

## **MED Sustainable Tourism Community contributes to the UNWTO Discussion Paper on “Sustainable Tourism for Development”**

In the context of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development ([IY2017](#)), the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) is working on a report on “Sustainable Tourism for Development”. This report serves as the foundation of the IY2017, and thus defines the current and potential contribution of tourism towards sustainable development– highlighting the sector’s strengths and the challenges it faces. It identifies some of the changes needed as we move forward – in policies, business practices and consumer behaviour. It also provides links to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and shall help to establish a more solid knowledge base through evidence and facts. For this purpose the UNWTO produced a [discussion paper](#) that offers a framework for a further debate with stakeholders of tourism and development and is meant to inspire discussion and critical comment.

The Med Community on Sustainable Tourism, mobilised by the BleuTourMed project and consisting of 14 cross-Mediterranean modular projects funded by the European Interreg MED Programme, aims to study, test and capitalize innovative instruments and actions towards the enhancement of tourism sustainability in the Mediterranean. Within this framework, the Community has contributed to the UNWTO discussion paper through some inputs to the IY2017 five pillars and provided several case studies that highlight the contribution of tourism towards sustainable development.

Tourism sector is amongst the highest income generators in the Mediterranean. Leisure related activities render tourism as the leading economic sector in terms of Gross Value Added and employment. The benefits of tourism are related to a direct contribution to regional economies with sectorial synergies and strong multiplying effects. Despite its economic and social importance, tourism development is associated with pressures on natural and built environment. These pressures may result in serious threats for local population, in terms of quality of life, and at the same time degrade tourism assets with direct negative effects on future tourism development.

Project co-financed by the European  
Regional Development Fund



 [www.sustainable-tourism.interreg-med.eu](http://www.sustainable-tourism.interreg-med.eu)

 [bleutourmed@gmail.com](mailto:bleutourmed@gmail.com)

 @MEDCommunity3\_1

 Interreg MED Sustainable  
Tourism Community

 BleuTourMed Interreg MED

In summary, the **Med Community on Sustainable Tourism contribution** is as follows:

- With regards to pillar 1, **Sustainable Economic Growth**, it stresses the need to reinforce the contribution of local, small scale and diverse tourism products to the economic growth of local communities. The paper presents only a global approach on the economic dimension of tourism and does not consider how local economic environment is positively influenced by community leadership.
- Concerning pillar 2, **Social Inclusiveness, Employment and Poverty Reduction**, our contribution suggests paying attention to the problems of tourism employment. Key areas for action are targeted and include the local dimension thus it could be helpful to provide solutions to problems of employment in the tourism sector and how these could be surpassed. A special dimension to unemployed middle-aged people could be addressed, since they are an important potential in countries that face touristic growth (in numbers) but are under recession.
- Pillar 3 focuses on **Resource Efficiency, Environmental Protection and Climate Change**. It points out that there is very little proof and analysis on the actual gains of efficient resources use. Concerning biodiversity there is no evidence that conservation of protected areas are subjected to enormous tourist flows by local actors under national and international legal framework.
- Under pillar 4, **Cultural Values, Diversity and Heritage**, the Community remarks the need to define in a more precise way the definition of “cultural tourist” and how the opportunities that could be potentially offered by the valorisation of tourism are underestimated by the cultural sector. At the same time, the extensive tourism growth could become a threat to cultural heritage if certain measures are not taken into account. Moreover, it should be analysed whether local gastronomic identities could be considered as part of cultural value. Additionally, the development of cultural routes can bring about sustainable development since it combines the protection of cultural heritage along with tourist exploitation.
- With regards to pillar 5, **Mutual Understanding, Peace and Security**, these should be addressed not only at international level but also at inter-territorial, cross-border and local level. A more simplified and related to key areas of the tourism industry approach could be introduced, apart from the global theme of peace.
- Concerning the transversal topics of **Governance, Policies and Tools for Sustainable Tourism**, the Community suggests the creation of multilevel networks and clusters to promote

Project co-financed by the European  
Regional Development Fund



sustainable tourism for areas of similar characteristics. In addition, the combination of the double approach bottom-up (results at local level can support decision makers and policy makers) and top-down (policies designed taking into account local results can then be better improved at local level) should be improved. Moreover, it could be interesting to include “geographical approaches” instead of only global approaches: as an example, the Mediterranean area has different problems and challenges than other areas of Europe and outside Europe.

Additionally, the MED Community on Sustainable Tourism identifies several **Case Studies: six EU funded projects** as examples of initiatives to develop sustainable tourism practices in the MED Area:

- Project **CASTWATER** supports sustainable tourism policies & practices on water efficiency in coastal areas. The transnational challenge is to reduce the impact of tourism activities on environmental heritage and to improve management of water resources. The project's overall objective is to support sustainable tourism water management in Med coastal areas, by improving the monitoring and assessment of the water sustainability performance of the tourism sector.
- Project **TOURISMED** promotes fishing tourism as a response to the development of sustainable coastal and maritime tourism in Mediterranean areas. The positive effects are a better conservation of fisheries and marine resources, the development of an innovative concept of tourism, the recognition of fishermen, the added value given to local fisheries products and traditional artisanal fisheries, and the diversification of economic activities.
- **BLUEMED** project has the objective of valorising and protecting the Underwater Cultural Heritage, the raising of public awareness and diving tourism attractiveness. Its main focus is supplying local/regional authorities with a multi-disciplinary plan for Underwater Museums and Knowledge Awareness, promoting innovation in the diving industry and improving divers experience through innovative diving services and technologies and promoting the incomes coming from these cultural heritage to countries tourism.
- **BLUEISLANDS** project aims to identify and mitigate the economic, social and environmental impact of seasonal waste variation on Mediterranean islands as an effect of tourism. It is based on three pillars: measuring quantity and composition of waste generated on nine Mediterranean islands, testing of policy making tools for sustainable tourism growth, local guidelines and regional strategies for implementation of seasonal waste variation management plans and engaging public and private stakeholders to promote sustainable business models in the tourism sector.

Project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund

- The project **MEET** - Mediterranean Experience of Ecotourism – (funded by EU programme ENPI CBC MED and predecessor of DESTIMED project) has focused on coordinated regional approach to transform ecotourism into a concrete alternative for development in and around protected areas across the Mediterranean Basin. It sets a leading example for public-private partnerships working towards sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean region.
- Finally, **BLEUTOURMED** project itself brings together the aforementioned projects and some others dealing with sustainable tourism. In total, 14 projects<sup>1</sup> covering a wide range of topics that compose the Community and join forces, exchange practices and capitalise results on sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean Basin. As a second step, it aims to influence policy makers and stakeholders in the Mediterranean and further to influence the European Union policy makers.

<sup>1</sup> The projects within this Community are: ALTER ECO (Alternative tourist strategies to enhance the local sustainable development of tourism by promoting Mediterranean Identity), BLUEISLANDS (Seasonal variation of waste as effect of tourism), BLUEMED (Plan/test/coordinate Underwater Museums, Diving Parks and Knowledge Awareness Centres to support sustainable and responsible tourism development and promote Blue growth in coastal areas and islands of the Mediterranean), CASTWATER (Coastal areas sustainable tourism water management in the Mediterranean), CO-EVOLVE (Promoting the co-evolution of human activities and natural systems for the development of sustainable coastal and maritime tourism), CONSUME-LESS (Consume Less in Mediterranean Touristic Communities), DestiMED (Mediterranean Ecotourism Destination: joint planning, monitoring, management and promotion for a governance system in Mediterranean protected areas), EMbleMatiC (Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains as Coastal destinations of excellence), MEDCYCLETOUR (MEDiterranean CYcle route for sustainable coastal TOURism), MEDFEST (MED Culinary heritage experiences: how to create sustainable tourist destinations), MITOMED+ (Models of Integrated Tourism in the MEDiterranean Plus), ShapeTourism (New shape and drives for the tourism sector: supporting decisions, integrating plans and ensuring sustainability), SIROCCO (Sustainable InterRegional cOastal & Cruise maritime tourism through Cooperation and joint planning), TOURISMED (Fishing Tourism in the Mediterranean region for sustainable development).

Project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund