

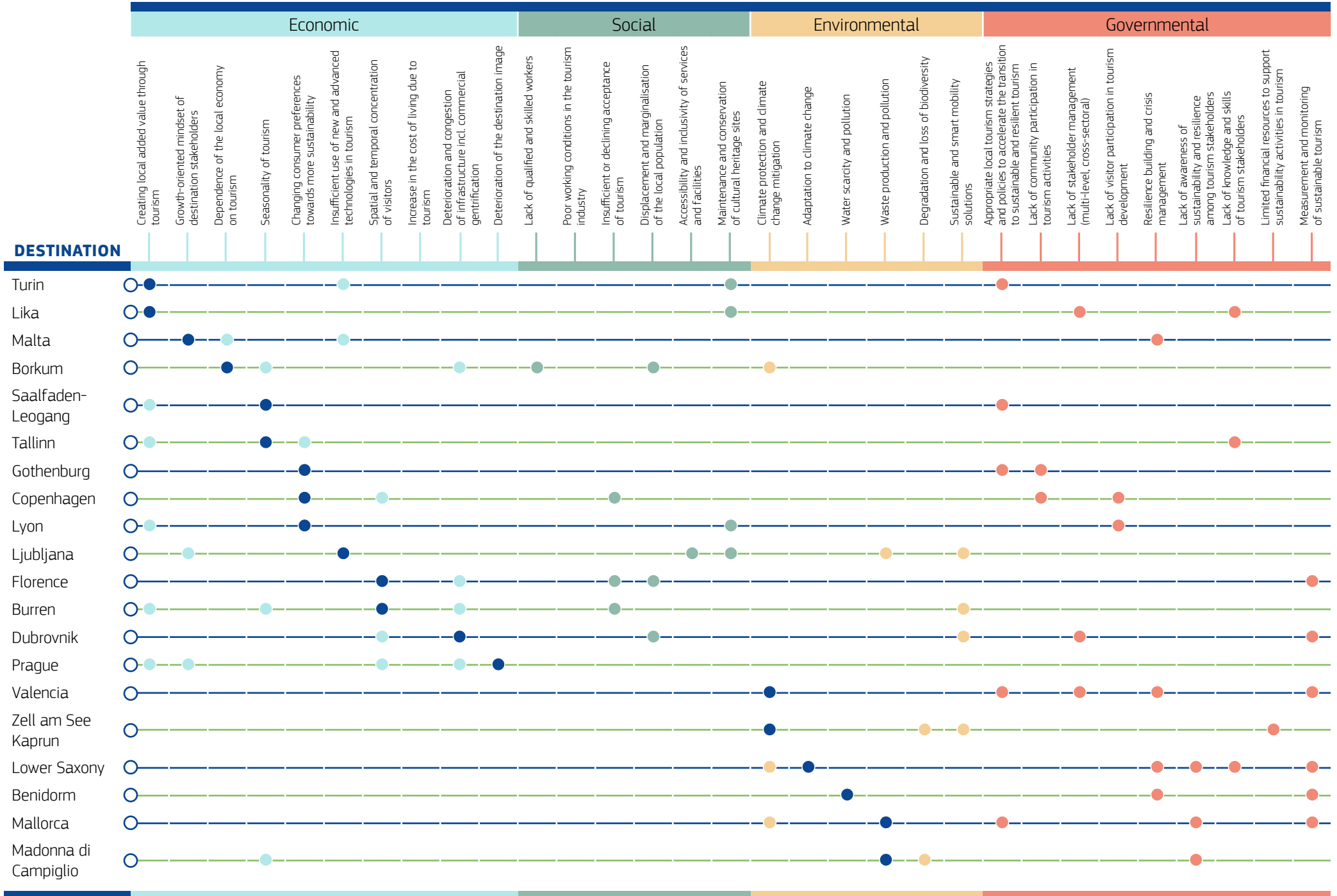
**BEST PRACTICES**

# **SUSTAINABLE EU TOURISM**

Shaping the Tourism of Tomorrow

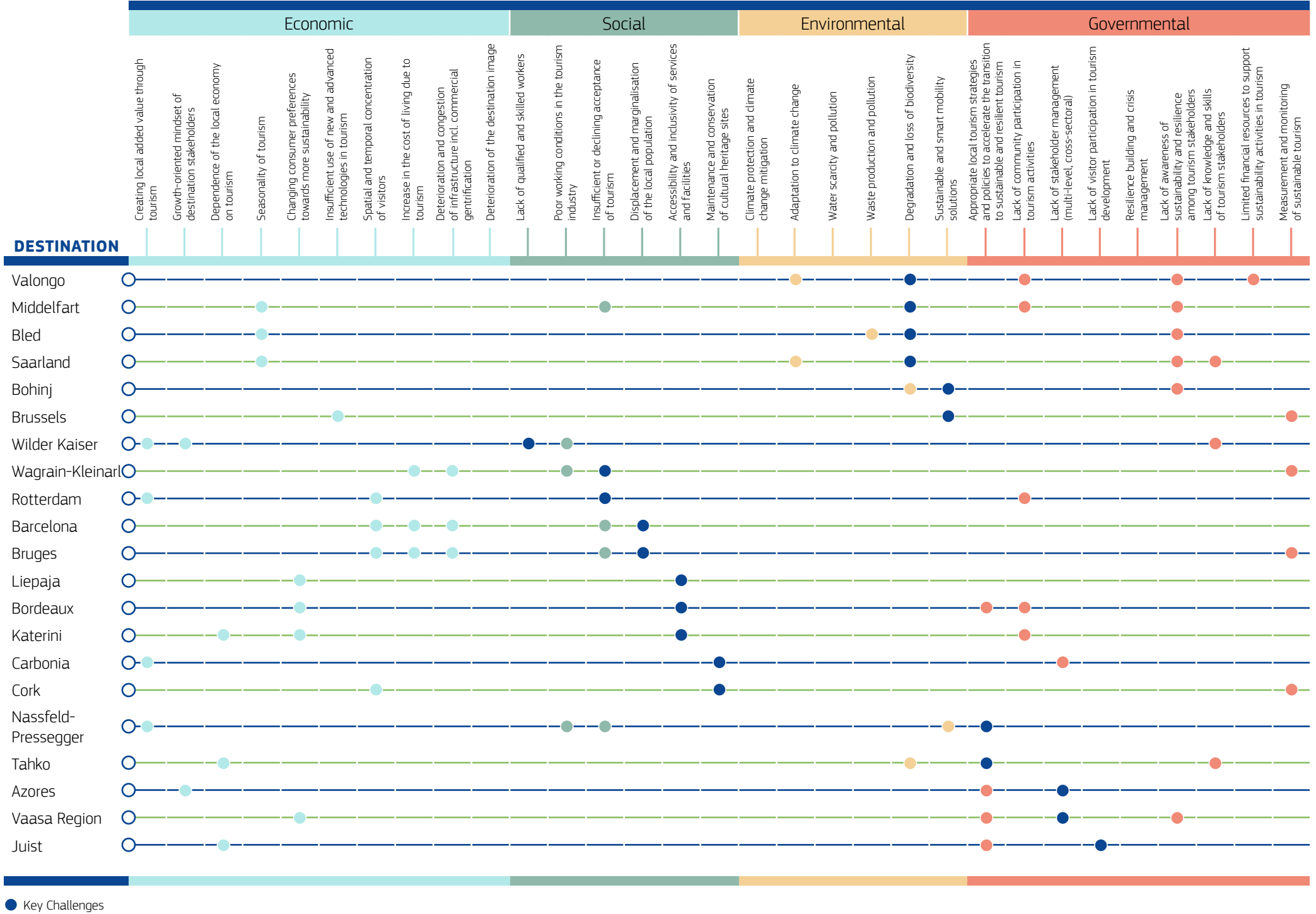


## KEY AND ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES

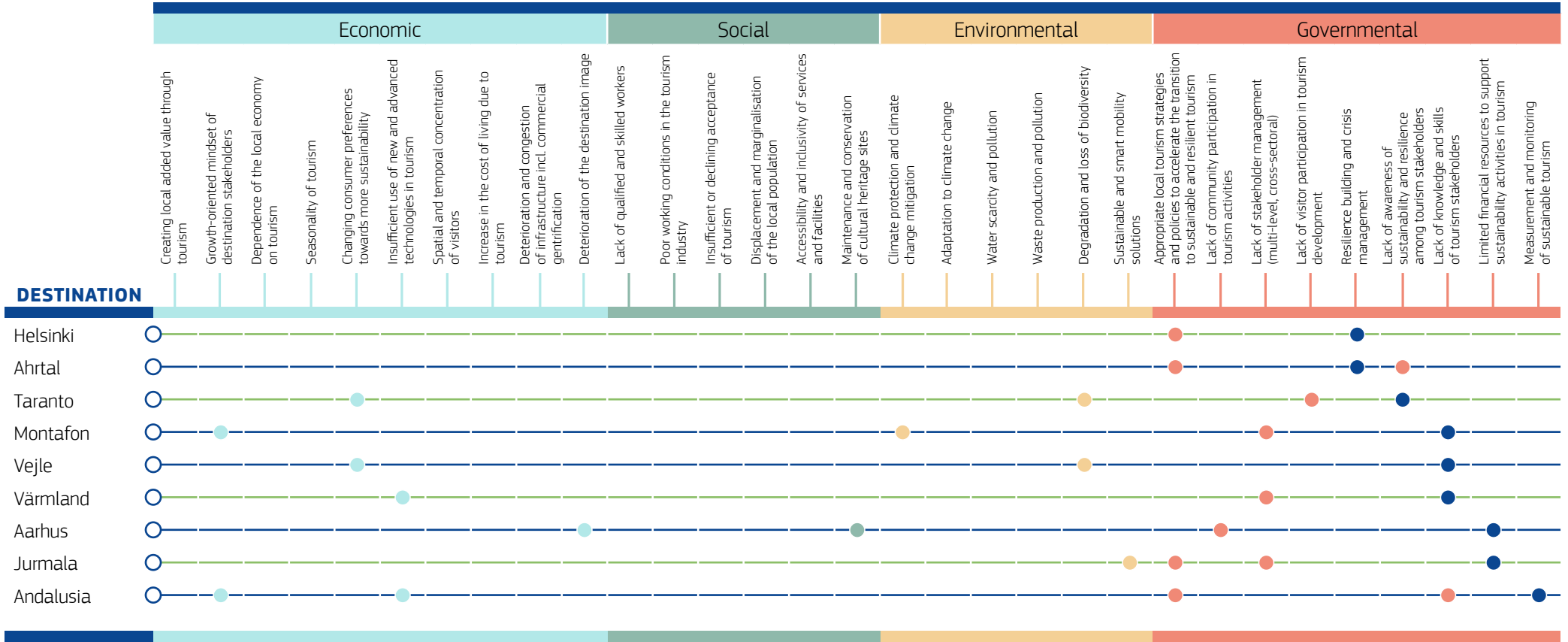


● Key Challenges

## KEY AND ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES



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## BEST PRACTICE: TURIN, ITALY



### Key Challenge

Creating local added value through tourism.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Investments in infrastructure and product development; Digital solutions.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Urban

**Territorial Level** | NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 6,821 km<sup>2</sup>  
(Metropolitan area)

**Population** | 2,208,370 in 2020 (Metropolitan area)

**Type of Tourism** | Mountain; Rural; Cultural; City; Business; Gastronomy.

**DMO** | Consortium with 77 members, of which 97% are public and 3% are private.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/ government; Restaurants and bars; Other tourism service providers; Technology providers.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Insufficient use of new and advanced technologies in tourism; Maintenance and conservation of cultural heritage sites; Appropriate local tourism strategies and policies to accelerate the transition to sustainable and resilient tourism.

### Context & Background

The initial spark for the development of tourism came in the 1990s with the bid for the 2006 Winter Olympics, which spurred the development of the tourist infrastructure. Since the Games, Turin has experienced stable growth, with 2,175,221 arrivals (5,343,918 overnight stays) in 2023, generating around 10% of GDP and 10-12% of employment. Around 60% of guests are domestic.

### Key Challenge

With the crisis of the automobile industry in the 1990s, the city began a transformation that sought to move away from being a purely industrial city. Stakeholders and residents were largely in favour of the development of tourism, but at the same time it was particularly important to them to preserve the authenticity of the city.



**Implementation of Solutions:** Over the last two decades, Turin has created a city with a high quality of life and an attractive tourist offer through (technological) innovation and sustainability of its cultural and natural heritage, events and creativity.

## SOLUTIONS

- Conversion of numerous (industrial) buildings into attractive multifunctional cultural or tourist facilities, such as the [Officine Grandi Riparazioni](#), a former railway factory converted into a multifunctional cultural centre (2017), the [LINGOTTO](#) car factory, which now houses a congress centre, a shopping centre, a concert hall and a collection of historical and contemporary art (2003) or Parco Doro, a post-industrial park, with the [Kappa Futur Festival](#).
- Particular attention has been paid to technological innovation, accessibility and sustainability of the most important historical museums. The recent projects [5G-TOURS](#), [CONVINCE](#) and [TRIALSNET](#) offer innovative services for museums that use AI and VR, visors and robots to improve the visitor experience. Currently, interactive signage is being introduced in the historic centres of the towns where the [Savoy Royal Residences](#) are located, as well as at the entrances to the 16 residences, allowing them to be explored via QR codes, which will serve as a unique selling point for Turin.
- In addition to museums and monuments, Turin also developed its rich gastronomic offer, presented within the project [Mangébin](#), which promotes local food culture. The most important initiative is the global *Slow Food* movement, which has led to a series of international events, such as [Terra Madre and Salone del Gusto](#). In addition, the network of local street markets is being expanded, such as [Porta Palazzo](#), a historical economic asset and a tourist attraction, also promoted through the "[TorinoMercati](#)" app.
- Turin, part of the Collina Po Biosphere Reserve, has also developed an attractive and rich *tourism infrastructure in nature*, including green areas, walking and cycling paths. The four rivers that flow through Turin are used for sports and riverside promenades. The DMO has signed an agreement with [Outdooractive App](#) to digitise the rich offer of hiking and cycling trails and make them easily accessible to tourists and residents.
- To make the wide range of tourist offers accessible, Turin has introduced the digital "[Torino Piemonte Card](#)", which grants free or reduced access to most tourist attractions. It can also be used to book entry in advance.

**Replicability potential:** Medium (requires political will, stakeholder cooperation and extensive funding).

**Cost & funding source:** Funded by the municipality, the European Union (348,000 euros for 5G-Tours, 149,000 euros for CONVINCE and 188,000 euros for TRIALSNET, all co-funded by the EU's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme) and other sources, such as the DMO, chamber of commerce or other tourism related associations.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Successful bid for the 2006 Olympic Games; Support for tourism by residents; Picking up on trends (e.g. digitalisation); Peer learning with other destinations, e.g. through membership in the [City Destinations Alliance](#).

Barriers: Lack of cooperation and use of synergy potential among the region's stakeholders for the implementation of major tourism projects.

### Results and Impacts

- Greater added value for the local economy as shops and restaurants no longer close in the off-season.
- Festivals and events helped reduce seasonality.
- Increased number of repeat visitors (people are pleasantly surprised by the rich cultural offer of Turin).
- Increased number of visitors to smaller, lesser-known museums.
- In the last ten years, Venaria Reale (part of the Savoy Residences, around 500,000 visitors) and the Egyptian Museum (around one million visitors) have been among the top ten most visited museums and cultural sites in Italy.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Digitalisation helps to improve the quality of the tourism experience.
- It is important not to just look at the quantitative numbers, but more at quality aspects (mind change).
- Tourism development and urban planning must be thought of together.
- It is necessary to have a clear vision for development.
- Involving stakeholders to jointly develop the vision and take joint action is essential.

## Useful Links

[Official Tourism website](#) | [Transformation projects in Turin](#) | [Urban Lab Turin](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: LIKA, CROATIA



### Key Challenge

Creating local added value through tourism.

### Type of Solution

Stakeholder participation and management; Certification; Promotional campaigns; Capacity building; Investments in infrastructure and product development.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Rural

**Territorial Level** | NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 5,350.5 km<sup>2</sup> (Lika-Senj County)

**Population** | 42,748 in 2021 (Lika-Senj County)

**Type of Tourism** | Ecotourism; Rural; Cultural; Gastronomy.

**DMO** | 100% subsidiary of the Lika-Senj County, next to the tourists' boards of the municipalities; Non-commercial.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Tourists; Accommodations; Restaurants and bars; Local farmers and producers.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Maintenance and conservation of cultural heritage; Lack of stakeholder management; Lack of knowledge and skills of tourism stakeholders.

### Context & Background

The Lika destination covers the areas of the Lika-Senj County and extends to parts of the Karlovac and Zadar counties. In total, it covers 6,796 km<sup>2</sup> of continental and coastal area, with over 60% of the area being protected. Tourism in the area is very unevenly distributed, with Croatia's most visited national park (Plitvice Lakes) and rural areas with little tourism development but extensive agricultural activity. Since 2010, tourism numbers have been increasing slowly but steadily, with 470,000 arrivals and 1.6 million overnight stays in 2023.

### Key Challenge

From 1960 to 1990, the region experienced significant emigration due to the Croatian Wars of Independence. Although the population decline has slowed, it has continued due to poor economic prospects. The economy needed to be stimulated to stop emigration and improve the quality of life, with tourism seen to increase local added value.





**Implementation of Solutions:** To increase the added value of tourism in the region, the traditional heritage in the region was leveraged, with traditional family farms and traditional cuisine being used for tourism development in rural areas.

## SOLUTIONS

- *Lika Destination Cluster* (NGO) was established by the Local Action Group Lika (LAG Lika) in 2017 to act as a central coordination point for strengthening tourism development in the region. The NGO promotes the development of a nature and gastronomy destination that enables the integration of local products from agriculture, arts and crafts into the tourism value chain.
- Introduction of the *Lika quality label*, a state-recognised regional quality system for local traditional food, drinks, and handicrafts. The products are based on tradition, characterised by a high level of quality and funded on a sustainable philosophy, especially with regard to social aspects such as securing jobs for the local population.
- *Building the capacity of producers* through 1:1 consultations, workshops and peer learning through stakeholder networking. The focus of the consultations and trainings was on basics such as business principles, marketing and promotion (website and social media) and the quality system. The *networking* of local producers with tourism businesses, such as restaurants and hotels in the destination, served to get to know each other and to acquire knowledge about the available locally produced products.
- *Product placement* by the Lika Destination cluster, which in cooperation with the agricultural cooperative LIKA COOP opened a *shop for all Lika quality producers* in Plitvice Lakes National Park, the most visited tourist destination in Croatia, in June 2018. The cluster is also currently developing a quality mark for restaurants selling local products to further strengthen the Lika brand and promote the region as a gastronomic destination.

**Replicability potential:** Very high (requires a leadership and stakeholder collaboration).

**Cost & funding source:** Most of the work is based on volunteer efforts; Around 1,000 euros per year for promotional material or lectures funded mainly nationally; Additional EU funding, such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and the COSME Programme.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Good network and communication system with all different stakeholder groups; Funding; The courage to start from scratch and persist (even when people are sceptical); Awards that have helped other stakeholders to better understand the importance of the project.

Barriers: Lack of support for the project from the administrative side.

## Results and Impacts

- 64 manufacturers are participating in the initiative and offer 174 products grouped in 11 different categories.
- The Lika brand is now known both regionally and nationally, also through studies and articles by researchers and scientists. Other tourist destinations in Croatia are developing their regional quality system based on the “Lika quality” label.
- In 2020, Lika Destination was included in the GSTC list of TOP 100 most sustainable destinations in the world and in 2024, it was certified with [\*Green Destination Bronze Award\*](#).

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Local producers need to be supported in developing authentic local experiences, with small practical steps such as setting up a website and easy-to-use communication channels.
- DMOs can often more easily obtain permits such as sales permit or stall permit in local markets and public places, which are often more difficult for micro-enterprises. In this way, DMOs can open distribution channels for SMEs.
- Creating an authentic gastronomic destination can increase its attractiveness and unique positioning of the destination.

## Useful Links

[Lika Smart Sustainable Destination](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: MALTA



### Key Challenge

Growth-oriented mindset of destination stakeholders.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Digital Solutions; Research and Innovation.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Island

**Territorial Level** | NUTS 2

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 316 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 519,562 in 2021

**Type of Tourism** | Rural; Coastal, maritime and inland water; Cultural Business; Gastronomy.

**Tourism Organisation** | Public; Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) and Visit Malta (100% subsidiary of MTA) for promotion.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; Local residents; ALL Tourism service providers; Research and Development (R&D) organisations.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Dependence of the local economy on tourism; Insufficient use of new and advanced technologies in tourism; Resilience building and crisis management.

### Context & Background

The number of tourist arrivals has more than doubled since 2010, reaching 2,975,671 arrivals (20,242,801 overnight stays) in 2023, most of them international. In addition, around 1 million cruise ship passengers visited the island. Tourism is an important economic factor, accounting for 12-15% of GDP and employment in recent years.

### Key Challenge

Due to the ongoing increase in tourist numbers and to its geographical characteristics, Malta is facing significant pressure from overtourism and related social challenges. This requires a change from the previously growth-oriented mindset to a controlled attraction and management of tourists.



**Implementation of Solutions:** The strategies and approaches to cope with the pressure are backed by science to ensure that carrying capacities are determined and respected, and that the country is well prepared for the future. The aim is to preserve Malta's unique characteristics and nature for its residents, while maintaining and increasing tourists' satisfaction.

## SOLUTIONS

- Malta's [Tourism Strategy 2021-2030](#) is based on the principles of 'Recover, Rethink and Revitalise' and aims to move from a sole focus on tourism growth to a more sustainable approach. Tourism must be managed in a way that balances economic growth with social and environmental wellbeing. It contains clear objectives and targets to ensure measurable and comparable results and underlines the importance of scientific research and data-driven decision-making to address environmental and social impacts.
- Established in 2019, the [Malta Tourism Observatory](#), a UNWTO initiative, is responsible for implementing, monitoring, updating, and communicating the progress of Malta's tourism strategy. Malta is currently expanding its data sources in areas such as energy, waste, sanitation, employment and climate change. One innovative approach is to use [satellite data and artificial intelligence](#) to monitor environmental factors (such as land use, tree cover, etc.) to assess carrying capacity and identify climate risks. One of the main objectives of this new approach is to identify future challenges for different tourism scenarios. In cooperation with the OECD, a [Tourism Satellite Account \(TSA\)](#) for Malta, also including tourism sustainability indicators, has been established in 2023-2024.
- [Participation in European projects](#) allows for a joint development of the measurement system, such as the [CASTWATER](#) project (2016-2019), for monitoring and evaluating sustainable tourism water management in the coastal areas of the Mediterranean, or the [Civitas Destination project](#) (2016-2021), which addressed the problem of the transport systems of European islands affected by seasonal tourist flows and fluctuations in demand.
- Start of a [collective stakeholder management](#), as traditionally stakeholder engagement in the Maltese tourism sector has been weak. The first stakeholder meetings with different stakeholder groups, including public (e.g. transport, universities) and private (e.g. hotel associations) entities, showed that sustainability in tourism must be discussed across sectors.

**Replicability potential:** Medium (requires strong political will, extensive resources and skills).

**Cost & funding source:** 400,000 euros annually for the Malta Tourism Observatory plus staff and office space, fully financed by the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA); Tourism Satellite Account funded by the EU Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP); CASTWATER funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) (85%) and national funds (15%).



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Tourism authorities' clear vision for sustainability and political willingness to limit growth; Expansion of conventional tourism indicators to include other indicators, especially on sustainability aspects; Consistent data management; Sufficient funding; Stakeholders' awareness that destination carrying capacity has been reached; Technological progress.

Barriers: Strong resistance from interest groups and other authorities to move away from the growth paradigm; Conflict between solutions' long-term scope and political election cycles; Horizontal aspects of sustainability (concerning different sectors in a destinations) sometimes are difficult to manage in a tourism context.

## Results and Impacts

- Increased awareness of environmental issues in general among tourism stakeholders.
- Increased interest among tourism stakeholders in changing their business strategies.
- The Tourism Authority and some stakeholders have already begun to shift their measurement and monitoring approaches from quantitative growth indicators to a broader set of indicators (for ex. financial health of tourism-related businesses, socio-economic impacts of tourism on local communities, greenhouse gas emissions related to tourism, tourist satisfaction etc.).
- Data generation created an enormous wealth of knowledge.
- Partnerships with other destinations and institutions have been established.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- The collaborative stakeholder approach underlines the need to integrate different perspectives for sustainable tourism development.
- Destinations need to develop a broader understanding of the scope of their work (not just marketing).
- Tourism organisations need to build knowledge and skills that go beyond tourism.
- Cooperation between countries is more successful than competition.

## Useful Links

[Malta Tourism Observatory](#) | [Tourism Strategy 2021-2030](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: BORKUM, GERMANY



### Key Challenge

Dependence of the local economy on tourism.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Digital solutions.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Island

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | | 30.74 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 5,171 in 2023

**Type of Tourism** | Coastal, maritime and inland water; Sports; Health and wellness.

**Tourism Organisation/DMO** | DMO is a 100% subsidiary of the town of Borkum and is a public-private partnership.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; Local residents;

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Seasonality of tourism; Deterioration and congestion of infrastructure; Lack of qualified and skilled workers; Displacement and marginalisation of the local population; Climate protection and climate change mitigation.

### Context & Background

Tourism is the economic lifeblood of the North Sea Island of Borkum (around 92% of GDP), with 6,030 people earning an average primary income. In 2022, around 300,000 tourists (2.4 million overnight stays) and an additional 60,000 day-guests visit the island, especially in the summer months. Borkum is located in the Wadden Sea UNESCO World Heritage Site, with extensive dune areas and diverse flora and fauna.

### Key Challenge

The high dependence on tourism, the high seasonality, and the high intensity of tourism pose extensive challenges. These include a lack of housing for residents and labour shortages, especially for seasonal workers, as well as a pressure on infrastructure, natural resources, and residents. The island is also highly vulnerable to climate change.





**Implementation of Solutions:** The importance of tourism has prompted Borkum to strive for a holistic sustainable development of the island based on a "living space concept" that considers all aspects of life on the island.

## SOLUTIONS

- [Living space Borkum 2030+ strategy](#), which builds on the tourism concepts from 2011 and 2015/2016, was developed together with the residents and adopted by the city council in 2023. It forms the *holistic strategic framework* for the future development of the island, takes into account the existing needs, values, attitudes and visions of the future of the island's residents and focuses on sustainable development. The strategy links and promotes the "climate-neutral island" and "qualitative tourism development" and not only includes the tourism sector, but also different areas and stakeholders on the island.
- The concept was developed with a process-accompanying, interdisciplinary *steering group* representing the population and stakeholders. Its tasks included supporting project coordination, acting as a technical sparring partner, reflecting the needs of the population and stakeholders, and evaluating (intermediate) results. In order to ensure the greatest possible participation and acceptance of the residents, a two-day "*workshop for future*" was held, in which the key points of the Borkum 2030+ strategy were discussed. To ensure acceptance and active participation in the vision of the future, another *public information event* for the residents and stakeholders was held six months later.
- Two concrete projects that emerged from the [fields of action](#) of the [Living space Borkum 2030+ strategy](#) include:
  - The project [Borkum 2030 - climate-neutral island](#), in which the DMO cooperates with the city and involves stakeholders with the aim of achieving climate neutrality.
  - The model project [Wadden Sea Learning Centre](#) which is being carried out in cooperation between the DMO and the Lower Saxony Wadden Sea National Park Administration, making the identity of the national park and island landscapes recognisable and tangible. Seven landmarks are intended to represent the seven "faces" of the island, with the corresponding seven stories and characters being generated by AI.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires political will, sufficient funding and strong cooperation).

**Cost & funding source:** 100,000 euros for the [Living space Borkum 2030+ strategy](#), 70% funded by the German-Dutch Interreg project "SAVE". Around 450,000 euros for the Wadden Sea Learning Centre, partly financed by tourism funds of the federal state of Lower Saxony.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Strategic competence and KPI-based good management; A strategy process that is designed as a cycle (development, implementation, controlling, adaptation) in which an intensive review of the strategy adaptation is carried out every three to five years; Funding opportunities and continuity; The involvement of the population and interest groups, which led to a high level of acceptance.

Barriers: Social resistance, shortage of skilled workers.

## Results and Impacts

- The implementation of Borkum 2030+ leads to a clear positioning of the island and strengthens its competitiveness.
- Involving the population in the strategy development process generates engagement and empowerment, which is important as essential elements of the strategy must be implemented by the local people and companies themselves.
- The comprehensive strategy ensures a stable financial budget.
- Social conditions including housing and good working conditions will be improved.
- Preventive action plan and measures connected to the climate crisis will mitigate climate risks.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

The holistic living space concept is highly recommended as it has several advantages:

- The concept involves an assessment of the destination's status quo, which shows possible areas of action.
- Through the assessment and stakeholder management process, it is possible to reduce social resistance and find reliable and quality-oriented partners.
- The concept offers orientation for the further development of measures.

## Useful Links

- [Lebensraum 2030](#) | [Islander Project](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: SAALFELDEN-LEOGANG, AUSTRIA

### Key Challenge

Seasonality of tourism.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Certification; Promotional campaigns; Investments in infrastructure and product development.



### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Mountain

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 208.63 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 20,656 in 2023

**Type of Tourism** | Ecotourism; Mountain; Sports; Cultural; Gastronomy.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a 100% private subsidiary of the municipalities' public tourism associations.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local residents; Tourists; Accommodations; Restaurants and bars; Other tourism service providers; Local farmers and producers.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Creating local added value through tourism; Appropriate local tourism strategies and policies to accelerate the transition to sustainable and resilient tourism.

### Context & Background

The local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) Saalfelden-Leogang was created in 1999 as a merger of the tourism associations of the two neighbouring municipalities. With a share of around 10% of GDP and 12% of employment, tourism is one of the most important economic factors. In 2023, around one million overnight stays were recorded, with summer and winter overnight stays now in balance.

### Key Challenge

In the original winter sports resort, the mountain lift operator threatened to cease summer operations in the early 2000s due to persistently low-capacity utilization in the summer months, with serious consequences for the entire summer tourism season. The DMO and tourism companies recognized the need to develop a strategy for the summer season and season extension.



**Implementation of Solutions:** In order to develop Saalfelden-Leogang into a year-round destination, a number of measures were implemented, which have slowly developed over the last 20 years. The foundation for this was laid with a clear vision and positioning of the destination.

## SOLUTIONS

- The vision of becoming a year-round destination made it necessary to develop attractive offers for the summer and off-seasons. Mountain biking was seen as a niche for tourism and some pioneers in the region developed a concept for a bike park, which was built in 2002 and made Saalfelden-Leogang the largest mountain bike destination in Austria and one of the most important in the world.
- The mountain lift operators have joined forces and made the infrastructure on the mountain more tourist- and family-friendly, e.g. by designing viewing points. The local mobility network also offers numerous discounts via the guest card.
- Since 2021, Saalfelden Leogang has implemented the *"365 Days Active and Creative"* program, with year-round tourist activities. Special highlights include snowshoe hikes, the e-bike tasting tour that passes various farm shops, or various tours and events that focus on environmental education, such as the *climate hike*. To increase tourist experiences and increase regional added value, regional products are strongly promoted and used in hotels and restaurants. Sustainable agriculture projects are specifically promoted, partly through the LEADER program. 73% of the farms in Leogang and 60% in Saalfelden are organically certified (compared to only 25% in Austria).
- The destination's focus is on sustainability and is based on the intrinsic sustainability beliefs of local stakeholders, who can define and control the development and growth in this rural destination themselves. As a sign of this, the destination has been in the certification process for the Austrian Ecolabel since 2021.
- In order to support the development into a year-round destination, there have been targeted marketing activities for 8 years, such as *"365 Days"* or the presentation of *destination brand*, which focuses primarily on culture and regionality.
- There is a regular dialogue between the DMO and tourism companies to strengthen the quality of the tourism offer and thus also the resilience in all areas. One focus is on motivating companies to get certified with a sustainability label.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires finding a suitable and economical niche, and clear vision).

**Cost & funding source:** The costs for product development, marketing and stakeholder involvement are included in the DMO's budget. One job in sustainability management is funded by the EU LEADER programme (a development programme that focuses on involving and empowering local communities to drive sustainable economic and social development in rural areas), co-financed from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Ongoing stakeholder communication in different formats with and between stakeholders, such as through Project Management Teams (PTM) on different topics (hiking, mountaineering, biking, etc.); Learning from the experiences of other destinations; A "pioneer group" that wants to drive innovation and sustainability; Regular review (every 2-3 years) of the visions and value; Promoting communication with the local population in order to maintain tourism acceptance; Sufficient funding.

Barriers: Key stakeholders with opposing opinions, which requires intensive persuasion in long debates and discussions; Insufficient communication of measures already implemented.

## Results and Impacts

- 2022/2023 was the first year with more tourist arrivals in the summer season (52%) than in the winter season (48%).
- More job security and year-round jobs in tourism.
- The quality of tourism and other economic sectors has increased and is manifested, for example, in a higher quality of accommodation establishments, a higher proportion of organic farming and an increase in regional supply chains.
- 28% of tourism companies have sustainability certification.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- There are no standard solutions. Suitable solutions (niches) must be found based on the conditions of the destination (like the bike park in Saalfelden-Leogang).
- It is important to have the courage to find your own ideas and discuss them with the community.
- A lot of patience is necessary, sometimes sometimes the benefits only appear after 10, 15 or 20 years.
- In order to initiate projects, it is helpful to gather a group of willing people around you.
- The tourist acceptance among the population should always be taken into account in order to avoid conflicts.
- It is essential to look for funding.

## Useful Links

- [Facts and figures](#) | [Ecolabel and Sustainability](#) | [265 Days Active & Creative](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: TALLINN, ESTONIA



### Key Challenge

Seasonality of tourism.

### Type of Solution

Stakeholder participation and management; Promotional campaigns; Investments in infrastructure and product development.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Urban

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 159.2 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 437,811 in 2022

**Type of Tourism** | Cultural; City; Business; Gastronomy tourism.

**Tourism organisation** | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a subdivision of the Tallinn Strategic Management Office, which is a 100% subsidiary of the City Administration.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Accommodations; Restaurants and bars; Event organisers; Other tourism service providers.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Creating local added value through tourism; Changing consumer preferences towards more sustainability; Lack of knowledge and skills of tourism stakeholders.

### Context & Background

Tallinn's tourism showed stable growth from 2010 to 2019 but has not yet fully recovered from the Covid pandemic and the loss of the Russian market (9-15%). In 2023, 1,581,255 arrivals (3,047,073 overnight stays) were recorded, with a peak 2023.

### Key Challenge

The strong seasonality particularly affects the city's accommodation sector. Many small, privately run accommodations must close off-season due to a lack of income, causing inconsistent quality standards between low and high seasons. Other local tourism businesses are also experiencing economic pressure due to tourism seasonality.





**Implementation of Solutions:** To counteract seasonality and at the same time fully exploit the city's tourism potential, a balance between increasing the total number of tourists and the efforts to balance the seasons is sought.

## SOLUTIONS

- The [\*Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions \(MICE\) industry\*](#) is considered a highly effective market segment for mitigating the effects of seasonality in tourism. Tallinn positions itself as a small destination with good accessibility within the city. Between 2015 and 2019, there were between 3,500 and 4,000 conferences annually with 53 (domestic) and 75 (international) participants on average. Despite a decline due to the corona pandemic to 2,674 MICE activities in 2022, organising conferences during the low season remains a crucial strategy to combat seasonality.
- The wide range of [\*innovative cultural events\*](#) are another means of relieving the seasonal pressure taking place mainly out of season. Tallinn actively supports the organisation of large international events outside of peak season, such as the Black Nights Film Festival (since 1997) and Tallinn Music Week (since 2009). The city's main event in winter is the Christmas market, which attracts many families and single tourists.
- To promote the low season, the DMO launched a *campaign with Lonely Planet* from October to December 2017, showcasing Tallinn in winter. During the campaign, over 60,000 people visited the pages dedicated to Tallinn and Estonia on Lonely Planet's website, and the campaign reached over 3 million accounts through social media. This initiative was ranked as the second-best tourism campaign of the year at the Emerging Europe Awards. Today, regular marketing activities promoting the low season are carried out in [\*cooperation with Visit Estonia\*](#) because 70% of international visitors have Tallinn as their only destination in Estonia.
- In an advisory capacity, the DMO is in regular contact with stakeholders to help companies address seasonality in their business plans. Companies are finding different solutions, such as restaurants shortening their opening hours in the off-season and focusing more on catering, organisation of [\*restaurant weeks\*](#) in off-season twice a year, or accommodation providers designing weekly theatre or other cultural packages in the off-season. In addition, the Estonian market is increasingly being targeted as a market for concerts and sporting events in the lower-priced off-season.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires intense collaboration with the stakeholders).

**Cost & funding source:** Independent budget for marketing of approximately 0.5 million euros per year funded by the municipality. Tallinn also benefits greatly from cooperation with the national DMO Visit Estonia.

## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Diversification of tourism offer; Flexibility of a small destination (different solutions and new trends can be tested more easily); Already existing positioning as a sustainable destination to attract MICE tourism; Creative stakeholders; Perseverance and long-term vision, as seasonality cannot be solved in the short term.

Barriers: Many companies believe that seasonality is a problem that passes, but it repeats itself over years; Fewer opportunities to diversify tourism offer in a small destination.

## Results and Impacts

- [Reels created during the Christmas market](#) (01.08.2023) generated more than 8 million impressions and reached 7.5 million accounts.
- Due to the increased tourist offer in low seasons and in winter, there were increases in hotel occupancy, reaching +36% in December 2023 compared to December 2022.
- More domestic tourists come to Tallinn in the off-season to attend events (e.g. Jazz Festival) and to visit Tallinn.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Managing seasonality takes time and requires a long-term vision.
- Each destination has its specificity that must be considered when looking for solutions to seasonality.
- Each source market and segment have their own needs and interests that must be considered and met when designing and targeting products.
- It is very important to have a plan for the off-season (a good way to develop this plan is through roundtables with stakeholders).
- An exclusive focus on generating more tourists can end up being less sustainable.

## Useful Links

[Visit Tallinn Professional](#) | [Visit Tallinn](#) | [Visit Estonia for the Travel Trade professionals](#) | [Visit Estonia](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN



### Key Challenge

Changing consumer preferences towards more sustainability.

### Type of Solution

Stakeholder participation and management; Certification; Digital Solutions; Capacity building.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Urban

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 447.76 km<sup>2</sup> (3,694.86 km<sup>2</sup> Metropolitan Area)

**Population** | 603,325 (1,077,128 Metropolitan Area)

**Type of Tourism** | Coastal, maritime and inland water; Cultural; City; MICE.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a 100% subsidiary of the city, non-commercial, responsible for tourism, events and meetings in the city and metropolitan area.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local residents; Accommodations; Events.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Lack of community participation in tourism activities; Appropriate local tourism strategies and policies to accelerate the transition to sustainable and resilient tourism.

### Context & Background

Gothenburg is located on the west coast and is Sweden's second largest city. Trade, manufacturing and industry are the economic pillars of the city. Despite a diverse tourism offering, only 5% of the workforce is employed in tourism. In total, around 5.5 million overnight stays (72,8% domestic) were generated in 2023, with the MICE sector (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) playing a significant role.

### Key Challenge

Two decades ago, Gothenburg noticed an increase in demand for sustainable tourism offers, especially in the MICE sector. The city administration therefore decided to pursue sustainable tourism development as progressive as possible.



**Implementation of Solutions:** Initiated by the MICE sector, Gothenburg consistently implements sustainability standards and projects in the destination, which are emphasised in the destination brand. The DMO is also certified according to the Swedish Environmental Standard “Svensk miljöbas”.

## SOLUTIONS

- Systematic stakeholder management and support driven by the DMO and the MICE sector to lead certifications in the MICE and accommodation sector, which includes:
  - Free Training and capacity building for the MICE sector and hotels.
  - Advice for MICE organisers from the DMO’s in-house sustainability experts to consider sustainability when planning meetings and continuous stakeholder dialogues.
  - Incentives for certified hotels (preferential booking recommendations, positive coverage in the media or on the DMO’s website); Encouraging other major tourist attractions and restaurants as well as other sectors (e.g. fashion or music) to become certified.
- Implementation of 9 indicators for stakeholders and tourists to measure their impact in terms of sustainability.
  - Adoption of the [Event Impact Calculator \(EIC\)](#) for event organisers to forecast and calculate the economic, social and environmental impacts of planned events and optimise sustainable operations.
  - [Climate Smart Vacation Calculator](#), developed in 2018, is an online calculator that enables travellers to make greener travel choices and estimates emissions from their trip.
  - Monitoring sustainability development with the [Global Destination Sustainability Index \(GDSI\)](#) since 2015.
- To mark [Gothenburg’s 400th anniversary \(2021\)](#), the City of Gothenburg decided in 2009 to initiate a *10-year collaborative process* to promote innovative and sustainable development in the city. The whole city was involved, and citizens submitted thousands of proposals, many of which resulted in [projects that benefit tourism](#).
- [“101 Sustainable Ideas for Better Tourism”](#) is an online catalogue compiled by Goteborg & Co together with an innovation agency, which contains a collection of international projects that can serve as inspiration for improving tourism worldwide.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires a strong political willingness, an intense collaboration with the stakeholders, participation of residents, and resources).

**Cost & funding source:** (1) Systematic stakeholder management and support are carried out within the DMO using own resources. Free training was co-financed through additional post-pandemic funds from the city (3,000 euros). (2) Costs for digital tools were around 15,000 euros funded by national innovation funds and developed by national universities in cooperation with public stakeholders. (3) Costs of projects related to Gothenburg’s 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary were covered by different funds.

## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: The involvement of all stakeholders at an early stage of the transformation process and their participation in every step led to stable planning and support; Trustful, long-term relationship between stakeholders and DMO; Progressive mindset of the community that finances the projects and the DMO.

Barriers: Conflicting goals and the search for a balance of interests; Financing.

## Results and Impacts

- 1<sup>st</sup> rank in the GDS Index 2016-2019, 2021-2023 and 1<sup>st</sup> in previous editions of the ICCA Scandinavia Sustainability Index. 100% of meeting facilities and 92% of hotels are certified.
- Organised 222 visits since 2017/18 for delegations from other destinations from 69 countries to share insights on sustainability.
- Over 300 professional users have registered to use the Event Impact Calculator tool.
- Travelandclimate.org has had 416,000 visitors since its launch in 2018.
- Higher financial revenue, through more tourists and more frequent events due to the sustainability aspects.
- Due to the increase in tourism, the local community benefits from a wider range of offerings such as music, attractions, and restaurants.
- A good reputation in the press and media.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- The clear positioning and branding as a sustainable destination has been a valuable lever to convince stakeholders to adopt sustainability measures. Businesses are jumping on the bandwagon because they do not want to be the only unsustainable tourism provider.
- It is important to know the stakeholders and strengthen the relationship. A shared long-term vision with the stakeholders provides good orientation throughout the process.
- Restaurants were more difficult to get involved in the certification process because the paper-heavy certification documentation was considered daunting.
- The transformation process is highly replicable and the use of events as a central tool for accelerating change has proven to be very successful.

## Useful Links

[Sustainability](#) | [Indicators and Goal monitoring](#) | [Best practices](#) | [Event Impact calculator](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: COPENHAGEN, DENMARK



### Key Challenge

Changing consumer preferences towards more sustainability.

### Type of Solution

Stakeholder participation and management; Promotional campaigns; Digital Solutions.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Urban

**Territorial Level** | NUTS 2

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 2,862 km<sup>2</sup> (Greater Copenhagen)

**Population** | 1.4 million in 2023 (Greater Copenhagen)

**Type of Tourism** | Coastal, maritime and inland water; Cultural; City; Business; MICE.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a Public-Private-Partnership with different business divisions.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Tourists; Local residents; ALL tourism service providers.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Spatial and temporal concentration of visitors; Insufficient or declining acceptance of tourism; Lack of community participation in tourism activities; Lack of visitor participation in tourism development.

### Context & Background

With a turnover of EUR 4.2 billion and 29,900 full-time jobs (2022 in the city of Copenhagen), tourism is an important industry that attracts visitors with the city's port, cultural attractions, and gastronomy scene. Overnight stays have doubled in the last decade and will exceed 11.65 million in 2023. Copenhageners are known for their sustainable lifestyle.

### Key Challenge

Even though Copenhagen has not reached the limits of its capacity yet, there is an awareness that the strong growth must be balanced to avoid visitor pressure in certain areas. Tourists should be inspired by the Copenhagen lifestyle and adapt to actions that can lead to a positive change in terms of more climate friendly actions. The destination of Copenhagen wants tourists to be involved, inspired, and part of the sustainable transformation of the city.





**Implementation of Solutions:** In order to spread the Copenhagen lifestyle and encourage visitors to behave sustainably, numerous communication and nudging campaigns were developed and implemented in addition to expanding the sustainable tourism offer.

## SOLUTIONS

- [\*Sustainable Choice CPH\*](#) is a project (2021-2024) based on the sustainable tourism strategy “[\*Tourism for Good\*](#)” and aims to accelerate the sustainable transformation of Copenhagen’s tourism industry and motivate Copenhagen visitors to make sustainable choices during their stay. Also, the [\*Planet Copenhagen Manifesto\*](#), launched in 2022, underlines the ambition to create a destination that is seen as an environmentally friendly destination by visitors and inspires them to make more sustainable choices.
- Development of Sustainable tourism as the basis to enable visitors to make sustainable choices, such as “[\*GoBoat\*](#)”, the rental of solar-powered boats made of recycled plastic, or “[\*Norrebro\*](#)”, self-guided tours through unknown neighbourhoods that disperse the flow of tourism while promoting local trade and consumption of local products.
- A [\*sustainability guide to Copenhagen\*](#) on the DMOs visitor website aims to inspire visitors to behave more sustainably offering cycling opportunities, more sustainable food options, shops with locally produced goods, meeting places for locals and visitors to carry out shared activities.
- The [\*Copenhagen Sustainability Guide 2.0\*](#) was developed as a planning tool for business events, congresses and meetings with the aim of minimising the carbon footprint and creating a positive and sustainable impact.
- [\*Copenhagen Legacy Lab\*](#) The Copenhagen Legacy Lab uses congresses and events to develop targeted and collaborative projects with the organising associations that have the potential to leave a lasting legacy and, ideally, lead to new business and funding opportunities.
- The [\*Copenhagen Card\*](#) is a digital all-inclusive city pass that offers easy access to public transport and over 80+ attractions, also outside the hotspots, thereby reducing visitor pressure.
- [\*CopenPay\*](#), a four-week pilot initiative launched in July 2024, aimed to reward climate-friendly behaviour. Tourists who demonstrated environmentally friendly behaviour, such as taking the train, cycling, participating in clean-up activities or volunteering at urban farms, were rewarded with perks such as free coffee or a museum entry.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires stakeholder collaboration).

**Cost & funding source:** 670,000 euros for CopenPay funded by the DMO.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: The way of life in Copenhagen and shared ambitions of the municipality and many stakeholders; Consistent encouragement and motivation of different stakeholders; The willingness of stakeholders to develop and share their experiences; Already seeing positive results from the work and collaboration around sustainability making the transformation tangible.

Barriers: The whole transformation process takes time, efforts and needs to be planned and prioritised for tourism companies.

### Results and Impacts

- The spread of visitors has led to less overcrowded places.
- Positive feedback from partners, residents and visitors.
- Visitors also receive some inspiration for their daily lives.
- The use of certified hotels, venues or other tourism-related aspects is increasing.
- A good reputation thanks to the eagerness to be part of projects including positive media coverage.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- The transformation takes time, but eventually the positive results will come.
- Coordination and focus are crucial as there are many stakeholders and opportunities.
- People tend to act sustainably, if well informed.

## Useful Links

[Wonderful Copenhagen](#) | [The official Guide to Copenhagen](#) | [Copenpay](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: LYON, FRANCE



### Key Challenge

Changing consumer preferences towards more sustainability.

### Type of Solution

Stakeholder participation and management; Certification; Promotion campaign; Investments in infrastructure and product development.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Urban

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 102.4 km<sup>2</sup> (533.68 km<sup>2</sup> Greater Lyon)

**Population** | 522.250 (1.424.069 Greater Lyon) in 2021

**Type of Tourism** | Cultural; City; Business; Gastronomy.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a non-profit organisation with nearly 600 tourism professionals as members.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local residents; Tourists; ALL tourism service providers; Local producers; Local businesses.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Creating local added value through tourism; Maintenance and conservation of cultural heritage; Lack of visitor participation in tourism development.

### Context & Background

Lyon is a sustainable and modern tourism destination (carbon neutral airport, high level of stakeholder engagement, sustainable AR-enriched experiences, etc.). In 2023, the city welcomed 6 million visitors, 60% of whom were for business trips and the remaining 40% for leisure trips. 9.4 million overnight stays were recorded in 2023, of which almost 25% were international. The contribution of tourism to Lyon's economy in 2023 is between 5 and 10% of the city's GDP and around 5% of local employment.

### Key Challenge

Lyon faces some negative impacts of tourism, partly due to visitors' behaviour and consumption preferences. These include the displacement of local shops and services by those that focus exclusively on tourists and often offer cheap imported goods. A major challenge for Lyon is therefore to educate tourists about sustainability and encourage them to make sustainable consumption choices for local sustainable products and services.



**Implementation of Solutions:** Based on the Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2021-2025, Lyon has identified sustainability and quality labels as well as the involvement of local producers, businesses and residents as key pillars to promote sustainable visitor behaviour.

## SOLUTIONS

- Launch of the *"Ville Equitable et Durable"* quality label in 2010, which promotes a social and solidarity economy for companies, shops, artisans, places and events. Lyon has also launched the *Bouchons Lyonnais* quality label to guarantee quality and a sustainable local approach in traditional "Lyon cuisine", and the *Accueil vélo label* which ensures quality services for cyclists. Using these labels allows both locals and visitors to make more conscious consumption choices.
- Promotion of waste reduction, for example through the national *#gourdefriendly initiative* with more than 115 partners (shop owners, bars, restaurants) who refill water bottles with fresh water for free or by promoting *zero-waste shops* and organic products.
- Lyon actively *promotes local products* with the "*Fabriqué à Lyon*" label in four product categories: fashion and design, manufactured products, artisanal food and decorative items, design and handicrafts. There are currently more than 100 certified products in Lyon.
- To maintain smooth access to Old Lyon, visitor flows are diverted to less frequented areas, the schedule of guided tours has been modified and the number of people per group is limited to 25, a walking team for guidance is present in the old town and a *charter of good behaviour* to respect the place and its inhabitants is distributed to visitors.
- Promotion of *environmentally friendly alternative means of transport*, especially bicycle infrastructure (5,000 bikes at 428 bike stations in the metropolitan area), but also Segways, e-scooters and car sharing to promote the use of public transport when arriving and departing.
- The *LyonCityCard* (LCC) not only includes discounts on museums and major attractions, but also allows free use of public transport. Work is currently underway on the Low Carbon LCC, which offers additional discounts for travelling by train or bicycle.
- The *Greeters initiative* enables interactions between residents and visitors. The Lyon City Greeters introduce tourists to their neighbourhoods and favourite places, which they show them during a walk. The "Lyon Greeters" are affiliated to the *International Association of Greeters*.
- Inviting visitors to get involved in local social issues by encouraging them to *support social organisations* in Lyon.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires leadership and stakeholder cooperation).

**Cost & funding source:** The municipality and the tourist board have made 300,000 euros available to support the transition to more responsible tourism in the 2021-2025 strategy period.

## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Dedicated staff; Funding to overcome the financial obstacles faced by some stakeholders; Involvement of pioneers among stakeholders; Support from local professional networks; Training and awareness raising of all Tourist Office teams and stakeholders.

Barriers: Lack of time; Giving priority to business and financial issues; Lack of financial and human resources; Difficulties faced by small businesses.

## Results and Impacts

- In 2023, Lyon scored 83% in the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS Index), ranking 13th in the world.
- More than 240 establishments have already received the "[Ville Equitable et Durable](#)" quality label.
- In 2023, 72 residents of the metropolitan area shared their favourite places in Lyon and the surrounding area so that visitors could experience them "like a local", with 292 outings for 708 people.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Start by identifying good practices and sharing them with all stakeholders.
- Set an example and commit to sector-specific certification processes to inspire others.
- Fund the first steps to facilitate engagement.
- Communicate stakeholders' initial commitments.
- Intensify awareness-raising and training of all stakeholders.

## Useful Links

- [Responsible Tourism in Lyon](#) | [Act for more Responsible Tourism](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA



### Key Challenge

Insufficient use of new and advanced technologies in tourism.

### Type of Solution

Stakeholder participation and management; Promotional campaigns; Digital solutions; Investments in infrastructure and product development; Research and innovation.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Urban

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 163.8 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 297,575 in 2024

**Type of Tourism** | Cultural; City; MICE; Gastronomy.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a 100% subsidiary of the City of Ljubljana.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; ALL tourism service providers; Technology providers R&D organisations.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Growth-oriented mindset; Accessibility and inclusivity; Maintenance and conservation of cultural heritage sites; Waste production and pollution; Sustainable and smart mobility solutions.

### Context & Background

Over the last decade, Ljubljana has experienced a rapid increase in tourism, from around 740,000 overnight stays in 2010 to 2.2 million in 2023. This represents 18% of all arrivals and 14.3% of all overnight stays in Slovenia. Ljubljana's tourism industry employs 14.5% of the workforce, which corresponds to approximately 25% of all tourism employment in Slovenia.

### Key Challenge

Digitalisation and sustainability are considered important pillars of the city's tourism development. The city's digital transformation aims to effectively use new technologies in tourism to create personalised experiences and targeted advertising for tourists, manage crowds, and use resources in a more environmentally friendly and economical way.



**Implementation of Solutions:** A variety of digital tools to enhance the tourist experience and support sustainable behaviour in the city are being developed, and R&D is being strongly promoted.

## SOLUTIONS

- [\*Digital services \(apps\)\*](#) to enhance visitor's experience and promote sustainable tourism, including:
  - [\*URBANA smart card\*](#) and the [\*URBANA app\*](#) are used for public transport, bike rental systems, cable car ride, Park and Ride services, parking payments around the city, and route planning. Since 2023, the [\*Ljubljana Tourist Card\*](#) has been added to the app, enabling visitors to explore Ljubljana's major sights.
  - [\*Nexto app\*](#), an innovative intelligent audio city guide that enhances the tourist experience with AR elements (created in 2016).
  - [\*Tap Water app\*](#) helps users find water dispensers around the city (created in 2013).
  - [\*Ljubljana by wheelchair app\*](#) enables a simple search of relevant tourist information about Ljubljana for wheelchair users (created in 2018).
  - [\*Digital Map at the Tourist Information Centre\*](#) features almost 600 points of interest in the city and its surroundings and offers visitors the ability to use various filters based on their interests and even create their own itinerary (created in 2023).
- [\*Digitisation of Plečnik's heritage\*](#) is an innovative project that digitises the immovable cultural heritage of the architect Plečnik in the city and its surroundings (created in 2018-2020).
- Smart waste management for the increased, including tourism-related, volume of waste with solar-powered, smart [\*Bigbelly containers\*](#) (more volume and most of the waste underground), the fill level of which is monitored by sensors and can therefore be emptied as needed. Ljubljana [\*Regional Waste Management Centre\*](#) is the biggest environmental project in Slovenia and the most modern facility for waste treatment in Europe, processing waste from more than a third of Slovenia.
- The establishment of technology labs that enable collaboration between companies and various R&D facilities to develop innovative tools, including the VR/AR lab, opened in 2019 in the [\*Ljubljana Technology Park\*](#), or a laboratory testing environment in a shopping centre with an acceleration program or the possibility to pay with Bitcoin in "[\*BTC City Lab\*](#)".

**Replicability potential:** Medium (requires strong political will and high investments)

**Cost & funding source:** 12,000 euros for Nexto app; 17,000 euros for Ljubljana by Wheelchair app; 35,000 euros for Digital Map funded by Ljubljana Tourism; 167,625 euros for the digitisation of Plečnik's heritage funded by Ljubljana Tourism and co-financed by the Republic of Slovenia and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); 2,578,000 euros for the Urbana app; Urbana app, Tap Water app, Smart waste management measures, and Technology Park Ljubljana with VR/AR Lab were all funded by the City of Ljubljana.





## Success Factors & Barriers

Success Factors: A clear vision for the future and courage and perseverance to pursue it; Good relationships and cooperation with tourism companies; Intensive communication with various departments of the municipality; Responding to the needs of residents (surveys are carried out regularly); Transparency in data and finances to build trust; An open-minded, innovation-friendly municipality.

Barriers: Resistance to innovations in parts of the community; Competitive mentality of the tourism industry, which made cooperation in developing innovations difficult (changed over the years to more cooperation).

## Results and Impacts

- Improved quality of tourism offer, which also allowed to enforce higher prices. The average daily expenditure of an international visitor was 174 euros in 2023 and rose to 190 euros in the first quarter of 2024.
- The improved quality of infrastructure and tourism led to greater satisfaction among residents. According to a 2023 Survey on residents' attitudes towards tourism, 77% of residents have a positive attitude towards tourism. 81.6% appreciate Ljubljana's attractiveness as a tourist city and 79% agree that the quality of life in Ljubljana is high.
- Ljubljana enjoys a very good reputation with an online reputation score of 78 (out of 100) in 2023, well above the European city average of 42 ([Travelsat](#), [MMGY TCI Research](#)).

## Destination's Recommendations

- Destinations must define their own identity as a first step for creating their vision and evolving.
- The DMO must always keep its vision in mind and involve and convince all stakeholders.
- The process of developing new innovative projects requires a lot of patience.
- There must be continuous adaptation to global tourism trends.

## Useful Links

[Useful mobile apps](#) | [Sustainable tourism in Ljubljana](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: FLORENCE, ITALY



### Key Challenge

Spatial and temporal concentration of visitors.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Laws and regulations; Digital solutions.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Urban

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 102.4 km<sup>2</sup> (3,514 km<sup>2</sup> Metropolitan area)

**Population** | 361,619 (984,386 Metropolitan area) in 2022

**Type of Tourism** | Cultural; City.

**Tourism Organisation** | Multilevel management of tourism (Municipality, Metropolitan City, Region)

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local residents; Tourists; ALL tourism service providers; Local businesses.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Deterioration and congestion of infrastructure; Insufficient or declining tourism acceptance; Displacement and marginalisation of the local population; Measurement and monitoring of sustainable tourism.

### Context & Background

Tourism is one of Florence's main economic sectors. More than 20% of all employees in the Tuscany region were employed in the tourism sector (2019). Florence, known for its rich cultural heritage, recorded stable growth in tourism. Seasonally well-distributed arrivals in 2023 amounted to almost 3.93 million (around 5.3 million in the metropolitan area) and overnight stays to around 8.9 million (just under 12.75 million in the metropolitan area).

### Key Challenge

The concentration of millions of visitors per year in the 5 km<sup>2</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Site of Florence has led to a gradual deterioration of the social and infrastructural structure of the centre. Many residents have left the centre because they can no longer adequately provide everyday services. Visitors are also no longer able to have an authentic experience during their stay and the attractions are constantly overbooked.



**Implementation of Solutions:** The aim is to reduce visitors' pressure on the centre while distributing visitor numbers across the town and surrounding villages to ensure more balanced tourism flows and thus a better visitor experience.

## SOLUTIONS

- Multi-level territorial and cross-sectoral tourism management coordinated by a *Steering Board*, to manage tourism more effectively. This Steering Board is composed by the local Destination Management Organisation (DMO), Chamber of Commerce, the University, the Municipalities, tourism companies and other commercial partners, and meets monthly to develop common strategies, regulations and tools for tourism management (homepages, applications, data analysis).
- *The Urban Mobility Plan (UMP)* ensures comprehensive intelligent mobility. Among other things, the transit points for coaches were linked to trams, railways, motorways and the associated parking areas, and the number of electric buses and the network of cycle paths were expanded.
- In June 2024, the [#EnjoyRespectFirenze campaign](#) was launched to promote the use and enhancement of the UNESCO area and to convey to visitors how enjoyable and yet fragile the urban ecosystem is. In addition, travel guides, such as the "Lonely Planet", were influenced to include lesser known but equally worth seeing places in the travel guide.
- An [interactive website](#) has been created, also compatible with other institutional systems (regional, national), containing over 2,000 georeferenced points of interest that present many of the lesser-known places and attractions throughout the metropolitan area, with Florence as the starting point. The "[FeelFlorence](#)" mobile application monitors crowds in real time and offers personalised alternative suggestions and tips, creating user profiles to better respond to users' needs (article selection and nudges).
- The [Smart City Control Room](#) aggregates and shares data (e.g. from official statistics, internet, social media, credit cards, mobile phones) between the city administration, public utilities and public service providers on a common data platform. Knowing the characteristics of visitors makes it possible to make tailor-made suggestions for activities implemented by the "Feel Florence" application.
- *Management of opening hours* through, for example, extended opening hours including "night opening hours" (e.g. [Uffizi](#)) or coordination of opening hours between attractions.
- To preserve the city's character, a *new regulation* of the municipality was introduced to discourage uncontrolled commercial development and to incentivise the coordinated opening of new food and beverage stores.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires strong political will and stakeholder collaboration).

**Cost & funding source:** The financial resources come from both national grants (e.g. PON Metro) and the municipal budget. Costs also arise from the personnel involved in the activities, who belong to both the municipality and private organisations.

## Success Factors & Barriers

Success Factors: Continuous and efficient cooperation of all relevant stakeholders at different territorial levels; Continuous monitoring and analysis of data as a basis for decision-making.

Barriers: The different layers and levels of administrative responsibility, which require extensive cooperation, coordination and communication.

## Results and Impacts

- Increase in the total number of visits to [www.feelflorence.it](http://www.feelflorence.it) (+53% from June 2023 to June 2024).
- Increase in downloads of the FeelFlorence app (+7,000 in 2024 compared to 2023).
- After the activation of the FeelFlorence Pass system in June 2024, there were more than 1 million new Wi-Fi connections in the city.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Maintaining the quality of life and uniqueness of the city is crucial for residents and tourists.
- For preserving Florence attractiveness as a tourist destination, the city must maintain its unique character through sustainable management planning.
- Networking and co-operation between the different levels and sectors are crucial for the successful implementation of measures and actions.
- Discussion and understanding of monitoring results among all stakeholders is important for decision-making.

## Useful Links

- [Destination Florence](#) | [Smart City Portrait Florence](#)

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## **BEST PRACTICE: BURREN AND CLIFFS OF MOHER UNESCO GEOPARK, IRELAND**



### **Key Challenge**

Spatial and temporal concentration of visitors.

### **Type of Solution**

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Digital Solutions; Capacity building.

### **Case Classification**

**Type of Destination** | Rural

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 530 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 6,650 in 2022

**Type of Tourism** | Ecotourism; Rural; Educational.

**Tourism Organisation** | The Geopark is managed by the local authority, Clare County Council.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local residents; Tourists; Accommodations; Restaurant and bars; Other tourism service providers; Local businesses.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Creating local added value through tourism; Seasonality of tourism; Deterioration and congestion of infrastructure; Insufficient or declining acceptance of tourism; Sustainable and smart mobility solutions.

### **Context & Background**

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, a UNESCO Global Geopark, is located in the west of Ireland in County Clare. Geoparks are managed with a focus on education, conservation, sustainable tourism and community engagement. Tourism is characterised by a wide range of experiences, infrastructure and services coupled with high number of day visitors, particularly at the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Centre within the Geopark (estimated 1.2 million visitors in 2022/23).

### **Key Challenge**

The strong growth and concentration of tourism, which leads to crowds and traffic congestion in parts of the Geopark during the high season, the lack of infrastructure in key locations (especially in terms of parking and toilets), coupled with low economic returns for those not directly employed in the tourism sector are causing some resentment in local communities.



**Implementation of Solutions:** To counteract the pressure on environment and society caused by tourism, a variety of measures have been introduced with the involvement of local community groups and companies, such as capacity building and visitor and traffic management.

## SOLUTIONS

- *Developing Skills in the Community* through the *GeoparkLIFE project* contributed to capacity building of tourism operators to understand, manage and protect the natural and cultural heritage of the Geopark region. Practical training in resource and conservation management is provided through a series of destination management tools, guides and case studies. These can be adapted and made fit-for-purpose in other destinations (*Sustainable Tourism Toolkits*).
- Establishment of the *Burren Ecotourism Network*, by the Geopark and made up of local businesses, all of which implement the Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism.
- The *Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism*, developed by the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark in collaboration with the Burren Ecotourism Network under the GeoparkLIFE project, sets out a minimum level of necessary training and standards for good environmental practices (including waste, water, sewage, energy, mileage) coupled with social and economic investment that every company in the network must achieve. These statistics can be used to calculate the carbon footprint of companies and identify improvements in their sustainable efforts.
- The *Geopark Ambassador programme*, an *online training course*, that focuses on awareness raising, “Leave no Trace” and sustainable tourism ethos for coach drivers, tourism staff in the Geopark, guides and more to pass on to their customers.
- *Visitor flow management* at Cliffs of Moher, including online booking and pre-booking solutions, extended opening hours, capacity caps to limit the number of visitors, marketing to influence customer behaviour towards longer stays, also to support the local economy.
- *Traffic and bus arrivals management* at Cliffs of Moher through dynamic pricing with reduced prices outside peak hours, package bookings, combined tickets with attractions, and bus travel packages with mandatory overnight stays. From mid-2024, *Traffic Ambassadors* will inform tourists about the optimal traffic routes in the Geopark, as tourists often do not follow traffic signs but only follow the sat navigation systems.
- Implementation of a *Traffic and Transport Strategy in 2022* in collaboration with agencies and the North Clare Communities Group, a recently established community representative forum of all communities within the Geopark.
- *Measuring and monitoring the impacts of tourism*, which results in a series of reports, surveys and studies.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires funding and strong stakeholder cooperation)

**Cost & funding source:** 2.2 million euros funded by LIFE, the EU’s funding instrument for the environment and climate action. Annual operational budgets provided by Clare County Council. Capital budgets under various grant schemes.

## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: The designation as a UNESCO Geopark and the criteria to be met; The EU Life project with its focus on tourism and nature conservation including regular dialogue and partnerships between key stakeholders; Flexibility and adaptability of the Geopark Code of Conduct to changing conditions.

Barriers: Perceived limitations due to the geopark status; Many different community groups to contact; Dwindling interest and engagement over time.

## Results and Impacts

- The Code of Practice and its training have fostered much engagement and discussion among local tourism operators.
- The effects of visitor flow management led to a shift in visits outside of peak hours.
- Digital booking systems helped to monitor visitor flows, manage capacity and distribute visitor numbers throughout the day.
- Restoration of nature, such as dunes damaged by parking and unauthorised entry, were restored through barriers and signs.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Involvement, collaboration, and education of the local community and across stakeholder groups (conservation, agriculture, tourism, local population) is key to success.
- When developing new infrastructure, comprehensive planning should be done in advance and for the long term, taking into account possible future development scenarios.
- Comprehensive monitoring to anticipate and manage the local stakeholders' expectations.
- Cooperation with a newly formed larger stakeholder group with representatives of small community groups was more efficient than cooperation with the many small groups.
- Making a digital transition with an increased use of booking/pre-booking/websites but also e-commerce and product diversification is highly recommended.

## Useful Links

[Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark](#) | [Burren Ecotourism network](#) | [Sustainable Tourism Toolkits](#)

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## BEST PRACTICE: DUBROVNIK, CROATIA



### Key Challenge

Deterioration and congestion of infrastructure including commercial gentrification.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Laws and regulations; Digital solutions.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Coastal

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 143.35 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 41,175 in 2021

**Type of Tourism** | Coastal, maritime and inland water; Cultural; Cruise.

**Tourism organisation** | Public tourism board.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; Local residents; Tourists; ALL tourism service providers; Local businesses; Technology providers; Research and Development (R&D) organisations; Transport companies.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Spatial and temporal concentration of visitors; Displacement and marginalisation of the local population; Sustainable and smart mobility; Lack of stakeholder management (multi-level, cross sectoral); Measurement and monitoring of sustainable tourism

### Context & Background

Tourism has traditionally been Dubrovnik's main economic activity, accounting for about 80% of GDP and 90% of employment. The number of overnight stays rose steadily and sharply from 2.2 million in 2010 to 4.4 million in 2019. In 2023, tourism, which has not yet fully recovered from the Covid pandemic, recorded 1,244,159 million arrivals (3,885,369 overnight stays). In addition, 526,414 cruise passengers were counted.

### Key Challenge

The steady and rapid growth of tourist numbers, including day visitors and cruise passengers, led to deterioration and overloading of infrastructure and commercial gentrification



**Implementation of Solutions:** In 2017, the City of Dubrovnik started working with tourism stakeholders to manage tourism, implementing numerous projects and initiatives to address the problem of infrastructure deterioration and congestion.

## SOLUTIONS

- [\*Respect the City \(RTC\)\*](#) project, initiated in 2017, outlined the strategic management of tourism in the city and an action plan aimed at reducing the negative impacts of overtourism and preventing further deterioration of the quality of life of residents.
- In order to preserve the character of the city, *new municipal regulations* were introduced to prevent uncontrolled commercial development and to manage tourist flows, including
  - the reduction of licenses for souvenir stands (only allowed in certain areas) and strict control of the number of bars, cafes and restaurants.
  - the management of cruise tourism by establishing a working relationship with CLIA (Cruise Lines International Association), which culminated in a [\*memorandum of understanding\*](#) and a [\*Cruise ship berthing policy\*](#) with max. 2 cruise ships per day.
  - The “*Limited traffic zone*” project introduces a special traffic regime around the historic city centre from January 2025 to better coordinate and control traffic there. The system enables automatic checks and management of buses and private vehicles including parking using installed cameras and complete software solutions.
- In order to efficiently manage tourist flows, a number of *measurement and monitoring projects* were introduced, including:
  - (1) Installation of cameras and counting machines (2018) at six key entrances to the Old Town to control and limit access to the city.
  - (2) Participation in the “[\*Alter Eco\*](#)” project (2016 to 2019), which calculated Dubrovnik’s visitor cap at around 11,000 visitors for the city centre.
  - (3) [\*Predicting Visitors\*](#) (2019), a machine learning-based application available on the DMO website that predicts visitor numbers in the Old Town, with the aim of better planning visits to the Old Town.
  - (4) “[\*Dubrovnik Parking\*](#)” (2019), a smart parking solution that installed 1,900+ sensors under each parking space and connected them to cameras and mobile devices to provide real-time information that will make it easier to find a free parking space.
  - (5) The [\*Bus Webshop app\*](#) for bus management, which offers parking and stopover fee vouchers for buses aiming to manage and regulate the influx of tourist buses into the city.
  - (6) Participation in the [\*Interreg-Med HERIT-DATA project\*](#) (2018-2022), which allows to more intelligently predict and better manage tourism flows in natural and cultural heritage sites by using open data and creating an online data analytics platform.

**Replicability potential:** Medium (requires strong political will and extensive resources).

**Cost & funding source:** (1) 30,000 euros, funded by DURA (City Development Agency); (2) 215,403.25 euros, 85% co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); (3) 30,000 euros, funded by DURA; (4) 420,000 euros, funded by the City of Dubrovnik; (5) 1 million euros funded by the City of Dubrovnik; (6) Total project cost of 4.2 million euros funded by Interreg Med.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Political will to introduce unpopular but effective restrictions; Networking and communication with cross-sectoral stakeholders; Peer-learning from other destinations and advice from international tourism organizations (GSTC, UNWTO); Scientific approach and cooperation with scientific institutions.

Barriers: Certain national and European laws (e.g. the number of taxis is unlimited under EU law); Opposition from accommodation providers who must pay very high accommodation taxes.

## Results and Impacts

- The “Respect the City” project has achieved visitor dispersion and mitigated the negative impact of excessive tourism. Comparing the 2022 data with the observation period from 2017 to 2019, a better visitor balance was observed in 2022 at the level of annual, monthly and intra-day visits, although the total number of visitors was higher.
- Visitor numbers decreased in the three peak summer months, while pre-season visitor numbers increased, with the largest increase recorded in September, namely 107 percent in 2022 compared to the same period in 2017, representing 21% of all annual visits.
- Revenue from the cruise tax amounted to around 770,000 euros in 2023, which will be invested in infrastructure.
- Due to the results of the strategic project “Respect the City” (transport organisation, cooperation with port authorities and CLIA, smart city solutions, communication with the public, etc.) and the focus on sustainable tourism, future prospects are positive.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Every change brings with it complications, so not all stakeholders will agree with new regulations.
- A well-functioning network of stakeholders is essential for the implementation of such strict regulations.
- Data management and monitoring are key to successfully managing tourism and especially tourism flows.
- Without mutual learning (from other destinations, but also from international tourism organisations), the measures would not have been so successful.

## Useful Links

- [Respect the City](#) | [Grad Dubrovnik](#)

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## BEST PRACTICE: PRAGUE, CZECHIA



### Key Challenge

Deterioration of the destination image.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Promotional campaigns; Digital solutions.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Urban

**Territorial Level** | NUTS 2

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 496.21 km<sup>2</sup>  
(Metropolitan area 11,425 km<sup>2</sup>)

**Population** | 1,384,732 (Metropolitan area 2,267,817) in 2024

**Type of Tourism** | Cultural; City; MICE.

**Tourism Organisation** | Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a Joint-Stock Company; 100% owned by the city.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local residents; Tourists; Accommodations; Local farmers and producers; Local businesses.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Creating local added value from tourism; Growth-oriented mindset of destination stakeholders; Spatial and temporal concentration of visitors; Deterioration and congestion of infrastructure including commercial gentrification.

### Context & Background

The tourism sector currently accounts for around 8% of GDP and 15% of employment which suggests problems in the realisation of tourism value creation. With almost 7.3 million tourist arrivals (78.6% of which are from abroad) and 16.9 million overnight stays in 2023, overcrowding and its negative consequences have been a problem for years.

### Key Challenge

The image as a party destination with cheap prices and cheap flights leads to overcrowding on the one hand, and to low tourism added value on the other. In order to increase tourism added value, a comprehensive image change is needed towards a higher-quality travel destination with unique, high-quality tourism experiences that also enable higher prices to be charged.



**Implementation of Solutions:** An intensive rebranding process from 2020 to 2023, guided by a comprehensive tourism concept and its implementation plan, was carried out with the aim of protecting the interests of Prague citizens, maintaining the public space and finding solutions to the negative impacts of tourism.

## SOLUTIONS

*Comprehensive tourism concept and rebranding.* The identified target markets are domestic tourists, repeat visitors and tourists with high quality expectations. The measures implemented include:

- *Collaboration with local artists and craftsmen* to displace cheap souvenir shops (e.g. DMO giveaways are exclusively products of the registered artists; DMO setting up a souvenir shop in the Old Town Hall that only sells products of local artists).
- Official registration of *tour guides as ambassadors* of the city, who have priority in bookings and website announcements. The tour guides receive special training on how to present the city and how to deal with guests, which is intended to ensure the quality of the tours and improve the image of the city.
- The *Official City Partner programme*, a system of contractual partnerships with selected, verified partners who must meet strict criteria regarding quality, sustainability, high level of service and authenticity. This supports cooperation with tourism stakeholders and drives certification efforts and quality measures.
- Three *long-term sustainability campaigns*. (1) Stay in Prague – focusing on incoming tourism; (2) At home in Prague – focus on domestic tourism; (3) Enjoy, Respect – awareness campaign focusing on sustainable travel and visitors' behaviour.
- *Increase in the city tax* (from one to two euros), with still considerable scope for increase, taking into account the size of Prague's tourism business and the expenditure on city administration (e.g. public areas, public transport, waste disposal, etc.).
- *Rebranding Prague* as a [sustainable MICE destination](#), though the rebranding of the Prague Convention Bureau. The entire rebranding process took three years and includes a new [website platform](#) (launched in June 2024), as well as the development of mobile applications (launched in October 2024).
- *Measuring quality standards* using extensive data management to ensure the success of the measures. Data from credit card payments, visitor passes, social media analyses, etc. are primarily used to control visitor flows and to measure tourist satisfaction rates.

**Replicability potential:** Medium (requires strong political will and high amount of resources)

**Cost & funding source:** About 640,000 euros per year for the three campaigns through public (municipal) and private (corporate) funding; the average annual investment in data resources is about 100,000 euros. It also requires highly qualified staff financed from corporate budgets; the total budget for the rebranding is several million euros.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success Factors: Changing the mindset of decision-makers and reducing the importance of quantitative aspects for tourism development in favour of a sustainable and high-quality tourism offer; Agreement including many negotiations with the town hall on the implementation of the measures; Financial support.

Barriers: The strategy and measures had to be discussed also with the other 20 municipalities of the metropolitan region; Difficulties in enforcing regulations due negative attitude; Timing, as the rebranding process started during Covid-19 pandemic and investments were difficult to attract (Covid compensation in the tourism sector was low).

## Results and Impacts

- The visitor structure has changed: fewer party guests, more domestic tourists (which increases resilience), more MICE guests due to higher quality offers.
- Higher visitor satisfaction rates for different tourism services.
- Higher quality of hotels, restaurants and other tourism products and services and better local added value through cooperation with the growing number of official tour guides and approximately 100 artists/craftsmen.
- In the period 2022-2023, there was a significant increase in tourism spending of almost 40%, which is well above the 15% inflation rate.
- Through redistribution strategies (e.g. Prague Visitor Pass) the tourist load in the city centre was reduced by 7%.
- Tourist programs that allow locals to learn more about the city are usually sold out.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Regarding the artists' network, it is advisable to start with a few well-known or famous artists, as this will attract others to join and follow the initiative.
- Carefully select which data will be most useful and relevant for your goals.
- Trust will be built gradually over the years as relationships and collaborations strengthen.
- Finding partners can be challenging and there is always a risk of failure, but with persistence the right partners will eventually be identified.

## Useful Links

[Prague](#) | [Sustainable Tourism Strategy](#) | [At Home in Prague](#) | [Enjoy respect](#) | [Prague City Tourism](#)

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## BEST PRACTICE: VALENCIA, SPAIN



### Key Challenge

Climate protection and climate change mitigation.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Digital Solutions; Investments in infrastructure and product development; Research and innovation.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Urban

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 134.6 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 792,492 in 2022

**Type of Tourism** | Coastal, maritime and inland water; Cultural; City; Business; Gastronomy; Cruise.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a Public-Private Partnership.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; All tourism service providers; Technology providers; Research and Development (R&D) organisations.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Appropriate local tourism strategies and policies to accelerate the transition to sustainable and resilient tourism; Lack of stakeholder management; Resilience and crisis management; Measurement and monitoring of sustainable tourism.

### Context & Background

From the mid-1990s onwards, Valencia, a former industrial centre, experienced rapid tourism development. In 2023, almost 5.5 million overnight stays (2.3 million arrivals) were generated, 64.1% of which were international. In addition, around 500,000 cruise ship passengers visited the city. Tourism is an important economic factor, accounting for 15% of GDP and 11.8% of employment in 2023.

### Key Challenge

Valencia repeatedly experiences droughts, with climate change exacerbating the situation in the region (as in many other parts of Spain). The last droughts occurred in 2022 and 2023, after which water-saving measures were implemented. Favoured by political measures (adopted by the green party in charge), climate protection was given high priority.





**Implementation of Solutions:** Climate protection in tourism takes place on two levels. It is based on (1) strategic considerations and visions, and (2) the technological and innovation-friendly infrastructures necessary for climate protection, together with other accompanying measures.

## SOLUTIONS

- The [Valencia 2030 Climate Mission](#) (created 2018 - 2020) aims to transform the city into a climate neutral and smart city by 2030, with a focus on sustainable urban mobility, energy efficiency, and green infrastructure. It was developed within the framework of the [EU City Missions](#) by the local government of Valencia in collaboration with various stakeholders, including environmental experts, urban planners, community representatives, and contributions from regional and national authorities. In addition, Visit València has [declared a Climate Emergency](#) as part of its membership in the Climate Emergency Alliance.
- In 2019, Visit Valencia developed a [Carbon footprint measurement system](#) in collaboration with environmental specialists, becoming the first city in the world to calculate the carbon footprint of all its tourism activities. This made allowed to identify and analyse the main sources of the total 1.3 million tons of tourism-related carbon emissions. No development costs incurred, as a scientific consulting firm, with which the city has collaborated for 50 years, developed this as a global business model.
- The carbon footprint measurement system allows to establish a clear path to achieving climate neutrality and to take measures to reduce tourism-related emissions, such as:
  - Infrastructures' improvement, including the expansion of renewable energy, electric public transport networks, and green spaces to increase CO<sub>2</sub> absorption.
  - Cooperation with airlines to promote the use of sustainable fuels.
  - From 2023 to 2025, companies will receive free energy audits and technical advice on energy saving.
  - [Assessment of risks and vulnerability of tourism to climate change](#) in Valencia.
  - In planning: Implementation of a digital carbon footprint management system using blockchain technology to track emissions from the tourism businesses. These emissions will be recorded using smart tags and entered into a digital platform for monitoring and management.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires strong political will).

**Cost & funding source:** The first steps to plan and develop a climate strategy were funded by the city council. Further projects were included in the Sustainable Tourism Destinations Plan, which has a budget of 7.5 million euros from the NextGeneration EU Fund.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Smart technologies to measure carbon footprint; Available financing; Close collaboration between community and stakeholders; Creating a “green story” that companies are happy to follow; Change in awareness in society towards more sustainability.

Barriers: Dependence on external technology expertise; Conservative mindset of some stakeholders who need to be convinced to invest in climate protection (slows down the process); During the pandemic it was almost impossible to focus on climate change; No forests in the region to facilitate carbon offsetting.

### Results and Impacts

- CO<sub>2</sub> emissions decreased by 8% in one year (2023-2024).
- Data helped to finance carbon offsetting.
- The entire tourism industry is involved in tackling climate change (sense of community).
- Climate protection efforts are recognised by customers, resulting in changes in the destination's image.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- As a tourism agency, it is crucial to ensure coordination with authorities and other sectors in the city.
- Networking with tourism stakeholders increases the awareness of the tools and knowledge already available in the destination.
- Investments in technology are highly recommended.

## Useful Links

[Sustainability, a pillar of Valencia's tourism strategy](#) | [Carbon Footprint Calculation of Valencia tourism activity 2021](#) | [Valencia 2030 Climate Mission](#)

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## BEST PRACTICE: ZELL AM SEE-KAPRUN, AUSTRIA

### Key Challenge

Climate protection and climate change mitigation.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Digital solutions; Investments in infrastructure and product development.



### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Rural

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 150 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | ~13,000 in 2023

**Type of Tourism** | Mountain; Rural; Sports; Gastronomy; Health and wellness.

**Tourism organization** | Private local Destination Management Organisation (DMO), public and private shareholders.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; Local residents; Tourists; Accommodations; Restaurants and bars; Other tourism service providers; Local businesses; Technology providers; Research and Development (R&D) organisations; Transport companies.

#### **Additional Challenges Covered** |

Degradation and loss of biodiversity; Sustainable and smart mobility solutions; Limited financial resources to support sustainability activities in tourism.

### Context & Background

The Zell am See-Kaprun tourist region is made up of two municipalities and is known for winter sports (glacier), as well as water and mountain activities in summer (lake). Since the 1970s, all year tourism has undergone a steady growth, with the number of arrivals reaching pre-Covid pandemic levels with around 2.8 million overnight stays and over 700,000 arrivals in 2023.

### Key Challenge

Due to the vulnerability to and risks of climate change (glacier retreat, lack of snow, extreme weather, decline in permafrost), climate protection and climate adaptation are crucial for preserving the natural environment, as well as for a safe and attractive tourist offer.



**Implementation of Solutions:** To become a CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral tourism region, a climate and energy action plan was developed in collaboration with all stakeholders along the value chain, and initial climate protection and adaptation measures were implemented.

## SOLUTIONS

- In 2020, the municipality successfully applied for the federal [programme “Climate and Energy Model Region”](#) and presented a [concept](#) focused on tourism that includes [11 climate protection and mitigation measures](#) on topics such as mobility, energy & infrastructure, and sustainable procurement of regional food.
- Mobility solutions to create an offer for climate-friendly mobility in the region.
  - Over 10 national and international trains stop in Zell am See every day, with Zell am See train station acting as a mobility hub for public travel.
  - To enable mobility within the region, the [ÖBB 360 Transfer Shuttle](#) was installed, reaching over 600 points of interest in the region.
  - The [Zell am See-Kaprun Mobility Card](#) allows visitors to use public transport free of charge from May 1<sup>st</sup> until October 31<sup>st</sup>.
  - More than 100 public and private [E-Car and E-Bike charging stations](#) across the region set a high standard for promoting the growth of e-mobility and active transportation.
- Measures to improve energy efficiency or increase the use of renewable energies include:
  - Over 350 [energy consultations in local tourism companies](#), carried out by experts from the regional energy provider, led to massive investments in renewable energies.
  - The [digitalisation of the Zell am See ice rink](#), with sensors inside the ice rink transmitting real-time data to a digital energy monitoring platform. This led to controlled ice production, as well as energy and cost savings.
- Climate protection in mountain resorts:
  - Schmittenhöhe, Zell am See: 14 new [photovoltaic systems](#) in the Schmittenhöhe ski resort produce 100% green electricity. [Ecological slope management](#) with GPS based snow-measurement and production. First ski area in Austria with [EMAS certification](#).
  - Kitzsteinhorn, Kaprun: [Photovoltaic energy production](#) at the Kitzsteinhorn with a total annual production of 500,000 kWh. Snow groomers run on [HVO100 fuel](#) since 2023. [Open air lab](#) for research on glacier and permafrost.

**Replicability potential:** Medium (requires political will, leadership and extensive funds).

**Cost & funding source:** 1 million euros for three years funded by the Federal State of Austria through the Austrian Climate and Energy Fund.

## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Public funding from the Federal State of Austria; An effective network of regional stakeholders in which the project team was well integrated; National and international experts as well as regional tourism experts from the Destination Management Organisation (DMO).

Barrier: The short period (3 years) for implementing measures through cooperation with politicians, a DMO, and tourism organisations.

## Results and Impacts

- The region was awarded the [UNWTO Best Tourism Villages](#) in 2022.
- Increase in the use of the mobility card for public transport by almost 30% in three years.
- Energy consultations led to installing new photovoltaic panels covering 6,000 m<sup>2</sup> across various tourism businesses, generating enough energy to meet the needs of 300 households.
- Following the successful implementation of climate protection and mitigation measures, the region aims to obtain the Austrian Ecolabel for tourism destinations.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- An independent project team that coordinates the interests of the municipality and the DMO, has good management skills, and is solely focused on the project is crucial.
- Ensure strong internal and external communication to engage all key stakeholders.
- Involve local residents in the projects, as they are the main stakeholders.
- Prioritise social sustainability alongside ecological efforts.
- Foster partnerships where all stakeholders have a voice and are heard.

## Useful Links

[Sustainable Holidays](#) | [Climate & Energy Model Region](#) | [Ecology at the Schmittenhöhe](#) | [Sustainability at the Kitzsteinhorn](#)

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## BEST PRACTICE: LOWER SAXONY, GERMANY



### Key Challenge

Adaption to climate change.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Capacity building; Research and Innovation.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Mixed

**Territorial Level** | NUTS 1

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 47,618 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 8,161,981 in 2023

**Type of Tourism** | Ecotourism; Coastal, maritime and inland water; Cultural; City; Business; MICE.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a 100% subsidiary of the federal state of Lower Saxony.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/ government; All tourism service providers; Research and Development (R&D) organisations.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Climate protection and climate change mitigation; Resilience building and crisis management; Lack of awareness of sustainability and resilience among destination stakeholders; Lack of knowledge and skills of tourism stakeholders; Measurement and monitoring of sustainable tourism.

### Context & Background

Lower Saxony is a federal state in the northwest of Germany, which includes both maritime and hilly areas. Tourism is one of has a crucial role for the Lower Saxony economy, accounting for the 4.5% if the state's GDP, and providing about 8% of all jobs. In total, there were about 45.7 million overnight stays (15 million arrivals) in 2023, of which about one third was domestic and one third was from neighbouring countries. Tourism is highly seasonal (especially during summer) with hotspots on coastal, rural, and hilly areas.

### Key Challenge

Lower Saxony is affected by the consequences of climate change (e.g. rising sea levels, extreme weather events). However, climate change remains an abstract topic for the population and companies are hesitant to implement climate mitigation and adaptation measures.



**Implementation of Solutions:** Lower Saxony was the first federal state in Germany to implement a project focusing on the effects of climate change on tourism. The project was carried out by the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) and the federal government, with the participation of Lower Saxony destinations.

## SOLUTIONS

The project "[\*Tackling climate change - adaptation strategies for tourism in Lower Saxony\*](#)" was implemented from January 2021 to July 2022, benefitting from the technical support of four German research institutions (Adelphi, DWIF, Fresh Thoughts, NIT), and went through the following phases:

- Compilation of a technical knowledge base for future climatic changes and their impacts on tourism in Lower Saxony's travel regions. A vulnerability analysis and climate risk analysis identified relevant risks for specific travel regions, as well as potential opportunities stemming from climatic changes (e.g., increasing service quality and guest satisfaction through implementation of climate-related measures).
- Identification of action areas and measures for minimising risks and making the most out of opportunities was carried out with broad stakeholder involvement (15 online and face-to-face events, advisory board meetings, online survey). [\*Region-specific documents and practice-oriented tools\*](#) were developed to help travel regions advance their adaptation to climate change competently. The results are clearly summarised on the website, featuring the "Adaptation Compass" (a guide with three action areas that leads through the process), the "Ideas Exchange" (highlighting successfully implemented measures), and the "Navigation Aid" (providing information on funding opportunities).
- After completing the status quo analysis and developing the tools, *climate change workshops* were set up to guide destinations on how to start based on their needs (e.g. funding applications, network events on specific topics, integration of climate adaptation in the tourism concept). In addition, the state of Lower Saxony launched a funding scheme, and the first funding applications have already been received, such as for a drinking water project and specific tourism offers such as the "[\*Nordsee Reisepass\*](#)" (a stamps booklet).

**Replicability potential:** High (other federal states are already following this model).

**Cost & funding source:** The project was funded by the state of Lower Saxony.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Scientific foundation; Intensive and sustainable communication with relevant stakeholders right from the start; Constant exchange and feedback with stakeholder groups.

Barriers: Initial scepticism towards the project; Limited time and human resources of stakeholders, especially in DMOs; The size and diversity of the federal state with diverse needs in the tourism industry; The calibration of the different time horizons of climate modelling (2035, 2050, 2100) to tourism planning, which has different planning horizons.

## Results and Impacts

- Tourism stakeholders now have action areas and can use practical instruments.
- Creation of regional networks involving non-tourism stakeholders.
- Sustainability and climate are core themes in Lower Saxony's tourism strategy, with all 15 travel regions in Lower Saxony actively participating.
- The website created as part of the project, offering information and tools for climate change adaptation, received highly positive feedback from workshop and project participants for its clear structuring of this complex topic.
- Increased cooperation between tourism experts and climate agencies; the DMO recently became a member of the Lower Saxony Climate Competence Network.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- When implementing a project, it is more effective to prioritise practical offerings like workshops or events. Peer-to-peer learning is widely recognised as highly beneficial for destinations.
- Climate adaptation measures should be tailored to meet the specific needs and structures of businesses and DMOs at all levels (regional and local).
- It is crucial for DMOs to invest both human and financial resources to actively lead climate change adaptation efforts and implement necessary measures. Financing models and potential partnerships require further discussions.
- Effective communication of best practices is vital- "sharing success stories!"

## Useful Links

[Climate Change and Tourism](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: BENIDORM, SPAIN



### Key Challenge

Water scarcity and pollution.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Investments in infrastructure and product development; Research and Innovation; Digital Solutions; Promotional Campaigns.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Coastal

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 38.51 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 74,588 in 2024

**Type of Tourism** | Coastal, maritime and inland water; Sports; Cultural; Gastronomy; Health and wellness tourism.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a Non-profit Public-Private Partnership, governed by the Foundation Board chaired by the Mayor of Benidorm.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; Local residents; Tourists; All tourism service providers; Local farmers and producers; Local businesses.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Resilience building and crisis management; Measurement and monitoring of sustainable tourism.

### Context & Background

Designed on the drawing board as a holiday destination in the 1950s, Benidorm has seen its population grow from around 6 thousand in the 1960s to nearly 75 thousand in 2023. Today, Benidorm is one of the leading tourist destinations in the Mediterranean, with 15.3 million overnight stays, and tourism accounting for around 12% of GDP and around 20% of employment. In the late 1970s, a major rethink took place due to extreme drought and extreme water shortages for residents and tourists.

### Key Challenge

Benidorm, like many other regions in Spain, suffers from water shortages due to infrequent rainfall and the drying up of rivers. Due to the increase in population and hotel accommodation, there is high pressure on resource consumption, especially water consumption.



**Implementation of Solutions:** Integrated water management ensures adequate water supplies for the population and tourists, accompanied by awareness-raising and risk prevention measures.

## SOLUTION

- *Integrated water management* includes:
  - Infrastructural measures such as a sewage system that separates rainwater and wastewater, allowing to produce compost from wastewater treatment sludge, used in agriculture, and biogas from wastewater treatment, used to generate electricity to power 6 municipal vehicles. An *innovative AI system* controls the aeration in the bioreactor to minimise the energy required to blow air into the tank and ensure the quality of the wastewater.
  - Creation of the *DINAPSIS* in 2017, a *centre for research and innovation* and digital transformation for sustainable water management, funded by the city council.
  - *Water monitoring system* through real-time monitoring of consumption levels, quality of supplied or treated water, incidents, etc. to enable quick decisions. This system is complemented by AI-powered condition monitoring of the main sewer, wastewater and stormwater systems, used to predict the aging of the sewer network and the necessary budget for maintenance up to 50 years in advance. The monitoring process is also supported by around 1,600 installed smart meters.
- Information campaigns such as *“Lo del agua en serio”*, initiated by Benidorm City Council and Hidraqua, aimed to raise citizens’ awareness of responsible water usage.
- There are *no showers on the beaches*, only seawater footbaths with sensors installed as part of an advanced water quality management system to monitor weekly the hygiene parameters of water, sand and footbaths.
- Measures to prevent risks of climate disasters and long periods of drought are constantly being adopted in collaboration with the municipality, including investments in new technologies and innovative solutions to ensure higher water production. Benidorm was the first municipality with more than 50,000 inhabitants to launch a Climate Change Adaptation Plan (PACC) in 2020.

**Replicability potential:** Medium (high complexity, requires investments and a lot of time)

**Cost & funding source:** 230,000 euros for the water monitoring system by municipal funds co-financed at 50% by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). In the last seven years, 22.5 million euros have been invested in the renovation of supply, sewerage and rainwater networks as well as digitalising the Municipal Drinking Water and Sewerage Service. Most of the investments were made by the city. Some projects were also financed by the regional or national government.

## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factor: High level of stakeholder engagement, as the private sector, the public sector, and the residents worked together.

Barriers: The economic downturn caused by the decline in fishing was also a challenge for financing the necessary infrastructure measures.

## Results and Impacts

- Reduction in water consumption despite population growth and increase in hotel overnight stays.
- Achievement of 95% water efficiency (96.4% in August 2023), well above the Spanish average (70%).
- 36% reuse of treated water in agriculture, gardens, and street cleaning.
- Benidorm withstands stress tests at +700% of demand in high season by modulating supply, pressure, efficiency, power, and purification capacity.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- There is a good potential for replication, however, this requires investing in a long-term project.
- Clear objectives and strategies have significantly contributed to the project's success.
- Investments in replacing outdated system elements and maintaining well-functioning infrastructures will pay off in the long term.
- Thanks to the increased efficiency of the water supply, tourism can thrive.

## Useful Links

- [VISIT BENIDORM](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: MALLORCA, SPAIN



### Key Challenge

Waste production and pollution.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Laws and Regulations; Promotional campaigns; Digital Solutions; Investments in infrastructure and product development.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Island

**Territorial Level** | NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 3,640 km<sup>2</sup> **Population**  
| 912.171 in 2020

**Type of Tourism** | Rural; Coastal, maritime and inland water; Sports; Cultural; Gastronomy.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a 100% subsidiary of the islands' government.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; Local Residents; Tourists; Accommodations; Local farmers and producers.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Climate protection and climate change mitigation; Appropriate local tourism strategies and policies to accelerate the transition to sustainable and resilient tourism; Lack of awareness of sustainability and resilience; Measurement and monitoring of sustainable tourism.

### Context & Background

Mallorca, the largest of the Balearic Islands, recorded 18 million tourist arrivals in 2023, resulting in 43.1 million overnight stays. Tourism is the island's main economic sector, contributing more than 45% of its GDP. While the island has been experiencing increasing numbers of tourists and media attention for years due to its mass and party tourism, it also has a rich natural, cultural, and culinary offer.

### Key Challenge

With the sharp rise in the number of tourists, the amount of waste has also increased significantly. During the 1990s, Mallorca only had landfills for waste disposal whose capacity was not sufficient to handle the increased waste volumes. Therefore, new strategies and measures for waste management were required to prevent the impairment of the quality of life of residents and tourists, as well as to contrast negative environmental consequences.



**Implementation of Solutions:** Laws and regulations, developing good infrastructures, and concretely implementing projects can counteract excessive waste production and environmental impact.

## SOLUTIONS

- The Destination Management Organisation (DMO) advised the regional government of the Balearic Islands throughout the development of the regulatory framework for waste reduction and circular economy.
  - Adopted by the regional government in 2019, the [Waste and Polluted Soil Act](#) focuses on reducing waste like single-use plastics, food waste, and packaging (e.g. plastic bags), among others.
  - The [Circular Economy in Tourism Businesses Act](#) (2022) establishes measures to enhance sustainability and promote a circular economy in the Balearic Islands, aiming for a regenerative effect of tourism on nature and society. According to this Act, accommodation businesses must carry out an annual circular economy assessment based on 16 mandatory key performance indicators updated and implement a circular economy plan with improvement targets. By 2024, all tourism accommodation businesses are required to have a circular economy strategy, updated every five years.
- [TIRME](#), the private company responsible for [waste treatment](#) in Mallorca since 1992, operates material recovery plants, energy recovery plants, waste disposal tanks, and manages the [Centre for Environmental Information and Education \(CIEA\)](#), which raises awareness of urban waste.
- Launched in 2021, the [Finhava project](#) uses blockchain technology to monitor and promote circular economy. TIRME collects organic waste from participating hotels, which are required by law to buy food from regional farmers, and uses it to make compost, which is then returned to the farmers. A blockchain technology-based platform allows to track resources at every stage of their lifecycle, thus acquiring valuable data (i.e., vegetable purchases by hotels, volume of organic waste collected, compost production generated). In addition, a CO<sub>2</sub> emissions calculator was created to determine the carbon footprint and, finally, the circularity is calculated using the methodology of the [World Business Council for Sustainable Development's Circular Transition Indicators tool](#).
- Communication campaigns to inform citizens and tourists is essential for efficient waste management practices. To this end, QR codes can be found in buffet stations of hotels to inform guests about [Tirme's activities](#).
- The first [Mallorcan wine "CERCLE"](#) produced according to the principles of the circular economy is available since mid-2024.

**Replicability potential:** Medium (requires political will, leadership, committed stakeholders and funding).

## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: The first [EU Circular Economy Action Plan \(CEAP\) of 2015](#) as inspiration; The interest and great ambitions of the waste company TIRME to adapt to the Action Plan; Motivated stakeholders such as hotels or the administration.

Barriers: Farmers' scepticism about the economic benefits generated by circular economy practices.

## Results and Impacts

- Waste management has improved significantly over the last decades. In 2023, [TIRME recycled](#) 146,153 tons of waste and recovered 52,248 tons of paper, glass and packaging.
- The tourism sector in Mallorca is pushing to improve the municipality's recycling goals.
- 30 large hotels are involved in the Finhava project.
- 7% of Mallorca's energy supply is generated from all types of waste by TIRME.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Gaining the support of the local administration is crucial for promotion, investment, and establishing a legal framework.
- Building a strong alliance between diverse stakeholders from both the public and private sectors is essential for driving progress.
- Waste reduction and circular economy are social challenges as well as tourism related. For lasting change, it is necessary to encourage a change of mindset in the community at large by engaging local residents.
- The circular economy approach should also be integrated into other economic sectors than tourism.

## Useful Links

[Mallorca's Master Plan for Urban Waste](#) | [Finhava](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: MADONNA DI CAMPIGLIO, ITALY



### Key Challenge

Waste production and pollution.

### Type of Solution

Stakeholder participation and management; Promotional campaigns; Investments in infrastructure and product development.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Mountain

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 150 km of slopes

**Population** | 28.569 in 2021

**Type of Tourism** | Ecotourism; Adventure; Mountain; Sports; Gastronomy.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local DMO is a Public-private partnership.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local Residents; Tourists; Accommodations; Restaurants and bars; Other tourism service providers.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Changing consumer preferences towards more sustainability; Degradation and loss of biodiversity; Lack of awareness of sustainability and resilience among tourism stakeholders.

### Context & Background

Located in the centre of a natural park, Madonna di Campiglio tourism offer mostly revolves around winter sports, water, and mountain activities. Since 2010, there has been a growth in tourist numbers, which in 2023 included 384.943 arrivals (1.5 million overnight stays). Tourism is a significant economic sector for the region, contributing more than 10% to GDP and employment.

### Key Challenge

Due to increasing tourism in the region, especially during the high season, waste has become a problem, as visitors often dispose of it irresponsibly in the nature park. This not only harms the environment, but also reduces the quality of vacations in the region. It also annoys the locals and those responsible for the nature park.



**Implementation of Solutions:** A set of measures has been put in place for better protecting the sensitive natural park and reducing the amount of waste in the region. These measures strongly involve both the local community and tourists.

## SOLUTIONS

Launched in 2021, *"Let's Green"* is an initiative promoted by the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) and the nature park to raise awareness and educate residents and visitors on proper environmental practice and the reduction of plastic usage. The following measures have been introduced:

- Eleven mountain huts participate in the "Let's Green" project. These destinations either are *100% plastic-free* or have started to eliminate single-use plastic. They also participate in the *"Bottle to Bottle"* circular initiative, which promotes waste separation and recycling. Recycling bins and *eco-compactors* have been installed in these mountain huts, reducing the volume of waste. Tourists are encouraged to throw their plastic bottles and cans into the eco-compactor to recycle and reuse them. The huts also sell Let's Green water bottles for visitors who do not have their own refillable bottles.
- The *"Refill your water bottle"* initiative aims to encourage visitors to use their own drinking bottles, thus reducing plastic waste. Drinking bottles are available at tourist information offices and mountain huts, and several fountains in the region provide fresh mountain water. Visitors can find more information about the initiative on the DMO website, in hotels, and in mountain huts.
- To positively influence the eco-friendly behaviour of residents and guests, awareness-raising campaigns are crucial. In this context, *Madonna di Campiglio's website* provides tips on how to behave in an eco-friendly way in nature. Collaborations between the destination and influencers acting as *green ambassadors* for the destination represent the main pillars of the campaign, leading to several Instagram posts on the topic.
- Other awareness-raising measures on environmental protection and waste reduction include *excursions with experts* from the natural park. These visits look for sensitising and involving local residents and tourists in taking up measures to reduce plastic, separate, and compact waste for recycling, and respect the environment and its ecosystems.

**Replicability potential:** Very High (requires stakeholder cooperation).

**Cost & funding source:** 30,000 euros annually funded by the DMO and nature park; one-off fee of 1,500 euros for the mountain huts to participate in the Let's Green initiative.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Have a strong partner like the nature park; High level of public support for reducing plastic waste in the nature park; High level of commitment from some stakeholders (mountain huts/shelters).

Barriers: Obtaining the participation of all mountain huts in the project.

## Results and Impacts

- Promising participation levels of the local population and of tourists strongly contribute to addressing the issues related to waste production and pollution. In addition, leveraging the experience collected through the project allows to adopt a targeted approach and coordinate effective measures in other fields (e.g. production of brochures made of environmentally friendly paper for municipal offices).
- A reduction in waste in the nature park is already noticeable and reported by those responsible for the nature park.
- Of the 11 mountain huts, 4 are already entirely plastic-free, with the others in progress to reach this objective.
- The excursions with experts (15-20 people) for residents and visitors are usually fully booked.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Intrinsic motivations such as environmental awareness can lead to higher quality levels of the sustainability process.
- Having an independent development team that determines the goals is highly beneficial for the project's success.
- It may be more practical to begin the process involving hotels and restaurants.

## Useful Links

[Let's green – No time to waste Initiative](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: VALONGO, PORTUGAL



### Key Challenge

Degradation and loss of biodiversity.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and a monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Promotional campaigns; Digital solutions; Investments in infrastructure and product development; Research and innovation.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Rural

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 75.7 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 94,795 in 2021

**Type of Tourism** | Ecotourism; Rural tourism; Mountain tourism; Educational tourism; Cultural tourism.

**Tourism organisation** | Tourism department of the municipality, supported by the regional Destination Management Organisation (DMO).

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; Local Residents; Tourists; Research and Development (R&D) organisations.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Adaptation to climate change; Limited financial resources to support sustainability activities in tourism; Effective community participation in tourist activities; Lack of awareness and know-how among tourism stakeholders.

### Context & Background

Tourism development in Valongo has gradually increased in recent years with 102,246 overnight stays recorded in 2023. Located 10 km from Porto, Valongo is a popular destination for day-trippers visiting the Porto Mountain Park Natural Park. Accommodation capacity in Valongo is limited and the tourism strategy focuses on creating added value through restaurants, outdoor service providers and promoting local products.

### Key Challenge

Tourism in Valongo depends on natural resources. However, it can also pose a threat to those same resources, with forest fires, endangerment of endemic species, etc. External funds and income from tourism are needed for nature conservation and sustainability.



**Implementation of Solutions:** Nature conservation and renaturation, awareness-raising and educational measures for the community and tourists are implemented with public and private financing.

## SOLUTIONS

- The Association of Municipalities of Porto Mountains Park, founded in 2016, is the result of the synergy between the municipalities of Valongo, Gondomar and Paredes and is strategically located in the metropolitan area of Porto. It is recognised as a model of political, technical and civic competence in the integrated management of protected areas. The association supports studies as well as the conservation, and sustainable use of the park. Among the [conservation projects](#) implemented is the [LIFE Serras do Porto project](#), funded by the LIFE programme, that includes a set of integrated interventions in forested areas to promote native species, adaptation to climate change, as well as monitoring, dissemination activities, awareness-raising and citizen participation.
- The Leça River, crossing the municipalities of Valongo, Maia, Santo Tirso and Matosinhos, has been considered one of the most polluted rivers in Europe, due to discharges from industry and agriculture. Recognizing the importance of preserving this watercourse, in 2016, the municipalities began to investigate solutions at a local level and in 2021 [Association of Municipalities of the Leça River Corridor](#) was created, focusing on implementing actions dedicated to its rehabilitation. To preserve its landscape and biodiversity, several actions were carried out with the support of EU Funding, such as waste collection, control of invasive exotic vegetation and natural engineering interventions (revegetation) to protect the banks from erosion and flooding, and to increase water quality and reduce its scarcity in drier periods.
- To involve the local population in environmentally friendly activities, several initiatives are being taken, such as the promotion of educational games in schools related to water, climate change and the SDGs. The Municipality also encourages citizen participation through composting training, tree planting, river cleaning, provision of vegetable gardens for communities, guided tours in the mountains etc. Furthermore, the Municipality participates in the European Union's [BiodiverCities project](#), which involved citizens in the co-design of greener cities.
- Tourists are also involved in conservation activities to raise awareness, to encourage them to protect nature and to promote and enhance the vast and valuable natural, geological, archaeological and mining heritage of the territory. For this purpose, Valongo Municipality developed the [Centre for Environmental Interpretation and Roman Mining](#).

**Replicability potential:** High (requires political will, leadership, and funding).

**Cost & funding source:** (1) Costs of conservation projects vary; mainly co-funded by the European Union (e.g. LIFE, COSME) and [other funding programmes](#); (2) 4 million euros for the Leça River Corridor funded by [REACT-EU](#); (3) 230,000 euros for the Centre for Environmental Interpretation and Roman Mining funded by the municipality.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Community commitment to conservation activities and a positive attitude towards tourism; A deep understanding that the mountains are an important natural resource for the municipality; Successful funding applications (mainly to the European Union).

Barriers: Lack of cooperation with the private sector (especially regarding river restoration); Insufficient number of stakeholders located in Valongo (they are scattered throughout the Nature Park region).

## Results and Impacts

- A greater emphasis on nature conservation both in the community and among tourists promotes species protection and contributes to greater cleanliness in the nature park.
- An improved tourism offer, both in quantitative and qualitative terms (more hiking trails, improved infrastructure). Over the last three-year period, the Valongo Interactive Tourism Store recorded annual growth of around 10%.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- A destination must be aware of its own unique selling points and the destination's DNA.
- Tourism should always involve the local population in development projects and activities to ensure a high level of acceptance of tourism.
- Environmental protection must always be viewed from two perspectives: an intact environment attracts tourists, and it must be protected by tourists.
- A good relationship with local authorities is essential to drive projects forward.
- To maintain the attractiveness of a tourist destination, it is important to focus on the quality of tourism rather than the quantity of tourism.

## Useful Links

[Nature Conservation Projects](#) | [Valongo: Intelligent City Transformation Overview](#)

## Contact

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## BEST PRACTICE: MIDDELFART, DENMARK



### Key Challenge

Degradation and loss of biodiversity.

### Type of Solution

Stakeholder participation and management; Promotional campaigns; Capacity building; Research and Innovation.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Coastal

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 72 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 16,546 (2023)

**Type of Tourism** | Ecotourism; Coastal, maritime and inland water; Cultural; Business.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a 100% subsidiary of the municipality.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; Local residents; Tourists; Accommodations; Restaurants and bars; Other tourism service providers; Local businesses.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Changing consumer preferences towards more sustainability; Insufficient or declining tourism acceptance; Lack of community participation in tourism activities; Lack of awareness of sustainability and resilience among tourism stakeholders.

### Context & Background

Middelfart is a coastal town on the island of Funen, characterised by a large whale population in the Little Belt. The tourism sector has grown steadily in recent years and plays an important role for the destination, with around 600,000 overnight stays in 2022, mostly domestic.

### Key Challenge

Increasing tourism (camping, cruises, second homes) contributes to significant disturbances and loss of biodiversity (especially fish stocks) as well as to resentment among locals towards tourists. The challenge is to promote awareness and understanding of biodiversity and conservation among both locals and tourists.





**Implementation of Solutions:** Sustainability efforts aim to protect and enhance the aquatic environment and increase awareness and knowledge about climate change mitigation, while promoting shared responsibility and active participation.

## SOLUTIONS

- *Vestre Skole Primary School* has been assigned an additional function after school opening hours: a central meeting point for students, visitors, and citizens of the city, bringing tourists together with locals and providing insights into the destination's environmental problems and solutions (especially on climate change).
- *Visitors are involved in conservation activities* through unique and innovative experiences, such as:
  - Harbour porpoises, though less common, are a typical species in the Belt. When tourists spot one, they are encouraged to report it to a research organisation, which then donates to a fund dedicated to protecting the species.
  - Tourists can get discounts on water activities like diving or snorkelling by participating in waste collection. Collected waste is often repurposed into art materials.
  - Crab hunting, offered as an activity for tourists, help address the Belt's crab overpopulation issue. The experience is paired with the preparation of authentic crab dishes after the hunt.
- *Raising awareness and educating* local residents and tourists about environmental and climate issues. The measures include:
  - An annual three-day [\*climate festival\*](#) with workshops and seminars.
  - Setting up information boards with *QR codes* across local areas to inform people about measures, encouraging them to be proactive in environmental issues.
  - Nature education offers, such as guided hikes providing information about nature conservation, or ambassador programmes for children through special excursions.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires a strong political willingness and intense collaboration with stakeholders).

**Cost & funding source:** Around 5,000 euros to support discounts on waste collection; 400,000 euros for awareness-raising and educational measures; both from the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) budget.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: A good relationship with the community; Long-term partnerships with interested and relevant stakeholders; Sufficient funding (especially national funding).

Barriers: Numerous regulations in local planning; Resistance to change in both the municipality and the tourism industry; Conservative attitudes of various stakeholder groups (e.g., farmers).

## Results and Impacts

- Increasing visitor numbers and rising interest in volunteer work at the highly successful climate festival.
- Shift towards more sustainable consumer behaviour, reflected in the increasing demand for vegetarian food. Shops also offer a more sustainable range of products and services, such as the municipality's revamped climate-friendly canteen.
- Improved biodiversity through reforestation and greater species diversity, with examples such as rediscovering a particular frog species.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Collaborative mechanisms are essential for success.
- A combined top-down and bottom-up approach has proven effective.
- Persistence is key—continuously seek funding and resources to build capacity.

## Useful Links

[Climate Lab](#) | [Middelfart Go Green](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: BLED, SLOVENIA



### Key Challenge

Degradation and loss of biodiversity.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Promotional campaign; Investment in infrastructure and product development.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Rural

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 72 km<sup>2</sup> (Municipality of Bled)

**Population** | 8,190 in 2023

**Type of Tourism** | Ecotourism; Mountain; Rural; Cultural.

**Tourism organisation** | Three entities: Bled Tourism Board (local Destination Management Organisation); Občina Bled (local municipality); Turistično društvo Bled (Bled Tourist Association).

#### **Main Stakeholders Affected** |

Local residents; Tourists; Local businesses; Transport companies.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Changing consumer preferences towards more sustainability; Waste production and pollution; Sustainable and smart mobility solutions; Lack of awareness of sustainability and resilience among tourism stakeholders.

### Context & Background

Bled is part of the UNESCO Julian Alps Biosphere Reserve and has doubled both its overnight accommodation capacity and visitor numbers over the past decade. In August 2023, there were 10,091 beds in the municipality, which corresponds to 1.1 beds per inhabitant. 441,738 arrivals and 1.08 million overnight stays were recorded in 2023.

### Key Challenge

The sharp increase in tourists, including day-tourists, has intensified the pressure on the destination's nature and biodiversity. In detail, there has been an increase in the amount of waste, which is putting a strain on the existing disposal infrastructure, as well as overloads to the transport infrastructure.



**Implementation of Solutions:** Bled's strategy for sustainable tourism development 2018 – 2025 is built upon an innovative zero-waste management system and the systematic reduction of car traffic.

## SOLUTIONS

- The municipality's zero-waste concept includes the following measures:
  - *Labelling of waste bins* based on waste separation guidelines to help locals and tourists separating waste. *Digital weight sensors* in garbage bins indicate when a bin needs to be emptied, thus optimising garbage collection and monitoring the amount of garbage.
  - The installation of [water fountains](#) throughout Bled to avoid the use of plastic bottles. A map of all water fountains shows where water bottles can be refilled.
  - The [SKART Re Use Centre](#) offers residents and tourists second-hand products to buy and reuse.
  - In 2023, [NA KILO](#), the first zero-waste store in Bled, opened, offering loose products or in reusable packaging.
  - The zero-waste measures are widely promoted by all actors involved, for example through inscriptions for the SKART Re Use Centre on the municipal utilities' garbage trucks, the [Zero Waste Week](#) organised by the municipality, or an [educational video](#) on the DMO website. In the project *Ask me I'm local*, organised by Tourism Bled and the Bled Tourist Board, locals inform guests and visitors about correct sustainable behaviour in the destination.
- The waste management company has produced brochures and stickers, distributing them to all residential buildings and accommodation establishments for further use (information on waste separation, drinkable tap water, call to action: "Don't leave a footprint").
- As a member of [Alpine Pearls](#), a network promoting eco-mobility, Bled has implemented a number of measures to reduce traffic, including road closures to reduce traffic, the [Bled Bus](#) which is available to tourists and locals free of charge for trips around Bled and the surrounding area, designated walking and cycling routes to keep tourists controlled on these routes, improved parking infrastructure (e.g. improved information on available parking spaces, more parking spaces at the train station), and a [map](#) that provides information on the transport infrastructure and available transport options.
- [Designated outdoor bathing areas on the lake shores](#) to prevent uncontrolled bathing by visitors along the lake shore.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires cooperation with local authorities and other stakeholders).

**Cost & funding source:** Destination Management Organisation (DMO) budget for the development of the sustainability strategies and partly the Bled bus operation; Infrastructure investments are financed by the municipality and private companies.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: The early involvement of all stakeholders in the transformation process and their participation in all steps; Multiplier effect of the local residents, who pass on the idea of sustainability to guests and visitors.

Barriers: The high costs of implementing the measures from the population's perspective (it took some time for the locals to become aware of the positive effects of the measures); Sufficient financial resources, as the measures had to be financed by the municipality.

## Results and Impacts

- Bled is a role model in the field of waste management and was awarded as the first zero-waste municipality in the EU.
- The zero-waste strategy led to major savings in the municipality through waste avoidance.
- Tourists were educated about waste, particularly through the influence of local residents and businesses as opinion formers.
- The cohesion within the community was strengthened, especially in relation to the zero-waste movement, as well as acceptance and adherence to rules of conduct on and around the lake.
- Bled was able to clearly position itself as a green destination through effective communication measures.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- It is necessary to have a clear vision and develop a strategy and concept for the future.
- The integration of stakeholders at all levels in the region is the biggest key to success – all relevant stakeholders must be engaged.
- Every idea and long-term vision should be shared with all stakeholder groups. Ideas of all stakeholders should be stimulated and considered, as this can motivate them.
- Younger generations should be involved. For example, the waste management company in Bled works with kindergartens and primary schools so that children can “educate” the older generations.

## Useful Links

[Green Bled](#) | [Zero Waste Bled](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: SAARLAND, GERMANY



### Key Challenge

Degradation and loss of biodiversity.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Certification; Capacity building.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Mixed

**Territorial Level** | NUTS 2

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 2,570 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | ~ 995,000 in 2023

**Type of Tourism** | Ecotourism; Rural; Cultural; Health and wellness.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a Public-private partnership.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; Local residents; Tourists; All tourism service providers; Research and Development (R&D) organisations.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Changing consumer preferences towards more sustainability; Adaptation to climate change; Sustainable and smart mobility; Lack of awareness of sustainability and resilience among tourism stakeholders; Lack of knowledge and skills of tourism stakeholders.

### Context & Background

A former mining region, Saarland has undergone a structural transformation over the last 20 years towards becoming a tourism region, with a strong focus on sustainability. In 2023, 3.2 million overnight stays were recorded, with tourism accounting for about 2.9% of GDP. The region's natural heritage is the main reason for visiting, therefore day tourism represents the largest part of tourists. A total of 32.1 million daytrips were undertaken in and to Saarland in 2022.

### Key Challenge

The protection of nature and landscape is a top priority for the tourism sector in Saarland. This entails facing the challenges of reducing traffic, managing visitor flows, and taking protective measures against natural disasters such as floods and death of trees due to climate stress (e.g. dryness and pests).



**Implementation of Solutions:** To protect and preserve nature, a comprehensive sustainability strategy and destination certification laid the foundations for individual measures such as promoting environmentally friendly mobility or influencing guest behaviour.

## SOLUTIONS

- Development of a [climate protection strategy for Saarland tourism](#), which is intended to implement the “climate neutrality” of Saarland tourism in a multi-stage process according to the principle of “avoid – reduce – compensate”. Calculating the CO<sub>2</sub> footprint, reducing greenhouse gas emissions along the tourism service chain, and developing compensation models are the successive action steps.
- The destination’s path towards sustainability was supported by obtaining the TourCert [certification](#), a process-oriented sustainability label that promotes continuous improvement in the areas of environmental protection, customer information, human rights, and fair business practices in the destination and its partner companies. Awareness-raising measures and training workshops enhanced the skills of the tourism stakeholders, helping to establish a robust sustainability network.
- Participation in the [EU project MONA](#), which aims to stimulate sustainable tourism in and around natural areas. Saarland will focus on applying the nudging theory for sustainable behaviour in nature-based tourism, especially focusing on mobility.
- A regional funding programme for tourism companies to strengthen their competitiveness and adaptability has been launched by making sustainability a key requirement for the granting of funding. Direct funding of up to 20% of the costs is possible.
- Measures to raise awareness of responsible use of nature aimed at locals and tourists, including
  - [“Hiking with a hammock”](#), a hiking offer that offers visitors the opportunity to experience special resting places with a rented hammock.
  - [“Fill your bag”](#), a campaign that encourages guests to take a sustainable vacation. Guests who choose a sustainable way of traveling receive a bag filled with regional products and handmade gifts.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires DMO leadership).

**Cost & funding source:** “Climate protection strategy for Saarland tourism” co-financed by the Ministry of the Environment of the Saarland; Project “Mona” co-financed by the EU Interreg funding programme and by the Economic Department of the State of Saarland; Many smaller actions are financed from the DMO budget.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: The high level of efficiency in project implementation (short distances, proximity to regional actors, simple decision-making structures); Major structural changes in the region (tourism is seen as a driving force for the future and sustainability as an essential building block due to natural areas worth protecting).

Barriers: Generally high bureaucracy in Germany (project applications are complex and time-consuming, which is an obstacle for some companies); Shortage of skilled workers and consequent time shortage for implementing sustainability actions (companies must keep their day-to-day business running).

## Results and Impacts

- Investments in sustainable tourism infrastructure have increased the attractiveness of the entire region. Sustainability orientation is perceived very positively by the population.
- As part of the nudging approach in the MONA project, Saarland is working in cooperation with public transport stakeholders on a mobility guarantee for visitors travelling within Saarland.
- Tourism is generally viewed positively as a source of prosperity and there are no significant acceptance problems.
- In November 2022, a survey reported that satisfaction with tourist offerings among the local population reached a value 1.9 on a scale of 1 - 5 (1 very satisfied, 5 deeply dissatisfied).
- Sustainable tourism approaches have an impact on other important sectors in the region.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- The Destination Management Organisation must seek personal interactions with all stakeholders in view of identifying the best solutions. A competent and prepared team is crucial for this activity.
- In such projects, communication plays a key role, as well as support and training of tourism companies.
- When exploring topics, ideas and solutions, collaborative approaches can result in greater engagement of stakeholders and consequently greater effectiveness of proposed actions.

## Useful Links

[Sustainable tourism in Saarland](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: BOHINJ, SLOVENIA



### Key Challenge

Sustainable and smart mobility.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Laws and regulations; Promotional campaigns; Digital solutions; Investments in infrastructure and product development; Research and innovation.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Mountain

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 333 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 5,200 in 2023

**Type of Tourism** | Ecotourism; Mountain; Rural; Cultural.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a 100% subsidiary of the municipality.

#### **Main Stakeholders Affected** |

Local authorities /government; Local residents; Tourists; Transport companies.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Degradation and loss of biodiversity; Lack of awareness of sustainability and resilience among tourism stakeholders.

### Context & Background

Almost two-thirds of Bohinj's area are part of Triglav National Park, making nature its greatest tourist asset. Bohinj is an intensive tourism region with more than 10,000 beds (about 2 per inhabitant), generating 820,000 overnight stays in 2023, with most tourists coming in summer (75%). On peak days, an additional 5,000 day-tourists are in the destination. Tourism contributes about 20% to the GDP and 30% of all jobs in Bohinj.

### Key Challenge

Given the high number of tourists and day-visitors in high season, the pressure on the ecosystem and infrastructures is constantly increasing. In particular, the overload of transport infrastructure by private cars is a key challenge during the peak season.



**Implementation of Solutions:** Based on the results of visitors movement monitoring, a [strategy for traffic management](#) was developed and comprehensive traffic control measures were implemented with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of life of residents and repositioning itself as a nature- and people-friendly destination.

## SOLUTIONS

- A *traffic calming model* was developed in 2007 and has been expanded over the years. It is supported by a unified traffic management system across the destination, including transfer of powers to implement traffic regulations in the municipalities of Bohinj, Kranjska Gora and Bovec. Elements of the traffic calming model include:
  - The division of the municipality into three traffic zones with different traffic restrictions (e.g., no entry into the core area of the national park for vehicles with combustion engines, prohibition of through traffic from city centres, speed limits, and quiet road surfaces in settlements).
  - Expansion of public transport ([8 public bus lines](#), [Poljuka Bus](#)) with trailers for transporting bicycles and reduced fares for tourists to encourage the use of public transport.
  - Linking tourist offers (e.g., visits to sights) with train and bus travel.
  - Development of a comprehensive network of hiking and [cycling trails](#), including route plans to promote environmentally friendly modes of transport and to direct tourist flows.
  - Bohinj MOBILITY guest card, which offers free public transport, free parking, free entry or discounts to attractions, etc.
  - Participation in the [European Mobility Week](#) to promote sustainable mobility together with other European destinations, which takes place in September.
  - Introduction of the *“Timetables web app”*, an integrated web portal and app with real-time public transport timetables, still in the testing phase. More details on mobility offers, as well as a test version of the app can be found [on the website](#).
  - The model is co-financed by the Climate Fund of the Republic of Slovenia. It also included establishing the Bohinj Railway Consortium (13 municipalities, 5 regional development agencies, 5 local tourist organisation) to create a sustainable transport system between the Alps and the Adriatic Sea, based on the Bohinj line.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires political will and stakeholder cooperation).

**Cost & funding source:** Around 300,000 euros for traffic measures, 90% financed by the local municipality of Bohinj, 10% by the national park. Mobility week co-funded by the European LIFE programme and the national Climate Fund; Timetables web app co-financed by the national Climate Fund.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Good cooperation with national authorities; Cooperation between all sectors to use collective knowledge and consensus-driven decision-making; Understanding how the local community perceives mobility, as mobility patterns and behaviours are difficult to change.

Barriers: Difficult and lengthy process to change mindsets and habits of visitors and residents; Lack of national co-financing for the development and operation of public transport.

## Results and Impacts

- 50% increase of bus passengers, moving from 49,948 passengers in 2019 to 75,645 passengers in 2023.
- In 2024, a 250-space parking lot near Bohinj Lake was closed, and a shuttle service was introduced to transport visitors from more distant parking areas. The aim is to reduce the number of parking spaces by a further 500 and reduce traffic near the lake.
- Investments in local transport permitted to extend the range of offered services, leading to more positive experiences for residents. A survey showed that around 60% of residents are very satisfied with the bicycle measures implemented (bicycle parking spaces, cycle paths) and 58% with the organised seasonal bus service.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Achieving sustainable mobility requires not only investments, but also a change in habits and mindsets among visitors and residents.
- Unpopular measures must be taken before positive changes and satisfaction among the population can occur.
- Mobility is a cross-border issue that strengthens cooperation with surrounding regions and supports the development of innovations.
- If sustainable mobility is also highly relevant for other regions, a positive influence can be exerted on the federal government, and the provision of public funds can be demanded.

## Useful Links

[Tourism Strategy Bohinj 2030](#) | [Mobility in Bohinj](#) | [Transport in Bohinj](#)

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## BEST PRACTICE: BRUSSELS-CAPITAL REGION, BELGIUM



### Key Challenge

Sustainable and smart mobility solutions.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Digital Solutions; Investments in infrastructure and product development; Research and Innovation.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Urban

**Territorial Level** | NUTS 2

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 162.42 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 1,249,597 in 2024

**Type of Tourism** | Cultural; City; Business; MICE.

**Tourist Organisation** | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a Public Interest Organisation funded by the Region.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; Local residents; Tourists; Accommodations; Restaurants and bars; Event organisers; Other tourism service providers; Transport companies.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Insufficient use of new and advanced technologies in tourism; Accessibility and inclusivity of services and facilities; Measurement and monitoring of sustainable tourism.

### Context & Background

Brussels is an easily accessible (connected to Europe's largest high-speed network) and easy-to-get around city that supports soft mobility. The historic centre has the second largest pedestrian area in Europe. Around 2,470 international associations have their headquarters in Brussels and half of Brussels' tourism is attributable to business and event tourism.

### Key Challenge

To ensure a comfortable and comprehensive travel experience, with fast and efficient movement of business and leisure travellers, whilst improving air quality and thus the quality of life of residents, a more sustainable way of arriving and departing from Brussels and moving around the city is needed.



**Implementation of Solutions:** The “[Good Move](#)” mobility plan, in force since 2020, is the basis for promoting a pleasant and safe city, a city of proximity that favours soft mobility.

## SOLUTIONS

- The development and promotion of sustainable transport solutions and services requires extensive cooperation between the DMO and partners from the hospitality, tourism, culture and events sectors. Measures include:
  - Improved rail connections to the European rail network and expanded rail services for a more environmentally friendly journey to Brussels, e.g. improving night train connections to Brussels (Nightjet, European Sleeper, etc.).
  - Investing in mobility infrastructure (e.g. charging stations for electric vehicles, electric buses, expanding the cycle path network, pedestrian zones, car-free zones and providing sustainable mobility solutions within the city) and creating service offers such as [car sharing \(Cambio\)](#), [bike sharing \(Villo!\)](#) and scooter sharing programmes all throughout the region. A “[Cycling node network](#)” A “bicycle hub network” has been created for tourists, making it easier for them to reach the sights and attractions by bike. In addition, the DMO has developed the “[Bike Friendly](#)” label, which is awarded to bike-friendly accommodations that offer services for cyclists.
  - Installation of Tactile Ground Surface Indicators (TGSi) for visually impaired people, for example at pedestrian crossings and train stations, wheelchair accessibility of the entire transport system and a door-to-door transport service (taxibus) at the request of STIB-MIVB at a reduced rate for the disabled, in order to make the city accessible to people with disabilities. With the [Access-i certification](#) the DMO promotes accessibility and inclusivity among tourism stakeholders and visitors.
  - The [Floya app](#) allows visitors to plan, book and pay for various modes of transport in Brussels. It combines the four public transport operators, a taxi service, and shared scooter, bike and car services.
  - The [Brussels Card app](#), available as a physical card for 20 years and as an app since 2022, offers free access to many museums and discounts on attractions, shops, restaurants, bars and tours, as well as optional unlimited access to public transport and hop-on hop-off buses.
  - The [Green Key programme](#) aims to promote sustainable development of tourism infrastructure, taking into account the evaluation criteria of environmental management, waste management, water, energy, mobility, etc.
- The multi-layered monitoring and measurement strategy includes the [Tourism Observatory at visit.brussels](#) and the [Good Move Observatory](#), which aims to measure and monitor the entire transport system and provides data to ensure fact-based decisions and sound management of the transport system.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires strong political will, cooperation and funding).

**Cost & funding source:** Financed by the Brussels-Capital Region with exceptional co-financing from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) (for ex. [ticketing.brussels](#), smart city card etc.).

## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Geographical location and political importance of Brussels; A clear vision of sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism development; The use of new technologies; Global trends such as sustainability and accessibility.

Barriers: Competition among infrastructure projects such as large convention centres and other facilities that challenge authorities' budgetary decisions.

## Results and Impacts

- [\*Trips on public transport\*](#) (metro, tram, bus, taxi bus) are increasing and amounted to 375.8 million in 2023.
- In general, all places in Brussels are well connected to public transport, with fewer traffic jams.
- Reduction of air pollution as all buses with combustion engines are equipped with particle filters.
- Improved quality of life through safe and diverse mobility options (e.g. night trains).

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Although mobility is primarily the responsibility of municipalities, tourism organisations should be involved as mobility and tourism are strictly interlinked.
- A strong cooperation with the hospitality, culture, events and business sectors will strengthen their engagement thus ensuring a successful (smart) development of tourism projects.
- Most tourism-related emissions are caused by transport to the destination, therefore alternative forms of travel such as rail travel, short-distance travel, and local tourism should be promoted and encouraged.
- Investments in accessible and inclusive mobility should always be part of a sustainable mobility plan.
- It is important to keep up with technological trends.

## Useful Links

[Get inspired by Brussels](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: WILDER KAISER, AUSTRIA

### Key Challenge

Lack of qualified and skilled workers.



### Type of Solution

Stakeholder participation and management; Promotional campaigns; Capacity building.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Mountain

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 134.4 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 10,125 in 2023

**Type of Tourism** | Mountain; Rural; Sports.

**Tourism Organisation** | Public Destination Management Organisation (DMO), partnership of 4 municipalities.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local residents; Accommodation providers; Restaurant and bars; Other tourism service providers (lift companies).

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Creating local added value through tourism; Growth-oriented mindset of destination stakeholders; Poor working conditions in the tourism industry; Lack of knowledge and skills of tourism stakeholders.

### Context & Background

Tourism is the dominant economic sector in the Wilder Kaiser (52% of GDP and an even higher share of employment). Until 2019, there was a continuous strong increase in tourist numbers. In 2022/23, 423,334 tourist arrivals and 2,067,556 overnight stays were counted again, with these distributed relatively evenly between the summer season (54%) and the winter season (46%). Due to increasing tourist numbers and capacity limits, tourism officials at the Wilder Kaiser began looking for alternatives to growth strategies around eight years ago. These aimed to improve the quality of the offer and service to increase the added value in the region through higher-quality guest experiences without increasing the number of guests.

### Key Challenge

The widespread shortage of skilled workers in the tourism industry challenges the quality offer of tourism products and services.



**Implementation of Solutions:** The Destination Management Organisation (DMO) focuses on creating an attractive working environment and promoting young talent, also incorporating the ideas of the destination working group “Attractive Working”, consisting of 10–15 hotels and catering companies.

## SOLUTIONS

After an unsuccessful attempt with a recruiting coach (2019–2022) to support companies in recruiting staff, two strategic approaches were pursued and are now considered to be effective:

(1) Creating an attractive working environment, with the focus on employee retention rather than constantly having to hire new seasonal employees. The following measures are being taken to achieve this:

- The employee community *“Happy Working Family”* was founded to build a stable social network of employees by organising joint activities and offering discounts on leisure activities and transport with the *“Staff Card”*.
- A *training and continuing education programme* developed by the tourism association exclusively for employees in the Wilder Kaiser region to increase the qualifications and competence and open up attractive personal development opportunities.
- A *job platform* provides information about job opportunities in the region. When disagreements arose with the employer, many workers left the destination because they had little knowledge of alternative employment opportunities in the region.
- Management workshops for employers and manager to deal better with problems in employee management, such as communication problems.

(2) Promoting young talents to become tourism professionals in the region through information and education.

- The tourism association visits schools, teachers are invited to round tables, there is a strong presence at career fairs and at tourism college.
- During two *one-day onboarding and offboarding events* for interns who come to the region in the summer, the interns' expectations are adjusted to reality and social contacts are made, which makes the region more attractive as a future employer.
- The *“Talent Competition”* project retrains career changers for the tourism industry.

**Replicability potential:** Very high (requires cooperation and resources)

**Cost & funding source:** The budget for employee initiatives in the region is 120,000 euros including personnel costs.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: A strong relationship with stakeholders, especially within the working group “Attractive working” where many sustainability ideas emerge; The willingness of employers to participate in different types of projects; Political will, which is crucial for funding; A full-time position focused primarily on this topic.

Barriers: The lack of communication by stakeholders about the positive results of some initiatives.

### Results and Impacts

- Increasingly positive feedback from employees: Interns show high levels of satisfaction, German courses are very well received.
- 400 students visited the “Open day in tourism businesses” in Elmau, one of the municipalities of Wolder Kaiser region.
- Solutions are now also being implemented by other destinations (e.g., onboarding and offboarding).

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Transition to greater sustainability takes time.
- Employees working in the sustainability department should not be overloaded with overly ambitious plans.
- Before adopting sustainability strategies, it is recommended to obtain the commitment of companies in the destination.
- Creating a good direct communication channel with stakeholders helps with coordination.

## Useful Links

[Soulful Working - Loving](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: WAGRAIN-KLEINARL, AUSTRIA

### Key Challenge

Insufficient or declining acceptance of tourism.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Certification; Promotional campaigns.



### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Mountain

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 121 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 3,993 in 2023

**Type of Tourism** | Ecotourism; Mountain; Rural; Cultural.

**Tourism Organisation** | Public Destination Management Organisation (DMO); In 2012 the Wagrain and Kleinarl tourism associations merged.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local Residents; Tourists; All Tourism service providers; Local farmers and producers; Local businesses.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Increase in the cost of living due to tourism; Deterioration and congestion of infrastructure; Poor working conditions in the tourism industry; Maintenance and conservation of cultural heritage sites; Measurement and monitoring sustainable tourism.

### Context & Background

Tourism is an important pillar of Wagrain-Kleinarl's economy (more than 10% of GDP and employment). Most of the approximately 275,000 tourists (1.36 million overnight stays) come during the summer (June-September) and winter seasons (December-March), with Germany being the largest source market (43%). Wagrain-Kleinarl positions itself as a destination that focuses on a relaxing and healing holiday, which makes the relationship with the living space and the social environment very important.

### Key Challenge

The population is confronted with rising housing costs and congestion of infrastructure, especially transport, in peak seasons. These negative impacts led to residents' increasingly critical attitude towards tourism.



**Implementation of Solutions:** In order to curb the increasing scepticism of local residents towards tourism, measures to improve the quality of life and strengthen residents' acceptance of tourism were carried out with their participation.

## SOLUTIONS

- Regular measurement of tourism acceptance by surveying local people to identify weak points and improve them through strategic measures to ultimately promote the local residents' positive attitude towards tourism.
- Due to the great importance of cultural heritage for the local community, several initiatives have been launched to preserve and maintain culture and traditions through tourism, thus indirectly contributing to greater acceptance of tourism. These include the establishment of a cultural association, the networking of agricultural and tourist businesses through the "From the Valley for the Valley" regulars' table, and the establishment of a sustainability council in which all stakeholder groups of the destination (such as farmers, cultural associations, tourist businesses, residents, restaurants, outdoor providers, etc.) are represented.
- The *employee card "beActive" (app)*, introduced in 2023 together with regional partners, offers employees and their family members of all participating companies discounts in tourism businesses and on leisure activities. This contributes to the identification of employees with the region and consequently also to the acceptance of tourism.
- The behaviour of the guests is also influenced to minimise disturbances and irritations to the local residents. Since 2015, there have been initiatives to raise awareness among tourists about sustainable behaviour. Since 2022, guests can find "[10 tips for conscious travel](#)" on the destination website and can digitally sign a commitment "[Your future-oriented promise](#)". The *AI concierge*, based on artificial intelligence, is also available to tourists around the clock with all the necessary information in all languages.
- The *Green Destinations Certificate* (2022) and the *Austrian Ecolabel for Destinations* (2023) were obtained, which improve the governance process in the destination. The associated exchange platforms for stakeholders and residents such as the sustainability committee, regular meetings, events (e.g. on the topic of zero waste) and workshops also promote tourism acceptance.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires political will, financial and human resources)

**Cost & funding source:** (1) Costs including both certifications, external support for 3 years, workshops, information events, meetings, implementation of initiatives, amounted to 170,000 euros in the period 2021-2024 funded by the LEADER programme. (2) One-time setup costs for the "beActive" app were 2000 euros and annual costs are 2800 euros. Also, there are personnel costs for maintaining the app, support for the companies etc.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Constant networking; A good and accessible database monitoring tourism development; Well-trained DMO employees; Viewing the transition to sustainability as an ongoing process; Partners who walk the path of transformation together.

Barriers: Scepticism among locals and companies.

## Results and Impacts

- 168 employees use the *“beActive”* app, which corresponds to 8.5% of all employees in the destination. According to some individual feedback, the employees and companies are satisfied with the card.
- The results of the resident survey were incorporated into the development of the future destination strategy.
- There was a move away from a consumption-oriented destination characterised by mainly quantitative indicators, towards a sophisticated and high-quality regenerative destination.
- By involving the local population in activities and decision-making processes, the acceptance of tourism increased.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- It is particularly important to have a well-functioning network in which actions and measures are implemented.
- It is very useful to benchmark other destinations' similar projects (peer learning).
- External support from a certification expert is essential in the certification process, to gain targeted expertise and higher credibility.

## Useful Links

[Sustainability in Wagrain-Kleinarl](#) | [Regeneration holidays](#)

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## BEST PRACTICE: ROTTERDAM, NETHERLANDS



### Key Challenge

Insufficient or declining acceptance of tourism.

### Type of Solution

Stakeholder participation and management; Investments in infrastructure and product development; Research and Innovation.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Urban

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 324.16 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 671,125 in 2024

**Type of Tourism** | Cultural; City; Business.

**DMO** | Public-Private partnership for city marketing in order to attract international businesses, conferences and visitors.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; Local residents; Research and Development (R&D) organisations.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Creating local added value through tourism; Spatial and temporal concentration of visitors; Lack of community participation in tourism activities.

### Context & Background

Rotterdam is the second largest city in the Netherlands and has the largest port in Europe. Rotterdam experienced a rapid increase in tourism in the mid-2010s, which accounted for 4% of GDP and 6% of employment in 2023 and generated around 2.6 million overnight stays (43.2% domestic). The city focuses on innovation, sustainability and inclusivity as well as good accessibility.

### Key Challenge

The steady growth of the tourism sector was initially welcomed, but there were also fears that a spatial concentration of high visitor numbers and excessive party tourism could arise. To counteract this at an early stage, the tourism authorities developed a series of innovative tourism offers with the aim of spreading tourism across the entire city. These offers were intended to have a positive influence on the development of districts and, at the same time, create acceptance for tourism among residents and stakeholders.





**Implementation of Solutions:** Rotterdam has so far taken two important steps to engage residents and stakeholders, focusing on the further development and promotion of two “neighbourhoods” that will attract tourists.

## SOLUTIONS

- Developed within the [EU project SmartCulTour](#), the *Rotterdam Living Labs* consist of two community-scaled living labs with a bottom-up approach, involving multiple stakeholders, especially residents and entrepreneurs, in the development of cultural tourism in two districts through a co-creation process. These two neighbourhoods are considered as emerging districts, each with its unique characteristics and tourism potential. In total, between 2020 and 2023, six living lab workshops were hosted to discuss current issues, challenges and future opportunities in district development. Very innovative and partly art-based tools were used (System Mapping, Visitor Flow Mapping, Personas, House of Quality, Ideation Washing Machine and Destination Design Road mapping) to support the creative idea generation and discussion process. The ideas generated by the Rotterdam Living Labs are summarised in a report that serves as a proposal to guide and maintain the sustainable development of both neighbourhoods.
- Since 2023, neighbourhood events have been held regularly following the Living Lab workshops to promote joint activities. Examples of this include the Rooftop Days and a joint painting event in which residents paint their vision of the city's future. Tourism officials dialogue with residents about their well-being and their ideas for the city.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires funding and an open community).

**Cost & funding source:** SmartCulTour was funded by the EU in the frame of Horizon 2020; 8,000 euros per neighbourhood event, funded by by Inholland University of Applied Sciences and local partners such as Rabobank.

## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Political willingness to involve residents and stakeholders; Funding from the EU and private sponsors; The university partner in the SmartCultour project who acted as a mediator and was perceived as a neutral scientific partner; A long-term vision.

Barriers: A passive attitude of the stakeholders in the district towards the lab, which led to more top-down approaches in the implementation of project ideas, even though the Living Lab was designed as a collaborative approach; Due to financial and political constraints, the municipalities of the two districts and other key stakeholders are not willing to take on more responsibility to ensure that the proposed ideas are further developed.

## Results and Impacts

- The SmartCulTour project created an open and reflexive platform that contributed to a stronger connection between local stakeholders, especially between the community and local entrepreneurs.
- The project has led to a higher acceptance of tourism development in the two districts.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Showcasing the benefits to the actors involved provides an incentive to participate in such projects.
- Communication with local residents works best through practical, interesting activities.
- Conversations and discussions with university staff are more accepted than with community representatives.
- Some of Smart CulTour's tools worked well (e.g. Ideation Washing Machine) and others less (e.g. House of Quality). A practical approach tends to pay off.

## Useful Links

[Paint your City Project](#) | [Expertise Network Sustainable Urban Tourism](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: BARCELONA, SPAIN



### Key Challenge

Displacement and marginalisation of the local population.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Laws and regulations; Digital solutions.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Urban

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 98.21 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 1,636,193 in 2022

**Type of Tourism** | Coastal, maritime and inland water; Sports; Cultural; City; Business; MICE; Gastronomy.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local DMO is a Public-private partnership.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; Local residents; Accommodations; Restaurants and bars; Other tourism service providers; Local businesses.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Spatial and temporal concentration of visitors; Increase in the cost of living due to tourism; Deterioration and congestion of infrastructure including commercial gentrification; Insufficient or declining acceptance of tourism

### Context & Background

Barcelona recorded 8,278,155 million tourist arrivals and 21,707,960 overnight stays in 2023, of which around 80% were international tourists. In addition, there are around 3.5 million cruise ship visitors and 1.6-million-day visitors. Consequently, tourism is an important part of the economy in the city, accounting for 12-14% of GDP and around 12% of jobs in 2023.

### Key Challenge

Since the 1990s, the number of overnight stays by tourists has increased more than fivefold. Despite all the positive aspects of this development, the large number of tourists in the relatively small area of Barcelona is causing problems, and the displacement and marginalisation of the local population has repeatedly led to protests.



**Implementation of Solutions:** With the aim of maintaining the positive economic benefits of tourism, the city has adopted regulatory and steering measures to mitigate the negative social impacts of tourism in the interest of preserving the quality of life and social equity.

## SOLUTIONS

- The establishment of the [City and Tourism Council](#) by the city government (2015) – which includes residents, representatives of the tourism industry, environmental associations, social groups and others – ensures that the opinions of residents and other tourism stakeholders is included in decision-making processes, through regular surveys of residents. This has led, among other things, to promotion and funding of local initiatives by the local authorities (e.g., for the renovation of communal spaces).
- The [Barcelona Tourism Observatory](#) was created to provide data for continuous monitoring of the tourism situation and fact-based decision-making in the context of sustainable tourism.
- The [Special Plan for Tourist Accommodation \(PEUAT\)](#), introduced in 2022, regulates the construction and short-term rental of tourist accommodation, such as short-term student housing, tourist apartments, shared apartments, hotels and hostels to counteract the rise in housing prices. In 2024, Barcelona announced that it would ban the rental of apartments to tourists by 2028 to improve the quality of life of residents.
- [Increase of the tourist tax](#) to finance important municipal services such as cleaning, security, public transport and lighting through the additional revenue.
- *Restrictions* have been imposed on some tourist activities, including regulations on souvenir shops, bars and restaurants (especially terraces), take-away shops and lockers. In addition, restrictions have been introduced on cruise ships. Giant ships are no longer allowed to dock at the city's ports and must dock south of the city centre. A limit of seven cruise terminals has also been introduced (previously ten).
- To reduce the pressure on congested areas and the resulting negative impact on the quality of life of locals, several measures have been implemented, including:
  - The [Check Barcelona app](#), launched in 2021, consisting of a city guide with real-time information on visitor flows at tourist attractions and ticket availability.
  - [The Smou app](#), launched in 2019, which provides residents and visitors with real-time information on road congestion and mobility options, including parking, information on public transport and other mobility services. This app is mainly used by residents.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires strong political will and stakeholder cooperation).

**Cost & funding source:** Costs and funding sources (public, private) vary depending on the initiative and project.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success Factors: Raising awareness of the importance of the regulations within the tourism sector; Residents' commitment to improve the situation; Local political leadership's commitment; The provision of good public services (mobility, transport, education, etc.); Communication with the most negatively affected stakeholders.

Barriers: Initial businesses' opposition to the regulations; Protests and aggressive discussions in public, institutional and media settings.

## Results and Impacts

- Revenue from tourism tax per capita increased in 2023. The communication of the investments financed through tourism tax has generated positive feedback.
- The share of tourists using public transport to travel within the city increased to 27.7% in 2023.
- Most of the population agreed to the new tourism laws and acceptance of tourism is still high. In 2023, 70.8% of residents believed that tourism was beneficial to the community.
- The tourism market players have changed their perspective on tourism, from a purely economic one to a social one.
- As residents and other organisations were consulted, the intensity of debates gradually decreased – for example at meetings of the Tourism and the City Council – and compromises and understanding were reached.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Prevention measures are needed to overcome overtourism.
- The implementation of all measures must be seen as a long-term process.
- Coordination and cooperation at all levels, with economic actors, residents and municipal departments are very important.
- Tourism organisations at regional and national level must also be consulted when planning and implementing measures to pursue a common line.
- For the acceptance of tourism, a correct management of tourism activities and its clear communication are of key importance.

## Useful Links

[Data and Studies](#) | [Barcelona Tourism & City Council](#) | [Special Plan for Tourist Accommodation \(PEUAT\)](#) | [Observatory of Tourism](#)

## Contact Person

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**SOCIAL**

**SUSTAINABLE  
EU TOURISM**



Shaping the Tourism of Tomorrow

## BEST PRACTICE: BRUGES, BELGIUM



### Key Challenge

Displacement and marginalisation of the local population.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Laws and regulations; Promotional campaigns; Digital solutions.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Urban

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 138.4 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 118,509 in 2022

**Type of Tourism** | Cultural; City; Business; MICE; Gastronomy.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a 100% subsidiary of the municipality.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; Local residents; Tourists; Accommodations; Other tourism service providers; Local businesses.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Spatial and temporal concentration of visitors; Increase in the cost of living due to tourism; Deterioration and congestion of infrastructure including commercial gentrification; Insufficient or declining acceptance of tourism; Measurement and Monitoring of sustainable tourism.

### Context & Background

The city centre of Bruges is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the city is also home to a large commercial and passenger port. Tourism has experienced a moderate and slow increase since 2010, with 1.1 million arrivals and 1.8 million overnight stays (81% international tourists) in 2023. In total, there were 8.3 million visitors to the city in 2023, of which 6.1 million were day tourists. In 2023, tourism accounted for more than 10% of GDP and for 5-10% of employment.

### Key Challenge

Due to the lack of industrial activity, tourism in Bruges was seen as a route to prosperity since the early 20th century. In the 1980s, the increasing number of tourists began to have negative effects and residents launched the “SOS for a liveable Bruges” protests. This prompted the city authorities to take measures to manage and control the impact of tourism at an early stage.



**Implementation of Solutions:** The “[Strategic vision memorandum tourism 2019-2024](#)” proclaims the principle that tourism not only contributes to the local economy but also creates social added value and the measures against overtourism are defined accordingly.

## SOLUTIONS

- To avoid overtourism, Bruges has been using a *concentration model* since the 1980s, which concentrates tourism in Bruges on a small area (4.4 km<sup>2</sup>), the so-called “Golden Triangle”.
- Since the 1980s, the city’s accommodation sector has been controlled by the following measures:
  - Small family-run hotels in historic buildings are protected by the city council and promoted by the DMO to preserve the city’s charm and support the local economy.
  - To control the flow of tourists and to protect the affordability of downtown living, a *ban on the construction of new hotels* was imposed in 1996, followed by a ban on the construction of new holiday homes in 2002.
  - A *pioneer law* stipulates that shared accommodation (e.g. Airbnb), can only be offered by residents who actually live there. This is intended to prevent non-locals from buying apartments and to provide additional income for locals. Airbnb providers must also pay taxes (income tax, VAT (value added tax), tourist tax).
- Limitation and restriction of tourist offers to limit the number of visitors by:
  - *Introducing caps on city tour licenses* for all means of touristic transport. This means 20 licenses for boat companies (which have been converted to electric), 13 for horse carriages, and 3 for sightseeing busses. In addition, a *code of conduct for guided tours* has been developed and a maximum group size was established.
  - In 2022, a *cap of two cruise ships per day* was created. However, this law is to be tightened again and target the number of passengers rather than of ships.
- In November 2024, there will be consultations with the EU on the issue of commercial gentrification as EU laws grant the [freedom of establishment and freedom to provide services](#).
- Bruges relies on *monitoring and big data management*, which creates user profiles and records peak times to make evidence-based strategic or marketing decisions.
- *Surveys* on the attitude of the local population towards tourism are regularly carried out to take people’s opinions into account in tourism planning.
- The marketing strategy focuses on specific segments such as cultural tourists or families to reach the desired target audience. Since 2005, Bruges no longer spends money on marketing day trips and certain events are strategically placed and organised in the low season months.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires strong political will).

**Cost & funding source:** At first glance, the regulatory measures do not entail any costs for the city and municipality. However, restrictions on tourist accommodation, tourist licenses and other measures can lead to lower revenues in the form of tourist taxes, lower added value and fewer jobs in the tourism sector.





## Success Factors & Barriers

Success Factors: A stable network with other destinations and cities for exchanging and learning from best practices; Close cooperation with the community, making regulatory approaches easier to implement; Many successfully implemented approaches that did not focus primarily on tourism growth; Emphasis on the importance of the opinion of the local population.

Barriers: The change of different political parties in the city government, to which the DMO always has to adapt.

## Results and Impacts

- Through permanent monitoring, Bruges has a comprehensive overview of all tourist activities and pressures.
- In 2023, around 64% of the population considers tourism to be an important and irreplaceable part of Bruges' economy.
- Airbnb providers offer an average of only 1.5 accommodations in Bruges.
- Noise decreased thanks to regulations reducing the number of buses in the centre, quiet electric boats, and a ban on shouting and use of electronic amplification by tour guides (and there is almost no offer for party tourists).
- Except for the Golden Triangle, there is a high standard of living.
- Compared to other cities in Belgium, Bruges is average in terms of rising living costs.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Restrictions and regulations are a good way to control tourism, but they need to be adjusted regularly.
- Depending on the situation and identity of a destination, concentrating tourist activities may be more effective than distributing them throughout the city.
- The concentration model also simplifies the monitoring and measurement of tourism.
- The proactive and transparent communication of the investments financed through the tourism tax creates a greater understanding and acceptance of tourism.

## Useful Links

- [Strategic vision memorandum tourism 2019-2024](#) | Visit Bruges

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: LIEPAJA, LATVIA

### Key Challenge

Accessibility and inclusivity of services and facilities.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Capacity building; Investments in infrastructure and product development.



### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Coastal

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 68.02 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 67,591 in 2022

**Type of Tourism** | Coastal, maritime and inland water; Sports; Cultural.

**Tourism organisation** | City Council for planning and management; Tourism Information Office for promotion, 100% funded by the city.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; Local residents; Tourists; ALL tourism service providers.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Changing consumer preferences towards more sustainability.

### Context & Background

Liepaja is a port city with an economy based on several sectors, placing a strong emphasis on sustainability and circular economy. Tourism in Liepaja currently accounts for about 4% of its GDP and has grown steadily over the last decade. In 2023, 112,714 arrivals (196,538 overnight stays) were recorded, with the main season being in summer.

### Key Challenge

The city administration has recognised the trend towards accessibility and inclusion and is committed to ensuring that locals and tourists can enjoy what the city has to offer regardless of age and ability level (people with disabilities, seniors, young parents).



**Implementation of Solutions:** The measures to develop accessible tourism in Liepāja specifically apply the principles of universal design and are reflected in several investments aimed at supporting people with disabilities and the elderly.

## SOLUTIONS

- [Basic infrastructure measures](#) for accessible and inclusive tourism were taken early (from 2012) and include:
  - Tactile paving (bumps) on sidewalks and tactile maps distributed throughout the city to enable blind and visually impaired people to move around independently.
  - Creation of an accessible beach and sea area with showers, changing rooms and a wooden walkway to the sea, making it easier for wheelchair users and young parents with strollers to get to the sea. Special swimming wheelchairs are also available.
  - During the beach season, audio buoys are installed in the water to give blind people a signal about how far they can swim.
- The [comprehensive tourist offer](#) includes:
  - Almost all hotels in Liepāja adhere to international accessibility reference frameworks (e.g. [ISO 21902 Accessible Tourism for All](#) of the UNWTO) and meet the minimum standards for accessibility, including one hotel that is certified to accommodate blind people.
  - All tour guides are trained to guide people with physical disabilities as part of a local qualification program organised by the local Destination Management Organisation (DMO).
  - [“Hear, smell, touch Liepāja”](#), a tour for blind and visually impaired people, led by a trained blind guide and covering the most important cultural and historical sites in Liepāja.
  - Liepāja is currently trying to build *a metaverse* to enable digital travel for people who are no longer mobile.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires political will and stakeholder cooperation).

**Cost & funding source:** For infrastructure investments: 116,329 euros in 2012 from the municipal budget and the EU; 102,321 euros in 2020 from the municipal budget, the national government and the EU; 2.75 million euros in 2021 – ongoing for the reconstruction of the exits of the central beach of Liepāja in 2021 from the municipal budget, the national government and the EU. EU funding programmes include the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund.

## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: European funding; The commitment and openness of the population to change; A generally high level of understanding of the issue among most people; The European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) Award 2013, which helped push forward the ambitious plans.

Barriers: Difficult or even impossible modifications to existing infrastructure, particularly around the beach and other major attractions that were not originally designed with accessibility in mind; the lack of interest of some private stakeholders to invest in accessibility measures.

## Results and Impacts

- The barrier-free infrastructure benefits all people with physical limitations (elderly people, families with strollers, disabled people), both locals and tourists.
- Due to the efforts of the municipality and the DMO, stakeholder groups (especially hotels) also recognised the importance of this issue and took action.
- The EDEN Award 2013, which gave a push for further initiatives.
- Positive reputation for Liepaja as a barrier-free tourist destination.
- Improved quality of life and awareness of the issue of accessibility among the local population.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- External funding is very important for a small destination.
- Accessibility and inclusivity efforts must be widely communicated for greater visibility and dissemination, especially among people with disabilities (this is still a weak point in Liepaja).
- Accessibility for all should be common practice for municipalities and tourism destinations.

## Useful Links

[Accessible Tourism](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: BORDEAUX, FRANCE



### Key Challenge

Accessibility and inclusivity of services and facilities.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Certification; Promotional campaigns; Digital solutions; Investments in infrastructure and product development.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Urban

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 578.27 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 831,534 in 2021

**Type of Tourism** | Cultural; City; MICE; Gastronomy.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a Public-private partnership.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local residents; Tourists; ALL tourism service providers; Transport companies.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Changing consumer preferences towards more sustainability; Appropriate local tourism strategies and policies to accelerate the transition to sustainable tourism; Lack of community participation in tourism activities.

### Context & Background

Tourism in Bordeaux currently represents around 7.5% of GDP and 10% of employment and has grown steadily over the last decade. In 2023, around 1.75 million arrivals, a third of which in the MICE segment, and 7 million overnight stays were registered. To make this growth as sustainable as possible, the DMO has launched a participatory community forum ([Agora Forum](#)) involving many stakeholders, including local residents and social organisations.

### Key Challenge

Ensuring that the growing demand for tourism in Bordeaux did not overlook the needs of people with disabilities and the ageing population, while promoting inclusion and equality in a city where accessibility was becoming increasingly important.



**Implementation of Solutions:** Bordeaux has a comprehensive approach to accessibility and inclusivity that considers different perspectives. The [Agora Forum](#) plays a central role in the planning and implementation of accessibility measures.

## SOLUTIONS

- The [Bordeaux Accessible Guide](#) for people with disabilities, published in 2022, contains information on accommodation, restaurants and other tourism services, travel routes and guided tours, practical information (e.g. transport, beaches), and contacts for people with disabilities. It includes some innovative offers such as:
  - Raised relief maps of three touristic areas that allow visually impaired visitors to discover the architecture of the most important monuments by touch.
  - Museums and attractions in Bordeaux that involve different senses, such as the [Cité du Vin Museum](#), which offers tactile exhibitions and audio guides for visually impaired visitors.
  - ["Mono-Pousseur" or tandem bicycles](#) for blind, visually impaired people and wheelchair users.
- To enable *barrier-free mobility*, since 2003, the city has built four barrier-free tram lines with a 66 km long network. The trams are 100% barrier-free thanks to large sliding doors and step-free access. The river shuttle and buses are also fully barrier-free and have specially reserved spaces for wheelchair users.
- The ["Destination for All" label](#), created by the French Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Solidarity and Social Cohesion, was awarded to Bordeaux for the first time in 2014 due to its commitment to accessible and inclusive tourism offers and services. In addition, many establishments are certified with the national ["Tourisme & Handicap"](#) quality label, which certifies the accessibility of holiday, leisure and cultural facilities for people with disabilities (learning disabilities, motor, visual and hearing impairments).
- [Bordeaux Solid'AIR](#), is a local tourism initiative aimed at providing leisure opportunities to those in precarious situations, such as offering hotel stays for victims of domestic violence and holidays for low-income families. It connects tourism professionals, cultural institutions, and social workers to promote social equality within the city.
- Bordeaux has implemented an *enhanced communication strategy* targeting multiple senses, including visual, auditory and tactile channels, such as videos on social media, to ensure comprehensive and inclusive access to information. These tools include:
  - The ["Bordeaux Accessible" section](#) of the Bordeaux Métropole Tourist Office website;
  - [TOOLIB](#), a shared mobility app for services for people with disabilities;
  - [Mobalink](#), a website and app for finding, recommending and sharing, including a live chat function.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires political will and stakeholder cooperation).

**Cost & funding source:** Not available.

## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: The Agora Forum as a key driver for sustainable tourism in Bordeaux; The city administration, which is strongly committed to making the city accessible to all; Positive feedback from people with disabilities.

Barriers: The long time needed for the establishment of the Agora Forum and the many debates and discussions; The difficulties in making people aware of the inclusive offers.

## Results and Impacts

- Improved accessibility of (tourism) infrastructure and services in the city and surrounding area.
- Inclusive tours are well attended, and guides are happy and proud to have additional guests (in terms of income and doing something good at the same time).
- The Solid'Air programme was launched in 2023, and 600 beneficiaries and 20 local providers are already involved (museums, hotels, restaurants, etc.).
- Increased positive reputation of the city.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- To get a holistic picture, it is recommended to link the tourism office with other sectors and areas (social, environmental, etc.) of the city, as tourism is a typical cross-sectoral industry that involves more than just the direct stakeholders.
- Regular meetings with other administrative units of the city are useful for collaboration.
- It is crucial to understand the different needs of stakeholders, and in this case especially the needs of people with disabilities.
- Accessibility and inclusion are important to create a fairer society.

## Useful Links

[Tourism and Disability Guide](#) | [The Bordeaux Tourism Road Map 2022-2026](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: KATERINI, GREECE



### Key Challenge

Accessibility and inclusivity of services and facilities.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Capacity building; Investments in infrastructure and product development.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Coastal

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 684.04 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | ~ 85,000

**Type of Tourism** | Mountain; Coastal, maritime and inland water; Cultural; Health and wellness.

**Tourism organisation** | Municipality of Katerini.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/ government, Local residents, Tourists, Technology providers.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Dependence of the local economy on tourism; Changing consumer preferences towards more sustainability; Lack of community participation in tourism activities.

### Context & Background

Katerini, located in the Piera region, has attracted huge investments over the last 20 years and experienced rapid tourism development, with a total of around 20,000 beds in 2023. This resulted in 1,345,595 tourist arrivals with 8,333,927 overnight stays (6.1 days average length of stay) in 2023, with the seasonal focus being in summer. Tourism is therefore the most important economic sector, accounting for 24% of GDP in Piera (GDP for Katerini not available).

### Key Challenge

Statistics show that a large part of the population suffers from some form of physical or mental disability (in Greece, 18.2% of the population, 50% of whom are over 65 years old; in Europe, in total 80 million people). Katerini is focusing on promoting accessible tourism in order to meet the increasing demand and become more competitive.



**Implementation of Solutions:** To promote accessibility and inclusivity, Katerini has adopted universal design principles in tourism products, supported by new technologies to improve social sustainability.

## SOLUTIONS

- Katerini has installed five [Seatracs](#), an innovative solar-powered technical system that allows people with disabilities and mobility impairments to access the sea independently. In addition to the Seatracs, Katerini has also installed barrier-free infrastructures such as showers, toilets and a changing room for people with disabilities. Two hotels that focus on people with mobility problems are under construction. Plans are in place to expand the service for blind and visually impaired people.
- In 2021, the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) has initiated the "[Citizens for the Seatracs Volunteer Team](#)", which is a self-governing body that informs visitors and solves any mechanical problems. The volunteer group, with over 100 active members, communicates via social media (Facebook), and exchanges experiences, ideas and issues.
- In order to put the issue of accessibility more clearly into the context of its importance for tourism (as the region's main source of income) among local tourism businesses, local residents and tourists, the DMO has promoted this innovative offer through intensive marketing campaigns, including project brochures, [videos](#) and radio spots on the topic of accessible tourism.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires political will and stakeholder cooperation).

**Cost & funding source:** 60,000 euros purchase costs for each Seatrac, 10,000 euros annual maintenance costs of for all Seatracs; 100,000 euros for each rail of the four additional Seatracs planned for blind people. Around 1,000 euros annually for T-shirts and agreements with public buses for the "Citizen for the Seatracs volunteer team".



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: The strong involvement of the local population (volunteer group); The clear commitment of the municipality to accessible and inclusive tourism; The use of different means of communication to achieve greater visibility; The latest technological innovations (Seatracs) to integrate people with disabilities.

Barriers: Insufficient financial and human resources contributions from tourism companies.

## Results and Impacts

- The project was the winner of the 2022 Greek Tourism Award in the category of Accessible Tourism.
- Awareness of accessibility issues has increased in the local community and a sense of community has developed through the project.
- Increased use of Seatracs (695 times in 2021, 1062 times in 2022, 1619 times in 2023).
- So far, the volunteer group includes more than 100 volunteers.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- The growing demand for accessible tourism represents a great opportunity and is a prerequisite for any sustainable tourism policy and strategy.
- By taking accessibility into account when designing a facility or by making small adjustments to it, significant improvements in accessibility can be achieved, which can also lead to larger market shares.
- A barrier-free offer increases competitiveness and promotes customer loyalty.
- Especially in coastal areas, Seatracs (or similar infrastructure) should be implemented more often as there is a strong demand.
- People are willing to contribute with time and capacity if the topic is communicated appropriately. It is very important to use a bottom-up (almost self-organised) approach to volunteering with the locals (tourists as volunteers may not work well as they are not part of the community and are only temporarily in the destination).

## Useful Links

[Seatrac Katerini](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: CARBONIA, ITALY



### Key Challenge

Maintenance and conservation of cultural heritage sites.

### Type of Solution

Stakeholder participation and management; Digital solutions; Investments in infrastructure and product development; Research and Innovation.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Island

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 145.6 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 26,565 in 2022

**Type of Tourism** | Rural; Cultural; Gastronomy.

**Tourism Organisation** | No Destination Management Organisation (DMO), tourism is organised by the municipality in cooperation with regional tourism associations and cultural institutions.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; Other tourism service providers; Technology providers; Research and Development (R&D) organisations.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Creating local added value through tourism; Lack of stakeholder management (multi-level, cross-sectoral).

### Context & Background

Carbonia was founded in 1937, mainly to provide housing for the workers of the nearby coal mines. The mines closed in 1970, leading to high unemployment and the conversion to the metallurgical industry. Tourism gained importance through the renewal of the modernist, urban and mining landscape and the archaeological sites dating back to 9000 BC, providing added value for the protection and conservation of cultural heritage. In 2022, 404,631 tourist overnight stays were recorded, with the share of GDP and employment being less than 5%.

### Key Challenge

The preservation of cultural heritage represents a unique opportunity to create a new identity for the destination, with tourism promoting this renewal through the valorisation of cultural heritage, helping to curb depopulation and create new jobs.



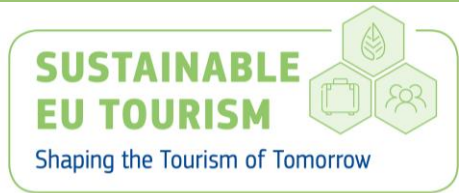
**Implementation of Solutions:** To transform the destination and create a new identity, the focus was on preserving and enhancing the cultural heritage, taking full account of the needs of the local population

## SOLUTIONS

- Regeneration and valorisation of industrial and archaeological monuments including:
  - Project “*Carbonia: the landscape machine*” (1999), which regenerated the town urban structure and converted the Serbariu mine and its infrastructure reopening the mining site as a park and museum.
  - Use of innovative, interactive technologies in the “*Museo del Carbone*”, such as touch screens and interactive maps, Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) installations that visually tell the story of coal mining in Carbonia.
  - Use of new technologies in the *Museum System of Carbonia (SiMuC)* to enhance the guest experience in this vast archaeological area, for example with free audio tours, QR codes, etc. For example, the *Archaeological Museum of Villa Sulcis*, which is part of SiMuC, displays virtual reconstructions recreating ancient sites and artifacts.
- *Preservation of the traditional language of Sardinia “Sardu”*, the traditional language of Sardinia, which is spoken by around 60,000 people. In Carbonia, all tourist information is available in Sardu, reflecting the town's commitment to preserving the language. Carbonia is also part of the *European Network for Linguistic Equality (ELEN)*, which promotes linguistic equality for lesser-used languages across Europe.
- *Membership in cultural networks* for research and innovation, enhancement of cultural and architectural sites, promotion of cultural tourism and dissemination of knowledge such as *ATRIUM (Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes)* or the “*European Route of Industrial Heritage*” (ERIH).

**Replicability potential:** Medium (requires strong political will and high investments).

**Cost & funding source:** Investments in cultural infrastructure have been financed mainly from national funds, but also from the region and from EU funding programmes such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and other EU structural funds.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Funding opportunities; Involvement in international cultural heritage networks; A well-outlined strategy and action plan; Continuity of political leadership of the municipality.

Barriers: No barriers identified.

## Results and Impacts

- Since the start of the “Carbonia, the landscape machine” project, the negative demographic trend in the city has been curbed and employment has increased by 12%.
- The authentic cultural offer by highlighting the Sardu language is also well received by the local population.
- Increased reputation as an important cultural heritage site.
- 72% increase in tourist numbers from 2022 to 2023.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- It is worth investing in interactive and immersive technologies such as VR, AR and digital archives to make cultural heritage more accessible and engaging for a diverse audience.
- To create a sense of ownership and ensure long-term support for heritage projects, it is advisable to involve local communities and empower them to participate in the preservation of cultural heritage through educational programs.
- Networking with kindred organisations is a key element and mutual learning is one of the main aspects of Carbonia's success.

## Useful Links

[Tourism in Carbonia](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: CORK, IRELAND



### Key Challenge

Maintenance and conservation of cultural heritage sites.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Digital solutions; Investments in infrastructure and product development; Research and Innovation.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Urban

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 820 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 584,156 in 2022

**Type of Tourism** | Rural; Coastal, maritime and inland water; Cultural; City; MICE; Gastronomy.

**Tourism Organisation** | Cork City and County council (strategic tourism planning and management); Visit Cork public-private sector partnership (tourism marketing).

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; Local residents; Tourists; Other tourism service providers; Research and Development (R&D) organisations.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Spatial and temporal concentration of visitors; Measurement and monitoring of sustainable tourism.

### Context & Background

Cork, with its rich cultural heritage, is the second most visited city in Ireland after Dublin, with around 2.5 million overnight stays in 2023. Tourism accounted for 14.4% of GDP in 2023 and is considered an important value-added factor for the protection and preservation of cultural heritage.

### Key Challenge

The protection and conservation of cultural heritage sites is vital to the preservation of Irish culture and history. Tourist spending supports conservation efforts, thereby preventing erosion of the cultural landscape and ensuring that Cork remains an attractive cultural tourist destination.





**Implementation of Solutions:** The city and the county have a strong framework for the preservation of cultural heritage, which is supported by national and local initiatives as well as by active citizen engagement.

## SOLUTIONS

- There are over 1,100 listed buildings and structures in Cork with various conservation plans in place. The conservation of these heritage sites is based on a number of conservation and management plans, most notably the Cork City Development Plan, which includes a dedicated volume on [Built Heritage Objectives](#).
- The [“Playful Culture Trail”](#) – a joint project of around 30 museums, galleries and attractions (launched in 2021) – makes cultural heritage attractive for children in the summer months through interactive, playful components.
- Cork is using new technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) to enhance its historical attractions. One example is [Spike Island](#), which has implemented AR experiences that allow visitors to [view historical recreations](#) via their mobile devices.
- The participation in the project [“Big and Open Data for Atlantic Heritage \(BODAH\)”](#) (2019-2021) aimed to achieve a higher level of sustainability in local tourism and cultural heritage management. Together with the Technical University Munster, an early warning model that uses on-site sensor equipment in conjunction with locally and regionally available live data was developed. This tool can be used, for example, to estimate the number of visitors to a cultural heritage site on any given date, to finally better manage visitor flows.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires innovation-minded leadership, and funding).

**Cost & funding source:** “Playful Cultural trail” funded by the Cork City Council on a small budget with participation from most of the attractions; 30,000 euros per year funded by the Spike Island organisation; 1,573,373 euros for BODAH project co-funded (75%) by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Ireland's Department of Cultural Heritage has built strong partnerships; External funding sources (national or EU); High level of local community engagement; Ongoing communication to bring together all relevant stakeholders.

Barriers: Insufficient funding for certain projects; Regulations that slow down the entire process (monument protection, safety aspects, etc.); Stakeholders who are not willing to participate in the initiatives.

## Results and Impacts

- Cork has protected the cultural heritage for the future and made it accessible to all who are interested.
- Preservation helps people to identify more with history and their community (an important point given the Irish diaspora).
- Visitor numbers increased by 10%.
- Greater visitor satisfaction through visitor management.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- It's crucial to preserve the authenticity of the cultural site or tradition, ensuring that restorations or activities respect the original form, values, and significance of the heritage.
- Engaging local communities is essential, as they are the custodians of the heritage. Their input, participation, and benefit from tourism can foster pride and ensures that traditions are honoured.
- Regular checks on the current condition of heritage sites are highly recommended.
- Tourism should be managed in a way that minimises environmental impact and prevents over-tourism, which can damage cultural sites.

## Useful Links

[Arts, Culture & Heritage](#)

## Contact Person

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## **BEST PRACTICE: NASSFELD-PRESSEGGER SEE, LESACHTAL, WEISSENSEE (NLW), AUSTRIA**



### **Key Challenge**

Appropriate local tourism strategies and policies to accelerate the transition to sustainable tourism.

### **Type of Solution**

Stakeholder participation and management; Certification.

### **Case Classification**

**Type of Destination** | Rural

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 986 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 20,000 in 2023

**Type of Tourism** | Ecotourism; Mountain; Rural; Sports; Cultural; Health and wellness.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local DMO is a private limited company (shareholders are 51% communities, 49% tourism businesses).

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; Local residents; All tourism service providers; Local farmers and producers; Transport companies.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Creating local added value through tourism; Insufficient or declining acceptance of tourism; Poor working conditions in the tourism industry; Sustainable and smart mobility solutions.

### **Context & Background**

A decade ago, the rural region of Nassfeld-Pressesegger See, Lesachtal and Weissensee in the south of Austria created a diverse year-round tourism offer (mountains and lakes), thereby achieving stable tourism growth. Tourism plays an important role in the economy, accounting for around 18% of GDP and 33% of employment. In 2023, around 2.2 million overnight stays were recorded, with a tourism intensity of 1 (1 tourist per inhabitant).

### **Key Challenge**

The region has been affected by emigration due to the lack and precarity of job opportunities and, in part, the poor acceptance of tourism. This situation has led to a rethinking of tourism, with local people and the culture of hospitality being moved to the centre of the tourism vision.



**Implementation of Solutions:** The comprehensive and forward-oriented policies of an effective Destination Management Organisation (DMO) aim to build a strong vision and identity, but also to consolidate the welcoming culture according to the principle: “Where locals are happy, tourists also come willingly.”

## SOLUTIONS

- In 1998, a new joint Destination Management Organisation was founded for the three regions Nassfeld-Presegger See, Lesachtal and Weissensee. The new, larger DMO (at least 1.5 million overnight stays) was prompted by the strong development of global tourism and the rapid increase in communication systems (online, social, etc.), the possibility of hiring specialised staff (e.g., for online advertising, data specialists), better support for employees and stakeholders, and the concentration of budgets. Since the leisure activities of guests and locals do not end in municipal boundaries, there was a need to develop infrastructure and experience offerings that go beyond regional boundaries.
- Ecological infrastructure measures have been implemented in the communities before the systematic transition to sustainability: the *conversion of the sewage system* to protect nature and revitalise lakes, measures to promote soft and slow mobility, such as nature park buses, train station shuttles or the *construction of a valley railway* in Nassfeld to reduce car traffic, accompanied by a [comprehensive mobility system](#) that makes cars unnecessary for local residents and tourists. The destination has also established itself as the world's first slow food tourist destination, supported by slow food international. Today a total of 124 Slow Food experiences are offered, which have also been adopted by educational institutions as best practices.
- Thanks to the ecological infrastructure measures undertaken and a clear vision for the future, after a three-year certification process to become the “Most Sustainable Region in Austria” according to GSTC criteria, the region was certified in 2021 and has since been recertified annually. The destination has also been awarded the Austrian Ecolabel. Current sustainability measures focus on green events, sustainable travel programs, development of new energy communities, an employer card with many employee benefits, and mobility.

**Replicability potential:** Medium (requires political will, significant financial resources (infrastructure), and strong cooperation).

**Cost & funding source:** 400,000 euros for “Slow Food Travel”, funded by the Austrian Ministry of Economic Affairs; Over 70 million euros for the valley railway developed by the local mountain railways and financed through a public-private partnership; 1 to 1.2 million euros annually (since 2010) for the tourism related mobility system, funded by lift companies, municipalities and tourism stakeholders; a total of 1 million euros for certification, funded by the Austrian Federal Ministry for the Environment and the Austrian Climate Fund as part of the “initiative of the most sustainable regions in Austria”.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Involvement of as many stakeholders as possible in the concept development to prevent complaints; Close cooperation with stakeholders; Use of the Austrian Ecolabel as a basis for tourism strategy development; The existence of two main seasons that enable planning security and better working conditions; Sufficient funding; Good arguments (including economic ones) that could be used to convince tourism companies.

Barriers: Different priorities and mindsets (profitability versus altruism); In the absence of economic necessity, it was quite difficult to convince and involve people.

## Results and Impacts

- In addition to the destination's certification according to GSTC and the Austrian Ecolabel, 32 companies were awarded the Austrian Ecolabel and were able to save costs by implementing sustainable measures in the areas of energy, cleaning and food waste.
- Farmers and small businesses in the Slow Food Travel project as well as employees involved in the "Most Sustainable Destination in Austria" initiative stated that environmental quality and sustainable measures were the deciding factors for them to return to the region or work there.
- Depending on the market of origin, between 29% and 62% of summer guests say that "sustainability is important to them when making travel decisions" (between 12% and 50% of winter guests).

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Networks and partnerships should be established before planning begins to agree on common goals.
- A key to sustainability awareness in the community is the involvement of children in education towards sustainability.
- The basis for good coexistence in the region is a well-developed and functioning infrastructure. It is important to take economic aspects into account when developing sustainability measures to avoid criticism.
- Consistent communication with the population about sustainability measures and their benefits is important.

## Useful Links

[Model region for the "Most Sustainable Region in Austria"](#) | NLW Tourismus Marketing

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: TAHKO, FINLAND



### Key Challenge

Appropriate local tourism strategies and policies to accelerate the transition to sustainable and resilient tourism.

### Type of Solution

Stakeholder participation and management; Certification; Capacity building.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Rural

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 10 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | Tourist Resort

**Type of Tourism** | Ecotourism; Adventure; Coastal, maritime, and inland water; Sports.

**Tourism Organisation** | Regional Destination Management Organisation (DMO) and Destination Development Company, both are public-private partnerships.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Accommodations; Restaurants and bars; Other tourism service providers.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Dependence of the local economy on tourism; Degradation and loss of biodiversity; Lack of knowledge and skills of stakeholders.

### Context & Background

Tahko is a tourist resort in the heart of Finland, characterised by its wide range of outdoor and sports activities for different target groups. Tourism is the resort's only source of income. In 2023, the 8,500 beds in various types of accommodation generated around 280,000 overnight stays, 90% of which were domestic (before the Ukrainian war, 30% were international tourists, mainly from Russia).

### Key Challenge

Since tourism in Tahko completely depends on intact nature, protecting it is of vital importance. Therefore, Tahko considers essential to promote sustainable tourism in the long-term using a systematic approach that also includes economic and socio-cultural aspects.



**Implementation of Solutions:** To implement a comprehensive and systematic sustainability approach in the resort, Tahko decided to promote and support the certification of the tourism service providers and the destination.

## SOLUTIONS

Tahko sought recognition in the national *“Sustainable Travel Finland” (STF)* programme, a comprehensive national sustainability programme that, in addition to meeting a number of criteria regarding socio-economic, cultural and legal responsibility, also requires obtaining an already recognised environmental certification – in Tahko’s case, this is the EcoCompass certification.

- Following a two-year certification process, Tahko’s Destination Management Organisation (DMO) and businesses received the *EcoCompass certification* as its first sustainability certificate. To achieve certification, it was crucial to bring a wide range of experts on board to raise awareness and provide training on sustainable development. Almost 30 companies received an environmental certification in this process.
- The *“Sustainable Travel Finland” (STF)* label, which is awarded by the national tourism association Visit Finland, aims to provide tourism companies and destinations with a sustainable tourism development model that facilitates the introduction and communication of responsible practices. Tahko started the 2-year accreditation process in 2022. Since the destination was already well prepared thanks to the EcoCompass certification and the companies were highly motivated, the Sustainable Travel Finland accreditation process was completed a year earlier and Tahko became the first tourism destination in Finland to receive the Sustainable Travel Finland label. Reaccreditation takes place every two years. Reaccreditations also influence the planning of future sustainability projects such as accessibility, communication networks, and recycling.
- Data collection on visitors and the economic and environmental impacts of their trips is carried out with the support of the *Power Bi app* and a regional analytics company.

**Replicability potential:** Very high (requires political will and stakeholder cooperation).

**Cost & funding source:** For the EcoCompass certification around 215,000 euros, mainly funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) (the DMO only provided a small share of the funding); The certification fee per company is around 300 to 500 euros annually, plus the audit costs of around 500 to 1000 euros every three years; For the STF accreditation around 40,000 euros, financed from the regular DMO budget available for sustainable development.





## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: High level of commitment from companies and good communication with all parties involved; The reduced demand caused by the Covid-19 pandemic freed up capacity to focus on the sustainability process; Clear roadmap and structure for certification; Sufficient funding.

Barriers: Financial constraints for some companies due to the Covid-19 pandemic; High burden of sustainability reporting for small companies due to limited human resources.

## Results and Impacts

- The spotlight on Tahko as the first certified destination in Finland increased its visibility, especially on the Finnish market.
- The data collected during the certification process made tourism development more transparent.
- In the destination, stakeholders feel an increased responsibility towards environmental and social issues.
- The local economy has been strengthened, resulting in more jobs.
- Other destinations are getting in touch to learn from Tahko.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- It is crucial to involve companies in the project at an early stage (also to set up financing).
- A clear vision helps to implement the activities and measures in the long-term.
- The cooperation of all those involved is pivotal, as such large projects cannot be carried out alone.
- It is important not only to promote responsible tourism at the destination, but also to communicate these efforts to locals and tourists, to increase both the acceptance of tourism among the population and the reputation of the destination among tourists.
- Well-prepared data are critical to convincing stakeholders and effectively explaining sustainability-related concepts.

## Useful Links

- [Sustainability in Tahko](#) | [Sustainable Travel Finland](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: AZORES, PORTUGAL



### Key Challenge

Lack of stakeholder management (multi-level, cross-sectoral).

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Certification; Capacity building.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Island

**Territorial Level** | NUTS 1

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 2,346 km<sup>2</sup> **Population** | 236,413 in 2021

**Type of Tourism** | Ecotourism; Rural; Coastal, maritime and inland water.

**Tourism organisation** | The Regional Government is responsible through several bodies, such as the Regional Directorate for Tourism (policies) and the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) Azores (promotion).

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; ALL tourism service providers; Local businesses.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Appropriate local tourism strategies and policies to accelerate the transition to sustainable tourism; Growth-oriented mindset of destination stakeholders.

### Context & Background

The Azores are an archipelago of nine autonomous volcanic islands in the North Atlantic, which makes the management of the destination very complex. Tourism is one of the islands' main economic sectors. When the Azores opened its airspace to low-cost airlines in 2015, the number of overnight stays increased strongly and continuously, reaching 3.8 million (1.2 million arrivals) in 2023.

### Key Challenge

The explosive increase in overnight stays and the aim to avoid negative impacts of tourism prompted the government to focus its tourism strategy on sustainability rather than quantitative growth. To achieve this, sufficient acceptance had to be achieved among the representatives of the nine autonomous islands.



**Implementation of Solutions:** To support the implementation of a sustainable tourism strategy and achieve broad acceptance, the Azores started a broad stakeholder collaboration and certification process in 2017.

## SOLUTION

- The Government of the Azores has adopted a collaborative and inclusive governance model. *Three working groups* were established to identify solutions for sustainable development. They included: (1) The regional community with tourism associations, the regional federation of fisheries, representatives of security services and others; (2) Sustainability teams of the public entities of the island governments (the so-called “green teams” of the islands); (3) Local companies. The public, private and NGO development projects mainly addressed raising awareness of changes in tourism demand and the opportunities of the twin transition for tourism. All these efforts were based on the criteria of [Earth Check](#) and [The Global Sustainable Tourism Council \(GSTC\)](#). To sustain these efforts, the Azores organise at least two annual *Sustainability Forums* that support networking and best practices.
- The *Destination Sustainability Action Plan 2030* was first launched in 2019 and is revised every year with all destination stakeholders to monitor the Action Plan, analyse which actions were implemented, and collect new commitments.
- To support the certification process and build capacity, the DMO coordinates the *Azores Sustainability Charter*, under which small and medium-sized enterprises from all sectors participate in training workshops on sustainability. They also receive support in the implementation of sustainability reports (reporting on ESG indicators). In addition, an interactive platform has been created where local SMEs can share sustainability reports, indicators and best practices and access specific tools, templates and news on sustainable development in the Azores. 200 tourism companies, mostly large or medium-sized, are participating voluntarily in this initiative. In 2019, the Azores became the first archipelago in the world to be certified by EarthCheck as a “Sustainable Destination” according to the GSTC criteria and are aiming for the Gold certification in 2024.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires strong political will, leadership, and collaboration).

**Cost & funding source:** 200,000 euros for the development of the sustainability charter and the certification process. The first two years were funded by the EU from the 2020 Operational Programme (85%). After that, it is funded by the government. The training workshops are included in the DMO budget.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Alignment with the Earth Check guidelines; Collaboration of all entities that join and comply with the charter; Long-term perspective of the initiatives.

Barriers: Insufficient personnel resources in the DMO for this very complex approach.

## Results and Impacts

- Creating synergies between different tourism providers and empowering more than 350 people and companies (not only in the tourism sector).
- Systematic nature conservation (more than 30 Blue Flag beaches, 13 Ramsar sites for wetlands, and UNESCO Biosphere recognition of 3 islands).
- Increased awareness and knowledge of sustainability for all relevant sectors on the islands.
- Improvement of overall island management, as the indicators collected in the certification process, such as greenhouse gases, waste management and water management (annual measurement) can also be transferred to other industries.
- The Azores received several awards and recognitions, including "[Europe's Leading Adventure Tourism Destination](#)".

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- The role of government's leadership was key in conceiving and implementing the Destination Sustainability Action Plan 2030.
- Despite the collaborative approach, it was of utmost importance to adhere to the plan and decisions taken by the government through a top-down approach.

## Useful Links

[Strategic Marketing Plan for the Azores – Horizon 2030](#) | [Sustainable Azores](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: VAASA REGION, FINLAND



### Key Challenge

Lack of stakeholder management (multi-level, cross-sectoral).

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Certification; Capacity building.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Mixed

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 397.45 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 118,000 in 2023

**Type of Tourism** | Ecotourism; Rural; Coastal, maritime and inland water Cultural; Business; MICE.

**Tourism Organisation** | Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is 100% funded by the eight municipalities of the Vaasa region.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; All tourism service providers.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Changing consumer preferences towards more sustainability; Appropriate local tourism strategies and policies to accelerate the transition to sustainable and resilient tourism; Lack of awareness among tourism stakeholders regarding sustainability and resilience.

### Context & Background

Vaasa region, consisting of eight municipalities on the west coast of Finland, is an industrial area and tourism plays a minor role in regional value creation, with less than 5% for both GDP and employment. With a moderate increase in tourism over the past 10 years, in 2023, the region recorded 248,000 tourist arrivals and generated 468,000 overnight stays, 40% of which are related to business travel. More than 80% of tourists came from neighbouring Nordic countries.

### Key Challenge

The global trend of increasing demand for sustainable tourism and the sustainability leadership of the region's largest company, Energy Vaasa, were the driving forces behind developing a sustainable tourism strategy for the region and involving as many tourism stakeholders as possible in the transformation process.



**Implementation of Solutions:** To implement a comprehensive and systematic approach to sustainability in the region, Visit Vaasa follows a collaborative stakeholder approach that strengthens its sustainability commitment and the implementation of sustainability measures.

## SOLUTIONS

- Stakeholder management is considered crucial for sustainable change in tourism, as sustainable performance can only be achieved with the sustainable commitment of tourism stakeholders. The Destination Management Organisation (DMO) carries out its stakeholder management at two levels:
  - At municipal level, by engaging local communities, with each municipality having developed its own urban sustainability strategy.
  - At corporate level, by encouraging all tourism providers and entrepreneurs in the region to participate in Visit Finland's Sustainable Travel Finland programme such as the best practice [Wasaline transports](#). Workshops, meetings and newsletters are designed to support this and raise awareness and knowledge.
- The DMO plays a central role in the transition to sustainable tourism and has initiated the following measures:
  - It signed Finland's [National principles for sustainable tourism](#) (2023), which express the comprehensive commitment to sustainable tourism.
  - Tourism Businesses and the DMO obtained the [EcoCompass certificate](#), an industry-independent environmental certification in Finland based on the international standard ISO 14001.
  - It initiated the national ["Sustainable Travel Finland \(STF\)"](#) label 's accreditation process which will be completed by the end of 2024.
  - *Internal training* and monthly meetings on sustainability topics to raise awareness and deepen knowledge of the topic.
- In addition, the DMO is committed to the development of sustainable tourism offers and environmentally friendly infrastructure, such as the tourist enhancement of the Kvarken Archipelago (UNESCO World Heritage Site), the participation in the development of the Bothnian Coastal Route project, the improvement of cycle routes and nature trails within the destination to promote environmentally friendly mobility.
- Comprehensive information about sustainable holidays, such as the DMO website, raises tourists' awareness on the topic.

**Replicability potential:** Very high (requires DMO leadership and stakeholder cooperation).

**Cost & funding source:** The initial cost for STF certification was around 40,000 euros, no annual fee; around 30,000 euros annual fee for EcoCompass.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Continuous cross-sector communication between the DMO and all interest groups; Openness of companies and joint problem solving with the DMO; Competition in terms of sustainability activities between tourism companies; The STF label as a good guide.

Barriers: Lack of knowledge about sustainability.

### Results and Impacts

- 30 tourism businesses have already been certified, 13 of which have been awarded the STF label.
- A highly sustainable transport system has been created (buses, trains, and Wasaline, which is one of the most environmentally friendly ferries in the world).
- Nearly all hotels are in a continuous improvement process in terms of sustainability.
- With the certified offers, Visit Vaasa can meet the increasing demand from tourists for sustainable experiences.
- The city of Vaasa is among the finalists for the 2026 Green Leaf competition.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- The STF program offers good orientation and can be used very well for the implementation of sustainability measures in companies and destinations.
- For the tourism industry, the shift toward greater sustainability is essential, on the one hand because it has a responsibility towards the current global environmental and social problems, but also because of the increasing tourist demand for sustainable tourism offers.
- Initially, the transition to greater sustainability may seem very expensive, but through energy savings as well as the circular economy, the economic balance becomes more attractive.

## Useful Links

[Travel to the Vaasa region in responsible way](#) | [Visit Vaasa and responsible tourism](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: JUIST, GERMANY



### Key Challenge

Lack of visitor participation in tourism development.

### Type of Solution

Stakeholder participation and management.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Island

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 16.41 km<sup>2</sup> **Population**  
| 1,542 in 2023

**Type of Tourism** | Ecotourism; Coastal, maritime and inland water; Health and wellness.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a public entity that is predominantly financed and managed by the local government.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local residents; Tourists; Local authorities/ government.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Dependence of the local economy on tourism; Appropriate local tourism strategies and policies to accelerate the transition to sustainable and resilient tourism.

### Context & Background

Juist is one of seven East Frisian Islands in the southern North Sea. Economically, tourism is almost the only source of income on the island. The number of tourists has been stable since 2012, with around 120,000 arrivals and around 933,000 overnight stays recorded in 2023, mostly generated in summer. Due to its location and accessibility, Juist mainly attracts domestic tourists, especially from neighbouring federal states.

### Key Challenge

The high dependence on tourism requires the development of sustainable growth strategies that involve all stakeholders, from tourism companies to local residents, but above all the tourists themselves. The external perspective of tourists is particularly important to drive the development of the destination and the tourism offerings.



**Implementation of Solutions:** Various initiatives were launched to involve guests in destination development to ensure high levels of guests' satisfaction and, at the same time, to jointly develop attractive tourism offers that reconcile the preservation of nature, social peace, and economic sustainability.

## SOLUTIONS

The initiatives launched over the last ten years to involve guests in tourism development include:

- The *Guest Parliament*, founded in 2014, consisted of 10 independent, voluntary guests. They were selected in a multistage lottery process and reflected the guest mix of Juist. The term of office of the Guest Parliament was 3 years, with the representatives of the Guest Parliament taking on an advisory role and being invited to the island once a year for a weekend. Through the discussions in the Guest Parliament, numerous sustainable practices were implemented on Juist that directly involve tourists in the preservation of the island's nature. These include initiatives to reduce waste, the use of renewable energies and nature conservation programmes that are supported and often actively shaped by visitors. In addition, the Guest Parliament promoted a sense of responsibility and connection with the destination. In 2022, the Guest Parliament was abolished because the islanders felt patronised by the guests. Expected innovative projects were not implemented and the guests also wanted fewer changes than the islanders.
- The Guest Parliament, although no longer existing, created a strong foundation for the involvement of tourists in the development of Juist. It fostered a culture of inclusivity and collaboration in the destination that continues. The principles and practices established during its term still influence the way the island interacts with tourists. Juist uses various mechanisms to collect feedback from tourists (surveys, suggestion boxes and digital platforms) and incorporate it into tourism planning and development. [Guest surveys](#) measure guest satisfaction and collect ideas for tourism development. At the same time, tourism officials hold informal dialogues with repeat guests. In addition, Juist organises various events, e.g., sustainability days and sustainability flea markets, the children's university with sustainability topics, gourmet days, etc., which on the one hand are educational activities and on the other allow for informal dialogue. The [Juistpost](#), a newsletter, communicates daily information on events, climate-relevant data (weather, UV exposure, etc.) and tips for sustainable behaviour.

**Replicability potential:** Medium for the Guest Parliament (requires good guests' relations).

**Cost & funding source:** 6,000 – 8,000 euros annual costs of the Guest Parliament (moderator, travel expenses, meals), funded by the city administration.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Recognising the importance of guest involvement given the importance of tourism for the island; The sustainability approach of the island authorities; Innovative thinking and willingness to experiment; Strong bond of guests with the island.

Barriers: Residents' dissatisfaction of with the perceived interference of the Guest Parliament in the affairs of the island; The attitude of the Guest Parliament delegates who were more interested in criticism than in the development of innovative ideas.

## Results and Impacts

- Through informal dialogues, tourism officials learn more about guests' expectations and can gather ideas for the development of new tourism offers.
- Guest participation strengthens the guests' connection to the holiday destination – also in terms of sustainable development of the island (e.g., sustainable events).
- The unique concept of a Guest Parliament attracted media attention and generated positive feedback by promoting Juist as a progressive and inclusive destination.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- The term “Guest Parliament” implies political power, and it would therefore be better to call this body an advisory board.
- It is important to find the right method to involve guests in tourism development and in finding innovations (direct interaction is better, but it must not have a political touch). Workshops or thematic events are well suited.
- The direct involvement of guests in the tourism development of destinations can lead to tensions. The visions and needs of the locals must always be considered.

## Useful Links

[Guest Survey](#) | [The Juistpost](#) | [Juist Podcast and Stories](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: HELSINKI, FINLAND



### Key Challenge

Resilience building and crisis management.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Urban

**Territorial Level** | NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 214.3 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 674,500 in 2023

**Type of Tourism** | Coastal, maritime and inland water; Cultural; City; MICE.

**Tourism organisation** | The Tourism and Destination Management unit is a subdivision of Business Helsinki, a unit of the city.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; ALL tourism service providers; Local residents; Tourists.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Appropriate local tourism strategies and policies to accelerate the transition to sustainable and resilient tourism.

### Context & Background

Helsinki, located on the coast of southern Finland, has one of the busiest passenger ports in Europe and is one of Finland's most important tourism destinations with over 4.14 million overnight stays in 2023. Economically, in 2023 tourism contributed 2.55 billion euros to Helsinki's total income and employment in tourism amounted to 8,806 person-years. Helsinki is characterised by a diverse range of tourism offerings and has been pursuing a consistent and comprehensive sustainability strategy for years.

### Key Challenge

Due to its exposed geographical location (difficult accessibility, border with Russia), Helsinki has always been more sensitive to possible risks. The Covid pandemic and Russian aggression in Ukraine demonstrated the vulnerability of the tourism ecosystem.



**Implementation of Solutions:** To better assess potential risks for tourism and to prepare for possible crises or changes in the environment, comprehensive crisis prevention plans and instruments have been developed through the project “Leading the safety in tourism in the Helsinki Area”.

## SOLUTIONS

- [The City of Helsinki's safety information](#) provides information on how safety and undisturbed operation of the city is ensured and provides residents and tourists with information such as weather warnings, water supply disruptions, air quality information, emergency numbers, etc.
- The [Safety and Preparedness Team](#) in the City Council coordinates the city's general safety and security matters and steers the city's preparedness for crisis. The team works closely with all concerned stakeholders.
- The [Helsinki Tourism and Event Safety Steering Group](#) leads the destination's tourism safety work and meets regularly. It has selected and approved [safety indicators](#) to track the development of the destination's safety issues.
- As part of a two-year project to develop tourism safety in Helsinki (2020–2022), a safety plan for tourism and events in Helsinki was developed and last updated in 2023. In this context, Compass, a [Handbook on Safety in Tourism and Events in Helsinki](#), was published and disseminated to tourism partners with a [promotional video](#). Helsinki also received advisory support under the [EU project 'Crisis Management and Governance in Tourism'](#) and developed action plans to improve its resilience and crisis preparedness.
- [DataLokki](#), a data platform launched in 2023, provides open and up-to-date data and indicators on Helsinki's tourism and events sector, improving stakeholders' knowledge to guide their own product development and manage risks with predictive information.
- [Helsingin tekijät-network](#) (Makers of Helsinki), a joint network with more than 140 members from the tourism, events and hospitality sectors, offers its network members a digital collaboration platform, knowledge sharing, training and peer learning, helping them to be more resilient to changes.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires intense collaboration with the stakeholders).

**Cost & funding source:** The project “Leading the safety in tourism in the Helsinki Area” (2020–2022) was part of the funding of tourism revitalisation projects by the Finnish Ministry of Business and Employment. The project's budget was almost 200,000 euros. After its completion, updating of safety materials and safety coordination will be funded by the City of Helsinki and its stakeholders. Advisory support under the EU project 'Crisis Management and Governance in Tourism' was funded by the EU Single Market Programme.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Good cooperation within Helsinki's tourism ecosystem and with international organisations; Networking and collaboration with neighbouring destinations to jointly build mutual support systems in times of crisis.

Barriers: Limited resources of the DMO; Lack of understanding within the city administration of how the tourism sector works (crises affect many tourism stakeholders, including tourists, and not only city residents).

### Results and Impacts

- Thanks to the DMO's numerous crisis prevention measures, the tourism sector is considered in the emergency plan at city level. In addition, cooperation with VisitFinland on crisis prevention at national level has improved.
- New members with additional expertise are strengthening the Helsinki Tourism and Event Safety Steering Group.
- By mapping the potential risks in the region and clarifying communication roles within the DMO team, crisis preparedness was improved.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Know your relevant stakeholders for crisis prevention and strengthen relationships with them.
- Regularly identify stakeholders' safety contacts and find the best ways to communicate in case of a crisis or emergency.
- Clarify the roles of each member of your network in the event of a crisis. In particular, understand your role as a DMO in tourism safety development, safety communication and crisis management.
- Remember to actively update materials and plans and regularly remind your network where to find the latest information.

## Useful Links

[The City of Helsinki's safety information](#) | [The Tourism safety materials and information](#) | [DataLokki](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: AHR VALLEY, GERMANY



### Key Challenge

Resilience building and crisis management.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Promotional campaigns; Investments in infrastructure and product development.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Rural

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | around 500 km (measured by the area of the municipalities along the Ahr).

**Population** | ~75,000 in 2023

**Type of Tourism** | Rural; Cultural; Gastronomy; Health and wellness.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a Public-private partnership.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; Local residents; Tourists; ALL Tourism service providers; Local farmers and producers; Local businesses; Transport companies.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Appropriate local tourism strategies and policies to accelerate the transition to sustainable and resilient tourism; Lack of awareness of sustainability and resilience among tourism stakeholders.

### Context & Background

The Ahr Valley stretches along the Ahr river and is characterised by wine growing and thermal baths. In 2021, a flood inundated almost 200 hectares of land in the valley, causing 135 deaths and damaging about 9,000 buildings, more than 100 bridges, 150 roads and the entire railway network. Before the flood, tourism was growing steadily (20 percent of GDP and 30 percent of employment in 2019). But most of the more than 450 accommodation facilities were damaged by the event, and the number of overnight stays dropped from 1.4 million (2019) to 624,000 in 2023.

### Key Challenge

The destruction has brought about the need for a complete restart of the entire tourism system in the Ahr Valley, with reconstruction, new business ideas and a repositioning of the region. The investments were associated with great financial risks and tourism needed to get back on track quickly.





**Implementation of Solutions:** In order to rebuild the destroyed tourism system, initial reconstruction measures were initiated on the basis of a newly developed sustainable tourism concept and efforts were made to bring tourists back to the destination.

## SOLUTIONS

- The extensive destruction of the infrastructure was a disaster, but also an opportunity at the same time: it made a completely new direction in tourism possible. The DMO Ahrtal Tourismus set the course for sustainable and innovative tourism in the Ahr Valley and, together with regional stakeholders, developed the *"Sustainable Tourism Concept Ahrtal 2025"*, which is based on the State's tourism strategy.
- At the same time, information brochures were created for tourism companies that supported the implementation of the sustainability strategy and provided an overview of *funding programmes*, a *self-check for sustainability management* and *measures for operational sustainability management*. The reconstruction of the tourism infrastructure is a lengthy process. Three years after the disaster, the first feasibility studies are now being carried out.
- More than 100 tourism companies have begun to redefine, restructure and reposition their tourism offerings. The reorientation is also driving a generational change in the companies.
- Due to lack of financial resources, but also to adapt to the new sustainability concept, long-distance markets are no longer being targeted and attempts are being made to exploit the potential of nearby cities. This has a positive effect on mobility, as it is easier for local tourists to travel by public transport – the local railway is being reconstructed, electrified and digitalised to meet modern mobility requirements.
- The *"We ahr open"* marketing campaign conveys the message that the region is ready to welcome visitors again, but also stands for 'openness' to new ideas and challenges. The campaign was launched in October 2022 and includes several measures, among which the DMO website, banners on construction sites in cities and motorways across Germany, advertisements placed throughout Germany (digital screens) in recreation and sports venues and shopping centres, a social media campaign and Spotify spots (October 2022-Jan 2023), and the involvement of regional businesses through the provision of campaign signs, banners, posters and stickers.
- Ahr Valley received advisory support under the *EU project 'Crisis Management and Governance in Tourism'* and developed action plans to improve its resilience.

**Replicability potential:** High in case of a catastrophe (requires leadership, stakeholder cooperation and financial resources)

**Cost & funding source:** 200,000 euros for the development of the sustainable tourism concept "Ahrtal 2025", funded by the Rhineland-Palatinate region; Around 250,000 euros for the "We ahr open" campaign, financed by the State of Rhineland-Pfalz and by sponsorships; Advisory support under the EU project 'Crisis Management and Governance in Tourism' was funded by the EU Single Market Programme.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: The solidarity of the residents and people through the disaster; the positive change in motivation (after initial despair, the motivation to create something new developed).

Barriers: Shock phase and disorientation among residents after the flood however did not last very long as the first discussions on the tourism strategy already began at the end of 2021, and at the beginning of 2022 the first plans for tourist activities on site were made.

## Results and Impacts

- Tourism played a key role in crisis management and, even after devastating floods, gave hope and confidence that the future of the destination could be successful.
- The “We ahr open” campaign showed locals and guests that the valley was seriously intending to rebuild tourism.
- The restart created many jobs in the construction industry, crafts, tourism, the service sector, etc.
- The number of overnight stays rose from around 434,000 in 2022 to 624,000 in 2023.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- The DMO and the tourism sector are taking a leading role in rebuilding the destination.
- Since the beginning of the reconstruction, tourist acceptance was promoted, as tourism development must take place in harmony with the local people.
- Through the “We ahr open” campaign, local residents and guests have realised that the entire valley is seriously committed to its future, and this has created a generalised sense of confidence.

## Useful Links

[We ahr open](#) | [Sustainable Tourism Concept Ahrtal 2025](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: TARANTO, ITALY



### Key Challenge

Lack of awareness of sustainability and resilience among tourism stakeholders.

### Type of Solution

Stakeholder participation and management; Promotional campaigns; Digital solutions; Capacity building; Investments in infrastructure and product development; Research and innovation.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Coastal

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 217 km<sup>2</sup> (Municipality)

**Population** | 186,977 in 2024 (Municipality)

**Type of Tourism** | Coastal, maritime and inland water; Sports; Cultural; Educational.

**Tourism organisation** | Department of the municipality.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local residents; Tourists; Technology providers; Research and Development (R&D) organisations.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Changing consumer preferences towards more sustainability; Degradation and loss of biodiversity; Lack of visitor participation in tourism development.

### Context & Background

Tourism has become an important economic factor in Taranto, alongside the steel industry and the port. In 2023, 98,227 tourist arrivals were recorded (294,034 overnight stays). While history, culture and sport have traditionally been at the forefront of tourism offerings, local authorities now want to take a step towards product differentiation and sustainable tourism.

### Key Challenge

Resource-efficient business practices and diversification of the tourism offer are crucial for Taranto to protect its environment, ensure long-term economic viability and improve the visitor experience. To achieve this general shift towards greater sustainability, Taranto seeks to raise awareness of sustainability in the community and among tourists, encouraging them to make more sustainable consumption choices and to actively participate in this transition.



**Implementation of Solutions:** Interactive offers that combine science, education and experience are intended to sensitise locals and tourists to the fragility of nature, especially the sea, and to impart knowledge about it.

## SOLUTIONS

- The [\*Ionian Dolphin Conservation\*](#) is a scientific organisation dedicated to the study of cetaceans in the Ionian Sea, raising awareness on the Blue Economy and sharing knowledge among the local residents and tourists. For this reason, it has developed courses and participatory activities that encourage people to actively participate in the protection and conservation of cetaceans, such as the "[\*Researchers for a Day\*](#)" program or the [\*Citizen Science program\*](#), which actively involves the public in scientific research projects. Local residents and tourists participate in whale watching and the collection of data that are fed into Duke University's interactive [\*OBIS-SEAMAP portal\*](#). The organisation's [\*KETOS Citizen Science Centre\*](#) provides insights into the environmental impact and the need for marine and cetacean conservation based on research results. The centre's interactive approach is innovative, allowing visitors to experience the underwater world authentically and with the support of innovative technologies, using 3D educational panels and touchscreen monitors, microscope laboratories and virtual experiences and a "Fixed Underwater Eye" webcam.
- The [\*CTE CALLIOPE project\*](#) also follows a "citizen-led" approach, where citizens participate in data collection and feed data into a platform called the "Citizen Space Platform" (for example, local police vests are equipped with sensors to detect air quality).
- [\*ECOSISTEMA Taranto\*](#) was created as a complement to the Municipality's institutional tourism portal. It presents the smart path to the transformation of Taranto and allows to experience the city live. It is also a tool to promote the digitisation of the city's institutions and businesses.
- The "[\*Taranto Capitale di Mare\*](#)" portal coordinates the tourism and accommodation offers of local operators and offers guests the opportunity to easily and directly get in touch with the numerous cultural and tourist experiences that the region has to offer.

**Replicability potential:** Medium (requires strong R&D organisation).

**Cost & funding source:** The Municipality of Taranto makes the Amati Palace – property of the municipality – available free of charge to the Ionian Dolphin Conservation Association as the headquarters of the Ketos Centre; 13,871,930 euros for CTE CALLIOPE financed by the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy (MIMIT) and the Fund for Development and Cohesion (FSC) 2014 – 2020.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Dedicated research teams willing to share knowledge; The uniqueness of the Ionian Dolphin Conservation organisation in terms of cetacean research and environmental impact studies.

Barriers: The widespread use of unsustainable fishing gear; Deep-rooted attitudes among citizens to take what the city offers for granted.

### Results and Impacts

- Securing good practices that serve as a model and inspiration for further activities.
- Taranto establishes itself as a reference point for the blue economy.
- The renewal of the old town of Taranto is promoted by the new scientific projects.
- The further creation of networks and the development of projects with key European actors is encouraged.
- The share of alternative and sustainable tourism is increasing.
- The projects allow an authentic visitor experience while respecting natural ecosystems.

### Recommendations by the Destinations

- Investments in ecotourism activities and the improvement of local natural resources are recommended, which requires strong cooperation between the community, research organisations and DMO.
- It is very effective to build networks and connections with local stakeholders and involve them directly in shaping the destination's identity and protecting the environment and culture.

### Useful Links

[Jonian Dolphin Conservation](#) | [Taranto Ecosystem](#) | [Taranto Capitale di Mare](#)

### Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: MONTAFON, AUSTRIA

### Key Challenge

Lack of knowledge and skills of tourism stakeholders.

### Type of Solution

Certification; Capacity building; Research and innovation.



### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Mountain

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 560 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | ~16,000 in 2023

**Type of Tourism** | Ecotourism; Mountain; Rural; Sports; Health and wellness.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a private limited company with private and public shareholders.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local residents; Accommodations; Restaurants and bars; Other tourism service providers.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Growth-oriented mindset of destination stakeholders; Climate protection and climate mitigation; Lack of stakeholder management (multi-level, cross-sectoral).

### Context & Background

Tourism in Montafon has a long tradition due to its diverse natural resources that can be enjoyed all year round. With an average of 60-70% of local GDP and 55-60% of local employment, tourism is a very important sector. In 2023, 550,401 arrivals with 2,223,901 overnight stays were recorded, mainly from neighbouring countries. Day visitors also play a significant role, especially for winter sports.

### Key Challenge

The current challenges, especially climate change, require rapid action to secure the future of tourism. For future-oriented development and the implementation of measures, capacity building and broad and intensive participation of all tourism stakeholders are essential, for which appropriate mechanisms need to be found.



**Implementation of Solutions:** The Destination Management Organisation (DMO) founded the [PIZ Montafon](#), a 100% subsidiary of the DMO acting as an innovation hub in the destination, whose goal is to inform, sensitise, network, develop and implement innovative solutions for a sustainable tourism future in the region.

## SOLUTIONS

Since 2022, the PIZ Montafon operates as an independent living lab outside traditional structures and centrally regroups all sustainable tourism development projects, including:

- [PIZ VHOTEL](#) (PIZ Virtual Hotel), an online platform for responsible accommodations that promotes the exchange of knowledge and helps to identify and implement individual and effective sustainability measures. It contains practical information on sustainability, the possibility to interact with experts, as well as concrete recommendations for action and tools for implementation.
- [Sustainability checks for accommodation providers](#), which are conducted in regular workshops. Initially, companies are made aware of sustainable development, then they perform a self-check of their business based on a set of criteria, and finally they can discuss possible solutions for improvement with participants and experts.
- ["Host Role Model" Programme](#) to support accommodation providers on their path to the most renowned sustainability certification in Austria and make the certification process as simple as possible for as many companies as possible. Together with external consultants, companies are supported through an educational program, group workshops and individual counselling hours.
- ["Tour de Ländle"](#), an excursion through the federal state of Vorarlberg that aims to give Montafon tourism companies insights into the topics of sustainable and future-oriented development, by visiting different companies operating in various business fields.
- The initiative ["Nature-friendly mountain sports in Montafon"](#) is committed to nature-friendly mountain sports and has implemented steering measures with the involvement of a broad set of relevant stakeholders.

**Replicability potential:** Very high (requires strong will, collaboration and networking).

**Cost & funding source:** The PIZ Montafon has a budget of 150,000 euros per year for research and development, 100% financed by the Montafon Tourismus GmbH (DMO). 150,000 euros for the PIZ VHOTEL project, with 30,000 euros co-financed by Vorarlberg Tourismus GmbH (DMO of the state).





## Success Factors & Barriers

*Success factors:* The establishment of an independent organisation such as the PIZ Montafon; Collaboration with innovators such as cable car companies as these actors demonstrate a high level of innovation for sustainable development; Central, easy-to-use digital platform to inform hotels and hosts about sustainability and to spread knowledge; Highlighting the economic benefits of sustainable business management.

*Barriers:* Innovations and quick decisions are often not expected in classically conservative tourism and initially lead to cautious behaviour; the expectations of politics, which are still more quantitative than focused on sustainable development; Lack of collaboration between politics and tourism.

## Results and Impacts

- A change in the growth-oriented mindset towards quality tourism.
- Controlling visitor flows and guest behaviour in nature by creating rules of conduct.
- Increasing the knowledge of tourism companies regarding a sustainable future of tourism.
- Receipt of the Vorarlberg Tourism Award 2024.
- Certification of the Montafon tourism destination with the Austrian Ecolabel for tourism destinations and commitment of all municipalities in Montafon to support the certification of tourism businesses in the entire destination.
- Over 100 users in the PIZ VHOTEL within two months of the platform being launched.
- 12 hotels join the Host role model program and will complete it in 2024.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- The DMO in its classic form is not particularly suitable for producing digital and sustainable innovations because it is busy with 'day-to-day business' and many other tasks.
- It is useful to have an own innovation lab that can focus on promoting innovation and sustainability and has a long-term focus.

## Useful Links

[PIZ Montafon Think Tank](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: VEJLE, DENMARK



### Key Challenge

Lack of knowledge and skills of tourism stakeholders.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Capacity building.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Coastal

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 1,058.4 km<sup>2</sup>  
(Municipality)

**Population** | 121,696 in 2024 (Municipality)

**Type of Tourism** | Ecotourism; City; Business; MICE; Gastronomy.

**Tourism Organisation** | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a department of the municipality; for MICE Public-Private Partnership.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Accommodation providers; Restaurants and bars; Other tourism service providers; Local businesses; Tourists.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Changing consumer preferences towards more sustainability; Degradation and loss of biodiversity.

### Context & Background

Vejle is centrally located on Vejle Fjord and is rich in industry, business, and the service sector. The development of new architecture, art and alternative urban spaces in the 1990s increased the attractiveness of the site. Tourism has grown in importance in recent years and around 825,445 overnights (33% international) were recorded in 2023. Tourism accounts for about 5% of GDP and 6.5% of employment.

### Key Challenge

The growth of tourism, decline in biodiversity and the global need for a more sustainable future have revealed the need for sustainable development. The DMO has acknowledged this, but small tourism businesses in particular have neither the time nor the capacity to drive the transition to greater sustainability on their own.



**Implementation of Solutions:** Vejle has undertaken numerous measures to raise awareness and develop competences of sustainable tourism, to ultimately support small and medium-sized enterprises in their path towards greater sustainability.

## SOLUTIONS

- To support tourism stakeholders in the green transition, in 2023, Visit Vejle produced a comprehensive [Handbook to a Green Destination](#), a guide for the introduction of green practices. It contains practical information on implementation and a checklist for companies to easily identify their areas for improvement.
- The DMO organises *workshops for tourism stakeholders*, where experts provide training on sustainability topics such as waste management, energy management, accessibility, social aspects, fundraising or sustainability communication. Special attention is also paid to promoting dialogue between stakeholders and between experts. In 2022 and 2023, Vejle has held more than 10 workshops.
- The DMO also offers free *1:1 consulting for tourism companies* provided by the DMO's own sustainability experts. The main goal is to give companies an overview of the status quo of their sustainability efforts and to create a work plan for the next steps for improvement. Various tools (information and contacts) are provided to companies.
- The [VisitVejle network](#), a tourism stakeholder network founded in 2010, offers its 150 participants an attractive platform for knowledge exchange in order to develop as a tourism business and to meet changing requirements and expectations of tourists and legislation.
- The [Green Guide](#) provides a map and information about green companies and initiatives and gives tourists tips and inspiration to make greener choices. This motivates companies to adopt green practices, also to be showcased on the list.

**Replicability potential:** Very high (requires strong will, leadership, and collaboration).

**Cost & funding source:** The handbook, workshops and green guide were created as part of a [three-year sustainability project](#) funded by the Municipality's Sustainability Fund. The total budget was 300,000 euros (including a project coordinator's salary) and the workshop costs were around 800 euros each.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: A close relationship with the stakeholders' network; Persistence and reminders for the workshop participation; Open mindset of many companies.

Barriers: Stakeholders resistance towards sustainability initiatives; Continuous contact with all stakeholders is very time-consuming.

## Results and Impacts

- Improved relationships and collaboration between different stakeholders through the VisitVejle network with more than 150 members. The network's platform for knowledge exchange generates great learning effects in the tourism industry.
- Many companies that previously were not so keen on sustainability for fear of financial burdens became interested in the topic. In total, more than 30 companies took part in the workshops, some several times and some with multiple employees. On average, there were 8 participating companies and between 8 and 20 participants.
- High level of satisfaction among participants with the workshops (mostly rated 4 out of 5).
- Three attractions have been awarded the [Green Attraction certificate](#) and some companies have signed up for the [Hidden Disabilities](#) certificate after attending a workshop on invisible disabilities such as ADHD, autism, etc.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Face-to-face meetings worked better than online meetings, also for the possibility of informal dialogues.
- A strict division of workshops by interest groups was less fruitful than bringing together different stakeholder groups.
- It is important to also always show the economic benefits for the companies.
- Workshops on social sustainability registered higher attendance than those on environmental topics, as the latter are often more technical and data-driven while social aspects are easier to communicate.

## Useful Links

[Sustainable Tourism](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: VÄRMLAND COUNTY, SWEDEN



### Key Challenge

Lack of knowledge and skills for tourism stakeholders.

### Type of Solution

Stakeholder participation and management; Certification; Digital solutions; Capacity building.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Rural

**Territorial Level** | NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 21,789 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 283,548 in 2023

**Type of Tourism** | Adventure; Rural; tourism; Coastal, maritime and inland water; Cultural.

**Tourism Organisation** | Värmland County Council (development and financing); Visit Värmland (Promotion, management and development), public-private partnership (50% self-financed).

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Accommodations; Restaurants and bars; Other tourism service providers, Research and Development (R&D) organisations.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Insufficient use of new and advanced technologies in tourism; Lack of stakeholder management.

### Context & Background

Located in mid-western Sweden, Värmland is an all-year-round destination for nature and rural tourism. Tourism has grown in importance in recent years and in 2023 around 2.5 million overnight stays were recorded (mainly from nearby markets). Tourism accounts for around 10% of both GDP and employment.

### Key Challenge

After the pandemic, the focus of tourism strategy has shifted to sustainability as a central tool in the process of improving resilience and competitiveness. Stakeholders play a crucial role in this transition, but they face challenges due to limited human resources—often individuals or small teams—and a lack of skills and expertise, which make the transition to sustainable practices difficult.



**Implementation of Solutions:** Based on the “Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Tourism”, Visit Värmland has initiated projects to raise awareness among tourism stakeholders about the need to implement sustainability and digitalization. The projects also build knowledge for greater resilience, competitiveness, and finding new market segments with higher added value.

## SOLUTIONS

- *1:1 consultation*, an initiative that runs from 2023 to the end of 2024 and in which Visit Värmland's trained experts coach tourism companies (accommodations, destinations, campsites, restaurants and catering) on digitalisation and sustainability. Two to three free coaching sessions can be arranged in which the company's status quo is determined and individual adaptation plans are developed in the areas of digitisation and sustainability.
- The *“Innovation in the Hospitality Industry”* project, implemented in 2021-2023 in collaboration with Compare, a regional tech cluster, used innovation arenas as a method to create innovative digital solution to encourage collaboration and sustainability within the tourism industry.
- The *Smart Villages project* (2021-2024, in collaboration with Karlstad University) used an innovative method ([place-based digital experiences](#)) to improve hospitality businesses' knowledge and skills on how to be smart and create solutions that contribute to the place attractiveness as well as business.
- *Mystery checks in accommodations* commissioned by the DMO by auditors from the label “Swedish Welcome” were an effective means of convincing the accommodations to obtain the eco-certification that the DMO has been promoting for many years. After the mystery check results were communicated to the accommodations and the external auditor also explained the need for eco-certification, some accommodations decided to get certified.

**Replicability potential:** Very high (requires stakeholder collaboration).

**Cost & funding source:** 1,500,000 euros for the project “Innovation in the hospitality industry” co-funded by React-EU and the regional Council; 700,000 euros for Smart Villages, funded by the Knowledge Foundation; 1,500 – 2,000 euros per company for the mystery checks, co-financed by EU and regional funds.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Strong collaboration between different stakeholders including local authorities, tourism businesses, environmental organisations and the community; Strong commitment from the county to make a meaningful change and become more resilient; The sustainability approach was the basis for the change; Companies that felt noticed and could talk about their individual problems and difficulties.

Barriers: Lack of resources (time, people, finance) of some companies.

## Results and Impacts

- High satisfaction rate among stakeholders with coaching activities. Surveys after coaching sessions show a satisfaction rating with the coaching of 5.68 (out of 6) and a rating of 5.76 (out of 6) for the relevance of the coaching.
- 50 SMEs (out of 400) participated in the digitalisation coaching (completed) and 28 participants attended sustainability sessions (still ongoing).

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Patience is important as changes take a lot of time.
- It is helpful to learn from other best practices and vice versa it is also important to share the knowledge and experiences with others.
- Close contact with different type of stakeholders is essential for collaboration.

## Useful Links

[Innovation in the Hospitality Industry](#)

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## BEST PRACTICE: AARHUS, DENMARK



### Key Challenge

Limited financial resources to support sustainability activities in tourism.

### Type of Solution

Stakeholder participation and management.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Mixed

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 99.4 km<sup>2</sup> (468 km<sup>2</sup> Municipality)

**Population** | 367,765 in Aarhus Municipality

**Type of Tourism** | Cultural; City.

**Tourism Organisation** | Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a Public-Private partnership, representing Aarhus and the surrounding area.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local residents; Tourists; Accommodations; Restaurants and bars; Other tourism service providers; Local businesses.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Deterioration of the destination image; Maintenance and conservation of cultural heritage sites; Lack of community participation in tourism activities.

### Context & Background

Aarhus is located on the East coast of Jutland and is Denmark's second largest city with 367,765 inhabitants. The economy is predominantly knowledge and service based, with culture and education playing an important role. Tourism is steadily growing and in 2023, around 1.38 million overnight stays (73.8% domestic) were generated. Sustainability is an important trend for the municipality and the DMO, which focus on creating value for the people, the planet and business.

### Key Challenge

A survey among tourism companies in the Aarhus region (2022) revealed that they needed more financial and human resources to make tourism more attractive. Moreover, it is an ongoing concern for the city and Destination Management Organisation (DMO) to ensure that the destination's tourism evolves in a way that benefits and strengthens the local community.



**Implementation of Solutions:** Because of the growing interest in sustainability and the increased involvement of local people in the development of the city, in the new tourism strategy, tourism and local life have been closely linked.

## SOLUTION

In preparation for the [European Capital of Culture 2017](#), the ReThinker volunteer programme was launched. Due to the positive response, the programme was further continued and is now managed by VisitAarhus (DMO). Volunteers support the [city's cultural and economic sectors](#) (e.g., museums, sports and cultural events, festivals, cruise tourism) in various hosting roles, for the benefit of both visitors and locals themselves. Today, the program includes over 2,000 volunteers.

The volunteer community is strengthened through various initiatives such as:

- [ReHelper](#), an online marketplace where volunteers can search for and choose tasks and a digital tool for organisers to create schedules and display the available volunteer tasks.
- *ReThinker* newsletter to inform about upcoming volunteer opportunities.
- [Speed meetings](#) held once a month to bring projects and volunteers together in person.
- Regular surveys to assess participant satisfaction.

**Replicability potential:** Very high (requires strong collaboration and networking).

**Cost & funding source:** Four full-time equivalents in the Aarhus department of ReThinkers funded by the City of Aarhus, the Salling Foundation, Denmark's Business Promotion Board and cooperation with event organisers.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Prioritising sustainability at the top management level; Fundraising; Flexibility of volunteers.

Barriers: No barriers were encountered.

## Results and Impacts

- High satisfaction rate among volunteers (86% are satisfied or very satisfied with being volunteers).
- Companies from various tourism sectors are supported without financial contribution; the volunteers take on around 200 tasks every year.
- Positive tourism attitude of Aarhus residents and more interaction with guests.
- Volunteers enhance the guest experience. According to a survey of cruise guests, 83% said they "had already spoken to a volunteer welcome host," and 97% of those said, "the volunteer welcome hosts made a real difference to them."

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- A general and holistic strategy for sustainable tourism is essential.
- With their welcoming attitude and hospitality, volunteers have a huge impact on the perception of tourism in the city.
- Volunteers are grateful to be able to do this work because they experience a strong sense of identity, community and belonging through being part of the Rethinker community.

## Useful Links

[Rethinkers](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: JURMALA, LATVIA

### Key Challenge

Limited financial resources to support sustainability activities in tourism.

### Type of Solution

Stakeholder participation and management; Investments in infrastructure and product development.



### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Coastal

**Territorial Level** | < NUTS 3

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 101.23 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 50,190 in 2022

**Type of Tourism** | Coastal, maritime and inland water; Cultural; Business; Health and wellness.

**Tourism Organisation** | Department of the municipality and Tourist Information Centre, which is a public-private partnership.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; Local residents; Tourists; Accommodations; Restaurants and bars; Local businesses; Transport companies.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Sustainable and smart mobility solutions; Appropriate local tourism strategies and policies to accelerate the transition to sustainable and resilient tourism; Lack of stakeholder management.

### Context & Background

Jurmala is a traditional holiday resort and tourism is a significant economic sector. Over the last decade, tourism has grown by almost 170% and in 2023 about 240,818 tourist arrivals were recorded (almost 80% from the Baltic countries).

### Key Challenge

In the community's effort to promote sustainable tourism development, it is crucial to encourage and support tourism businesses in this regard. Since most tourism businesses are small and medium-sized enterprises, which often also face financing problems, financial support is particularly needed to enable the transition to sustainable and resilient tourism.



**Implementation of Solutions:** A broad stakeholder approach and innovative participatory and financial support measures for local residents and businesses promote the adoption of sustainable and smart behaviours and actions in the city and the tourism sector.

## SOLUTIONS

- Since 2018, Jurmala Municipality has been organising the *“Inspiration” grant programme* to implement new business ideas and develop existing businesses, such as creating new digital services and products, developing new entertaining outdoor or indoor activities for Jurmala residents and visitors, and creating new and innovative handicraft or art products.
- Since 2017, the municipality has been *financially supporting tourism entrepreneurs* in digitising their operations (e.g. booking services) or expanding their offer to include environmentally friendly activities (kayaking, individual sports) or facilities with a focus on sustainability (e.g. new cafes), with 50% of the total project budgets.
- In addition, the municipality invested in tourist infrastructure, such as energy-efficient lighting and solar and wind energy systems on beaches, and monitored traffic intensity with sensors and improved road safety by establishing safety zones with the support of *the European Investment Advisory Hub (EIAH)*.
- To attract younger people to work in the tourism sector and support the local tourism industry during the summer months, since 2017, the municipality has been *co-financing the wages of young people* working in tourism during their summer holidays with 50% of the minimum wage.
- To promote sustainable mobility, free city buses are offered to city residents and low-priced tickets to tourists in cooperation with the local transport system. Since 1996, a fee has been charged for entering the city by car, but at the same time free parking at the entrance points is offered. In addition, since 2024, residents can take the train to the nearby capital Riga twice a day for free. Boats, cycle paths and rental bicycles are also available for tourists as an alternative sustainable mobility option.
- The local population and companies are involved in these development processes through regular events, where their ideas for the development of the city and tourism are collected. Special workshops are held to encourage young people to develop solutions to improve their living environment.

**Replicability potential:** Very high (requires political will, and stakeholder collaboration).

**Cost & funding source:** 10,000 euros annually for financial support of companies; 15,000 euros yearly to cofinance the wages for young people; 4 million euros budget in 2024 for mobility measures. The funding is made directly by the municipality.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: A political strategy for sustainable transformation; Strong involvement and good relations between the municipality and local entrepreneurs and residents; Financial support; Support by European Investment Advisory Hub (EIAH); The tourism industry's commitment to shift toward sustainability; Digitalisation of companies; The perception that tourism infrastructure represent a common good for residents also.

Barriers: Geopolitics and the associated financial losses (the Russian aggression led to the loss of one of the most important source markets).

### Results and Impacts

- Around 40 summer jobs are supported by the municipality in 15 companies every year.
- High use of public transport (3.2 million trips, of which 2.5 million were made by the local population and 0.7 million by tourists).
- Increased sustainability performance in terms of energy efficiency, waste, clean beaches, etc. and a greener environment that is recognised and appreciated by residents and tourists.
- The seasonality is more balanced, as in the [low season and in winter](#), more tourist offers (e.g. restaurant weeks), sometimes with discounts, are promoted jointly by the DMO and tourism companies.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- It is very useful to involve the local community in decisions regarding infrastructure, as they are the main users and therefore the experts.
- The funding programmes are very effective and highly recommended: they are not expensive but create more stability in the offer.
- Even if the bureaucratic processes in a municipality seem complicated, this should not stop from developing projects further.
- It is always useful to look for funding at national or European level.

## Useful Links

[Jūrmala State City Development Program 2023-2029](#)

## Contact Person

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## BEST PRACTICE: ANDALUSIA, SPAIN



### Key Challenge

Measurement and monitoring of sustainable tourism.

### Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Digital solutions; Capacity building.

### Case Classification

**Type of Destination** | Mixed

**Territorial Level** | NUTS 2

**Size of the Tourist Area** | 87,597 km<sup>2</sup>

**Population** | 8,620,120 in 2023

**Type of Tourism** | Rural; Coastal, maritime and inland water; Cultural; City.

**Tourism organisation** | Andalusian Regional Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport for policies; Public Destination Management Organisation (DMO) Turismo Andaluz for tourism management and promotion.

**Main Stakeholders Affected** | Local authorities/government; ALL tourism service providers; Technology providers; R&D organisations.

**Additional Challenges Covered** | Growth-oriented mindset; Insufficient use of new and advanced technologies. Appropriate local tourism strategies and policies to accelerate the transition to sustainable and resilient tourism; Lack of knowledge and skills of tourism stakeholders.

### Context & Background

Tourism is a very important source of employment (12.3% in 2023) and income (25,337 million euros of direct and indirect economic impact, 13.1% of GDP in 2019) in the region and contributes significantly to the preservation of cultural and natural heritage. In 2023, 34.2 million tourists visited Andalusia and 54.3 million overnight stays in hotels were registered, of which 65.7% were domestic and 26.4% were EU, with much of the tourism activity concentrated along the coast.

### Key Challenge

The pressure of tourism on society and nature, as well as the dependence on tourism, has led to a rethink and strong interest in sustainable and resilient tourism practices. New technologies and the measurement and monitoring of sustainable tourism play a key role in this, representing both a solution and a challenge due to their complexity.





**Implementation of Solutions:** To prevent the negative impacts of tourism, Andalusia has set up an extensive monitoring system that is being further developed in collaboration with other destinations and networks.

## SOLUTIONS

- The [\*Tourism Sustainability Indicator \(TSI\) Pilot project\*](#) defines a policy-oriented common set of destination indicators to measure and monitor tourism sustainability, in order to align it with the Tourism Transition Pathways, the EU Green Deal, the EU Climate Law and the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Diverse tourism datasets, including both conventional statistical data and data from private providers (e.g. booking systems, accommodation listings) will be integrated to create a unified and standardised set of sustainability indicators to be used in the destinations. The project is carried out within the framework of the Spanish Tourism TSI project together with Catalonia, Navarra and Valencia, with the support of the OECD and the [\*NECSTouR Tourism of Tomorrow Lab\*](#) from 2021 - 2024.
- [\*“Smart Data”\*](#) platform for companies that, since 1997, with the support of Turismo Andaluz, has published pooled data on sustainable tourism from various sources and made it available to all interested parties for decision-making.
- [\*Covid-19 crisis management dashboard\*](#) provided by the regional government to guide policy actions in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Data updated weekly includes economic impact analysis, data on flight searches, reservations and airline seat capacity, as well as weekly opinion polls of accommodation providers, sentiment analysis and social listening, and a consumer confidence indicator for key origin markets in the EU and Spain.
- Turismo Andaluz is constantly striving to learn and share knowledge and experiences. In addition to leading the Digital Transformation Subgroup of the [\*“Together for EU Tourism \(T4T\)” Expert Group\*](#), they [\*collaborate in a number of international projects\*](#), including:
  - [\*MITOMED+\*](#), an Interreg MED project on measuring sustainability at local level involving more than 15 destinations across MED Europe implementing data-driven destination management models.
  - [\*UNWTO Working Group\*](#) on Measuring Sustainable Tourism and Committee on Statistics and Tourism Satellite Accounts.
  - [\*NECSTouR\*](#), a network of European regions for sustainable and competitive tourism that develops interregional projects and promotes cooperation for sustainable tourism management.

**Replicability potential:** High (requires significant financial and human resources, strong political will, leadership and cooperation).

**Cost & funding source:** TSI Pilot project funded by the European Commission (DG REFORM); “Smart data” funded by the regional government and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); Covid-19 crisis management dashboard funded by the regional government.



## Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: Collaboration in networks with other destinations and regional statistics office; Political will to make data understandable for policy makers; Close collaboration with the different policy departments; Sufficient financing through continuous persuasion to invest in measurement systems; Sharing the same vision for tourism with stakeholders.

Barriers: Change of policy makers every four years (elections); Complexity of the data (lack of harmonised methodologies and data gaps on social and environmental impacts of tourism; difficulty in making it easily understandable for users); Constraints of financial and human resources; Difficulties in integrating smaller companies into the process.

## Results and Impacts

- The culture in the organisation has changed, with an increased awareness of the importance of data.
- Now, policy makers make their recommendations and decisions based on data analysis.
- During the pandemic, it was crucial to use data to analyse what and how to restore the tourism sector.
- The development of tourism in Andalusia is no longer measured only by the number of tourists, but takes a broader approach with various sustainability indicators, such as water and energy consumption, accessibility, certified establishments and others.

## Recommendations by the Destinations

- Collaboration is important to improve sustainability and data management because challenges such as climate change cannot be solved individually.
- Get inspiration and learn from other destinations (think outside the box of your destination).
- Communicating data is almost as important as working on the technical part.

## Useful Links

[European projects](#)

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