

# The MED DECLARATION

for a smarter and greener  
sustainable tourism ecosystem  
in the Mediterranean region

October 2022





# The MED DECLARATION

**We**, the partners of the projects co-funded by the INTERREG MED programme, belonging to the Sustainable Tourism Community, collaborating since November 2016 to enable sustainable tourism development in the Mediterranean region;

## **acknowledge**

the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are “an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership to reach peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future”<sup>1</sup>;

the **European Green Deal** objectives to reduce half of the emissions by 2030 and reach Net Zero as soon as possible before 2050<sup>2</sup>;

the **Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025**<sup>3</sup>, providing an integrative policy framework for all stakeholders to translate the previously mentioned 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs at the regional, sub-regional, national and local levels in the Mediterranean region;

the new **Interreg Euro-MED Programme** priorities to make the Mediterranean region smarter and greener, improve the governance between its stakeholders, and specifically the “Mission 4: Enhancing Sustainable Tourism”<sup>4</sup>;

the **Transition Pathway for Tourism**<sup>5</sup> as a collaborative process to help the transformation of the tourism industrial ecosystem into a greener and more digital one and to boost the global competitiveness of the EU tourism sector;

the **Communication on a new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU, Transforming the EU’s Blue Economy for a Sustainable Future**<sup>6</sup>, an initiative of the European Commission to fully embed the blue economy into the Green Deal and the recovery strategy, including a set of proposals to re-enable safe tourism and pave the way for a more resilient and sustainable sector;

<sup>1</sup> [The UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

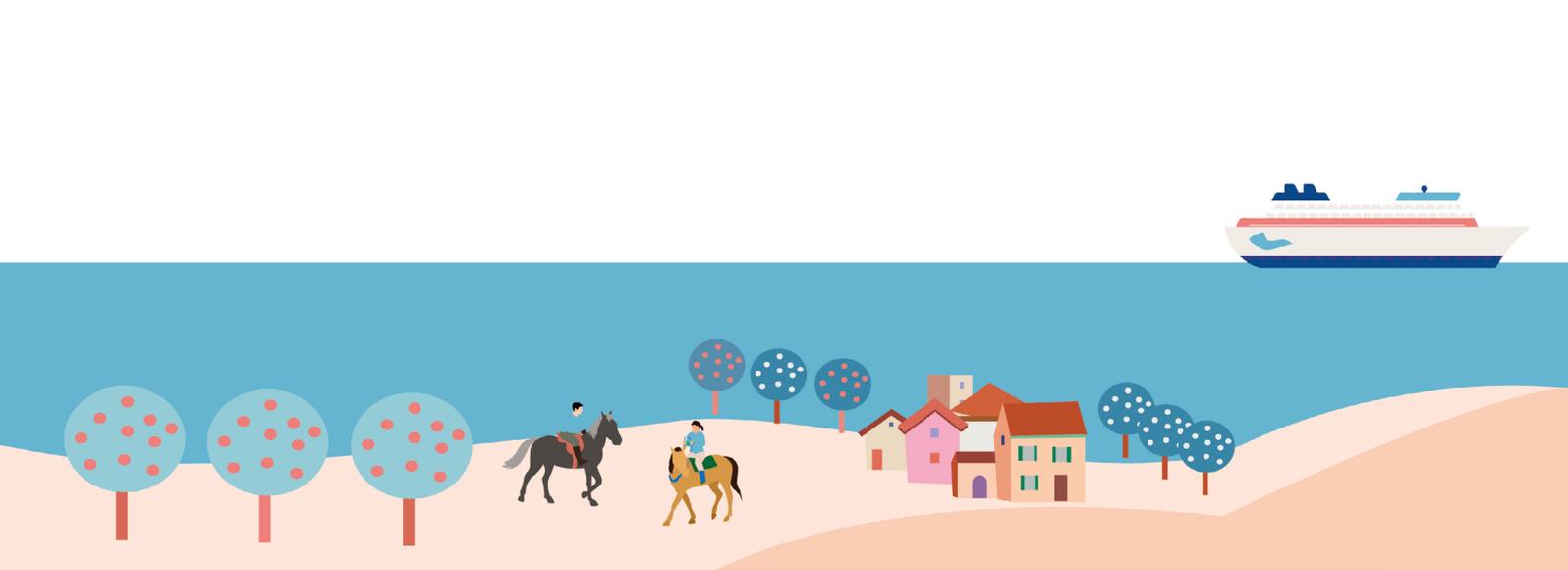
<sup>2</sup> [The European Green Deal](#)

<sup>3</sup> [The Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2025](#)

<sup>4</sup> [The Interreg Euro-MED Programme Manual](#)

<sup>5</sup> [The Transition Pathway for Tourism](#)

<sup>6</sup> [The EU’s Blue Economy for a Sustainable Future](#)



## recall

the **“Athens declaration of the MED Community 2019”**<sup>7</sup> as a milestone document to start the effective collaboration of European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) projects as a community towards the following objectives: 1) to contribute to addressing tourism pressures in the Mediterranean region; 2) to enhance attractiveness and the tourism offer in the Mediterranean region; 3) to strengthen planning and management practices towards sustainable tourism and 4) to build a strong community of projects and stakeholders;

the **“Glasgow Declaration on climate action in Tourism”**<sup>8</sup>, a shared commitment to unite all stakeholders in transforming tourism to deliver effective climate action, supporting the global commitment to halve emissions by 2030 and reach Net Zero as soon as possible before 2050;

the **“Better governance for smarter and more resilient tourism in the Med”** follow-up report: Conclusions and recommendations<sup>9</sup>, underlining the lack of a harmonised methodology for data collection and definition of indicators;

the **Barcelona Declaration “Better places to live, better places to visit”**<sup>10</sup>, calling for the adoption of 5 principles (smart and inclusive governance; adding value to the sense of place; using a holistic vision for marketing and preservation; balancing place, people, and business; connecting people to people) to make tourism more sustainable for the visitors and the hosting communities;

the **Tourism of Tomorrow Lab**<sup>11</sup> commitment to empower tourism authorities in measuring and forecasting impacts and sustainability performance in a way that measurement becomes structural to policies, strategies and projects and is based on values beyond volumes;

## express

our concern on the unbalanced recovery of the tourism ecosystem in the Mediterranean Region, severely affected by subsequent crises - economic, social and environmental - unleashed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and threatened by climate change effects already noticeable in the territory;

<sup>7</sup> [The Athens Declaration](#)

<sup>8</sup> [The Glasgow Declaration on climate action in Tourism](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Better Governance for smarter and more resilient tourism in the Med](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Better Places to Live, Better Places to Visit](#)

<sup>11</sup> [The Tourism of Tomorrow Lab](#)



## urge

all the Mediterranean stakeholders - governments, destination management and marketing organisations, private sector players, research community, civil society, to intensify efforts and coordinate the indispensable transition towards a sustainable and competitive tourism model, which contributes to the local communities' wellbeing and preserves the natural resources by bringing economic, social, and territorial cohesion.

## To this end we

call the Mediterranean public authorities to enhance the tourism governance in the Mediterranean by developing holistic and collaborative destination management models, mainstreaming best practices into strategies based on sustainability values and sound data and creating the necessary political framework to enable destinations to flourish. All this in partnership with the tourism ecosystem actors and according to the targets set by the Tourism Transition Pathway 's "Topic 4" and "Topic 5"<sup>12</sup>;

invite the European, national and regional programmes' managing authorities to mainstream the tourism-related projects' achievements and best practices into the relevant funding programmes and especially the ERDF instrument, maximising their replicability potential into national and regional calls for proposals and fostering dialogue among actors and decision makers, enabling project development and implementation;

## request

the European Institutions' direct support to the implementation of this process by providing the necessary framework conditions, facilitating the good practice exchange and capitalisation, enhancing the visibility and access to finance for tourism actors , regularly updating the "Guide for EU funding for tourism", technical support and a closer dialogue among multilevel actors<sup>13</sup> of the tourism ecosystem;

<sup>12</sup> [The Transition Pathway for Tourism](#) Topic 4 "Comprehensive tourism strategies development or update"; Topic 5 "Collaborative governance of tourism destinations"

<sup>13</sup> [The Transition Pathway for Tourism](#) Topic 27 "Support visibility of funding opportunities for tourism actors"





suggest the following topics to become object of the new generation of projects co-funded by the European Union to be implemented in the Mediterranean

- 1. Implementation of climate change adaptation and mitigation actions, including disaster risk prevention, resilience, green infrastructures and nature-based solutions taking into account ecosystem-based approaches.**
- 2. Development of applied research and innovation capacity and the uptake of advanced technologies, fostering data driven solutions and policies<sup>14</sup>.**
- 3. Enabling the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy, fostering sustainable mobility, reducing and better managing waste, making a better use of scarce natural resources such as water.**
- 4. Protection and conservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructures from all forms of pollution caused by tourism as well as to protect, preserve, restore and enhance the Mediterranean cultural heritage, material and immaterial.**
- 5. Regeneration of the tourism offer in the Mediterranean destinations as a way to encourage diversification, breaking seasonality, based on the enhancement of the natural, cultural and local endogenous resources.**
- 6. Mediterranean communities' regeneration and flourishing, encouraging local engagement and governance, balancing between the needs of visitors and the lifestyle of locals, reducing economic and social disparities through sustainability.**

The Sustainable Tourism Community stands ready to enhance the already fruitful dialogue with the European Institutions bridging the European policies and programmes with the territorial projects fostering sustainable tourism development in the Mediterranean.

We commit to keep collaborating in the same spirit, launched and reinforced since 2016, looking at the future outlook 2027 within the “Mission 4 - Sustainable Tourism” of the INTERREG Euro-MED programme, for which we will keep working on capacity building, skills improvement and knowledge sharing through the development of the Interreg Euro-MED Academy<sup>15</sup>.

Our existing networks are ready to promote a good use of ERDF funds and to keep disseminating the information and engaging new partners, regions and initiatives around the Mediterranean basin, including the Southern and Eastern shores, to reach our objectives in the Sustainable Tourism Community.

<sup>14</sup> [Europe's Digital Decade: digital targets for 2030](#)

<sup>15</sup> [The Interreg Euro-MED Academy](#)

Created in November 2016 within the framework of the Interreg MED Programme, the Sustainable Tourism Community has been renewed for a three-year period until December 2022 to make tourism a real driver for inclusive and sustainable growth.

The Community relies on 30 territorial cooperation projects and almost 400 organisations (public authorities, private companies, 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. Besides, two Strategic Projects, approved in October 2019, focusing on governance of sustainable tourism have joined forces with the Community to make tourism a real driver for inclusive and sustainable growth.

Most notably, the Community's members are leading the development of innovative tools to monitor the tourism industry, they are studying and testing new tourism models and they are actively engaging policy makers and managers in a constant dialogue to make tourism a real driver for inclusive and sustainable development. The main objective of the Community is to influence economic and social development strategies to include sustainable tourism policies at regional, national and European level. To attain these renewed objectives the project partnership leading the Community has slightly changed to include a network association of regional policy-makers and to extend the geographical area to the Balkan region.

## Project Partners

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** - Regional Activity Centre of UNEP/MAP (Marseille, France), **Adriatic and Ionian Euroregion** (Pula, Croatia), **RDA Green Karst** - Regional Development Agency (Pivka, Slovenia).

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