NECSTouR or EDEN<sup>2</sup>, a system of indicators for the management of destinations' (EC, 2010). The ETIS is based on 27 core indicators and 40 optional indicators, subdivided into four categories:

1. Destination management.
2. Social and cultural impact.
3. Economic value.
4. Environmental impact.

The feasibility and practicality of the ETIS Toolkit and the entire system at destination level was tested through two **ETIS pilot phases** over a 2-year period by more than 100 destinations across Europe. After analysing this feedback, the European Commission, supported by a pool of experts, revised the system in 2015-2016 and launched the **ETIS and Accessible Tourism Awards** as recognition of the efforts made by destinations during ETIS pilot phase to measure and enhance their sustainable management performance. Special attention was given to destinations working on improving accessibility. Eight destinations were awarded in three different categories in which both

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<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/eden\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/eden_en)



sustainable and accessible destination management approaches were recognised, based on social, economic, environmental and cultural criteria. Some of the awarded destinations are located in the MED area, such as South Sardinia, Barcelona Province, Mali Lošinj in Croatia, Torroella de Montgrí-l'Estartit and L'Estartit Llançà, Ljubljana, Comunitat Valenciana, Podgorica, Abano Terme and Andalusia (European Commission, 2016).

ETIS implementation at destination level has been widely analysed, namely in Spain (Barcelona<sup>3</sup> and Andalusia<sup>4</sup>), Montenegro<sup>5</sup>, Slovenia<sup>6</sup> and Italy<sup>7,8</sup>. Some lessons learnt about the pilot phases are as follows:

- a) Political commitment: the importance of obtaining actual and relevant local political support for implementation was emphasised by the destinations piloting the ETIS.
- b) Adaptability: Piloting of the ETIS has shown that there is no one set formula that works for all destinations. It is important to be flexible and adapt an approach that best suits one specific destination and stakeholders.
- c) Practical applicability: Destinations found that, whereas some figures are easy to be collected annually, others (such as data from surveys) are more cost-effective if undertaken as it may be every 3 years.

At a European level, there are other initiatives such as the *Tourism and Environment Reporting Mechanism (TOUERM)*, some initiatives from the private sector, such as the Network of European regions for Sustainable and Competitive Tourism (NECSTouR), the European Charter for sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (ECST) or the European Network for Sustainable tourism development (Ecotrans).

**TOUREM** is a reporting mechanism developed by the European Environment Agency (EEA) in 2013. Based on the use of policy relevant, feasible and regularly updated indicators, it aims at being able to reflect both environmental impacts (baseline and threshold) and sustainability trends. The geographical context (whether coastal zones, rural or urban areas) is also addressed by some of the indicators. EEA acknowledged the need to further explore and monitor the environmental impacts and sustainability trends of tourism and considers that TOUREM and ETIS can complement each other (Giulietti et al., 2016).

<sup>3</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/15851/attachments/1/translations/en/renditions/pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.turismoandaluz.com/estadisticas/sites/default/files/Sist\\_Indicadores\\_1.pdf](http://www.turismoandaluz.com/estadisticas/sites/default/files/Sist_Indicadores_1.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/15851/attachments/5/translations/en/renditions/pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/15851/attachments/6/translations/en/renditions/pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/15851/attachments/3/translations/en/renditions/pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/15851/attachments/4/translations/en/renditions/pdf>

Several private organisations representing the tourism industry or destinations have also established monitoring tools and certification schemes in the area of sustainable tourism. The **Network of European Regions for Sustainable and Competitive Tourism (NECSTouR)**, which, since 2007, implements the 10 principles of the Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism, counts on a specific working group devoted to tourism indicators. Accordingly, the Federation of European Protected Areas (**EUROPARC**) created and disseminated the **European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (ECST)**. It is a management tool for ensuring that tourism contributes to a balanced economic, social and environmental development of protected areas in Europe that targets destinations, local business and tour operators. Also, the **European network for sustainable tourism development, Ecotrans**, has been helping to make tourism more sustainable through the sharing of experience and know-how with its members as well as through global networking, supporting and contributing to joint projects and its **DestiNet portal since 1993, which** was now re-launched as Tourism 2030.

### 3. Measuring tourism sustainability at the subnational level

In addition to the interest of national governments and the relevance in international agendas, sustainable tourism is especially important at subnational levels. Regions and cities play a growing role in tourism development and policy design (Russo & Van Der Borg, 2002) whilst tourism could prove to be a pillar for regional and local economies (Saarinen, 2003; Macbeth et al. 2004). The economic wide effects of tourism are significant and vary a lot from one territory to another and among different types of destinations (e.g. urban, rural, coastal or mountainous areas) in terms of number of visitors, type of tourism, seasonality patterns, revenues and added value per visitor or jobs generated. Thus, the main challenge for national authorities, responsible for the strategic tourism management, is to develop a system of information and statistics on tourism at a subnational level (OECD, 2016). This system should take into account the particularities of the country and the different types of destinations situated in it and should produce robust and timely data with a good level of disaggregation, which will allow comparisons among regions, destinations at the national as well as the international level (OECD, 2016).

Much has been done in the past 20 years to improve the economic measurement of tourism at the national level (e.g. with the Tourism Satellite Account), but rather little at the sub-national level (Massieu, 2008). The sub-national level can be represented by a region, a city, or another type of “tourism destination”. The “tourism destination” level is very significant from a tourism perspective – the destination is the geographical area which is chosen by the visitor due to its attractions, accommodation, catering and entertainment/activities – since it is the place that the actual consumption of tourism services takes place (Leiper, 1995). The actual geographical definition of a ‘destination’ remains to be set up within international literature, since various definitions exist according to the different angle that the concept is being approached (Saraniemi and Kylänen, 2011). In addition, many scholars agree that the destination does not necessarily coincide with the administrative limits of regions and cities. Taking into account that data are usually referring to

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official administrative units, it is becoming obvious that very often there is a difficulty to acquire the essential information for destinations due to the inability of aggregating or disaggregating the available data (Massieu, 2008).

The effective statistical coverage of tourism at the sub-national level is facing the following challenges according to a recent report of OECD (2016):

- *Strengthening governance for the development of tourism statistics to avoid problems of overlapping and coherence, engage all players, and secure appropriate funding.*
- *Defining a common perspective regarding the statistical information needs, in partnership with the main industry players, taking both a horizontal and vertical perspective.*
- *Ensuring that institutional and human capacity for the development of tourism statistics is available and durable over time.*
- *Determinating the boundaries of the territory to be observed, taking into account the design and limits of the broader statistical system.*

Several initiatives have been developed for facing the aforementioned challenges. For example, UNWTO's **International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO)** is an initiative that organises various tourism destinations' observatories for measuring sustainability. Additionally, the **International Network on Regional Economics, Mobility and Tourism (INRouTe)** is an initiative promoted by the UNWTO dedicated to advancing policy-oriented measurement and analysis of tourism in order to provide operational guidance to entities and practitioners involved with regional and sub-regional entities. Aiming at providing statistical data to national tourism authorities, regional and sub-regional entities and related stakeholders, INRouTe published a *Tourism, territory and sustainability: A statistical insight at subnational levels* handbook. The handbook makes a clear case for the relevance of data collected using standard definitions at sub-national level that can be subsequently used to support integrated analysis and decision making. Its focus concerns adapting the 2008 IRTS, hence it has a particular interest in measuring tourism demand and supply at sub-national levels while also considering environmental and social aspects (INRoute, 2017).

#### 4. MED Sustainable Tourism Community projects approach

In this section, several projects that are specifically working on measuring the sustainability and indicators within the MED Sustainable Tourism Community will be presented. The projects utilise the knowledge built by the ETIS and other relevant initiatives and adapt various systems of indicators to their particular needs and objectives. In general, two main categories of indicators are developed by the community's projects:

1. Destination Indicators: This type of indicators refers to the destination level, measuring the sustainability of tourism development in particular areas. Analysis in some cases is extended from the strict focus of tourism in order to accommodate broader issues of sustainability of the considered areas.

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2. Sector Specific Indicators: This type of indicators are targeting exclusively at the tourism sector evaluating the sustainability of tourism supply actors or this of newly developed models or products.

It should be also noted that many of the projects use a hybrid system of indicators incorporating both of the aforementioned targets.

Projects developing Destination Indicators:

- **CO-EVOLVE** project analyses and promotes the co-evolution of human activities and natural systems in touristic coastal areas and couples a presently unavailable analysis at MED scale of threats and enabling factors for sustainable tourism with specific indicators in the case of representative pilot areas. The project creates a conceptual model for assessing the level of sustainable development of tourism in the Mediterranean basin composed by an indicators' system (baseline and target values) that assesses sustainability in terms of criteria corresponding to four dimensions (environment, society, economy and governance) and develops an operational Tourism Sustainable Toolkit to be applied at Mediterranean scale.
- Aiming at promoting an integrated management of maritime and coastal (M&C) tourism, **MITOMED+** project develops a set of indicators built up on the ETIS toolkit to be applied in coastal destinations. The project addresses the knowledge gap on M&C tourism data by testing, transferring and capitalising on an integrated management system where indicators are improved in terms of coverage, sectors, quality and resolution. The project tests this set of indicators in different regions through pilot actions oriented to set up a common MED tourism monitoring system on which to experiment the database of M&C tourism indicators in the regions. This system alongside a structured social dialogue and participatory processes aim to enhance the capacity and empower public authorities, tourist destinations stakeholders, and economic operators to work together towards integrated and eco-systemic approaches for the development of a responsible and sustainable M&C tourism.
- **ShapeTourism** aims at improving the knowledge framework on tourism providing analysis and operational tools to pinpoint an integrated methodology in order to shape and drive sustainable tourism growth, particularly for cultural destinations. To do so, the project focuses on indicators and develops a set of tools, notably the Smart Integrated Tourism Data System (SITDS). The SITDS (an observatory based on Big Data accompanied by future scenarios elaboration, mega trends analysis and sample surveys) uses innovative statistical sources directly from the Internet/Mobile phone by accelerating the development of sustainability, attractiveness and competitiveness. The data and big data elaboration allows to assess tourism business dynamics and trends, provides effective responses to enhance operational capabilities in order to face persistent emerging problems deriving from tourism pressures on fragile coastal ecosystems.

Projects aiming at the sustainability assessment of tourism products, models and action plans are:

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- **ALTER ECO** project attempts to measure the available indicators of European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) for the most recent year in order to describe the involved pilot areas. Indicators are considered important for the project in the context of comparison between the pilot sites as well as between the status of the pilot sites before and after the application of methods and tools suggested by the project in order to implement alternative tourism strategies that allow the sustainable development of local tourism by promoting Med identity. Furthermore, this exercise will verify if the indicators are feasible in the pilot sites and at which administrative level.
- **BLUEMED** project seeks to valorise the underwater heritage of the Mediterranean by planning, testing and coordinating Underwater Museums, Diving Parks and Knowledge Awareness Centres. In order to support the establishment and consolidation of Underwater Museums and Diving Parks, feasibility studies and business models are prepared. These models will, also, use KPIs (key performance indicators) for the measurement of the proposed actions' impact on the natural, cultural and economic environment of the considered areas.
- **CASTWATER** project supports sustainable tourism policies and practices for water efficiency in coastal areas. The main challenge of the project is to reduce the impact of tourism activities on the environment and to improve the management of water resources. Towards this direction, an online tool will support the self-assessment of tourism actors regarding their capacity in making an effective and sustainable use of water resources.
- **CONSUME-LESS** project develops a new tourism model (Consumeless Med tourism model) for the Mediterranean destinations. A fundamental tool for the qualification of destinations for becoming Consumeless is the continuous monitoring of the model's implementation. To this end, the project will test in practice and evaluate the feasibility of ETIS indicators on a Mediterranean sample of destinations.
- **DestiMED** project aims at fostering planning, management, monitoring and promoting ecotourism in Mediterranean protected areas. The project tests the establishment of a system for monitoring the sustainability of ecotourism products and setting "Mediterranean ecotourism destination" standards, to ensure the sustainability of ecotourism in Mediterranean coastal and marine protected areas. This monitoring instrument will be the basis for the quality scheme of the forthcoming governance system for Mediterranean Ecotourism in Protected Areas. DestiMED builds on the outcomes of former experiences, adapting them to its context and improving and expanding them to address other areas. This allows a comparison among such areas, therefore feeding the indicators for improved sustainability identified by the MED Programme. The monitoring system is expected to create the enabling governance conditions to work towards the harmonization of environmental practices, and a more sustainable use of Mediterranean natural assets.

- **MEDCYCLETOUR** project seeks to reveal the potential of cycle tourism for enhancing sustainable tourism development. The project capitalises on a flagship project called the ‘Mediterranean Route’ and will deliver strategies, knowledge and support to realize the potential of cycle tourism across the whole Mediterranean region. The project develops an evaluation scheme for the proposed routes based on a system of indicators which will be fed with data sourcing from relevant surveys. On the one side, the evaluation seeks to depict the users’ attitudes and perceptions regarding the proposed actions and, on the other side, it seeks to measure the sustainability of the actions taking into account the cost and benefits of the actions.
- **MEDFEST** project targets at the exploitation of the Mediterranean culinary tradition towards the creation of sustainable tourism experiences. The project foresees the sustainability assessment of these culinary experiences based on four criteria which concern the content of the experience, its organisation, the level of the local context integration and the embedment of the experience into planning and policy frameworks<sup>9</sup>. The project builds on the existing knowledge produced by ETIS initiative, Global Sustainable Tourism Council Criteria and previous implementation of quality labels on the tourism industry.
- **SIROCCO** project seeks to develop more sustainable cruise tourism value chains in the MED. Towards this goal, the project constructs a Sustainable Cruise Tourism Certification System (SCTCS) building upon, integrating components, and extending and customising indicators of previous relevant initiatives, such as ETIS. The proposed SCTCS includes an indicator structure linking each indicator to the respective cruise value chain actor, who can provide the required data, and proposing data sources and collection methods.
- **TOURISMED** project aims at developing, testing and transferring a new fishing tourism business model in six Mediterranean countries. Through its proposed activities the project promotes a sustainable approach to tourism, while fostering the preservation of the marine ecosystem and traditional fishing culture of the MED region. The project foresees an evaluation scheme for the developed fishing model which is based on environmental and socio-economic criteria.

The aforementioned projects face different challenges and barriers beyond the lack of specific data and the challenge of collecting it. Besides, as mentioned before in this paper, when data is available, sometimes it is not comparable at destination, regional or transnational level or there is not coordination among different administrative levels. Consequently, the projects set different strategies in order to achieve their objectives. In some cases, projects need to collect additional data in order to support available quantitative and/or qualitative data deficiencies. The projects of the Sustainable Tourism Community are expected to identify good practices and lessons learned, which, in turn, will provide useful knowledge to advance coastal and maritime tourism management, since,

<sup>9</sup> [https://medfest.interreg-med.eu/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Sites/Sustainable\\_Tourism/Projects/MEDFEST/3\\_2\\_1\\_SetOfCriteria.pdf](https://medfest.interreg-med.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Sites/Sustainable_Tourism/Projects/MEDFEST/3_2_1_SetOfCriteria.pdf)

as stated in the Communication ‘A European Strategy for more Growth and Jobs in Coastal Tourism’: *“despite some progress in recent years, there is a need to identify and address data gaps in order to improve planning and destination management. Therefore, specific indicators are needed to improve coherence and comparability of coastal and maritime tourism statistics across Europe and beyond”* (EC, 2014).

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