

ALTOUR-MED

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KA210-VET - Small-scale partnerships in vocational education and training



GUIDE



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INTRODUCTION

This document constitutes a Guide for tourism professionals, destination management stakeholders and VET providers on how to develop and promote alternative tourism forms in their local contexts. The Guide focuses on three targeted Mediterranean regions, exploring similarities and opportunities that are relevant for the promotion and uptake of strategies and practices that promote alternative tourism as opposed to mass tourism.

The Guide has been developed under the framework of the ALTOUR-MED project (2022-2-MT01-KA210-VET-000096406) and will be used as the main training material during the organisation of three workshops in summer 2024, in Malta, Greece and Italy, targeted at current and future tourism professionals and VET providers. The Guide also intends to be a useful resource for all interested tourism stakeholders around the Mediterranean, providing them with some basic knowledge on alternative tourism related concepts as well practical examples on how those can be promoted or developed based on the particularities of each region.

Also, it will outline the particularities of the three targeted regions (Malta, Messina in Sicily and Korinthia in Greece) which share many similarities in terms of their touristic product and their environmental context. The respective contexts which are presented in this Guide were the result of the needs analysis research that the three ALTOUR-MED partners (Institute of Tourism Studies – Malta, Green Village - Greece and Education in Progress - Italy) undertook in the framework of the project.

Finally, the Guide's chapter are in line with the defined alternative tourism forms. Each chapter includes an introduction and explanation of the respective form, as well as a relevant best practice and/or case study which constitutes a practical example of developing and promoting an alternative tourism offer.

The full list of the identified best practices is available on the [ALTOUR-MED website](#).

1. ALTERNATIVE TOURISM

Alternative tourism refers to a paradigm shift in the travel industry that prioritizes environmental conservation, community engagement, and socio-cultural authenticity. As part of the notion of sustainable tourism, it seeks to minimize the negative impacts of traditional mass tourism while maximizing the benefits for local communities and the environment. The concept of alternative tourism encompasses various types, including ecotourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, rural tourism, and volunteer tourism. Each type emphasizes different aspects of sustainability and offers unique experiences for travelers. In essence, alternative tourism is an umbrella term for all forms of travel opposed to mass tourism.

Definitions of alternative tourism often emphasize principles such as minimizing environmental impact, supporting local economies, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting community involvement. These definitions highlight the importance of balancing the needs of tourists, host communities, and the environment to ensure long-term sustainability. Approaches to alternative tourism range from grassroots initiatives led by local communities to large-scale government policies and industry-led initiatives. Key approaches include community-based tourism, sustainable destination management, certification programs (such as eco-labels), and responsible travel practices adopted by both tourists and tourism operators.

In summary, alternative tourism represents a holistic approach to travel that goes beyond mere leisure and sightseeing. It embraces sustainability principles and seeks to create meaningful experiences for travelers while preserving the natural environment and supporting local communities.

1.1 EU Context

The European Union (EU) has played a significant role in promoting alternative tourism across Europe through various policies, funding initiatives, and collaborative efforts with member states and stakeholders. Here are some key aspects of the EU's approach:

1) Policy Framework: The EU has developed policy frameworks that emphasize sustainable tourism development. **The European Tourism Strategy ([European Agenda for Tourism 2030](#))**, for example, highlights the importance of sustainable and responsible tourism practices, including alternative tourism, to ensure the competitiveness and long-term viability of the European tourism industry. The EU's **[Transition Pathway for Tourism](#)** publication also outlines the necessity for adapting approaches and strategies that promote alternative tourism forms so as to mitigate challenges that mass tourism poses for the environment and also for local societies.

2) Funding Programmes: The EU provides financial support for alternative tourism projects through programmes used to invest in infrastructure development, capacity building, and promotional activities that support alternative tourism initiatives. Some of them are highlighted below:

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF): The ERDF is one of the primary financial instruments used by the EU to support regional development initiatives, including those related to tourism. Funding from the ERDF is allocated to projects that aim to enhance regional competitiveness, stimulate economic growth, and promote sustainable development. Within the tourism sector, the ERDF may provide grants for infrastructure improvements, capacity-building activities, and promotional campaigns that support alternative tourism initiatives. This could include investments in eco-friendly accommodation, development of hiking or cycling trails, or revitalization of cultural heritage sites to attract responsible tourists.

Cohesion Fund: The Cohesion Fund focuses on reducing economic and social disparities between regions within the EU. It provides financial assistance to member states with lower income levels to support their development priorities, including investments in tourism infrastructure and services. Alternative tourism projects in less developed regions may benefit from funding through the Cohesion Fund, helping to diversify local economies, create employment opportunities, and improve living standards.

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD): The EAFRD supports rural development initiatives across the EU, including those related to sustainable tourism in rural areas. Funding from the EAFRD can be used to support agri-tourism projects, farm diversification initiatives, and the development of rural tourism infrastructure. This may include investments in farm stays, local food experiences, and cultural heritage tours that showcase the unique character of rural communities and landscapes.

Interreg Programmes: The Interreg Programmes promote cross-border cooperation and territorial development across different regions of Europe. These programmes provide funding for collaborative projects that address common challenges and opportunities, including those related to sustainable tourism. Interreg projects may focus on promoting alternative tourism routes, fostering cultural exchange, and enhancing environmental conservation efforts in transnational or cross-border areas.

European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF): In addition to specific funding programmes like the ERDF, Cohesion Fund, and EAFRD, alternative tourism projects may also access support through broader European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). These funds aim to strengthen economic, social, and territorial cohesion within the EU by investing in areas such as innovation, education, and infrastructure. By aligning with the objectives of ESIF, alternative tourism initiatives can tap into funding opportunities to support their sustainable development goals.

3) Networking and Collaboration: Through the following networking and collaboration mechanisms, the EU fosters a culture of cooperation, innovation, and shared learning among stakeholders involved in promoting alternative tourism across Europe. By facilitating dialogue and partnership-building, the EU strengthens the

collective efforts to advance sustainable tourism practices and achieve common objectives related to economic development, environmental conservation, and cultural preservation:

European Network for Rural Development (ENRD): The ENRD serves as a platform for networking and exchange of knowledge and best practices among rural development stakeholders across the EU. Within the ENRD, thematic working groups, workshops, and seminars focus on various topics, including sustainable tourism in rural areas. Through these activities, stakeholders from different regions can share experiences, learn from successful case studies, and identify opportunities for collaboration in promoting alternative tourism.

European Tourism Network: The European Tourism Network brings together representatives from national tourism authorities, regional tourism organizations, industry associations, and other relevant stakeholders to promote cooperation and dialogue on tourism-related issues. This network facilitates the exchange of information, policy discussions, and joint initiatives to advance sustainable tourism practices, including alternative tourism, at the European level.

Thematic Platforms and Initiatives: The EU supports thematic platforms and initiatives that focus specifically on promoting sustainable tourism, cultural heritage, and rural development. For example, the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe program encourages transnational cooperation to develop themed tourism routes based on Europe's cultural heritage. Similarly, initiatives such as the European Capitals of Culture and the European Heritage Label promote cultural tourism and cross-border collaboration to showcase Europe's rich cultural diversity and heritage.

Collaborative Projects and Partnerships: The EU encourages collaborative projects and partnerships among stakeholders involved in alternative tourism initiatives. These projects may involve public-private partnerships, joint ventures between tourism operators and local communities, or cross-sectoral collaborations that bring together actors from tourism, environmental conservation, and cultural heritage sectors. By pooling resources, expertise, and networks, these collaborations can enhance the impact and sustainability of alternative tourism initiatives.

Capacity Building and Training: The EU supports capacity-building activities and training programs to strengthen the skills and knowledge of stakeholders involved in alternative tourism. This may include workshops, seminars, and online resources on topics such as sustainable tourism management, community engagement, and cultural interpretation. By investing in capacity building, the EU empowers local communities, tourism entrepreneurs, and destination managers to develop and implement alternative tourism initiatives effectively.

Certification and Quality Standards: Through the following certification schemes and quality standards, the EU promotes transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in sustainable tourism practices across Europe. By incentivizing businesses and destinations to adopt environmentally and socially

responsible practices, the EU contributes to the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the European tourism sector:

EU Eco-Label for Tourist Accommodation: The EU Eco-Label, also known as the EU Flower, is a voluntary certification scheme that recognizes tourist accommodations (such as hotels, campsites, and holiday rentals) adhering to high environmental standards. Accommodations certified with the EU Eco-Label must meet criteria related to energy efficiency, waste management, water conservation, and other environmental performance indicators. By promoting certified eco-friendly accommodations, the EU encourages tourists to choose environmentally responsible lodging options and supports the adoption of sustainable practices within the tourism sector.

European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas: The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas is a certification scheme designed to promote sustainable tourism development in protected natural and cultural heritage areas across Europe. Participating protected areas develop and implement action plans to integrate sustainable tourism principles into their management practices, visitor experiences, and community engagement initiatives. The Charter aims to balance the conservation of natural and cultural heritage with the socioeconomic benefits of tourism, fostering responsible visitor behavior and supporting the long-term viability of protected areas as tourism destinations.

Destination Management Organizations (DMOs): The EU supports destination management organizations (DMOs) and local tourism authorities in the development and implementation of quality standards and certification schemes for sustainable tourism. These standards may encompass criteria related to environmental management, cultural authenticity, social responsibility, and visitor satisfaction. By establishing and enforcing quality standards, DMOs help ensure that tourism activities meet the expectations of visitors while minimizing negative impacts on local communities and the environment.

European Tourism Indicators System (ETIS): The EU promotes the use of common indicators and measurement tools, such as the European Tourism Indicators System (ETIS), to monitor and evaluate the sustainability performance of tourism destinations. ETIS provides a standardized framework for collecting data on key sustainability indicators, including environmental, socio-economic, and cultural aspects of tourism development. By monitoring progress against established indicators, destinations can identify areas for improvement and track the effectiveness of their sustainability initiatives over time.

Voluntary Sustainability Certification Programs: In addition to EU-led certification schemes, various voluntary sustainability certification programs exist at the national, regional, and sectoral levels across Europe. These programs, often developed in collaboration with industry stakeholders, certify tourism businesses and destinations that demonstrate commitment to sustainable practices. Examples include Green Key for eco-friendly hotels, Blue Flag for clean beaches and marinas, and Fair Trade Tourism certification for socially responsible tourism operators. By participating in voluntary certification programs,

tourism businesses and destinations signal their dedication to sustainability and gain recognition for their efforts to promote alternative tourism.

1.2 ALTOUR-MED Categories

In the framework of the ALTOUR-MED Project and following the main contemporary definitions of alternative tourism, the consortium has further categorised the potential offers that a destination and/or tourism business can focus on. Those are:

A) ECOTOURISM

Ecotourism is a form of responsible travel that emphasizes the exploration and appreciation of natural environments while minimizing negative impacts on ecosystems and local communities. It involves immersing oneself in natural landscapes, wildlife habitats, and cultural heritage sites, often with a focus on education, conservation, and sustainable practices. Ecotourism strives to foster environmental awareness, support biodiversity conservation efforts, and generate economic benefits for host communities through responsible tourism activities. Key principles of ecotourism include environmental stewardship, community involvement, cultural sensitivity, and visitor education, aiming to create meaningful experiences that contribute to both the protection of nature and the well-being of local people.

B) ACTIVE TOURISM

Active tourism, also known as adventure tourism or outdoor recreation, involves engaging in physical activities and exploration while traveling to natural or cultural destinations. It encompasses a wide range of adventurous pursuits such as hiking, biking, kayaking, skiing, and rock climbing, among others. Active tourists seek to immerse themselves in nature, challenge themselves physically, and experience the thrill of adventure in diverse landscapes and environments. Unlike traditional forms of tourism, active tourism emphasizes participation, interaction, and personal growth, encouraging travelers to step out of their comfort zones and embrace new experiences. Whether trekking through rugged wilderness, cycling along scenic trails, or embarking on adrenaline-pumping excursions, active tourism offers opportunities for exploration, discovery, and connection with the natural world.

C) CULTURAL & CREATIVE TOURISM

Cultural and creative tourism involves traveling to destinations to explore and experience the unique cultural heritage, arts, and creative expressions of a place. It encompasses activities such as visiting museums, art galleries, historical sites, attending cultural events, festivals, performances, and participating in workshops or classes related to local traditions and crafts. Cultural and creative tourism seeks to immerse travelers in the authentic cultural fabric of a destination, fostering cross-cultural understanding, appreciation, and engagement. It encourages interaction with local communities, artisans, and artists, providing opportunities for cultural exchange and enrichment. By celebrating the diversity of cultural

expressions and supporting creative industries, cultural and creative tourism enhances the visitor experience while contributing to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage and identity.



2. NATIONAL CONTEXT: MALTA

Tourism Governance in Malta

Malta's Tourism Strategy for the years 2021 - 2030 was published following a drafting and consultation phase during a time that has been profoundly impacted by the chaos, turmoil, and uncertainty that the global COVID-19 pandemic has wrought on the world's economies in general and tourism activity in particular. This strategy is built around the three principles of Recover, Rethink, and Revitalise. The publication of this Strategy comes at an important juncture of Malta's economic development and the Maltese Tourism Industry's evolution. It comes at a point in time where sustainable approaches to doing business, the need to balance economic growth with social and environmental wellbeing, the recognition of climate change impacts, and the need to shift to net zero emissions rub shoulders with the need to recover tourism activity, the multiple challenges faced by the industry in terms of receptive capacity, human resource availability, the quest for a higher quality offer, the investment and maintenance needs of the Tourism Product and the competitive pressures of a globalised industry.

This is a Tourism Strategy in which Recovery is conditioned by the dual principles of Rethinking and Revitalising. Thus, it is not merely a plan to return to the tourism activity prevailing pre-COVID-19 but one in which we strive to work towards a Tourism Industry that is stronger, more competitive, and better equipped to handle the challenges of the next decade. A Strategy such as this will not succeed if it is to be executed and implemented by the Government alone. It is a Strategy for the entire Tourism Industry and all the ancillary sectors related to tourism. It will only prove successful if it attracts the widespread stakeholder acceptance necessary for it to succeed.

This is a Plan in which each Strategy is defined by a clear Rationale, Objective, Goals, and Actions to ensure that deliverables do not remain nebulous but measurable and benchmarkable. It is by far the most ambitious document of its type produced for the Maltese Tourism Industry to date. The government has shown continuous belief and commitment towards the Maltese Tourism Industry and this document provides further proof of the importance attached to this major sector of economic activity by setting the steps for its revitalisation and future-proofing for the rest of the decade. In this way, we can ensure that Tourism continues to contribute to a higher quality of life for Malta's inhabitants in the years to come.

Green Transition of Tourism Malta

The key elements of Malta's Tourism Strategy for the period 2021-2030. It aims to form the basis of a wide discussion with the scope of providing the Maltese Tourism Industry with a sound platform from which to recover the losses inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic whilst taking decisive steps to strengthen Tourism's economic and social awareness and sensitivity and a quest to grow Tourism's contribution beyond mere volumes by attracting a higher spending tourist: a tourist who appreciates those authentic, quality experiences which the destination is capable of offering. This will lead to a Maltese Tourism Industry that is

built on stronger foundations based on the principles of sustainability. The launching of this process presents us with a unique opportunity to provide inputs into the direction that Maltese Tourism is to take over the next decade. It recognizes the changing international trends, seeks to equate a higher quality, diverse Maltese tourism offer with what travelers shall be seeking in the coming years, and addresses challenges in areas ranging from service delivery and human resource requirements, accommodation mix, connectivity, facilities, and digitalisation to embracing the Sustainable Development Goals and addressing Climate Change. It seeks to equate enhanced visitor satisfaction with agreeable host population tolerance. We are launching this process of consultation, discussion, and strategy formulation to finalise the ten-year Malta Tourism Strategy early in 2021 following which we will work with all stakeholders to deliver that which has been agreed upon. As a Strategy, this exercise recognizes that Malta's tourism offer is a combination of supply and demand-based initiatives. As a result, the Strategy shall harness the opportunities arising during the post-COVID interlude to propose the best possible ways to reassess Malta's tourism model, guide investment opportunities, and continue the process of enhancing the quality dimension of Malta's tourism offer not only by addressing the physical product but also through the further development of the human resource element. Tourism continues to be a major pillar of Malta's economic and social development. This Strategy is being formulated to sustain its longer-term potential to keep generating wealth and progress more effectively and sensitively in the decade to come.

Ecotourism Opportunities and Challenges

While the increase in protected areas has presented an opportunity for ecotourism development in the Maltese Islands, this niche still needs to make considerable steps forward to become a key component of the tourism product in Malta. This entails competing with other sectors, in particular quarrying, hunting and trapping, tourism, construction, and real estate, for the same resource. While small steps forward have been made including the preparation of management plans for terrestrial Natura 2000 sites, the setting up of an agency for their implementation as well as the introduction of rangers, adequate management and investment in the sector remains scant. Ecotourism development by operators and its practice within managed sites can contribute to better protection of the environment, which is under constant pressure, and generate funds for management and conservation, which are currently lacking or limited. This needs to be further studied and good practices from other parks/protected areas such as the Aegadian must be explored (Agius et al., 2016).

This income can serve to rehabilitate areas close to protected and buffer zones that have been impacted by a myriad of activities and illegalities. Operators need to develop packages that fulfill ecotourism criteria and which are adequate for different seasons. Legal challenges in interpretation need to also be addressed through the introduction of eco guides for specific areas (Agius, 2021). In the short term, ecotourism can help to reboot tourism in a period when staying in small groups, social distancing, and staying outdoors seem to be the normality. In the longer term, ecotourism will not only diversify the tourism product but also serve to tap into an ever-increasing 151 niche of tourists interested in sustainable travel (UNWTO, 2019) and outdoor tourism in parks (GEF, 2020; TripAdvisor, 2021). Ecotourism can also serve as a strategy



to address over-tourism, which may return after the Covid-19 pandemic as confirmed through projections (MTA, 2021) by shifting discerned tourists to areas with ecotourism potential and that to date have been overlooked. While this may raise concerns about environmental degradation and introduce new challenges, adequate management can help to minimise possible impacts. Therefore, by valuing terrestrial and marine environments, ecotourism can help the island state fulfill the Sustainable Development Goals and support the European Green Deal targets including restoring biodiversity on land and sea.

Cultural and Creative Tourism

Tourism, like many other cultural and social phenomena, is based on exchange. It is perhaps not surprising that Malta, long a centre for trade and social exchange, has become a focus for the social exchanges promoted by tourism and other forms of long-term mobility. Exchange is also a major theme for the European Capital of Culture in Valletta in 2018. This paper looks at how the concept of exchange has changed in a globalising world, particularly as it problematizes traditional concepts of 'host' and 'guest'. In particular, attention is paid to how the concept of 'local' culture is replacing 'authenticity' as the touchstone of the real tourism experience. What does it mean to be local, or to 'live like a local' in Malta, or anywhere else? Keywords: Relational Tourism, Communities, Exchange

INTRODUCTION An important theme for the Valletta 2018 European Capital of Culture is exchange. As the Valletta 2018 bid book says: Born within both Europe and the Mediterranean and occupying a central strategic position, Malta is a place of diverse cross-cultural exchanges, whether for trade, tourism, or even as a refuge. However, not all of these encounters are necessarily comfortable ones. Although the most uncomfortable encounters have come in recent years with the flood of refugees from Africa, in the context of the ATLAS conference the theme of tourism exchanges has been central. Tourism has always been about exchange.

Tourism has been a vehicle for exchanging ideas, lifestyles, culture, and money. Like many forms of exchange, however, the exchanges stimulated by tourism are not always equal or equitable. Much of the tourism literature on development, for example, was focussed on the unequal exchanges between hosts and guests, with the tourist guests usually seen as coming out on top of their local hosts. In the service economy, tourism became a major source of economic growth, because, at its most simple level, it involved exchanging tourist money for services provided by locals. This situation was analysed in some detail in a Maltese context by the anthropologist Jeremy Boissevain, who despite the obvious temptations to join the detractors of mass tourism, tended to take a more sanguine view of the exchanges in Malta. Creating Relational Tourism Through Exchange: The Maltese Experience 88 Creating Relational Tourism Through Exchange: The Maltese Experience, Greg Richards He identified six circumstances peculiar to Malta that enabled this small island to benefit from tourism to a greater extent than some other destinations:

- Not having all their eggs in the tourist basket
- A relatively high standard of living
- An outward-looking attitude as a result of a long, reasonably friendly relationship with the British
- A tradition of service
- A high population density, which has permitted the Maltese to absorb a large tourist population
- The government intention to dominate the tourist industry

The Maltese are perhaps not the classic hosts of anthropological theory, cast helplessly to their fate by rapacious international tourism industry.

The Maltese view of tourism has developed with a more equal, and equitable view of the relationship between host and guest, which has perhaps facilitated the transition to the modern network society better than some other destinations. It was in Malta, for example, that the concept of ‘relational tourism’ came to fruition. “Integrated Relational Tourism” (IRT) ‘is based on the interaction between the traveller/tourist and the local people which provides material and immaterial gains.’ (Caudullo, 2010) This is a departure from traditional tourism, offering the tourist the possibility to immerse himself and taste local culture and traditions in the particular region or locale he/she is visiting. Today’s tourists prefer “to be” rather than “to have”, and therefore they want to become part of the daily life of the places they visit and want their journey to be a source of knowledge and leisure. The tourist reclaims the old function of the journey, intent on widening his knowledge of the surrounding territory, while respecting the social and cultural equality of other populations.

The tourist seems less interested in the traditional sites of mass tourism, which has damaged local identities. More and more tourists prefer less known sites and inland areas where outside influences have had little influence on local culture and folklore. This has many parallels to the concept of ‘creative tourism’ that has also become popular in recent years (Richards, 2011). If one analyses what relational or creative tourism gives people, it is based on exchange – the exchange of knowledge, skills, ideas, culture, etc. In the early forms of creative tourism, this was often encapsulated in specific learning experiences such as workshops and courses, but it is increasingly now bound up with the idea of immersion in local culture and creativity, or the concept of ‘living like a local’. This is perhaps the ultimate example of relational tourism – ‘being’ rather than ‘seeing’. The growth of home exchange systems and hospitality exchange systems such as Couchsurfing underlines how popular the ‘living like a local’ concept has become (Andriotis and Agiomirgianakis, 2013). The irony of this, however, is that this form of local experience has been supported by the growth of global networks. Without the Internet exchanging lives with other locals would be much more difficult. Via the Internet, however, we can easily become a local elsewhere.

Active Tourism In Malta

The Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) is looking beyond the traditional attractions of sun and sea towards more specialised tourism, including those seeking active tourism. This segment is contributing millions of euro to the tourism economy with 11% of tourists visiting Malta last year having participated actively in some sport or other.

This active tourism is becoming increasingly popular and has become a niche in Malta’s tourist product and fact, generates an annual income of €220 million. According to the MTA’s calculations, tourists involved in some kind of sports activity spend an average of nine nights in the Maltese Islands and on a head-to-head basis spend €1,200 each.

It is estimated that last year 190,000 visiting tourists participated in sports activities, the most popular of course being diving but in recent years other activities such as abseiling and kayaking have considerably increased in popularity.

Andrew Galea from Malta Outdoors – one of the agencies providing activity opportunities – told tv.m.com.mt that the demand for such activities is always increasing.

He said participation in sport is always increasing because of various factors and has shown a definite upturn in demand in recent years not only among tourists but the Maltese themselves requesting all types of activities. He said that Malta Outdoors also offers climbing and abseiling.

Wied iż-Żurriq is a highly popular locality for abseiling and kayaking. Recently a German couple who were visiting Malta as MTA guests. Carolin Steig and Martin Merten are bloggers who visit various countries and then relate their experiences.

“We are in Malta for the first time, but we have seen there is much more to experience than just architecture, food, and wine. We have done a lot of activities. We have been climbing and cycling in Gozo and today we have made a coastal walk. It’s just beautiful here,” said Martin Merten.

Referring to the Blue Grotto walk, Carolin Steig said she was not quite sure about attempting it and at first it was quite scary and looked quite awesome. She said however that when one sees the arc beneath it is amazing.

Replying to a question by MP Silvio Parnis, Minister for Tourism Clayton Bartolo explained the importance of active tourism, particularly those niches that attract tourist participants during times of the year when general tourism is not that popular. He said the MTA is budgeting €1 million annually to promote active tourism.

Adventure Sports in Malta

The Maltese islands’ landscapes, coastline, and geology are ideally suited to getting outdoors and pushing one’s limits through many exciting and different sports.

There is a wide range of services designed to bring out the adventurer in you, as you discover a Mediterranean archipelago famed for its stunning land and seascapes, millennial history, and mild climate. Adventurous services are designed to capture your imagination and bring out the adventurer in you, through many different extreme sports, including rock climbing, kayaking, kite surfing, offroad biking, and trekking experiences for both individuals and groups:

The excitement of the zipline can be enjoyed by all

Malta offers scenic routes to appreciate geology, flora, fauna, our beautiful coastline and countryside.

Snorkelling in the crystal clear blue waters of Malta, Gozo, and Comino.

Beautiful landscapes and 300 days of sunshine make Malta and Gozo perfect locations for rock climbing.

In the summer heat, you can leap into the sea for a cooling dip in the Med.

Abseiling (rappelling)

Cliffs, slabs, and crevasses offer the most spectacular places to abseil in Malta. Whether new to these sports or an experienced athlete, activities are designed to suit your skill level throughout the year and are supervised by experienced professionals.

Urban Abseiling at Mosta Bridge

You've done abseiling before and you search for more thrill and an amazing location? Then the abseiling at Mosta Bridge, probably one of the most amazing abseiling points on Malta, is waiting for you. A huge 35m long abseil with 30m of free hanging in the rope!

Outdoor Adventure Activities for Children and Youths

Fun-filled adventure programs for summer or winter. Depending on the season and age group, kids can enjoy activities for groups 9-14 and 13-17 years including climbing, abseiling, night hikes, cookouts, laser tag, culture treasure hunts, indoor climbing, ziplining, beach games, snorkelling, kayaking, trekking, sea adventure, slacklining and more...

Group Holiday Camps

Located in the middle of the Mediterranean with a population of some 410,000, most of whom speak English, and many Italian too, Malta offers the ideal location for many university and education adventure and leadership sports programs. These can be themed around English and adventure, personal leadership, adventure & culture, or adventure & extreme sports.

The Migra 150 Zipline

A cliff-to-cliff zipline adventure at Migra il-Ferha is a safe, fun-filled treat for adults and families alike, as well as making a great day out for friends and groups.

Trekking, Walking, and Trail Running

Trekking and hiking will allow you to appreciate Malta's unique character, allowing you to leave the beaten tourist track and explore Malta's quaint villages, rugged landscape, and spectacular coastlines. Trail running routes cater to different levels of fitness.

Snorkelling

Snorkelling in Malta can be sedate and relaxing, drifting along admiring underwater reefs and sea life, or you can dive down, to get closer to the beauty of the seabed and its creatures! With amazing azure blue waters, long hot summers, and easy access to a wild coastline, what better way to relax and have fun than snorkelling in Malta and Gozo's seas?

Rock Climbing

With 1000 trad routes and 900 sport routes (most bolted to the highest standards during the last 9 years), excellent limestone, beautiful landscapes, and 300 days of sunshine every year, Malta is a climbers' gem waiting to be discovered.

Sea Level Traversing

Malta's coastline is rocky with many inlets and caves, allowing you to experience all the freedom of DWS with the added advantage of a very short fall into the sea should you not be able to continue your route. In the summer heat, you can jump off the rock face and into the cool waters of the Med!

Freefall Jump at Mosta Bridge

A total jump height of 23m from the famous Mosta bridge to the valley floor is a first for Malta. This amazing location is not to be missed and the best way to appreciate one of Malta's most scenic places to visit.

Offroad Mountain Biking

Taking minor roads, country footpaths, and offroad trails, you can explore the forgotten valleys and scenic routes of Malta and Gozo. In one day you can visit historic Malta, with stops at the Neolithic temples, the walled medieval city of Mdina, and wayside chapels, or discover rugged countryside, spectacular cliffs, and hidden inland valleys.

Kayaking

Kayaking is a great way to see Malta's coastlines, including a visit to the island of Comino where you will be able to glide under natural arches and into several caves. Another adventure holiday favourite takes you to pretty Selmun Bay and the historic St. Paul's Islands.

Statistics

Presenting a **ten-year Strategy for Maltese Tourism** at this important juncture in global development necessitates a thorough understanding of the industry's 70 years of operation, development, and evolution. It is only by understanding where the industry is coming from that one can properly propose strategies that are not only based on a strong foundation but also stand a good chance of success given their relationship with the industry's roots.

Tourism in Malta has evolved through various phases which have led to different impacts on the economic scene in Malta over the years. In its six decades of development and growth, Maltese tourism has witnessed many different periods each of which created different types of economic opportunities, challenges, and issues.

Phase 1: Before the 1960s

Although travel for the masses was still a phenomenon yet to come, this does not mean that Malta had no tourism to speak of before its conscious attempt to develop this industry in the 1960s. Tourism accommodation was initially mostly confined to Valletta, and hotel names betray a British colonial connection and utilisation.

Phase 2: The 1960s

Mass tourism was still in its infancy and air travel was still the realm of the rich. Tourism was exclusive and high quality was in demand. During this phase, Malta can be best described as an emerging quality hotel destination for British tourists. Quality hotel investment was being stimulated by a generous development Grants Scheme run by the Malta Government Tourist Board.

Phase 3: The 1970s

This period can be described as the one of exponential growth of mass tourism and tour operators. Despite temporary setbacks caused by a mix of internal and external factors - such as the chilling of Anglo-Maltese relations before the renegotiation of the Defence and Financial Agreement in 1972 and the 1973 oil crisis and price hike – tourism volumes to Malta increased rapidly, assisted by political troubles and misfortunes of other countries in the Mediterranean region: the Arab/Israeli war, the Lebanese civil war, the military dictatorships in Portugal, Spain, Greece and Turkey and the invasion of Cyprus. Air Malta was set up as Malta's national airline in 1974, creating new tourism job opportunities in the aviation and other ancillary sectors. These factors contributed to a decade of strong growth which saw tourism to Malta increase from around 180,000 tourists per annum in 1970 to nearly 750,000 annual tourists by 1980.

Phase 4: The early 1980s

By the early 1980s, a situation arose whereby international tourism supply in the shape of destinations and tourist beds was fast outstripping demand. This ushered in a period of price sensitivity. For Malta, riding on the crest of ten years of rapid growth during the 1970s, this worrying scenario was further exacerbated by the return of political stability to the Mediterranean region meaning that competition in the neighbourhood, comprising a more modern tourism offer, became a sudden reality in a country struggling with basic issues such as guaranteed tap water supply, electricity, and telecommunications.

The predictable outcome of this combination of unfortunate events led to the decline and stagnation of Maltese tourism between 1981 and 1986. This was mostly due to uncompetitive pricing, Sterling/Maltese Lira exchange rate issues, Malta's overdependence on British tourism, the high seasonality of tourism inflows, and the tangible infrastructural shortcomings.

The immediate outcome of this period was the decline of the recently but rapidly developed Bugibba and Marsaskala. These localities saw the rapid emergence of second homes and residential elements commence during this period as replacements for unutilised and obsolete former self-catering tourism stock.

Phase 5: Late 1980s

The growth of intra-European travel was the signature feature of the late 1980s. This was stimulated by the end of the Cold War and the liberalisation and deregulation that emerged as a result of the single European market concept, with the Single European Act coming into force in 1992. Simplified border formalities also played a major role, starting from the removal of visas and culminating in the concept of borderless travel within the Schengen area introduced by the Schengen Agreement in 1990.

Phase 6: The 1990s

International tourism started growing at an accelerated rate during this period. In Europe, this was strongly influenced by the opening of Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union and with vast populations seeking travel to previously inaccessible and unaffordable destinations. It was also the age of mergers and takeovers, with the demise of the small, local, regional, and independent tourism operators in favour of integrated companies. This phenomenon affected tour operators, travel agents, hotel chains, and airlines. This was also the period that saw the emergence of the Internet as a source of information.

Phase 7: Early 2000s

Following the boom years of the previous decade, the new millennium brought about several new realities resulting from the birth pangs of a truly globalised economy. In tourism, this was made manifest by the decline of traditional suppliers such as tour operators which were replaced by a new generation of companies aimed at serving a more experienced, knowledgeable, confident, and independent tourist. Foremost amongst this was the rise of the low-cost airline phenomenon.

One of the major stimuli of independent travel was the birth and growth of e-commerce. E-commerce changed the World Wide Web from a database of information to a business portal and changed web users from lookers to bookers. Within Europe, the introduction of the Eurozone and the expansion of the Schengen Agreement to include many European countries allowing free travel within a single border also had a huge impact on the way people organised their holidays by allowing for exchange rate free cross-border travel which could be planned at short notice owing to no frontier formalities and instant direct online bookings.

Phase 8: 2006-2014

This was a turbulent period during which global tourism was rocked by a succession of pandemics, economic crises, rising fuel costs, and terrorism but continued to grow strongly due to its resilience. Tourism was becoming a necessity, to be consumed at all costs, rather than a luxury requiring financial, personal, political, and medical stability to take place.

This was also the period during which independent travel and online purchasing came of age. These important developments led to a huge shift in travel behaviour, with late booking decisions replacing the previous situation which favoured early bookings months in advance. It was also during this period that huge numbers of people started to travel in a way that featured shorter stays and higher trip frequency. The advent of low-cost carrier services in Malta in late 2006 opened the door to new travel patterns. This was quite a contrast to the business model of the previous four decades, dictated by the tour operator style of holidays, with visitors staying in multiples of seven days due to flight schedules that linked the origin and the destination every week only.

This period also witnessed the growth of interactive social media as an alternative to traditional media. The onus shifted from a supplier-led industry to a consumer-driven one, with increased demand for 'bed and breakfast' type, room-only, town-center, exclusive type accommodation experiences. Private accommodation grew as an alternative to the collective accommodation establishments which had prevailed since the mid-1980s.

Phase 9: 2015-2019

The period commencing in 2015 has seen global tourism continue to grow in an unprecedented, almost exponential manner as travel shifts from its previous status of an affordable indulgence undertaken at a reasonable expense to a more affordable commodity that is consumed more frequently and regularly by wider sections of the population in more countries worldwide.

Alternative forms of touring have also expanded, particularly the cruise market which grew to reach the 670,000 mark in 2017. Although cruise passengers are not included in tourism arrivals statistics as they are excursionists, they do bear a relationship with tourism in terms of the tendency for a number of them to eventually revisit the destination as bone fide tourists and also in terms of the cruise and stay possibilities

emerging from home-porting operations such as TUI's Mein Schiff and P&O's Oceana which operate Malta to Malta itineraries during the Mediterranean cruising season.

Tourism kept growing, fuelled by cheap air travel as a result of lower fuel prices and the proliferation of the low-cost airline model whilst being further facilitated by the rise of a global middle class and the removal of many of the barriers previously associated with travel. The Maltese remain generally positively disposed to tourism, but they are more prone to NIMBYism and less sympathetic to hordes of visitors on their small island state (Bramwell, 2003).

These past few years have also seen the emergence and growth of the 'sharing economy' as a rapidly expanding phenomenon, posing stiff competition to traditional tourism suppliers mainly in the field of accommodation but also slowly creeping into other areas including catering, transportation and even entertainment. Such peer-to-peer tourism is wholly dependent on the existence of online platforms which facilitate information exchange and online transactions. The impact of such alternative tourism supply chains and the resulting boom in demand for experiential tourism in which tourists seek hands-on experiences are distinct from the detached, distant-observer type of tourism prevailing until a few years back.

Phase 10: COVID-19, Climate Change and beyond

Until COVID-19, this most recent trend of strong tourism growth in Malta was taking place within an environment of strong economic growth by a wide number of sectors ranging from construction to financial services and gaming, all competing for scarce resources, ranging from land to talent. Tourism growth has been impressive in terms of its diversity via its strong off-peak growth, making it a truly, year-round economic activity. This resulted in the need for more year-round employees, the attraction of volumes of tourists from different cultures and still new skills and services. The introduction of novel segments in the fields of active, experiential and wellness tourism and the broadening of the service aspect of the industry had enabled thousands of small entrepreneurs, albeit with a substantial number of them operating outside of regulations and fiscal regimes, to tap into the expanded tourism industry, the size of which has grown beyond the absorptive capacity of traditional suppliers.

In the post-COVID-19 scenario, the shape of Malta's overall economic structure and direction is under review. Tourism may well need to operate within the context of a changed economic landscape brought about by the respective strengthening and decline of other sectors in the primary and services sectors. It may need to deliver additional value in replacement of lost activity from other economic sectors but will itself feel the pinch if sectors which traditionally generated overlapping activity with it shrink.

Employment impacts will also need to be more closely monitored given the equilibrium which needs to be established between a possibly increasingly willing Maltese workforce willing to return to the hospitality industry and the skills and numbers gaps which may still need to be filled by foreign workers, either from within the EU/EEA or from third countries.

The experience and lessons emerging from COVID-19 as a global crisis also have a strong bearing on how the world and the tourism industry will react to the accelerating hazards of unchecked Global Warming and the resulting Climate Change impacts. Climate Change is acknowledged to be the single, highest existential threat to humanity and will undoubtedly have a huge impact on travel and tourism as integral parts of global economic activity in the years to come. For Maltese tourism to survive and remain sustainable in the coming years, a **mix of proactive and reactive steps need to be undertaken with immediate effect.**

Alternative Strategic Options

RECOVER relates to the efforts to re-emerge from the losses incurred as a result of COVID-19. Whilst at face value, there is universal agreement that recovery needs to take place within the shortest time frame possible, there are many factors which influence the speed of recovery both internal and external.

Ultimately the aim should be for recovery to be feasible and sustainable so that it will feature a stable growth curve rather than the more damaging false starts and pauses.

REGROW signifies a wish to SIMPLY return to the growth rates prevailing pre-COVID-19. REGROW would dismiss the effect of the virus as a one-off damaging dip that needs to be erased as rapidly as possible for a return to normality to take place.

Under the REGROW option, there is no need to make any huge corrections to the previously applicable strategy but to merely get back on track anew.

REGROW - the business-as-usual case, is not only hard to imagine but also unlikely to happen. It represents the least climate-friendly and sustainable option and also automatically dismisses the RETHINK option.

The **RETHINK** option represents the school of thought of using the COVID-19 impact to re-examine the fundamental role of tourism within the overall socio-economic context.

RETHINK is based on the premise that the sudden closure of international tourism not only created economic turmoil and hardship but also had some incidental benefits resulting from a reduced movement of people, a less hectic lifestyle in countries, reduced emissions, and the reduction of other negative elements for which tourism is usually singled out as a major contributor.

RETHINK calls for a critical re-evaluation of the role, scale, and nature of tourism in Malta covering a wide range of areas including environmental protection and biodiversity conservation.

RETHINK calls for an understanding of behavioural changes in travel patterns following the pandemic and an adaptation to new demands

RETRENCH as an option is a more extreme extension of RETHINK that actively considers downsizing Maltese tourism to lower levels by making a conscious effort not to regrow to pre-COVID-19 levels.

The upheaval brought about by COVID-19 has generated some beneficial spinoffs to destinations which were normally accustomed to a hectic tourism presence throughout the year. Foremost among these are reduced visitor numbers expressing themselves in reduced densities, less noise and disturbance, better parking opportunities, the freedom to enter a restaurant without the need for a reservation and the reduction of several other discomforts normally associated with a high tourism influx. This argument, albeit simplistic in its escapist evaluation of reduced tourism impacts, constitutes one of the main advantages emphasized by RETRENCH proponents.

It is based on the premise that a lower level of tourism activity would prove beneficial to the destination by making it less busy and less crowded to the benefit of both the resident population and visitor satisfaction.

The main proviso of this rather simplistic option is that the reduction of tourism's economic contribution would be at a lower rate than the reduction in numbers due to greater shares of higher spending tourists attracted to a destination which is more selective and prefers to cap growth.

It fundamentally ignores the critical masses of volumes required to sustain an inter-related and complex tourism value chain.

REVIEW is based on taking stock of the situation arising from the COVID19 experience to review the current status quo to further strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of Malta's tourism industry in the long term.

REVIEW is based on the premise of a more selective approach towards the attraction of Malta's preferred tourism inflows based on the principles of heightened visitor satisfaction, minimized social and environmental impacts and maximized economic returns.

It will reflect all the dimensions of the EU Green Deal, Malta's Vision 2050 and Malta as a Global Climate Friendly Travel Centre.

REVIEW involves re-engineering tourism through an ongoing process which aims to be seamless by avoiding any transitional dips during the process. In the process, we need to evaluate the risks associated with the overdevelopment of the sector.

While all the above is positive, simply stopping at a review is not considered sufficient to achieve the desired strategic objectives.

REVITALISE is closely linked to and adds to REVIEW by emphasizing the revitalisation aspect of the reviewing process.

In REVITALISE, the objective is to induce a process of change aimed at giving a new life to Maltese tourism to elevate it to a higher socio-economic level based on stronger principles of climate resilience, sustainability, value-added, profitability, resilience, and innovative change.

The REVITALISATION of the tourism industry will make it more future-proof in terms of its responsiveness to changing trends, new realities, global threats, and competitor development.

Proposed Options

Based on an evaluation of the above options and alternatives, and based on the PESTEL and SWOT Analyses, the three tourism strategic development options identified for tourism to Malta and Gozo for the period 2021-2030 are the following:

RECOVER. RETHINK. REVITALISE

They have been selected to the exclusion of REGROW, RETRENCH, and REVIEW which have been discarded owing to their inferior attractiveness and their less-than-ideal impacts on the current and future Maltese economic realities:

REGROW is considered too short-sighted and linked to a past reality that is no more.

RETRENCH simplistically ignores the economic complexities and interlinkages surrounding tourism and the relevant critical masses deemed necessary

REVIEW, although positive and beneficial, stops some steps short of **REVITALISE** which is more far-reaching in its strategic objectives.

Pros and Cons

- Focusing on absolute growth alone may continue to generate returns to the expanding hospitality industry, particularly the low category and private accommodation offers, albeit within a framework of reduced marginal returns. It runs into Climate and Sustainability barriers.
- Consciously going for a retreat in volumes would satisfy critics of unrestrained growth and bring down densities and pressures to much lower levels. This would however come at a price of unutilised facilities which will require alternative economic use should they need to shift away from tourism.
- Going for growth based on recovering losses accompanied by a thorough restructuring and re-engineering has the main advantage of repositioning Maltese tourism on stronger foundations to face stronger challenges.
- It is possible that the expected lengthy period of recovery and subsequent reduced rates of growth may create a mismatch between Maltese tourism demand and supply.

Delivering the Strategy

The selected options shall be implemented in an overlapping manner.

The major initial effort shall focus on recovery to close the gap between current losses and the critical mass of volume necessary to bring the tourism industry back to acceptable levels of operation and profitability.

While volumes are being rebuilt, a rethinking strategy will be put in place, based on which, the full-blown revitalization of Maltese tourism will start coming into effect.

The impact of increases in the bed supply will need to be studied and evaluated more profoundly, given the extent of existing and planned bed stock. The primary objective here is to strive to maintain bed stock through a profitable operative environment rather than trimming stock through business failures.

Strategic Vision, Mission, Challenges and Targets

The Tourism Strategy has been formulated on the principle of what type of tourism growth Malta is interested in aiming for. It combines the interest of sustainable economic progress with environmental and social prosperity.

The Strategy recognises that Malta needs to aim for quality at all levels of the tourism value chain, as quality is increasingly influencing travel choices. Our limited land resource demands a strategy that promotes the development of responsible and sustainable quality tourism over the years to come. In this way, the Maltese tourism industry will further build not only in terms of continuing to outperform competitor growth rates but also by consolidating Malta's status as a quality destination of choice. This demands a concerted effort and commitment at the highest level for the improvement of Product Malta and calls for the coordination and commitment of public institutions and the private sector.

It is by taking the above considerations into account that the following Strategic Vision and Mission Statements have been devised: Adapted from the Malta Tourism Authority. For more information visit www.mta.com

3. NATIONAL CONTEXT: GREECE

Statistics and General Information

Tourism is one of the most important sectors in the economic and social life of Greece. It has been a key element of the country's economic growth and social development since the 1970s. Greece has always been a major tourist destination and for its rich culture and history (18 UNESCO World Heritage sites – among the most in the EU and the world), as well as for its natural beauty, nice weather, its long coastline, many islands, and beaches.

In 2019 Greece attracted as many as 31.3 million visitors making it one of the most visited countries in Europe and the world, thus contributing to approximately 24% to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (16), a higher percentage than the EU average (17). The sector directly employed 381.800 people in 2018, accounting for 10.0% of total employment in the country. (18) A substantial percentage when considering that it does not include the jobs that are indirectly linked to tourism. It is also interesting to note that more than 99% of tourism related businesses in the country are SMEs, in line with the EU average. This fact poses specific challenges towards the transition to a more sustainable and digital tourism operation model.

Tourists from other EU countries account for almost two-thirds of total visits. The markets of Germany and France grew significantly in 2018, recording a total of 4.4 million and 1.5 million visits respectively, as did arrivals from the United States which reached 1.1 million visits. (19) Domestic tourists made 5.7 million trips in 2018, and only 4.7% of those were for business purposes. However, the majority of domestic visitors stayed in non-rented accommodation, with only 34.2% of visits using paid accommodation. This poses a challenge for destinations that target mainly domestic visitors and are not as popular to international tourists (20).

The above numbers fell by approximately 80% in 2020 due to the covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent protective measures imposed. Since Greece has been traditionally relying heavily on revenues from tourism and tourism-related sectors, the impact of the pandemic and the travel restrictions was severe and many tourism SMEs relied solely on governmental support for their survival during 2020 and 2021.

Tourism Governance in Greece

Highlighting the importance of the tourism industry in Greece, the Ministry of Tourism is responsible for related policy making and development. It introduces legislation on tourism, agrees the strategic marketing plan, stimulates investment, and works to improve the quality and competitiveness of Greek tourism. The Ministry co-operates closely with other interested ministries and tourism bodies, such as the Association of Greek Tourism Enterprises and the Research Institute for Tourism.

The implementation of the Marketing Strategy is carried out by the Greek National Tourism Organisation (GNT0), which operates a network of 16 offices overseas. The Hellenic Chamber of Hotels is the



Government's statutory advisor on tourism, as well as the authority responsible for the official classification of hotels, rooms and apartments. At the regional and local level, regions and municipalities plan and implement programmes and activities for tourism development and promotion. All promotional activities require the approval of the Greek National Tourism Organisation, to ensure that these campaigns align with the national strategy.

Green Transition of Tourism in Greece

Following the unprecedented crisis due to the pandemic, Greece's recovery and resilience plan responds to the urgent need of fostering a strong recovery and making Greece ready for the future. It was developed throughout 2021 and was finally approved by the European Commission on 17 June 2021. The comprehensive plan named Greece 2.0, targeting various economic sectors, includes €17.77 billion in grants and €12.73 billion in loans with the aim to support Greece to become more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the green and digital transitions.

The tourism sector plays an important role as part of the Plan and several key projects have received the go-ahead. Among these are:

- the upgrade of tourist port infrastructure (161.05 million euros)
- the further development of mountain and winter tourism products and facilities (such as ski resorts) and the revision and simplification of legislation covering construction, licensing and operation of relevant infrastructure (56.57 million euros)
- the introduction of educational and upskilling programs for 18,000 tourism industry employees (43.97 million euros)
- the development of health and wellness tourism and the utilisation of the country's thermal springs (28.46 million euros)
- the development of diving and underwater tourism (22.05 million euros).
- improving the management of destinations through the establishment and operation of local or regional DMOs and of observatories for sustainable tourist development (18.45 million euros)
- making beaches accessible to people with mobility problems or disabilities with the construction of some 250 semi-permanent structures (17.21 million euros)
- developing a network that will link the agri-food, gastronomy and tourism sectors (dubbed Agri-Food, Gastronomy and Tourism Interconnection System – AGTIS), which will serve as the country's management organisation / (DMO) for gastronomy and agriculture (17.18 million euros)

In December 2021 the Ministry of Tourism passed a bill setting out the new priorities for the sector which include setting out the terms of operation for destination management and promotion organisations (DMOs) and developing wellness and sustainable tourism.

Ecotourism opportunities and challenges

Greece offers abundant opportunities for the promotion of ecotourism due to its rich natural landscapes, diverse ecosystems, and cultural heritage. The country's rugged mountains, pristine beaches, and picturesque islands provide ideal settings for outdoor activities such as hiking, sailing, and wildlife watching. Ecotourism in Greece can capitalize on its numerous protected areas, including national parks, biosphere reserves, and marine sanctuaries, to showcase biodiversity conservation efforts and offer sustainable tourism experiences.

However, promoting ecotourism in Greece also comes with several challenges. One major challenge is the need for sustainable infrastructure and facilities to support ecotourism activities while minimizing environmental impacts. Developing eco-friendly accommodation, transportation options, and visitor facilities requires investment and coordination among stakeholders. Furthermore, balancing tourism development with environmental conservation goals in sensitive areas can be complex, requiring careful planning and management to avoid overdevelopment and habitat degradation.

Another challenge is ensuring that ecotourism initiatives benefit local communities and contribute to socio-economic development. This involves fostering community engagement, capacity building, and equitable distribution of tourism revenues. Empowering local stakeholders, including indigenous communities and small-scale entrepreneurs, to participate in and benefit from ecotourism ventures is essential for fostering social inclusivity and promoting sustainable livelihoods. Combatting “greenwashing” approaches is also key

Moreover, raising awareness among tourists and encouraging responsible travel behavior is crucial for the success of ecotourism in Greece. Educating visitors about the importance of conservation, cultural sensitivity, and sustainable practices can help minimize negative impacts on natural and cultural resources. Implementing visitor management strategies, such as carrying capacity limits and interpretation programs, can also help mitigate potential conflicts between tourism and conservation objectives.

Two examples of successful development of ecotourism offers in Greece are:

Zagori Region: Located in the northwestern part of Greece, the Zagori region is renowned for its stunning natural beauty, rugged landscapes, and traditional stone villages. The area is part of the Vikos-Aoos National Park, which is home to the Vikos Gorge, one of the deepest gorges in the world. In recent years, the Zagori region has become a popular destination for ecotourism due to its emphasis on sustainable tourism practices and community involvement. Local initiatives have focused on promoting hiking and trekking trails, wildlife observation, and cultural heritage experiences. Accommodation options range from eco-friendly guesthouses and traditional guesthouses to agro-tourism establishments that showcase local cuisine and agricultural practices. The Zagori region exemplifies successful ecotourism development through its preservation of natural and cultural assets, engagement with local communities, and provision of authentic, low-impact tourism experiences.

Mount Olympus National Park: Mount Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece and the mythical home of the ancient Greek gods, offers opportunities for ecotourism centered around outdoor recreation and environmental education. The Mount Olympus National Park, designated in 1938, protects diverse ecosystems, including forests, alpine meadows, and rare plant species. Ecotourism activities in the park include hiking trails to the summit of Mount Olympus, wildlife watching, birdwatching, and botanical tours to explore the region's biodiversity. Interpretive centers and visitor facilities provide information about the park's natural and cultural heritage, as well as conservation efforts. Local communities are involved in ecotourism initiatives, offering accommodation, guiding services, and culinary experiences that showcase traditional Greek hospitality and cuisine. The Mount Olympus National Park demonstrates successful ecotourism development by balancing conservation objectives with tourism opportunities, fostering environmental stewardship, and providing educational experiences for visitors.

Active Tourism opportunities and challenges

Promotion of active tourism in Greece presents several opportunities and challenges:

Diverse Landscapes: Greece boasts diverse landscapes, including mountains, islands, coastal areas, and rural countryside, offering a wide range of outdoor activities such as hiking, sailing, rock climbing, and cycling. This diversity attracts adventure enthusiasts and provides ample opportunities for the promotion of active tourism.

Island Hopping: With thousands of islands scattered across the Aegean and Ionian Seas, Greece offers unique opportunities for island hopping adventures. Travelers can explore remote islands, discover secluded beaches, and experience authentic island life while engaging in water sports, sailing, and other outdoor activities.

Infrastructure Development: Investment in infrastructure development, including hiking trails, cycling routes, water sports facilities, and adventure parks, enhances the appeal of active tourism in Greece. Well-maintained infrastructure makes it easier for visitors to access outdoor destinations and engage in recreational activities

Seasonality: Greece's tourism industry is highly seasonal, with peak visitation during the summer months. Encouraging active tourism year-round requires diversification of activities and promotion of off-peak travel periods to mitigate the negative impacts of seasonality on local economies and infrastructure.

Environmental Conservation: Managing the environmental impact of active tourism activities, such as erosion on hiking trails, disturbance to wildlife habitats, and pollution from water sports, is essential for preserving Greece's natural landscapes and biodiversity. Sustainable practices, visitor education, and responsible tourism guidelines are needed to minimize ecological degradation.

Overall, while Greece, thanks to its landscape can offer a vast variety of sports offers such as snorkelling, kayaking, canyoning, cycling, hiking, any water sport like water skiing, wakeboarding etc, or even regular snow skiing thanks to its mountainous terrain. However, addressing challenges related to seasonality, environmental conservation, infrastructure development, and community engagement is essential for realizing the full potential of this tourism sector and maximizing its benefits for both visitors and host communities.

Two examples of successful development of active tourism offers in Greece are:

Cycling Routes in Crete: Crete, the largest Greek island, has seen successful development in active tourism, particularly in cycling. The island offers a variety of cycling routes catering to different skill levels and interests, ranging from leisurely coastal rides to challenging mountain trails. Local tour operators provide guided cycling tours, equipment rental, and logistical support for cyclists, making it easier for visitors to explore the island's diverse landscapes, cultural sites, and traditional villages on two wheels. The development of cycling infrastructure, including designated bike paths, signage, and bike-friendly accommodations, has contributed to the popularity of cycling tourism in Crete, attracting cyclists from around the world and stimulating economic growth in rural communities.

Water Sports in Rhodes: Rhodes, one of the most popular Greek islands in the Aegean Sea, has become a thriving destination for water sports enthusiasts. The island's pristine beaches, crystal-clear waters, and favorable wind conditions make it an ideal location for a variety of water-based activities such as windsurfing, kiteboarding, scuba diving, and snorkeling. Local water sports centers and beach resorts offer equipment rental, instruction, and guided excursions for visitors of all skill levels. Additionally, Rhodes hosts international water sports events and competitions, attracting athletes and spectators from around the world. The development of water sports infrastructure, including designated beach areas, safety regulations, and environmental protection measures, has contributed to the sustainable growth of water sports tourism in Rhodes, enhancing the island's appeal as a premier destination for active travelers seeking aquatic adventures.

Cultural and Creative Tourism opportunities and challenges

Greece boasts a rich cultural heritage spanning thousands of years, including ancient ruins, archaeological sites, Byzantine churches, and traditional villages. This wealth of cultural assets provides ample opportunities for the promotion of cultural tourism experiences, such as guided tours, cultural festivals, and heritage trails, showcasing Greece's history, art, and architecture.

Greece also has a vibrant arts and crafts tradition, with artisans skilled in pottery, weaving, woodcarving, and other traditional crafts. Cultural tourism initiatives can highlight these artisanal traditions through workshops, demonstrations, and artisan markets, allowing visitors to engage with local artists and learn about Greece's craft heritage firsthand.

Cultural Events and Festivals: Greece hosts numerous cultural events and festivals throughout the year, celebrating music, dance, theater, literature, and gastronomy. Cultural tourism promotion can leverage these events to attract visitors interested in experiencing Greek culture and traditions in an authentic and immersive way, fostering cultural exchange and dialogue.

Culinary Tourism: Greek cuisine is renowned for its Mediterranean flavors, fresh ingredients, and regional specialties. Culinary tourism offers opportunities to explore Greece's gastronomic heritage through food tours, cooking classes, and wine tastings, showcasing local ingredients, traditional recipes, and culinary traditions from different regions.

Some challenges though include:

Seasonality: Similar to other tourism sectors in Greece, cultural and creative tourism experiences may be affected by seasonality, with peak visitation during the summer months. Diversifying cultural offerings and promoting off-peak travel periods can help mitigate the impact of seasonality and extend the tourism season.

Infrastructure and Accessibility: Ensuring adequate infrastructure and accessibility to cultural sites and attractions, particularly in rural areas and on islands, can be a challenge. Investment in transportation networks, visitor facilities, and cultural heritage preservation is essential to enhance the accessibility and visitor experience of cultural tourism destinations.

3.1 Regional Context: Korinthia, Peloponnese

In the region of Korinthia in the Peloponnese, and more specifically around the town of Xylokastro where the partner Green Village is based, there are specific challenges and opportunities for the tourism sector. The region is not specifically marketed to international tourists; it is heavily relying on domestic tourism and mostly on people with second residence in the area. Moreover, there is an evident seasonality (during the summer months) of tourism in the region, and in the last few years the tourist season has been shrinking for various reasons mostly related to the impact of the economic crisis linked to the decrease in disposable income of domestic tourists. All the above pose severe challenges for the sustainability of tourism businesses.

However, the proximity to the metropolitan area of Athens and the potential access to capacitated human capital together with the fact that the somewhat underdeveloped in terms of tourism region has a large variety of beauties to offer to tourists such as beaches, mountains, forests, lakes, and cultural sights, as well as various local products, increases the potential for the development of novel, alternative tourism offers.

Moreover, following the newly passed legislation, a dedicated DMO was set up in 2021 named Moreas, in order to promote the Peloponnese as a tourist destination, and Xylokastro – Evrostini municipality is part of this initiative.

So, the engagement of relevant stakeholders and the involvement of capacitated and skilled tourism and destination management professionals who in turn will be able to drive the integration of digital tools for a more efficient, modern, and sustainable tourism offer will indeed unfold the region's potential as a sustainable and alternative tourism destination.

Here are some aspects that stakeholders in Korinthia can highlight or even capitalize on, in terms of the promotion of alternative tourism forms:

Mountains and Gorges: Korinthia is home to stunning mountain ranges, including the Geraneia Mountains and the Ziria Mountains, offering opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, and nature walks. The region features picturesque gorges like the Vouraikos Gorge, providing scenic trails for outdoor enthusiasts to explore.

Coastal Areas: Korinthia boasts a coastline along the Corinthian Gulf, with beautiful beaches, coves, and fishing villages. Visitors can engage in eco-friendly water sports such as sea kayaking, snorkeling, and sailing, while also participating in marine conservation activities like beach cleanups and sea turtle monitoring.

Protected Areas: The region is home to several protected areas, including the Parnassos National Park and the Lousios Gorge Natural Monument. These areas showcase diverse ecosystems, rare flora and fauna, and cultural sites such as monasteries and ancient ruins, providing opportunities for guided eco-tours, birdwatching, and wildlife observation.

Agro-Tourism and Local Cuisine: Korinthia's fertile lands support agricultural activities such as vineyards, olive groves, and citrus orchards. Agro-tourism initiatives allow visitors to experience rural life, participate in farm activities, and sample local products like wine, olive oil, and traditional Greek cuisine made from fresh, locally sourced ingredients.

Cultural Heritage: The region is rich in cultural heritage, with historical sites such as Ancient Corinth, Acrocorinth, and the Sanctuary of Heraion. Cultural ecotourism programs can combine visits to archaeological sites with nature walks, storytelling sessions, and workshops on traditional crafts, providing insights into Greece's ancient history and cultural traditions.

Community-Based Tourism: Engaging with local communities is integral to ecotourism in Korinthia. Community-based tourism initiatives empower residents to share their knowledge, skills, and cultural heritage with visitors, fostering mutual understanding and respect. Homestays, guided tours led by locals, and participatory experiences like olive harvesting or traditional dance workshops offer authentic insights into local life.

4. NATIONAL CONTEXT: ITALY

Statistics and General Information

Italy stands out as a top global tourist destination, renowned for its rich historical and cultural heritage showcased in cities like Rome, Venice, Milan, and Florence. These cities, along with their artistic, architectural, and archaeological treasures, captivate both domestic and international travelers. Italy's museums play a pivotal role in attracting tourists, offering a glimpse into its vibrant history. The country's diverse landscapes, from the lush Tuscan countryside to the snow-clad Alps and stunning Mediterranean coastline, appeal to a wide range of visitors.

Tourism plays a crucial role in the Italian economy, directly contributing 6.2% of total GVA in 2019, equivalent to EUR 99.9 billion, and employing 2.1 million people. It also supported over 218,000 enterprises, constituting 8.8% of total employment. However, due to the impacts of COVID-19, the direct contribution of tourism to Italy's GVA dropped to 4.5% in 2020.

In 2020, international arrivals decreased by 61.0% to 25.2 million, and domestic tourism declined by 37.1% to 34.1 million. This led to an estimated loss of EUR 27.0 billion in tourism expenditure from international visitors. In 2021, international arrivals remained 58.3% below 2019 levels, totaling 26.9 million tourists, with top source markets including Germany (17.1%), France (14.5%), and Austria (9.3%). Tourism expenditure from international tourism amounted to EUR 21.2 billion in 2021, representing a 52% decrease from 2019.

Domestic tourism, which accounted for 56.4% of total tourism expenditure in 2019, experienced a stronger rebound. In 2021, it recorded 37.2 million tourists, marking a 31.5% decrease from pre-pandemic levels. (OECD (2022), *OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2022*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/a8dd3019-en>.)

Tourism Governance in Italy

The legislative framework governing tourism in Italy involves key entities such as the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Activities and Tourism, the Permanent Conference for Relations between the State, Regions, and Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano, and the Joint Conference of Regions and Municipalities.

The Ministry's Directorate-General for Tourism sets the strategic policy agenda, while the Italian Constitution delegates various responsibilities to the regions, including regulating tourism businesses, developing marketing strategies, and managing European Structural Funds. Provinces and municipalities also have the authority to establish local regulations for the tourism sector.

In addition to coordinating national tourism policies with regions and autonomous provinces, the DG for Tourism oversees the National Italian Tourism Agency (ENIT) and the Italian Alpine Club. It manages tourism

activities not under regional jurisdiction, provides aid to stimulate tourism demand, issues certifications to foreign professionals, handles international relations, and contributes to EU legislation development.

ENIT's role focuses on marketing and promoting Italy as a tourist destination. A 2015 statute restructured ENIT from a public body to a public economic entity, with its Board of Directors including two members appointed by the Minister. ENIT has the flexibility to engage in agreements with regions, autonomous provinces, local authorities, and other public bodies to fulfill its mission. (OECD TOURISM TRENDS AND POLICIES 2018 © OECD 2018)

Green Transition of Tourism in Italy

The green transition of tourism in Italy involves a multifaceted approach aimed at promoting sustainable practices, reducing environmental impact, and preserving cultural heritage. Italy, known for its rich history, art, and natural beauty, recognizes the importance of sustainable tourism to protect its resources for future generations while meeting the demands of travelers seeking eco-friendly experiences.

Sustainable tourism is experiencing growth in Italy, not only from a customer perspective but also from an industry standpoint. The Bank of Italy report published in December 2018 titled "Tourism in Italy: Figures and Potential for Development" acknowledges the direct link between industry evolution and the increasing interest in sustainability. The report echoes a recommendation from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to governments regarding "green investment" policies, aiming to:

Enhance energy efficiency in tourist facilities

Improve water resource management and waste collection systems

Promote environmental protection, biodiversity, and cultural heritage preservation in each country.

Italy places particular importance on safeguarding and promoting its cultural heritage, a significant national asset, along with environmental protection. Sustainable tourism not only benefits the planet but also aids tourism industry operators and local communities. What was once a social phenomenon is now a crucial income source for local economies and a widespread opportunity.

Benefits for travelers extend beyond environmental satisfaction and include:

- Increased physical activity and reduced stress
- Cost savings through reduced expenses and consumption
- Diverse experiences integration

- Facilitated cultural exchanges
- Preservation of historic and artistic heritage
- Conservation of local resources
- Creation of positive, infectious energy

Italy's diverse offerings make it a prime destination for sustainable tourism experiences. For instance, alberghi diffusi (scattered hotels) offer accommodations in renovated historic buildings in villages like those in Liguria's Western Riviera or Sardinia's Barbagia mountains, avoiding new construction and land consumption.

Other initiatives involve repurposing existing buildings for new functions, such as the Narcao mining village in Sulcis, Sardinia, transformed into an ecomuseum hosting guests, or the Porto Tolle thermal power station becoming an innovative open-air tourist center emphasizing environmental appreciation, local industries, and water sports.

The Italian Association for Responsible Tourism (AITR) publishes a sustainable tourism map highlighting member locations, including small municipalities in the Authentic Villages of Italy network, WWF-managed nature reserves, Legambiente-certified hotels, and ICEA-certified organic agritourism facilities.

Principles of sustainable tourism also encompass attention to food quality, social, and ethical considerations, such as zero food mile products or anti-mafia tourism initiatives like the “pizzo-free” Valle del Sosio excursions in Palermo, aimed at combating mafia extortion in local businesses.

Sustainability extends to eco-friendly mobility options such as walking, cycling, and using electric vehicles for tourist excursions. Enthusiasts of hiking and walking in the Alps and Apennines have long embraced zero-emission travel principles, a philosophy also cherished by pilgrims walking historical routes like the Via Francigena.

For cycling enthusiasts, electric bikes provide a chance to enjoy tours without excessive physical exertion, ideal for exploring places like the island of Elba or the landmarks around Recanati, poet Giacomo Leopardi's hometown.

When more than two wheels are needed, electric cars come into play. In February 2018, the Enel Group and the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism signed a memorandum of understanding to promote e-mobility in tourist-heavy cities. Moreover, we are actively involved in key sustainable mobility projects across Italy's stunning destinations, ranging from the Silver Coast to the islands of Ventotene, Ischia, and Sicily.

Ecotourism opportunities and challenges

Ecotourism in Italy serves as a crucial tool for fostering positive transformations, particularly in environmental, social, cultural, and economic realms, all while safeguarding the natural and cultural treasures found in its 54 UNESCO heritage sites—the most in the world. Ecobnb, an online platform promoting sustainable tourism, highlights several benefits derived from Italy's embrace of eco-friendly practices.

Economically, sustainable tourism has spurred job creation across various sectors such as hospitality, customer service, and transportation services like taxis, benefiting local communities. This not only bolsters the economy but also empowers residents through employment opportunities.

Culturally, there is a concerted effort to support and preserve traditional customs, ensuring their sustainability for future generations. By funding cultural activities, sustainable tourism not only enriches these communities but also safeguards their unique heritage, making them more appealing to conscientious tourists. Socially, the revenue generated from sustainable tourism has facilitated significant improvements in infrastructure, including upgraded roads and enhanced sewage systems. These enhancements not only elevate the quality of life for residents but also enhance the overall attractiveness of Italy as a tourist destination. (<https://www.findyouritaly.com/ecotourism-and-sustainable-tourism-in-italy/>)

Ecotourism faces various challenges that must be addressed to ensure its sustainability and positive impact. These challenges include tackling CO2 emissions, reducing water consumption, preventing landscape degradation, and mitigating biodiversity loss [1]. Understanding the complexities of sustainability and its interconnectedness with human well-being also presents a significant challenge. Moreover, the geographical location and infrastructure of ecotourism sites can give rise to financial and operational hurdles, such as low visitor numbers and inadequate revenues. Failure to realize ecotourism visions can lead to mismanagement and disempowerment of local communities. Therefore, the successful development of sustainable ecotourism hinges on effectively balancing environmental conservation efforts, meaningful community engagement, and fulfilling visitor experiences.

(<https://typeset.io/questions/what-are-some-of-the-challenges-of-ecotourism>)

Active Tourism opportunities and challenges

Italy has a lot to offer for active tourism, blending its rich cultural heritage with stunning natural landscapes. It is possible to explore the Dolomites' rugged peaks and lush valleys through hiking trails suitable for all levels. Cycling enthusiasts can enjoy riding through Tuscany's rolling hills and vineyards, visiting medieval towns like Siena and San Gimignano along the way. In winter, skiers and snowboarders

head to the Italian Alps, with resorts like Cortina d'Ampezzo offering top-notch slopes. Sardinia is a hotspot for water sports lovers, offering snorkeling, diving, windsurfing, and kiteboarding in clear waters. The Cinque Terre's coastal trails and colorful villages attract hikers and sightseers alike. For adrenaline junkies, rafting in the rivers of the Aosta Valley amidst stunning alpine scenery is a must-try. Piedmont offers gourmet trekking experiences amid vineyards and truffle forests, with wine tastings and farm-to-table dining options. Lake Garda is perfect for windsurfing, sailing, and mountain biking adventures. Yachting along the Amalfi Coast lets you discover hidden coves and charming coastal towns, showcasing Italy's blend of outdoor adventures and cultural richness for active travellers. (<https://www.italia.it/en/italy/things-to-do>)

Italy's adventure tourism sector is experiencing significant growth due to the increasing number of travellers seeking vibrant holidays, whether in the countryside, beaches, mountains, or slopes. The Italian government supports this growth by offering reasonably priced tourism packages that attract visitors. Thrilling outdoor sports such as mountain biking, rafting, and skiing are driving this expansion, especially among younger tourists eager to try new activities. Despite this growth, challenges such as limited infrastructure and high activity costs persist, particularly for small businesses organizing events for larger groups. Weather dependency also affects market growth, prioritizing customer safety and experience. Digital technology has revolutionized the industry, with travel agencies using virtual platforms to offer immersive experiences. Access to outdoor resources like tents and vehicles has increased, allowing for specialized and personalized activities. Market players continually innovate to meet traveller demands, offering adventure retreats and diverse sports packages accessible to various budgets.

(<https://www.actualmarketresearch.com/product/italy-adventure-tourism-market>)

Cultural and Creative Tourism opportunities and challenges

Cultural and Creative tourism in Italy has experienced significant growth, driven by a surge in art consumption during travel. A study by Cst for Assoturismo Confesercenti predicts a 24.6% increase in cultural tourism this summer, with foreign demand rising by 34.6%. Italy's vast cultural heritage, including 58 UNESCO sites, plays a pivotal role. However, the performing arts sector has suffered greatly due to COVID-19, with European estimates indicating a 30% revenue loss. To aid recovery, Italy has allocated over EUR 7 billion to cultural sectors, emphasizing tax incentives and support funds. Audience development and digitization efforts are crucial, with initiatives like digital libraries and innovative outreach programs like Opera Camion aiming to engage diverse audiences and leverage digital platforms for cultural dissemination and economic growth. Alexandra Solea, with extensive experience in cultural affairs, emphasizes the importance of preserving and leveraging Italy's cultural wealth through strategic investments and digital innovations to ensure long-term sustainability and audience engagement.

(<https://romebusinessschool.com/blog/cultural-tourism-driver-of-made-in-italy/>)

4.1 Regional Context: Messina, Sicily

4.1.1 Sicily Context

Sicily, the largest island in Italy and the Mediterranean Sea, boasts a diverse coastline bordered by the Tyrrhenian, Ionian, and Sea of Sicily. Its shores range from rocky inlets in the north to pebble beaches in the east and sandy stretches in the south. The island's hilly and mountainous terrain offers stunning landscapes, but it's the allure of the sea that draws many visitors. Sicily also encompasses various archipelagos and smaller islands, adding to its natural beauty.

The northern coasts of Sicily feature notable gulfs, while the eastern coast showcases pebbled beaches and dramatic cliffs. In contrast, the southern coast is known for its sandy expanses, with the Gulf of Gela standing out as the largest in the area. Regions like Ragusa, Agrigento, and Trapani exhibit a diverse range of coastal features, enhancing the island's appeal to tourists.

To bolster tourism, the Sicily Region has implemented initiatives such as SeeSicily. This program aims to boost visitor numbers by offering enticing benefits. Tourists who book a minimum of two nights at participating accommodations receive a third night free of charge. Additionally, they can select a complimentary tourist service such as a guided excursion or cultural tour and gain free access to museums or monuments.

Moreover, travelers can benefit from a 50% discount on air, ship, or ferry tickets, with generous caps such as 100 euros for domestic flights and 200 euros for international flights. Originally introduced in 2021 during the COVID-19 crisis to stimulate tourism, the SeeSicily initiative has been extended into 2022 and 2023, encompassing holidays throughout the year, including winter, spring, and summer seasons. (<https://www.newtravelservices.net/en/0-41-content/sicily>)

Active/Adventure tourism in Sicily offers a thrilling combination of natural beauty, cultural richness, and exciting activities across the island's diverse landscapes. From the volcanic slopes of Mount Etna to the clear waters around the Aeolian Islands, Sicily attracts adventurers looking for unforgettable experiences. Guided tours such as hiking to Mount Etna's summit, kayaking in the UNESCO-listed Aeolian archipelago, and scuba diving in Ustica Island's vibrant underwater world showcase Sicily's natural wonders and geological marvels. For land-based adventures, quad tours in the rugged Nebrodi Mountain Range, mountain biking on Etna's trails, and body rafting in the Alcantara River Park provide thrilling experiences and stunning views. Sicily's rich historical heritage also blends with adventure, offering opportunities like hiking in Zingaro Nature Reserve combined with wine tasting tours on Etna, allowing travellers to immerse themselves in Sicilian culture and cuisine. Whether climbing volcanoes, exploring underwater worlds, or trekking ancient paths, adventure tourism in Sicily promises an exciting journey through breathtaking landscapes and centuries-old traditions.



4.1.2 Messina Context

Messina, Sicily's gateway, offers a blend of historical charm and scenic beauty. Visitors can explore the city easily on foot, taking in sights like the iconic Duomo and its stunning late-Gothic architecture. The famous mechanical and astronomical clock on the Duomo's facade draws crowds at noon, accompanied by Schubert's Ave Maria played on the original bronze statues carousel.

Nearby, the monumental Orion Fountain and the Art Nouveau-style Vittorio Emanuele III Gallery showcase the city's artistic and architectural richness. Visitors can also delve into Messina's cultural heritage at sites like Villa De Pasquale and the University of Studies.

For a taste of local delights, sampling the renowned "mezza con panna" (coffee granita) while admiring the panoramic views of the Strait of Messina is a must. The city's spiritual side is reflected in its ancient sanctuaries and religious landmarks, offering a rich experience for pilgrims and history enthusiasts alike.

From panoramic viewpoints like the Sacratio di Cristo Re to hidden gems like the Church of S. Paolo in Briga Marina, Messina's allure extends beyond its bustling squares and historical sites. The city's maritime traditions, legends like Colapesce, and culinary delights such as arancini and focaccia add layers to the visitor experience.

Exploring Messina is a journey through art, history, spirituality, and gastronomy, making it a captivating destination in Sicily's diverse cultural landscape.

(<https://www.visitsicily.info/en/localita/messina/>)

Sicily, particularly in Messina, showcases several **eco-tourism initiatives** and **attractions** that promote sustainable practices while offering visitors unique experiences in nature. These initiatives highlight the region's commitment to preserving its natural heritage and fostering responsible tourism practices.

Capo Peloro Lagoon Natural Reserve: Established in 2001, covering approximately 70 hectares, this reserve is a sanctuary for over 400 aquatic species. Recognized internationally, it has been part of the UNESCO Water Project since 1972, showcasing the region's dedication to environmental conservation.

Villa Giuseppe Mazzini: Originally named "la Flora," this villa, designed by Enrico Fehr, features Mediterranean and exotic vegetation. It serves as a popular leisure destination and houses an aquarium and aviary displaying exotic bird species.

Villa Dante: Built in the 1970s, Villa Dante is Messina's green oasis, offering amenities such as an outdoor arena, swimming pool, facilities for the elderly, soccer fields, and various recreational areas for children.

Villa Albert Sabin: Overlooking the Strait of Messina, this expansive green space provides stunning views and opportunities for recreational activities amidst natural beauty.

Colli San Rizzo (Colli Sarrizzo): This vast green area within the city offers facilities for outdoor activities, making it an ideal spot for leisure and relaxation amidst nature.

Pietro Castelli Botanical Garden of the University of Messina: Located in Piazza XX Settembre, this botanical garden showcases plant species from around the world and serves as a center for botanical research and education, promoting awareness of biodiversity and conservation.

Blue Flag Beaches in Messina:

The Blue Flag designation is a prestigious eco-label awarded to beaches and marinas meeting stringent criteria for water quality, environmental management, safety, and services. In 2023, Sicily boasted 11 Blue Flag beaches, with six in Messina: Roccalumera, Ali Terme, Furci Siculo, Lungomare Santa Teresa di Riva, Lampare beach in Tusa, and Acquacalda in Lipari. These beaches exemplify sustainable coastal tourism practices, ensuring visitors enjoy pristine environments.

Moreover, Messina stands out in Sicily with its notable eco-friendly tourist ports like Capo d'Orlando Marina and Marina del Nettuno, reflecting the region's commitment to sustainable marine tourism and preserving coastal ecosystems. These initiatives collectively contribute to Sicily's reputation as a premier destination for eco-conscious travellers seeking memorable and environmentally responsible experiences.

5. ECOTOURISM

Ecotourism is a form of responsible travel that focuses on visiting natural areas to learn, appreciate, and conserve the environment, as well as to enhance the well-being of local communities. It involves immersing oneself in pristine and protected natural landscapes, observing wildlife in their natural habitats, and engaging in activities that promote environmental conservation and cultural preservation. Ecotourism aims to minimize negative impacts on the environment and maximize positive contributions to biodiversity conservation, community development, and cultural heritage.

There is a wide and diverse range of ecotourism experiences available to travelers around the world, from rainforest expeditions and safari conservation tours to sea life conservation projects and agricultural communal experiences. By choosing ecotourism, travellers can contribute to conservation efforts, support local communities, and create meaningful connections with nature and culture.

The concept of ecotourism emerged in the late 20th century as a response to the negative impacts of mass tourism on the environment and local communities. The term "ecotourism" was coined in the 1980s by Hector Ceballos-Lascurain, a Mexican architect and environmentalist, who defined it as "traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas."

The modern ecotourism movement gained momentum in the 1990s with the publication of books like "Ecotourism: The Earthscan Reader" by David Fennell and "Ecotourism and Sustainable Development" by Martha Honey. These works highlighted the potential of ecotourism to promote environmental conservation, support sustainable development, and foster cross-cultural understanding.

As part of the broader "Sustainable Tourism" concept, ecotourism nowadays refer to experiences that allow the guest/tourism a more direct contact with nature and/or with human activities such as agriculture that are connected to nature. Ecotourism places its focus exactly on the relation between humans and nature and ties to develop experiences that have minimum negative impact on the environment while at the same time can act as educational activities for raising awareness among guests regarding the importance of environmental conservation and protection.

5.1 Good Practices/Case Studies

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Name of the Practice | Trekking Hellas |
| Category | 2. Active Tourism |
| Type | 1. Service 2. Case Study |
| Developer / initiator | Trekking Hellas |
| Short description | Trekking Hellas is a specialised tourism agency and events organiser, specialised on adventure tours and activities |
| Goal | To promote all forms of active tourism, especially in less popular regional destination across Greece |
| Detailed description | <p>EMBRACING NATURE SINCE 1986 WITH ACTIVITIES AND EXCURSIONS</p> <p>Create experiences. Built memories. Explore the most hidden corners of Greece through impressive trails, in places unique in the most famous mountains of the country but also in areas that only a few know. Swim in lakes, walk on the banks of rivers, cross the waters and pass 'flying' across. Get to know the emotions of the sea and experience what it can offer you, apart from a relaxing day at the beach.</p> <p>Trekking Hellas is here to offer you unique experiences in nature and help you get to know Greece like you never imagined before. The choices are endless, as long as you are thirsty for discovery and action. Explore organized camps for children. Choose programs for all ages that include outdoor activities. Get in touch with the most important thing that our planet has to offer. Look inside you again.</p> <p>For 36 years now, Trekking Hellas has been organizing your unique experiences in nature, following the highest standards with the most experienced guides and local suppliers. Our vision is for as many people as possible to get in touch with the Greek countryside and for us to contribute to its sustainable development by supporting local communities.</p> <p>Whether you live in Greece or abroad, TREKKING HELLAS will guide you to its magical places, all seasons of the year. Enjoy outdoor activities like, rafting, monoraft, river trekking, canyoning, hiking, climbing, mountain bike, Jeep safari, orienteering, mountaineering, canoe-kayak, sea-kayak, sailing and zodiac safari. There are also special camping programs for children, in the most amazing places of Greece such as Karpenisi, Pertouli, Helmos, Parnassos, Parnitha and Smolikas. Smaller excursions and parties are organized for schools and families.</p> |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| | Moreover TREKKING HELLAS organizes corporate events with adventure trips and outdoor activities. |
| Innovativeness | The fact that the company specialises its services in the promotion of alternative tourism forms based on active tourism and adventure and the fact that the focus is on respect of nature and of less developed destinations |
| Financial aspect | €€ = Moderate investment |
| Country | Greece |
| Transferability | Can easily be used for creation of synergies and alternative tourism offers without any modifications |
| Website and/or relevant links | https://trekking.gr/ |



6. ACTIVE TOURISM

Active tourism is a type of travel that emphasizes engaging in physical activities and exploring natural and cultural environments. It typically includes outdoor pursuits, adventure sports, and cultural experiences that require physical participation. This form of tourism appeals to individuals seeking more dynamic and immersive travel experiences.

Examples of Active Tourism in Malta

1. **Diving and Snorkeling:** Malta offers some of the best diving spots in the Mediterranean, with crystal-clear waters, underwater caves, and shipwrecks. Popular sites include the Blue Hole in Gozo and the wreck of the Um El Faroud near Wied iz-Zurrieq.
2. **Hiking:** The Maltese Islands have numerous walking trails, such as the Victoria Lines Walk, which provides stunning views of the island's landscape and coastline. The Gozo Coastal Walk is another excellent route that circles the island of Gozo.
3. **Rock Climbing:** Malta's rugged coastline and limestone cliffs make it a perfect destination for rock climbing. Areas like Mgarr ix-Xini in Gozo and the cliffs near Mellieha offer various climbing routes for different skill levels.

Examples of Active Tourism in Greece

1. **Hiking and Trekking:** Greece is famous for its diverse hiking trails, from the mountainous terrains of Crete's Samaria Gorge to the scenic routes of Mount Olympus, the mythical home of the Greek gods. The Menalon Trail in the Peloponnese is also a popular long-distance hiking path.
2. **Water Sports:** The Greek islands provide ample opportunities for water sports such as windsurfing, kitesurfing, and sailing. The beaches of Paros and Naxos are particularly renowned for their ideal wind conditions and clear waters.
3. **Cycling:** Exploring Greece by bike is an excellent way to experience its landscapes and historic sites. Popular cycling routes include the Peloponnese region and the island of Rhodes, where cyclists can enjoy coastal roads and challenging mountain paths.

Examples of Active Tourism in Italy

1. **Skiing and Snowboarding:** Italy is home to some of Europe's best skiing destinations, such as the Dolomites and the Alps. Resorts like Cortina d'Ampezzo and Val Gardena offer extensive slopes and modern facilities for winter sports enthusiasts.
2. **Hiking and Trekking:** Italy's diverse landscapes make it a hiker's paradise. The Cinque Terre National Park offers stunning coastal trails, while the trails around Lake Garda and the Amalfi Coast provide both scenic beauty and challenging terrain.
3. **Cycling:** Italy is famous for its cycling culture and routes, including the Tuscany hills, the roads around Lake Como, and the challenging climbs of the Stelvio Pass. These areas provide picturesque scenery and varied difficulty levels for both amateur and professional cyclists.

Active tourism in Malta, Greece, and Italy allows travelers to combine physical activity with the exploration of some of Europe's most beautiful and historically rich environments. Each destination offers unique opportunities to engage with nature and local culture, making for memorable and invigorating travel experiences.



7. CULTURAL & CREATIVE TOURISM

Cultural and creative tourism is a type of tourism that aims to discover the authenticity and local history of places with a less tourist vocation: it aims to discover their traditions, artistic events, cultures and local monuments that tell the true history of the place. For this reason, we can say that Cultural and Creative Tourism is a new form of travel, vacation and quality of leisure time that, thanks to an active participation by the tourist, implies the involvement of both tourists and residents in the co-creation of experiences in full respect of the identity of local communities, giving them the opportunity to develop creative potential, through a process of collaboration between the participating tourist resorts in the region, in order to promote their visibility at national and international level.

Definitions:

The World Tourism Organization states that cultural tourism, more generally, is a form of tourism usually oriented towards the so-called traditional inanimate culture, such as visits to sites and monuments, but which then also extends to art and folklore, i.e. the so-called animated culture, as well as to nature (UNWTO, 1985).

Creative tourism, on the other hand, is seen as an evolution of cultural tourism: Richards and Raymond (2000, p. 18) define creative tourism as that type of tourism "[...] which offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through participation in courses and learning experiences typical of the destination visited.

Creative tourism is a subset of the broader cultural tourism and combines the enhancement of the material resources of the destination, such as monuments and places of historical and artistic interest, with the enhancement of intangible resources, through the active participation of the consumer, who becomes co-creator of the product/service (Richards, 2000). In short, the creative tourism product is characterized by a high attention to the local environment, by the active involvement of the customer in unique experiences, by the facilitation of interaction between tourists, as well as between tourist and business, and the consequent construction of lasting relationships (Croce, Perri, 2008).

To date, the official definition of Creative Tourism is the one released by UNESCO, which complements the one already mentioned by Richards and Raymond:

"[...] a journey based on an immersive and authentic experience, characterized by learning about the arts, heritage or peculiar characteristics of a place, which allows a connection with those who reside in that place [...]" UNESCO (2006, p. 3).

Specifically, the cultural and creative tourist par excellence is attracted by the following poles:

- archaeological sites and museums;

- architecture (ruins, famous buildings, whole towns);
- art, sculpture, crafts, galleries, festivals, events;
- music and dance (classical, folk, contemporary);
- drama (theatre, films, dramatists);
- language and literature study, tours, events;
- complete (folk or primitive) cultures and sub-cultures

In general, we can further categorize the poles as such:

I. ATTRACTIONS

- a) Monuments;
- b) Museums;
- c) Routes;
- d) Theme parks

II. EVENTS

- a) Cultural-historic events;
- b) Art events;
- c) Events and Attractions.

7.1 Good Practices/Case Studies

The Historical train journey by FS Italiane Foundation

Below we report a case study that well explains the concept of *Italian cultural and creative tourism*: the **historic train journey** organized by the FS Italiane Foundation.

This tourist service - case study falls into the "Case Study (tourism business or des na on)" typology, and was created by 3 founding members: FS Italiane (group leader), RFI and Trenitalia, to which the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Tourism also joined in 2015 as an "institutional partner".

Presentation:

Fondazione FS Italiane is custodian and manager of the great historical heritage of the Italian State Railways: established on 6 March 2013, it protects a park of historical rolling stock consisting of 400 vehicles, archives and librarians, the museums of Pietrarsa and Trieste Campo Marzio and the railway lines once suspended, now recovered for a new tourist vocation with the project "[Binari senza Tempo](#)".

Through this project, in fact, the FS Foundation has seen fit to give new life to ten of the railway lines that cross the Italian provinces, creating an innovative formula for railway tourism. Thanks to the **historic train travel service**, tourists can discover more than 600 km of disused railway heritage, unattractive for the regular transport of people and goods, but which still has a lot to offer: by traveling along their route, in fact, you can admire unique views, in areas of Italy to be rediscovered and opened to tourism.

Furthermore, thanks to the law on historic railways of 2017, also stimulated by the work of the Foundation, today these lines are protected and respond to the new aim of re-evaluating the territories they cross by creating a widespread museum - a mobile museum, if we want - of small villages and of Italian landscape jewels.

List of railway lines that can be visited by historic train:

- 1) Name: Ferrovia del Sebino; Line: Palazzolo S.O. - Paratico Sarnico; Reactivation: 2014, Length: 10 km;
- 2) Name: Ferrovia della Val d'Orcia; Line: Asciano - Monte Antico; Reactivation: 2014, Length: 51 km;
- 3) Name: Ferrovia Transiberiana d'Italia; Line: Sulmona - Carpinone; Reactivation: 2014; Length: 118 km;
- 4) Name: Ferrovia dei Templi; Line: Agrigento Bassa - Porto Empedocle Succursale; Reactivation: 2014; Length: 12 km;
- 5) Name: Ferrovia della Valsesia; Line: Vignale - Varallo Sesia; Reactivation: 2015; Length: 51 km;
- 6) Name: Ferrovia del Tanaro; Line: Ceva - Ormea; Reactivation: 2016; Length: 35 km;
- 7) Name: Ferrovia dell'Irpinia; Line: Avellino - Rocchetta S. Antonio Lacedonia; Reactivation: 2016; Length: 119 km;
- 8) Name: Ferrovia del Sannio; Line: Benevento - Bosco Redole; Reactivation: 2017; Length: 66 km;
- 9) Name: Ferrovia Pedemontana; Line: Sacile - Gemona del Friuli; Reactivation: 2018; Length: 75 km;
- 10) Name: Ferrovie delle Langhe Roero e Monferrato; Line: Asti - Alba - Castagnole delle Lanze - Nizza Monferrato; Reactivation: 2018; Length: 58 km;
- 11) Name: Ferrovia Subappennina Italica; Line: Fabriano - Pergola; Reactivation: 2021; Length: 31 km;
- 12) Name: Ferrovia del Basso Monferrato; Line: Asti - Chivasso; Reactivation: 2022; Length: 51 km;

13) Name: Ferrovia delle Murge; Line: Rocchetta S. Antonio Lacedonia - Gioia del Colle; Reactivation: in progress; Length: 139,2 Km.

Innovativeness:

The innovation lies in making an asset of national historical value easy to use for tourists who come to our country, who can book the historic train journey through the dedicated website or by going to the Ferrovie dello Stato infopoints. Historic train travel therefore gives the opportunity to discover a vast collection of historic railway assets, including over 400 vehicles and various museums, preserving the rich historical heritage of the Italian Railways. Furthermore, through the "Timeless Tracks" project, the foundation has given new life to previously suspended railway lines, transforming them into tourist attractions. The foundation also promotes the rich railway culture through various initiatives, such as organizing historic train journeys and guided tours. A large digital platform has been created which hosts documentary material, detailing over 150 years of Italian railway history. Finally, the foundation's efforts have resonated with the public, indicating a strong interest in railway heritage and tourism. This success has opened new avenues of growth.

Transferability

The "historic train journey" service of the FS Italiane Foundation could be transferred to other countries that have a historic railway network rich in history and scenic beauty, as well as presenting details that are worth discovering.

In the field of environmental conservation, the foundation concept could be adapted to protect and manage nature reserves. This could involve restoring degraded ecosystems, promoting biodiversity and organizing educational tours to raise public awareness of environmental issues.

However, any adaptation would require careful consideration of the specific needs and characteristics of the new context.

Furthermore, the success of such a service would also depend on public involvement strategies adapted to the new context. While historic train rides and guided tours work well for a railway foundation, art exhibitions, workshops and interactive installations might be more appropriate for an art foundation. Likewise, nature walks, citizen science projects, and conservation volunteer opportunities could be effective for an environmental foundation.

Website and/or relevant links:

<https://www.fondazionefs.it/content/fondazionefs/it/treni-storici.html>

Contact information:

Address: Piazza della Croce Rossa, 1 - 00161 Roma, Phone: + 39 0644103000, Email: direzione@fondazionefs.it



8. DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVE TOURISM OFFERS

Developing and promoting alternative tourism offers requires careful planning, collaboration, and implementation. Here are the steps for a tourism stakeholder, whether a destination manager or tourism business owner, to develop and promote alternative tourism:

Assess Local Context & Identify Potential Opportunities: Conduct market research and stakeholder consultations to identify potential opportunities for alternative tourism development in the destination. Assess the region's natural, cultural, and community assets, as well as existing tourism infrastructure and visitor preferences.

Define Alternative Tourism Offerings: Based on the identified opportunities, define alternative tourism offerings that align with the destination's unique characteristics and target market segments. Consider various types of alternative tourism, such as ecotourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, or community-based tourism, and develop experiences that emphasize sustainability, authenticity, and meaningful engagement.

Engage Stakeholders: Collaborate with local communities, tourism businesses, government agencies, and non-profit organizations to involve stakeholders in the planning and development process. Build partnerships, seek input, and ensure that alternative tourism initiatives are inclusive, participatory, and responsive to local needs and aspirations.

Develop Sustainable Infrastructure: Invest in sustainable tourism infrastructure and facilities to support alternative tourism activities while minimizing environmental impacts. This may include developing trails, visitor centers, interpretation signage, eco-friendly accommodations, and transportation options that prioritize energy efficiency and waste reduction.

Enhance Visitor Experiences: Design and deliver high-quality visitor experiences that immerse travelers in the destination's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and community life. Offer authentic interactions, hands-on activities, and guided tours that provide insights into local traditions, customs, and environmental conservation efforts.

Implement Responsible Practices: Adopt responsible tourism practices throughout the alternative tourism supply chain, from planning and operations to marketing and visitor management. Emphasize principles of sustainability, respect for local cultures, and equitable distribution of benefits among stakeholders. Encourage tourists to minimize their environmental footprint, respect cultural norms, and support local businesses and initiatives.

Promote Alternative Tourism Offers: Develop a comprehensive marketing strategy to promote alternative tourism offers and attract target audiences. Utilize various channels, including digital platforms, social media, travel agencies, and tourism networks, to raise awareness, showcase experiences, and engage

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potential visitors. Highlight the unique selling points of alternative tourism, such as authenticity, sustainability, and transformative experiences, to differentiate them from mainstream tourism products.

Monitor and Evaluate Performance: Continuously monitor the performance of alternative tourism initiatives, gathering feedback from visitors, stakeholders, and local communities. Evaluate the social, economic, and environmental impacts of alternative tourism development, and make adjustments as needed to improve outcomes and ensure long-term sustainability.

By following these steps, tourism stakeholders can effectively develop and promote alternative tourism offers that contribute to sustainable development, enhance destination competitiveness, and create meaningful experiences for travelers while preserving natural and cultural heritage.



9. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR TOURISM

| EU programme | Description | Relevance to Tourism | Tourism funding criteria |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Creative Europe | Creative Europe is the EU's programme for support to the cultural and creative sectors, including the audiovisual sector. | <p>Creative Europe is the European Union's programme for support to the cultural and creative sectors, including the audiovisual sector. The general objectives of the Creative Europe programme are to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - safeguard, develop and promote European cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage - increase the competitiveness and economic potential of the cultural and creative sectors, particularly the audiovisual sector. <p>The programme supports projects that promote contemporary European creative works and heritage (covering intangible, tangible and industrial outputs). This includes architecture, music, literature, the performing arts, films, festivals, cultural tourism, and flagship initiatives such as the European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) or European Heritage Days.</p> | <p>The ECOC scheme is particularly relevant for regional development. It can help finance tourism and cooperation projects or platforms under the horizontal actions of the CULTURE strand. Cultural events like music or performing arts festivals are also eligible for funding. In the MEDIA strand, film festivals and markets may play a role in national and international tourism. In addition, city branding through culture contributes to the value of urban areas, thereby attracting more visitors.</p> <p>Furthermore, the programme's CULTURE strand provides for sectoral actions, including developing the creative aspects of the design and fashion sectors, along with sustainable cultural tourism. These sectors are also promoted and represented outside the EU.</p> |
| Erasmus+ | Erasmus+ is the EU programme in the fields of education, training, youth and sport. These are key areas that support citizens in their personal and professional development. | Tourism organisations, education and training providers can receive funding for development and networking activities. These include academic and vocational training, adult/lifelong learning, youth and European sport events. Projects can cover mobility, developing the competences and employability of young people in tourism, digital skills in cultural heritage, hospitality, and research innovation. | he programme has no specific tourism components. However, tourism enterprises and their (future) staff can benefit from developing and training young people. In addition, some Erasmus+ project calls are specific to certain sectors, and often aim to have 1 project financed per sector, per call. |
| European Agricultural | The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) under the European Agricultural | Many rural areas in the European Union suffer from structural problems such as a lack of attractive employment opportunities, skill shortages, | EU countries had the possibility to include tourism-related investments in their CAP Strategic Plans which are being implemented from January 2023 onwards. Such support |

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| <p><u>Fund for Rural Development</u></p> | <p>Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD or so-called Second Pillar) supports the vibrancy and economic viability of rural communities through rural development measures.</p> | <p>under-investment in connectivity, infrastructure and essential services, as well as youth brain drain. It is fundamental to strengthen the socio-economic fabric in these areas, particularly through creating jobs and generational renewal. Bringing jobs and growth to rural areas will promote social inclusion, and help develop smart villages across the European countryside. New rural value chains such as renewable energy, the emerging bioeconomy, the circular economy, and various types of tourism activities can offer good growth and job creation for rural areas.</p> | <p>could, for instance, include initiatives for territorial economic development and rural infrastructure, the renewal of villages and/or actions to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conserve small-scale built heritage (e.g. chapels, bridges, public amenities) - build and renovate tourist offices - update visitor information - other leisure, recreational and/or sports activities. |
| <p><u>European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Displaced Workers (EGF)</u></p> | <p>The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) helps people find new jobs through further education or training or helps them start their own business.</p> | <p>The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF), launched in 2007, helps people find new jobs through further education or training or helps them start their own business. Originally created to support workers who lost their jobs because of large-scale restructuring triggered by systemic globalisation changes, its scope was broadened over the years.</p> <p>The EGF now helps workers let go during larger scale restructuring events, no matter the cause. At the request of the EU country concerned, the EGF co-finances job search support, career advice, further training, retraining, coaching and entrepreneurship, and to a certain extent, allowances that enable participants to take part in the measures.</p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic has put tourism-dependent businesses across the EU in an unprecedented situation. The EGF can help workers and self-employed people in European countries who lost their job.</p> | <p>The EGF has no tourism specific component. However, it is open to various sectors and can support workers dismissed by tourism businesses or self-employed individuals (previously) active in the tourism industry. It does so through supporting measures that help train displaced workers, upgrade their skills, or help them start businesses.</p> <p>Moreover, it can support measures in tourism, such as vocational training courses for displaced workers according to their needs, apprenticeships to learn new professional skills and practical knowledge directly on-the-job, and business start-up subsidies with follow-up support.</p> |
| <p><u>European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF)</u></p> | <p>The fund supports actions and investments that contribute to the protection of aquatic biodiversity and to sustainable and low-impact fishing and aquaculture</p> | <p>The fund supports actions and investments that contribute to the protection of aquatic biodiversity and to sustainable and low-impact fishing and aquaculture activities. It also promotes the supply of quality and healthy seafood products to European consumers, supports the development of a sustainable blue economy in coastal communities, and</p> | <p>One of the fund's priorities focuses on enabling a sustainable blue economy in coastal, island and inland areas, and fostering the development of fishing and aquaculture communities. This priority is the most relevant for the tourism ecosystem, as it supports community-led local development and could cover tourism-related projects such as</p> |

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| | <p>activities. It also promotes the supply of quality and healthy seafood products to European consumers.</p> | <p>contributes to maritime surveillance and international cooperation on ocean governance.</p> <p>The European Maritime and Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund co-finances projects alongside national funding streams, with each EU country receiving a share of the total budget in relation to the size of its fishing industry. In accordance with the rules of the fund, EU countries draw up their national programmes, specifying how they intend to spend the money depending on their needs. Therefore, the relevance to the tourism ecosystem might differ from one EU country to the other.</p> | <p>eco-tourism, pesca-tourism, local gastronomy (fish and seafood restaurants), accommodation, tourist trails, diving, as well as supporting local partnerships in coastal tourism.</p> |
| <p><u>European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Cohesion Fund</u></p> | <p>In order to strengthen the environmental, socioeconomic sustainability and resilience of tourism in the long term, regions and countries are encouraged to help transform the sector by learning from innovative solutions.</p> | <p>To strengthen the environmental, socioeconomic sustainability and resilience of tourism in the long term, regions and countries are encouraged to help transform the sector by learning from innovative solutions. Investments in tourism are possible through all 5 policy objectives supported by the ERDF (see below), provided that they comply with the relevant objectives, enabling conditions, or minimum requirements established for the concerned policy objectives.</p> <p>A specific objective under policy objective 4 (A more social and inclusive Europe) is dedicated to exploiting the full potential of culture and tourism for an economic recovery coupled with social inclusion and environmental and financial sustainability, without prejudice to the possibilities for support provided from the ERDF to those sectors under other specific objectives.</p> <p>The Cohesion Fund can support tourism-related investments in environment and in the trans-European transport networks (TEN-T), in particular in regions with an economy heavily dependent on tourism.</p> <p>Regarding European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg) programmes, tourism is expected</p> | <p>The Cohesion Fund targets the reduction of economic and social disparities through investment in environment and Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T). It covers EU countries whose Gross National Income (GNI) per inhabitant over the period 2015-2017 was less than 90% of the EU average. In 2021-2027 these are Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.</p> |



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| | | <p>to still be among the most popular topics. It can be addressed by a two-fold approach</p> <p>through the Interreg programmes (European Territorial Cooperation regulation)</p> <p>through the mainstream programmes 'embedding cooperation'</p> | |
| <u>European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)</u> | <p>The ESF+ has a total budget of over €99 billion. It invests in people, creating and protecting job opportunities, promoting social inclusion, fighting poverty and developing the skills needed for the digital and green transition</p> | <p>The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) is a key financial programme for investing in people. It provides much-needed resources to EU countries to help societies and economies recover after the coronavirus crisis. The ESF+ finances the implementation of the principles from the European Pillar of Social Rights</p> <p>With a budget of almost €99.3 billion for the 2021-2027 period, the ESF+ will continue to provide an important contribution to the EU's employment, social, education and skills policies. It will also fund structural reforms in these areas.</p> <p>The ESF+ supports EU policy implementation and national structural reforms in these fields. This contributes to EU countries' efforts to reduce unemployment, enhance quality and equal opportunities in education and training. It also helps with actions to improve social inclusion and integration.</p> <p>The ESF+ promotes the horizontal principles of gender equality, respect for fundamental rights, equal opportunities and non-discrimination in all its investments.</p> | <p>1) Further support youth employment: The tourism ecosystem employs a higher share of young people compared to the overall economy. Young people in or entering the labour market have been disproportionately hit by the crisis. EU countries with a large number of people aged 15 – 29 that are not in employment, education or training should invest at least 12.5% of their ESF+ resources in this key area. All other EU countries must allocate an appropriate amount of their ESF+ resources to targeted actions to support youth employment measures.</p> <p>2) Accompany the green and digital transitions: The ESF+ makes a strong contribution to the green and digital transitions by driving investment in jobs and skilling opportunities so that workers can thrive in a climate-neutral, more digital and inclusive society.</p> |
| <u>Horizon Europe</u> | <p>Research and innovation framework programme, running from 2021-27. It has a budget of around €95.5 billion for 2021-27 (in current prices), including €5.4 billion from</p> | <p>Horizon Europe is a research and innovation framework programme, running from 2021-27.</p> <p>It has a budget of around €95.5 billion for 2021-27 (in current prices). This includes €5.4 billion from NextGenerationEU to boost the economic recovery and make the</p> | <p>Within cluster 2 - Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society - research and innovation activities are offered to meet the EU's goals and priorities for enhancing democratic governance and citizen participation. Safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage, and responding to and shaping</p> |

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| | <p>NextGenEU to boost the economic recovery and make the EU more resilient for the future, and €4 billion reinforcement</p> | <p>EU more resilient for the future, as well as an additional reinforcement of €4 billion.</p> <p>Pillar 2 of Horizon Europe - Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness - supports research on societal challenges and reinforces technological and industrial capacities through clusters. It sets EU missions with ambitious goals tackling some of our biggest problems. Pillar 2 also includes activities pursued by the Joint Research Centre, which supports EU and national policymakers with independent scientific evidence and technical support.</p> <p>The Digital, Industry and Space work programme has been available since March 2023.</p> | <p>social, economic, technological and cultural transformations are also conducted.</p> <p>Developing new approaches, concepts and practices for sustainable, accessible and inclusive cultural tourism are among the research activities planned for this cluster. These opportunities will continue. Those already provided through the previous framework programme Horizon 2020 will be further developed.</p> |
| InvestEU | <p>InvestEU programme will promote investments to strengthen tourism's competitiveness, sustainability, and value chains. It will facilitate sustainable, innovative and digital measures, which could help reduce the sector's climate and environmental footprint.</p> | <p>The tourism sector came under unprecedented pressure during the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact was especially challenging for SMEs and family businesses. The InvestEU programme promotes investments to strengthen tourism's competitiveness, sustainability, and value chains. It facilitates sustainable, innovative and digital measures which could help reduce the sector's climate and environmental footprint.</p> | <p>InvestEU brings several EU financial instruments together under one roof. The programme aims to support viable investments to help the EU in its economic recovery from COVID-19.</p> <p>The guarantee under InvestEU amounts to €26.2 billion and aims to raise more than €372 billion in additional investments before 2027 through private funding. InvestEU is managed indirectly, which means that the Commission will negotiate mandates with financial partners to deploy the available EU guarantees. The European Investment Bank (EIB) is the main financial partner and is expected to deliver on 75% of the EU guarantee.</p> |
| LIFE Programme | <p>Funds projects in environment and climate action. Tourism activities related to green transition can benefit from the programme. Particularly tourism projects supporting the circular economy, energy efficiency and renewable energy</p> | <p>The LIFE programme funds projects in environmental and climate action. Tourism activities related to the green transition can benefit from this scheme. In particular, projects supporting the circular economy, energy efficiency and renewable energy measures, as well as climate neutrality may be eligible for funding.</p> | <p>The LIFE programme has no specific tourism theme. However, environmentally sustainable projects - especially those mitigating CO2 emissions through energy efficiency or renewable energy - may benefit from funding. Similarly, projects that marry climate adaptation measures with tourism may also be eligible.</p> <p>In general terms, funding would be provided via 'standard action projects' following an annual call for proposals. LIFE does not</p> |

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| | measures, as well as climate-neutrality may be eligible. | | finance big infrastructure projects. However, it may support investment in green infrastructure by providing services which can include recreational and tourism activities. |
| <u>Single Market Programme (SMP)</u> | Aims to provide EU countries the tools to recover and repair from the Covid-19 crisis. The final objective is to make the Single Market stronger and more resilient. Annex 2 focuses on improving the competitiveness of enterprises, particularly SMEs, and supporting their access to markets. | The <u>SMP Work Programme 2023 aims</u> to make the Single Market stronger and more resilient. Among its objectives is to improve the competitiveness of enterprises, particularly SMEs and their access to markets. The 2023 work programme is composed of 5 annexes, which are aligned with the overall objectives of the SMP. <u>Annex 2 details the SME pillar</u> in this programme. | <p>The SMP aims to boost the competitiveness and sustainability of SMEs, including in the tourism sector. One important pillar of the SMP aims to foster the competitiveness, capacity building and sustainability of these enterprises.</p> <p>Here are some examples of relevant calls for tourism under Annex 2 of the 2022 and 2023 Work Programmes:</p> <p>Sustainable growth and building resilience in tourism: empowering SMEs to carry out the twin transition</p> <p>The initiative aims to help the tourism ecosystem recover by supporting companies in their digital and green transformations. This included working through groups of tourism organisations as intermediaries.</p> <p>European Capital and Green Pioneers of smart tourism</p> <p>This project promotes smart and sustainable tourism in the EU, increases the visibility of destinations, and facilitates the exchange of best practices through networks.</p> <p>The European Capital of Smart Tourism recognises outstanding achievements by European cities as tourism destinations in 4 categories: sustainability, accessibility, digitalisation and cultural heritage and creativity.</p> <p>The European Green Pioneer of Smart Tourism - successor of the European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) competition - rewards smaller destinations that have implemented successful strategies to boost sustainable tourism through green transition practices.</p> |



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| | | | <p>Promoting trans-European products in third countries</p> <p>The overall objective of the grant to the European Travel Commission is to rebuild the image of Europe as a safe and secure tourist destination</p> <p>support the recovery of EU tourism and maintain its share of the world market better disperse and diversify tourism flows in terms of geography and seasons, while taking into account the needs and aspirations of local residents.</p> |
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