

# CATALOGUE OF BEST PRACTICES ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

*SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COMMUNITY - INTERREG MED*

JUNE, 2022

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Mediterranean region is an emblematic region for coastal and marine tourism, being one of the most popular destinations worldwide, with negative externalities impacting the natural, cultural and social resources. Nevertheless, the Covid-19 pandemic has severely impacted the sector and brings the opportunity to think about a different model of tourism in the Mediterranean.

In the framework of the **Interreg MED Sustainable Tourism Community** and in line with its mandate to work on regional tools for sustainable tourism, Plan Bleu committed to producing Best practices report to inspire the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and to foster the transition towards sustainable development in the Mediterranean Region supporting the implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development and the Integrated Coastal Zone Management in the Region by encouraging sustainable development in marine and coastal areas.

The main goal of this catalogue is to **showcase a range of examples** and good practices of the Sustainable Tourism Community which have been **successfully incorporated into policies** (either at the local, regional or state level) in the Mediterranean with **concrete results**.

The main goal of the catalogue **is to support decision-makers and local communities to foster the adoption of the best practices on sustainable tourism** in the Mediterranean Region. It presents 8 best practices on sustainable tourism in Mediterranean destinations. These destinations have been part of projects within the Sustainable Tourism Community, thanks to which they have been able to develop and work towards sustainability in their destinations.

The catalogue aims to address challenges in the Mediterranean and summarizes the key elements for success and the lessons learned from Mediterranean destinations paying special attention to the replicability and transferability to other Mediterranean coastal zones.



# 1.INTRODUCTION

Over time, the Mediterranean region has developed a unique blend of tourism activities associated with sea, health, sports, nature, business, as well as cruise and culture, offering consistent employment and economic growth before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the economic growth due to tourism development has often been to the detriment of environmental integrity and social equity. Sea-Sand-Sun (3S) dependency, weak governance and degradation of cultural heritage, environmental pollution and resource depletion, contribution to climate change and climate vulnerability, political insecurity and social instability, economic and human capital leakage are some of the issues that threaten the long-term sustainability of the Mediterranean region and the tourism sector itself.

Inherent societal characteristics and the development of the tourism sector are generating a need for a dedicated set of actions to be included in Strategic Directions for Sustainable Tourism in the Mediterranean to be implemented by regional, national and local policymakers and stakeholders under the following shared vision: “Promote sustainable Mediterranean tourism in which visitors and hosts enjoy balanced, respectful and fruitful relationships and value the unique Mediterranean environmental, human and cultural heritage, while ensuring inclusive socio-economic development, taking into account the carrying capacity of healthy natural ecosystems, and developing complementarity between various economic activities at the tourist destination level.” It is therefore crucial that we urgently work to share best practices for a sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean.

**The Sustainable Tourism Interreg MED horizontal project** (2019-2022), new phase of the BlueTourMed project (2016-2019) relies now on 30 thematic projects involving more than 200 organisations (mainly public authorities, universities, NGOs and international organisations) active in 13 European countries to promote sustainable tourism by capitalizing on tools and good practices developed by its projects.

## 2.OBJECTIVE

The main goal of the present document is to showcase a range of concrete examples and good practices of the Sustainable Tourism Community focused on the tools and practices of the different projects which have been successfully incorporated into destinations for decision making either at the local, regional or state level in the Mediterranean to inspire decisionmakers to foster the sustainability of the sector.

The Sustainable Tourism Community aimed to mainstream the results of the projects of the Community into European, national, regional and local policies, also having in mind how they can contribute to a green and digital post-Covid tourism recovery and the EU Green Deal challenges.

In this regards, considering that the Sustainable Tourism Community gathers 30 projects, a methodology for the destination selection was established to select the cases presented in this report. Each selected best practices follows the same structure and provides relevant information on:

- Objective
- Context and challenges addressed
- What was achieved
- How?
- Why did it work?

In addition the selected cases represent success stories in different Mediterranean destinations: Big cities, island, inland and coastal territories to gather the maximum representativity of destinations.

## METHODOLOGY

The destination selection criteria followed in order to select the best cases showcased in the present document are:

- 1.The destination having had or having faced some issues or challenges regarding the tourism activity in the destination,
- 2.Having acted on one or more of those issues,
- 3.Having obtained results and lessons learnt,
- 4.Having had stakeholder collaboration, Public-public, public-private or both,
- 5.Replicability of the experience,
- 6.Having implemented the lessons learnt into public policy.

The information for each one of the destinations was collected through primary source, specifically by interviewing the person managing the destination and/or involved in the development and implementation of each one of the Interreg MED Sustainable Tourism Community projects in the destination.

# 3. IDENTIFIED BEST CASES

The following table highlights the destinations and the topics they have addressed with the partial or full support of modular projects of the Interreg MED programme focused on sustainable tourism.

The issues and challenges proposed mainly focus on:

- 1) Management of flows considering the carrying capacity of destinations,
- 2) the improvement of circularity: energy, water and waste management and
- 3) the offer of alternative tourism models.

The scheme here below showcases the type of destination, the issue tackled and the project involved.

		Large City	Island	Inland	Coastal
Managing flows		<b>DUBROVNIK</b> HERIT-DATA			
Implementing sustainable mobility solutions				<b>FLORENCE</b> HERIT-DATA	<b>LA RÀPITA</b> ALTER ECO PLUS <b>HIMARA</b> INCIRCLE
Diverting flows through new sustainable experiences			<b>ALONISSOS</b> BLUEMED		
Reducing energy, waste			<b>RETHYMNO</b> INCIRCLE <b>RAGUSA</b> CONSUME-LESS INCIRCLE		
Commercialising ecotourism experiences				<b>BERGUEDÀ</b> EMbleMatic	

It is important to note that each case that will be presented in the following pages, is an accurate reflection of what the interviewees have voluntarily shared for the development of the present document. Hence, there are different styles in writing.



Rethymno Municipality

Region of Crete

Country: Greece

Project: InCircle

<https://incircle.interreg-med.eu/>

2019-2022

“ The Municipality of Rethymno is aiming towards a balanced tourism development, respecting today’s environmental obligations. This is a one-way option for everyone. ”

GEORGE MARINAKIS- MAYOR OF RETHYMNO MUNICIPALITY

## OBJECTIVE

Rethymno seeks to remain a popular tourism destination on an international level, but also seeks to become a city model when it comes to sustainable development.

## CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

As an island municipality with more than 500K tourists per year, Rethymno is affected by tourism flows and has to meet increasing environmental challenges caused by tourism activities. Rethymno has to preserve the quality and availability of natural resources and the attractiveness of the municipality. Moreover, in the framework of InCircle project, which aims to support insular and scarcely inhabited MED areas to meet the increasing environmental challenges caused by tourist activities by promoting the application of circular economy principles in the tourism sector, Rethymno had to confront the challenges of the transition to a circular economy.



## WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

The Municipality of Rethymno succeeded to introduce the concept of Circular Economy in the local community at policy and demonstrator level empowering the knowledge of decision and policy makers and raise awareness over citizens and visitors.

In the framework of InCircle project, Rethymno implemented two demonstrators: (1) one to promote electromobility in combination with Renewable Energy Sources (RES) and (2) the other one recycling and waste separation at the source. Their main advantage is that they are easily replicable in both household and business level with a significant effect in the environment and in the local community.

## HOW?

- With the installation of two solar carports (one with 10KWp installed power and the other with 20KWp), a charging station for electric vehicles, 5 charging stations for 20 electric bicycles and electric scooters, and with 2 bicycle racks for 10 bicycles. The photovoltaic carports produce energy to cover the needs of the EV-Chargers using net-metering for the grid connection Green energy for e-mobility.
- Procurement of 153 waste collection bins for three different waste streams (plastics, rest of recyclables and general waste) were placed in the city's waterfront road and at selected municipal beaches.

## WHY DID IT WORK?

Rethymno as a pioneer in Greece regarding electromobility has become a model city on a national level, and therefore there is a rapid increase in electric vehicles circulating in the city. Through the installation of the carport, Rethymno pointed out a feasible and cost-effective good practice which could be installed in a business or house outdoor area.

In addition, the bins placed in a hot-spot area in terms of walkability aroused the interest of people immediately, promoting waste sorting at the source.

## IMPACTS OBTAINED

Based on the data collected from the web platforms monitoring the electricity production and the EV-charging stations consumption, the following useful information can be shown:

- The estimated Minimum Production for both PV-carports is 24.000 KWh/year, avoiding 12,5 Tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to the environment, emissions equivalent to 52.000 Km of a conventional car.
- The energy produced is sufficient for a typical E-car to cover 160.000Km.
- The energy produced can cover 2,2times the energy demand for all charging stations installed in Rethymno Municipality (1 fast charger and 4 conventional).

Concerning the bins for the waste separation at the source there is a positive response from both citizens and visitors which is proved by the waste amount collected and the correct waste sorting.



District of Ragusa

Sicily

Country: Italy

Projects: Consume-Less & InCircle

<https://consume-less.interreg-med.eu/>

<https://www.consumelessmed.org/>

<https://incircle.interreg-med.eu/>

2016-2022

“

We want to significantly reduce energy and water consumption and create less waste in our territories to maintain them over time, while always offering an authentic and original experience for visitors' journey

”

**IGNAZIO ABATE, MAYOR OF MODICA AND PRESIDENT OF LOCAL ACTION GROUP - LAG TERRA BAROCCA (RAGUSA, MODICA, SICILI, ISPICA E SANTA CROCE CAMERINA)**

## OBJECTIVE

We love our territory. We are a sustainable tourism destination in the heart of the Mediterranean and we are passionate about keeping it beautiful for visitors and locals. Hence, the objective with these projects is to help us become a better place to live, thus a good place to visit.

## CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Ragusa territory has always been rich in terms of cultural and natural heritage, food tradition and resources availability. Tourism became an important source of income. At the same time, we understood the need to take care of our legacies.

Hence, our challenge is the reduction of energy, of water use and of waste generation and improving a sustainable mobility while always offering people a treasured experience in living and visiting us.

## WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

15 public entities involved in the local committee and stakeholders working groups to manage the Consume-Less model and planning 5 new measures toward a sustainable and circular tourism strategy according to the InCircle model. Hundreds of private actors of the tourism industries involved to reduce energy and water use and waste production and to plan a new approach for making services more sustainable, starting by mobility. One green wall for treating and reusing grey water was installed with a reduction of thousands of liters of potable water.

## HOW?

The Consume-Less model was designed to be an easy and friendly tool with clear commitments for both public and private actors. We knew that changes need time but it was the moment to start the “slow revolution”. We made the public entities aware about the urge to act. We organised them in a local committee to manage the ConsumelessMed label and jointly debate the common issues. This was challenging but we succeeded.

Moreover, we developed intensive B2B work involving private actors to improve their environmental standards, while enhancing their marketing strategy as part of a sustainable destination. It was an opportunity to get to know them better, collect their suggestions, network and grow together. A win-win approach able to give importance to each tiny behaviour change offering tourism services. The businesses were awarded for their efforts and became the ambassadors of our destination.

Finally, we involved them in a co-creation process for facing the identified weaknesses to reach a common vision, thus jointly developing a sustainable and circular strategy, capitalising the Mediterranean model of InCircle and including tailored and innovative measures at selected municipal beaches.

## WHY DID IT WORK?

The transversal objective was to be consistent, giving continuity to the projects’ activities, integrating them into the existing local strategies for not duplicating actions and funds. We did not want to create expectations without fulfilling them, hence consistency was and is key. We addressed efforts to capitalise best practices at local and European level and to communicate in the best way what we were doing. We believe in the holistic approach involving the Quadruple Helix, thus the bottom-up approach, listening to our stakeholders and assessing the process according to the collected feedback. A dynamic approach with a clear objective.

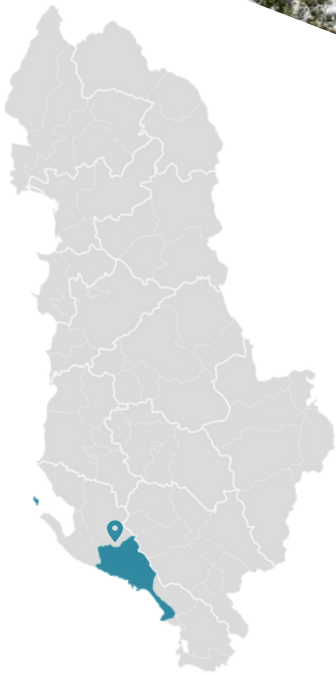
## IMPACTS OBTAINED

In the process of the project we discovered that many tourism businesses were already adopting measures to minimise their environmental impact managing and offering services. They were proud of this and waiting for a public strategy which could be able to valorise them.

We coached more than 50 facilities to focus on new measures to value water, to share tips with guests for reducing energy consumption and waste production, distributing thousands of gadgets for minimising the impact visiting our territories.

They became the “voice” of the destination, promoting not only the natural and cultural heritage, but our sustainable vision, too. They became part of the destination and not only service providers.

We analysed the collected feedbacks to foster a jointly reaction to face weaknesses. Thanks to the InCircle model we made our tourism strategy more sustainable and circular. We co-created new measures to improve resources’ management and address mobility challenges, including a measure to set a permanent Tourism Observatory for monitoring and improving the reached achievements.



Himara  
Vlorë County  
Country: Albania  
Project: InCircle  
<https://incircle.interreg-med.eu/>  
2020-2022

“Finding the balance between rapid economic growth and sustainable development is the key to a better tomorrow for Himara”

**JORGO GORO, MAYOR OF HIMARA**

## OBJECTIVE

Himara intends to be a pioneer in the region to implement Circular Tourism Economy while increasing the number of tourists and visitors. As stated in Himara 2030 strategy, it aims to be the number one tourism destination in Albania and at the same time approaching environmental challenges with bold decisions.

## CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Tourism represents the most important economic driver in Mediterranean insular and scarcely inhabited areas, including Himara Municipality. Tourism activities are increasingly putting pressure on natural resources and assets, both from a qualitative and quantitative perspective. Massive inflows of tourists to relatively small and insulated areas are relevant challenges for destinations like Himara as it has a wide range of impacts on destinations, depleting their environmental capital, which is being used more quickly than it can be renewed.

## WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

Himara Municipality implemented the concepts of circular economy by investing in circular mobility, building mountain bike lanes to connect two scarcely populated areas between them. These two areas suffered from a high traffic volume during peak-season. After a consultation period with all the stakeholders including local inhabitants, civil society, city council member and civil society a collective approval was achieved on approving this investment. Himara demonstrator managed to increase bike usage by an estimation of 15% during the peak-season. This resulted in an estimated 5-10% decrease in traffic jams and air pollution in that area.

## HOW?

By combining efforts with all the stakeholders including local inhabitants, a broad range of professionals of civil society, city council member, tourism and transportation businesses and elected officials it was concluded that the embracing of circular economy is the main driver of our region in the future for a sustainable and steady economy.

The concept of circular economy on the contrary of linear one, is that wastes are minimized and each element is reconsidered for usage again and again. Being a small local community, inhabitants of Himara know the importance of resource preservation and conservation of nature. Combining the tools that InCircle project provided and the mindset of the community, the stage is set for further successes.

## WHY DID IT WORK?

For all these stakeholders to work together it was key to have a win-win selling point to convince them to come to the table. Less congestion means happier visitors, and happier visitors that come to these destinations are more open to spend on local businesses. Less congestion is also critical for local inhabitants, to feel less disturbed by tourism flows.

## IMPACTS OBTAINED

During the monitoring phase, Himara Municipality has conducted different questionnaires and other methods of obtaining information. The total number of lane users since its opening has stayed between our target values 110 - 250 weekly significantly contributing to decreasing air pollution caused by the reduction of car usage and reduction of road congestions. Furthermore, the businesses located in the area reported an increase of visitors and more cyclists requiring their products and services. Taking advantage of the experience and knowledge obtained by InCircle project as a first corner stone in building larger and larger capacities, Himara Municipality will continue to add more and more components of circular economy completing all parts of the circle.





Alonissos  
Region Of Thessaly  
Country: Greece  
Project: BlueMED  
<https://blumed.interreg-med.eu/>  
2016-2020

“ The Region of Thessaly with the creation of the first underwater Museum in Greece, in Peristera, Alonissos, is a pioneer in the emergence of innovative, alternative tourism products with added value for the economy, culture and local communities. ”

**KONSTANTINOS AGORASTOS, GOVERNOR OF THE REGION OF THESSALY**

## OBJECTIVE

To innovate with a diversified tourism product that respects and highlights the natural environment, brings added national wealth, expands the tourism season and creates new jobs.

## CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Fostering alternative tourism is part of the EU's commitment to building a sustainable economy through the European Green Deal. Innovative projects like the Underwater Museum in Alonissos, show how responsible coastal and maritime tourism - also known as 'blue tourism' - can support Europe's economic sustainable recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. This is especially important in less-visited yet culture-rich destinations like Alonissos, as destinations like this can help create a more sustainable tourism by diversifying high tourism flows that happen in nearby destinations.

## WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

The BlueMED project developed underwater archaeological itineraries, based on the use of new methods for in situ protection, and new technologies for the enhancement of UCH including augmented reality (AR) for divers. Thanks to this project, the operation of the first visitable Underwater Archaeological Site in Greece, the classic shipwreck near the island of Peristera in Alonissos, took place in the summer of 2020, causing great interest and very positive reactions internationally.

The museum offers something for the whole family. Anyone can join a licensed diving excursion to explore the 5th-century BC shipwreck of Peristera. It sank to the bottom of the sea while carrying thousands of vases that likely contained wine over 2,500 years ago. Now, you can discover those ancient artifacts, still in good condition, in the underwater museum.

Additionally a Knowledge-Awareness Centre (KAC) was developed in Alonissos. It offers high-tech tools and 3D audio-visual displays to foster interactive learning for visitors of all ages and abilities. Yet, it's the exclusive virtual reality dive that brings the centre to new heights. It transports the user to the seabed to get up close with marine life and to see the shipwreck like never before.

## HOW?

- The innovative services and technologies of the Underwater Museum
- The Augmented Diving System is a solution designed to enhance the guest experience.
- The Tablet Application for Underwater Navigation and Guide.
- "NOUS", an original installation of an underwater self-powered system (with solar panels) that provides a real-time image of the wreck. The above system helps not only in the safe implementation of the dive but also in monitoring the condition of the wreck.
- Finally the software applications that have been developed in the Knowledge-Awareness Centre, Dry-Visit, Virtual Museum, the app for Marine Biology and the video installation.

## WHY DID IT WORK?

The Cultural Development Programming Convention was signed within the framework of defining a framework for cooperation and operation of all stakeholders of the Project (Region of Thessaly, Greek Ministry of Culture, Municipality).

The Underwater Museums are an important factor in enhancing tourism for the Region of Thessaly. In this context, the NSRF financed the Operational Plan for the construction of "Underwater Museums and Diving Parks in the Sporades Islands and the Western Pagasitikos". The Region has financed 4 other projects from the NSRF that are in progress, for the development of diving tourism in the region.

After the experience gained during the implementation of the Underwater Museum of Alonissos, the country had to accomplish significant changes in the legal framework, which "paved" the way for the operation of Underwater Museums in other parts of Greece.

## IMPACTS OBTAINED

From the experience gained, it was possible to develop the methodology and to determine the procedures which must be followed when planning and organizing an Accessible Underwater Archaeological Site. It should be noted that such a thing was attempted for the first time in Greece in the context of the project at Peristera shipwreck in Alonissos.

The preservation protocol adopted in the Underwater Museum of Alonissos, is wide enough to address common issues in preservation, marine protection, diving services, operation of underwater museums, and can be transferable to other Mediterranean regions.

The small-scale investment needed to implement KAC and Augmented Diving Services was allocated to the Underwater Museum of Alonissos, that will be managed and sustained even after the end of the project. The scheme, protocol, services can be easily transferred to site management.



Berguedà

Catalonia

Country: Spain

Project: EMbleMatiC

<https://emblematic.interreg-med.eu/>

2016–2019

“It was key for Berguedà to boost its uniqueness and dinamize the destination’s environment beyond the mountain.

Thanks to the participation in EmbleMatic project, public and private agents have joined forces for the revitalization of the territory and its people”.

**LLUÍS VALL CARRILLO, PRESIDENT OF DEVELOPMENT AGENCY OF BERGUEDA**

## OBJECTIVE

The objective of the project is to qualify EMbleMatiC Mediterranean Mountains as coastal destinations of excellence by developing a sustainable and responsible tourism offer around the mountains, based on the singularity of the territories and respecting and enhancing the traditional, cultural, natural and landscape heritage.

## CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Berguedà, as the other territories involved in the project are facing some common challenges, such as significant decrease in inhabitants; overcrowding by same day visitors in some very specific spots of natural and cultural resources disregarding other parts where expenditure in tourism services and experiences could happen; lack of quality in its sustainable tourism offer and the need to promote the tourism offer.



## WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

The EMbleMatiC project, allowed Berguedà to characterize the emblematic dimension of the territory of Pedraforca mountain with a participative approach under the common methodological framework of the network on emblematic mountains in order to create a sustainable tourism product according to the 30 common criteria agreed with the rest of the partners, addressed to the desired target public and using the methodology included in the transfer guide of the project for designing, creating and implementing the eco-itinerary around Pedraforca mountain.

## HOW?

According to our experience the success of this project has been the involvement of the local tourism businesses from the beginning of the project. At first, local tourism businesses were invited to the presentation of the project and were invited to be involved on the definition of the emblematic dimension of the territory, the first step of the project in order to create a common framework with the rest of the partners. The logic was to join different paying tourism experiences together to be able to offer them to visitors to increase expenditure. Later on, they participated on the local stakeholder's group in order to design and evolve the project together by discussing, sharing and making proposals (a monthly meeting). Finally, their tourism experiences' proposals were taken into consideration for the creation and implementation of the final eco-itinerary. And to conclude, all the involved stakeholders were included on "The 7 faces of the Pedraforca" guide and communication material.

## WHY DID IT WORK?

It worked, because of the high level of involvement of the local stakeholders (tourism businesses) and for their cooperation spirit.

In general, they believed that this project could bring something important for the territory and that they would benefit from it. They saw a clear win-win. That is why they put the territory in front of their own and individual priorities.

## IMPACTS OBTAINED

The impacts obtained with the implementation of this project are triple. First, this project has allowed us to get funding for the implementation of the infrastructure and equipments necessary to put the eco-itinerary properly on the market according to the requirements of the project and to finance human resources to manage the whole process. Second, we created a local group of tourism actors interested in being part of this project, ready to work on another issues to develop common tourism strategies and actions and, at the end proud of their eco-journey.

And finally, Berguedà as a territory that represents Pedraforca mountain was included in a European network of territories and mountains interested in facing common challenges and solutions. Without a doubt, this project has allowed us to share our methodologies and knowledge so that other similar territories with the same objectives can replicate them and put our emblematic mountains on the map for visitors to Europe.



Dubrovnik

Dubrovnik-Neretva Region

Country: Croatia

Projects: Herit Data & S.II.DES.

<https://herit-data.interreg-med.eu/>

<https://www.italy-croatia.eu/web/slides>

2016-2022

“ Destinations have a certain power for change, we really showed this, and the fact that the destination can actually play a key role to manage it sustainably. In order to achieve that, you/we need to address problems and not just watch them happen, it is your/our obligation. ”

**JELKA TEPŠIĆ - DEPUTY MAJOR OF DUBROVNIK**

## OBJECTIVE

We were suffering of bad press. The world had the image of an overcrowded Dubrovnik. Hence our objective was to address overtourism head on by welcoming visitors but without risking the residents way of live. We welcomed the idea of destinations as value-chain hubs of life-enriching experiences for locals, visitors, businesses, communities and nature.

## CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

The flows of visitors mixed with specifically cruise passengers at certain time in the city were literally blocking the option to walk, wander, enjoy the city. This is particularly the case in the UNESCO site.

This was not only impacting residents in their everyday life to be able to move around. Tourism businesses could not benefit from visitors if visitors were stuck in these pedestrian flows. Moreover, outside the center, there were traffic jams, again impacting all roads' users.

## WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

The first clear achievement was: better destination management. This was a critical change.

Then, residents now count with parking lots only for them. This eases the tension quite a lot. Moreover a new law on traffic was passed allowing to mark a zone as restricted traffic enable residents to go around the old zone but nobody else. Additionally, project park and ride for visitors is prepared and will be implemented so that they do not enter the old part of the city.

Moreover, a limit to 2 cruises per day with no more than 4000 passengers at the time was established. This is a key achievement.

In the end, even for visitors that spend only half day in Dubrovnik, but also for all visitors and residents the experience improve in pedestrian areas as well as in roads.

Hence, better visitor experience and better quality of life.

## HOW?

CLIA cruise association became partners with the port authority in order to better schedule for cruise arrivals two years in advance. This was critical.

All the measurements conducted with Herit Data sensors where relevant to understand flows of visitors in the old part. As a result, we had to modify a local ordinance to reduce the amount of terraces and public space used by commercial and tourism businesses in the pedestrian sides of the city to ease the flow of visitors and residents.

## WHY DID IT WORK?

Because the city hall invested in improving the relationship with the private sector, since without them it is impossible to do anything. For instance the mayor took the initiative to call CLIA directly and CLIA appreciated very much to be in direct contact with a destination as relevant as ours, they saw the long run benefits of these cooperation. Local tourism businesses and commerce businesses saw it clear that it was a win win to improve visitor satisfaction by removing terraces and other elements occupying public space to foster expenditure of visitors. They new it impacted on their income in the short term but provided the option to a long run of the destination, which means sustained income over time. Moreover, it is true that regulations that we have had to pass are strict but the residents and businesses appreciate that they are clear, on what to do and what not to do. We were able to be successful on implementing them and business are still profitable.

## IMPACTS OBTAINED

Those steps allowed for even more steps to be taken with the same and other stakeholders. The mood was set already, we wanted sustainable development and we were ready to act in collaboration with the needed parties. The main impacts obtained were:

- to limit to 8000 cruise passengers per day
- better cruise ship arrival schedule during the week
- a better coordination and distribution of the passenger embarkation and disembarkation time (CLIA, Dubrovnik Port Authority)
- Developing a Berthing Policy. Every autumn, companies get a BP document for 2 years in advance.

Hence, some examples of other impacts are: an electric tram boat from the harbour to the old zone, so that less people rely on the roads; reconstruction and refurbishments of accommodation; developing also other tourism products to combine with the UNESCO site to move people beyond the old town; prediction calendar allowing to check how many people is going to be in the old town so that we can anticipate and act.



La Ràpita  
Catalonia  
Country: Spain  
ALTER ECO PLUS project  
<https://alter-eco.interreg-med.eu/>  
2021-2022

“ The main objectives are to preserve the natural environment of Trabucador, while enhancing the visitor experience.

These have been achieved through the management and regulation of the Trabucador Beach.”

JOSEP CAPARRÓS GARCIA - MAYOR OF LA RÀPITA

## OBJECTIVE

La Ràpita, in the south of the Ebro delta, embodies the Trabucador beach. It suffered every Easter and summer the impact of overcrowding by numerous vehicles of residents, home dwellers and visitors.

## CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

The beach of El Trabucador has become even more crowded after the pandemic caused by COVID-19. In fact, Catalonia's residents need to get out into nature after being locked up and the ban on leaving the autonomous community have made this destination popular with the inhabitants of this province. Indeed, the pandemic situation turned the beach into a kilometre-long queue of cars and caravans during Easter holidays of 2021.

## WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

Residents, second home dwellers or tourism visitors are welcome to The Trabucador. However, if second home dwellers or tourism visitors decide to arrive/go to Trabucador by private vehicle (car, motorhomes, caravans, etc) there is a time limit to park and a price to be paid during summer. If they come walking or cycling there is no time limit, and no price is to be paid.

Vehicles registered in the municipality, vehicles of companies operating in the Trabucador, vehicles of their clients, emergency vehicles... Do not have to pay.

Moreover, it is prohibited to park from 11pm to 6am, this is addressed to avoid camping cars or motorhomes or caravans to overnight at the Trabucador. Something that used to happen very often.

Hence, the achievement is a nature experience, without overcrowding, where cars are only occupying a delimited space for a period of time.

## HOW?

After several refusals, from other levels of public administration, in attempts to place a tourism office at the Trabucador beach access, from which it would be possible to provide information about the beach and the surrounding area, as well as regulate the vehicle access, the solution found has been to develop a Plan of Usage for the Trabucador beach. This Plan of Usage allows the town council of La Ràpita to adapt the beach to implement a parking limitation activity, with the necessary infrastructures for this purpose.

The technological system depends on solar power, it is removed at the end of the season and there is no paper needed, the transactions are digital.

## WHY DID IT WORK?

It worked because the mayor and his team were convinced that the situation had to stop. It was damaging the image of the destination and it was not sustainable for this nature gem. Moreover, the town council did not do it alone, it sought after the support of the Delta de l'Ebre Nature Park and the Coastal Service of the Generalitat of Catalonia and the Ministry, as well as the companies operating in Trabucador, because clearly the town did not want to damage their business model, they create employment in the destination. And these companies are committed to sustainability so they saw it as a logical step forward.

When this was first implemented, there was no time to communicate it broadly, with anticipation, for all target audiences to understand the why and how. So this created a bit of confusion among users, not knowing that there was a booking system, that cash was not allowed, etc. Second home dwellers also would have preferred to be part of the users that do not have to pay, neither book a time slot.

Hence, perhaps better communication for the first pilot year would have helped. Nonetheless the solution addresses spot on the issue.

## IMPACTS OBTAINED

ALTER ECO PLUS project, concern with tourism carrying capacity management for destinations, helped rethinking the prices and time slots. This system and its improved version has obtained further digitalisation of tourism companies and users, major awareness over the use of vehicles to access nature, a clear reduction on vehicles at Trabucador and demonstrating to other mayors of towns and cities that measures can be taken for the sake of sustainability.



Florence Municipality

Tuscany Region

Country: Italy

Herit Data project

<https://herit-data.interreg-med.eu/>

2020-2022

“ Tourists are a richness for any territory and Florence aims at welcoming whoever whenever, allowing them to live the best possible experience when visiting us, so overtourism is not the challenge, the virtuous management of tourist flows is the real one. ”

**CECILIA DEL RE - DEPUTY MAYOR MUNICIPALITY OF FLORENCE**

## OBJECTIVE

The main objective was to provide information to visitors to travel in a more sustainable/smart way improving both, visitor experience and resident's way of life, but also to decision/policy makers to be able to act quickly and effectively in respect to any possible overflows. The additional objective was to promote Florence's unknown/unusual heritage.

## CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Florence was receiving around 15M tourists per year or even more, all interested in the UNESCO area, a 5 Km<sup>2</sup> area in the city center. The first challenge was reducing impacts on that area. The second challenge was avoiding tourists missing out on highly valuable unusual/unknown natural/cultural heritage located inside Florence.

## WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

Exploitation of big/open/smart data to manage flows in natural and cultural heritage sites. Unusual and unknown places have more social networks interactions. Visitors are aware of the information to become savvy, avoid queues and discover unusual and unknown places. The target was reached by influencer marketing campaign, to raise awareness of FeelFlorence App. Sentiment analysis was implemented too and coupled with tools, data, sensors. The solutions serve decision and policy makers also far beyond the tourism purposes (safety, security et al.). Final achievement the tight cooperation among the stakeholders responsible for the different aspects of the testing.

## HOW?

The mantra of the project has been “let’s not reinvent the wheel”, i.e. starting from the existing, new features, data, information have been layered and added up to the old ones. Florence already had Wi-Fi access points data which gave decision makers an idea of how many people there were at different sites at the same time. Building from the existing, Feel Florence Web App and App are now true Internet of Things (IoT) solutions, integrating new elaborated Wi-Fi access points data and thermal cameras ones, providing detailed information for visitors to live at their best the places they want to visit. Data are collected in real time, processed, and analyzed and finally returned to users in a meaningful way, meaning with the term users, decision makers, citizens and tourists, all by means of the Feel Florence App. Promotion was performed using nudging and influencer marketing, while the sentiment analysis allowed to understand residents' and visitors' moods, orientation and feelings.

## WHY DID IT WORK?

Not reinventing but using existing “items” and complementing with new features, information, et al. Having the relevant stakeholders cooperating: Tuscany Region, Metropolitan City of Florence, Municipality of Florence, Universities, data monitoring institutions, other public agents and the tourism private sector.

Stakeholders brought the tourism competences and allowed averting barriers in terms of tools implementation and taking action. The synergy was due to the innovation ecosystem protocol. The 3 open data territorial providers were involved and worked together on the project platform developed by the University of Florence, named DisitLab.

## IMPACTS OBTAINED

Thanks to big open/smart/data and different tools and methodologies that were implemented, overflows monitoring was improved and Florence unusual/unknown sites have experienced higher engagement and interactions with users on social media, which provides evidence that those sites are becoming better-known and the overall Florence site is empowering visitors to make smarter decisions when visiting the city and the UNESCO area, by virtuously orienting their behaviors. The implemented solutions also allowed the destination to reach its target audience and focus on a more surgical marketing and laid the ground for analyzing and monitoring the excursionist, i.e., city visitors staying a day and often quite hard to track, monitor and assess.

Overall, something new has been provided to tourists to better live their Florence experience, reducing impacts thanks to more sustainable behaviors and decision makers and policy makers will be able at the same time to dynamically act and react to the city needs due to overflows.

## 4.CONCLUSION:

The results and lessons learnt from the Sustainable Tourism Community projects represent a unique knowledge asset that can help the transition to innovative tourism policies and practices based on sustainability principles.

This document reflects some of the best cases of the Sustainable Tourism Community, destinations that have successfully addressed challenges of managing flows, mobility, energy consumption, waste generation and commercialising ecotourism experiences. These cases are showcasing the context and challenges as starting points, what they did to address them, how, why did it work and main impacts achieved. It is evident that cooperation in all its forms: public - public; public - private; and private -private is key, also a clear leadership and willingness to address the issue head on, without that none of these cases would have happened.

It is worthy to note that more tools and outputs have been developed in the frame of the Sustainable Tourism Community that might be implemented in the near future in other Mediterranean destinations.

This catalogue showcases how the Sustainable Tourism Community has developed concrete and replicable tools and outputs to tackle issues in the Mediterranean destinations towards a sustainable tourism and it is important to consider that reaching sustainability in the Mediterranean needs multi-level cooperation in which all the stakeholders have a key role to play.

The Sustainable Tourism Community has published more documents to support decision-makers to foster sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean:

- Catalogue of project outputs and policy targets
- Policy Factsheets
- MED Sustainable Tourism Community Policy Recommendations
- Thematic Papers
- Guidelines for the sustainability of cruises & recreational boating in the Mediterranean region (EN & FR).

The MED Sustainable Tourism community is an Interreg MED Programme initiative coordinated by Barcelona Provincial Council (Barcelona, Spain) in partnership with UNIMED - Mediterranean Universities Union (Rome, Italy), University of Thessaly (Thessaly, Greece), NECSTour - Network of European Regions or Sustainable and Competitive Tourism (Brussels, Belgium), Plan Bleu UNEP MAP, the Regional Activity Centre of Mediterranean Action Plan (Marseille, France), Adriatic and Ionian Euroregion (Pula, Croatia), RDA Green Karst Regional Development Agency (Pivka, Slovenia).







## **SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COMMUNITY - INTERREG MED**

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