Towards a new EU strategy for sustainable tourism

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EU Tourism in figures

❖ **3.5 mln. enterprises, 99 % - micro and SMEs**

❖ **6,6% of EU Gross Value Added (10% Malta, Croatia, Greece)**

❖ **Over 20,4 mln. jobs (9,5% of total EU employment)**

❖ **2024 record year: 3 billion nights spent in the EU accommodation, 50% increase over 15 years**

❖ **Europe remains most visited destination in the world**

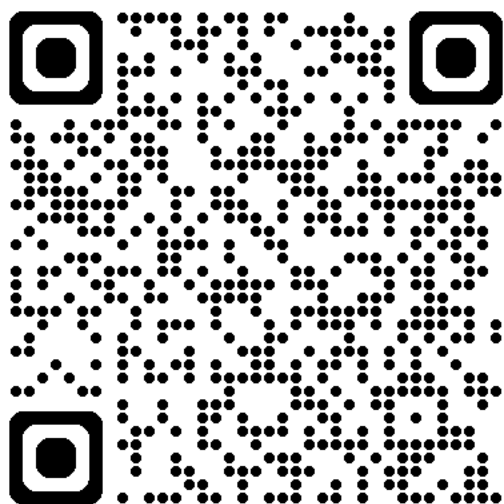# Towards new EU strategy for sustainable tourism: building on a common vision & co-implementation

Co-created and co-implemented by stakeholders

Consultation launched!

EU Strategy for Sustainable Tourism

Targeted Consultation:
by 15 August 2025

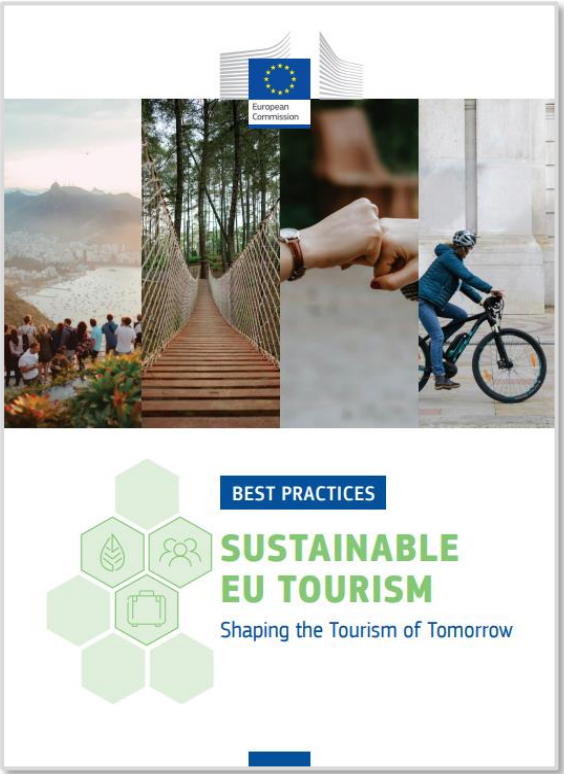https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/TourismStrategy

European Commission

EC supports destinations in their sustainability path by:

❖ Capacity building & peer-to-peer exchanges

❖ Dialogue forums for destinations

❖ T4T expert group work:

✓ Task force on unbalanced tourism

✓ Task force on sustainable destination management and regenerative tourism

❖ Supporting statistical framework and work on sustainability indicators (EU Tourism Dashboard, Tourism Flagship under Technical Support Instrument)

❖ Promoting a shared brand for Europe, with ETC support: sustainable, inclusive and safe destination

❖ Research and surveys on trends and travel sentiment

Sustainable EU Tourism project

50 best practices addressing 31 concrete challenges faced by European DMOs

BEST PRACTICES

SUSTAINABLE EU TOURISM
Shaping the Tourism of Tomorrow

ECONOMIC

SUSTAINABLE EU TOURISM
Shaping the Tourism of Tomorrow

BEST PRACTICE: TURIN, ITALY

Key Challenge

Creating local added value through tourism.

Type of Solution

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

Case Classification

Type of Destination | Urban
Territorial Level | NUTS 3
Size of the Tourist Area | 6,821 km² (Metropolitan area)
Population | 2,208,370 in 2020 (Metropolitan area)
Type of Tourism | Mountain; Rural; Cultural; City; Business; Gastronomy.
DMO | Consortium with 77 members, of which 97% are public and 3% are private.
Main Stakeholders Affected | Local authorities/ government; Restaurants and bars; Other tourism service providers; Technology providers.
Additional Challenges Covered | Insufficient use of new and advanced technologies in tourism; Maintenance and conservation of cultural heritage sites; Appropriate local tourism strategies and policies to accelerate the transition to sustainable and resilient tourism.

Context & Background

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

Key Challenge

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

Download the Compilation of 50 Best Practices

Economic	Social	Environmental	Governance

Economic:
- Creating local added value through tourism
- Growth-oriented mindset of destination stakeholders
- Dependence of the local economy on tourism
- Seasonality of tourism
- Changing consumer preferences towards more sustainability
- Insufficient use of new and advanced technologies in tourism
- Spatial and temporal concentration of visitors
- Increase in the cost of living due to tourism
- Deterioration and congestion of infrastructure incl. commercial gentrification
- Deterioration of the destination image

Social:
- Lack of qualified and skilled workers
- Poor working conditions in the tourism industry
- Insufficient or declining acceptance of tourism
- Displacement and marginalisation of the local population
- Accessibility and inclusivity of services and facilities
- Maintenance and conservation of cultural heritage sites

Environmental:
- Climate protection and climate change mitigation
- Adaptation to climate change
- Water scarcity and pollution
- Waste production and pollution
- Degradation and loss of biodiversity
- Sustainable and smart mobility solutions

Governance:
- Appropriate local tourism strategies and policies to accelerate the transition to sustainable and resilient tourism
- Lack of community participation in tourism activities
- Lack of stakeholder management (multi-level, cross-sectoral)
- Lack of visitor participation in tourism development
- Resilience building and crisis management
- Lack of awareness of sustainability and resilience among tourism stakeholders
- Lack of knowledge and skills of tourism stakeholders
- Limited financial resources to support sustainability activities in tourism
- Measurement and monitoring of sustainable tourism

BEST PRACTICE: VALONGO, PORTUGAL

Key Challenge

Degradation and loss of biodiversity.

Type of Solution

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

Case Classification

Type of Destination | Rural

Territorial Level | < NUTS 3

Size of the Tourist Area | 75.7 km^2

Population | 94,795 in 2021

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

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

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

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

Context & Background

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

Key Challenge

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

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

SOLUTIONS

- The Association of Municipalities of Porto Mountains Park, founded in 2016, is the result of the synergy between the municipalities of Valongo, Gondomar and Paredes and is strategically located in the metropolitan area of Porto. It is recognised as a model of political, technical and civic competence in the integrated management of protected areas. The association supports studies as well as the conservation, and sustainable use of the park. Among the *conservation projects* implemented is the *LIFE Serras do Porto project,* funded by the LIFE programme, that includes a set of integrated interventions in forested areas to promote native species, adaptation to climate change, as well as monitoring, dissemination activities, awareness-raising and citizen participation.

- The Leça River, crossing the municipalities of Valongo, Maia, Santo Tirso and Matosinhos, has been considered one of the most polluted rivers in Europe, due to discharges from industry and agriculture. Recognizing the importance of preserving this watercourse, in 2016, the municipalities began to investigate solutions at a local level and in 2021 *Association of Municipalities of the Leça River Corridor* was created, focusing on implementing actions dedicated to its rehabilitation. To preserve its landscape and biodiversity, several actions were carried out with the support of EU Funding, such as waste collection, control of invasive exotic vegetation and natural engineering interventions (revegetation) to protect the banks from erosion and flooding, and to increase water quality and reduce its scarcity in drier periods.

- To involve the local population in environmentally friendly activities, several initiatives are being taken, such as the promotion of educational games in schools related to water, climate change and the SDGs. The Municipality also encourages citizen participation through composting training, tree planting, river cleaning, provision of vegetable gardens for communities, guided tours in the mountains etc. Furthermore, the Municipality participates in the European Union's *BiodiverCities project,* which involved citizens in the co-design of greener cities.

- Tourists are also involved in conservation activities to raise awareness, to encourage them to protect nature and to promote and enhance the vast and valuable natural, geological, archaeological and mining heritage of the territory. For this purpose, Valongo Municipality developed the *Centre for Environmental Interpretation and Roman Mining.*

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

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

European Commission

ENVIRONMENTAL

SUSTAINABLE EU TOURISM
Shaping the Tourism of Tomorrow

BEST PRACTICE: MIDDELFART, DENMARK

Key Challenge

Degradation and loss of biodiversity.

Type of Solution

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

Case Classification

Type of Destination | Coastal

Territorial Level | < NUTS 3

Size of the Tourist Area | 72 km^2

Population | 16,546 (2023)

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

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

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

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

Context & Background

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

Key Challenge

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

ENVIRONMENTAL

SUSTAINABLE EU TOURISM
Shaping the Tourism of Tomorrow

BEST PRACTICE: BLED, SLOVENIA

Key Challenge

Degradation and loss of biodiversity.

Type of Solution

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

Case Classification

Type of Destination | Rural

Territorial Level | < NUTS 3

Size of the Tourist Area | 72 km^2 (Municipality of Bled)

Population | 8,190 in 2023

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

Tourism organisation | Three entities: Bled Tourism Board (local Destination Management Organisation); Obcina Bled (local municipality); Turisticno drustvo Bled (Bled Tourist Association).

Main Stakeholders Affected |

Local residents; Tourists; Local businesses; Transport companies.

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

Context & Background

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

Key Challenge

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

European Commission

DMO Twinning Workshops

💡 **11-12 March:** Diversifying tourism

🤝 **26-27 March:** Smart solutions

💬 **8-9 April:** Governance & collaborative approaches

Upcoming Webinars

Sustainable EU Tourism

💡 **4 June:** Unlocking EU funding for sustainable and resilient tourism

🤝 **16 June:** Building capacity and fostering cooperation in tourism

💬 **30 June:** Practical tools for twinning and cooperation

European Commission

Forum on unbalanced tourism at destinations

Forum on unbalanced tourism at destinations

Root causes and impacts of overtourism – from EC project 2022

Root causes

General long-term developments: Higher standard of living · Technological advances · Wider access to media and information · Demographic shifts · Economic growth · Increased number of holidays · Larger scale and higher frequency of transport

Tourism-specific developments: The falling cost of travel · Short-term focus of tourism decision makers · Rise of new competitors · Public and unique tourism products · Bad working conditions in the tourism sector · Growth-focused mindset of the tourism sector · Performance measure of DMOs in international tourist arrivals · Marketing of already well-established destinations · Seasonality (temporal concentration of tourists numbers) · Easement of travel restrictions

New trends

Social media · Transition from "3S tourism" to "3E tourism" · Prioritisation of travel and leisure experiences · Sharing economy and peer-to-peer platforms · Bucket-list tourism · New segments & types of tourism · Promotion of destinations in media · New source markets

Sudden, unpredictable events

World Health Status · Current travel regulations · Extreme weather events (due to climate change) · Safety/ Terrorist attacks

Resulting effects

Greater number of tourists and rapid growth · Imbalances in the number of visitors and residents · Concentration of visitors · Distribution of visitors to new places · Short-term focus of tourists (undertaking and arranging travel) · Changes in visitors' behaviour

Destination factors intensifying overtourism

General characteristics: Social disparity · Diversity of stakeholders · Lack of facilities · Greater accessibility · General and tourism-specific laws & regulations · Existing pressure through other sectors · Poor governance (e.g., corruption) · Unequal distribution of benefits

Local tourism sector: Destination branding strategy · Inadequate implementation of strategies · Lack of a balance of responsibilities and power · Lack of the awareness of overtourism/ importance of sustainable tourism development · High dependency on tourism · Insufficient involvement of local population · Lack of current tourism statistics

Impacts

Degradation of local infrastructure · Degradation of the environment · Imbalances in the local economy · Disturbance of the social environment · Declined quality of the visitor experience

T4T webinar: Measuring tourism environmental impacts

Objective: Identify necessary actions and common ground at European, national or local level towards measuring environmental impacts of tourism:
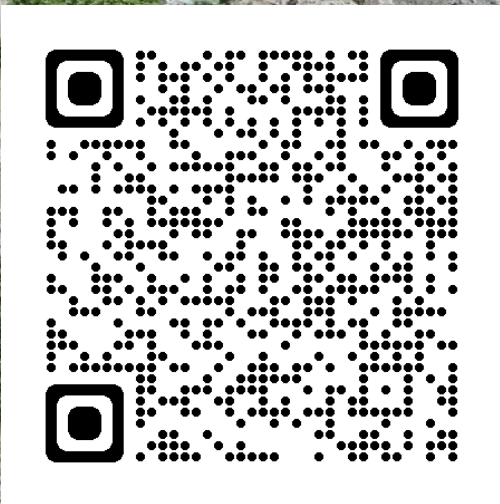
- General perspective on environmental impacts of tourism (scientific perspective)

- Work on measuring sustainability of tourism (EU perspective)

- Lessons from the industry

Watch the recording

Measuring EU Tourism Environmental Impacts. Setting the frame. - EUROPARC Federation

TOURISM OF TOMORROW DATA DRIVEN DESTINATIONS HUB

Creation of a Competence Centre to support data management in tourism destinations

Build a knowledge support scheme to assist EU tourism destinations

Provide tailor-made digital solutions and data for DMOs and tourism SMEs

Integrate results and learnings into a business plan to set up and sustain the Centre

Upscale beyond the partnership and build a data-driven tourism community

Implement the Centre and ensure its continuity

D3HUB Competence Centre (d3hub-competencecentre.eu)

European Commission

EU Tourism Dashboard

#EUtourism dashboard
30+ INDICATORS TO HELP TRANSFORM EUROPE'S TOURISM

Regularly updated, 19 indicators:
- Green
- Digital
- Socio-economic performance at national, regional level

13 tourism descriptors: supply, demand, offer

GREEN PILLAR
- Air travel emission intensity
- Tourism GHG intensity
- Tourism energy intensity
- Share of trips by train
- Excellent bathing water
- Dependence on distant origins
- Environmental labels and schemes

DIGITAL PILLAR
- E-commerce sales
- Enterprises using social media
- Personnel training on digital skills
- Enterprises seeking ICT specialists
- Internet speed at tourism destinations

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PILLAR
- Tourism intensity
- Tourism seasonality
- Dependence on top 3 countries of origin
- Tourism diversity
- Average tourism expenditure
- Direct economic contribution of tourism
- Share of employment in the tourism ecosystem
- Tourism enterprises by size

TOURISM DESCRIPTORS (DEMAND & SUPPLY)
- Nights spent
- Arrivals
- Tourism capacity
- Occupancy rate
- Avarage length of stay
- Tourism density

- Dominant tourism typology
- Share of foreign tourists
- Progress of tourism demand recovery
- Presence of Blue flag awarded sites
- Share of protected/designated land

- Share of accommodations in areas with high nature value
- Cultural assets intensity
- UNESCO and European heritage label sites

Have a look at: https://tourism-dashboard.ec.europa.eu/

European Commission

Sustainable & innovative urban destinations

APPLY NOW TO BECOME THE NEXT EUROPEAN CAPITAL OR GREEN PIONEER OF SMART TOURISM
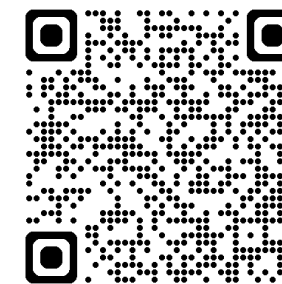
European Capital of Smart Tourism

Are you a smart destination with a population of over 100.000 inhabitants? Apply here for the European Capital of Smart Tourism Competition.
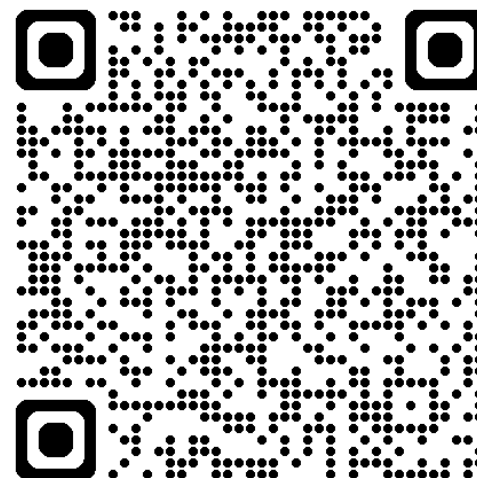
European Green Pioneer of Smart Tourism

Are you a green destination with a population of between 25.000 – 100.000 inhabitants? Apply here for the European Green Pioneer of Tourism Competition.

The guide will help you find appropriate funding. It contains links to relevant EU programme websites with the latest developments (such as annual work programmes or calls for proposals) and further details per programme.

For inspiration, you can also see concrete project examples funded by previous EU programmes. The guide is available in all EU languages via a high-quality machine translation tool.

EU funding and businesses - European Commission

Accessing Cohesion Funds

2021-2027

Shared Management: Member States and regions are responsible for the implementation of Cohesion Policy programmes, including call for proposals and selection of operations

1. Check existing **Cohesion Policy programmes** – projects need to meet the selection criteria and investment priorities of the Programme. Full list

2. Reach out to the relevant **Managing Authority of the Programme** for information on available calls and support. Full list

Further Links: Regional Policy news   Projects supported by Cohesion Policy

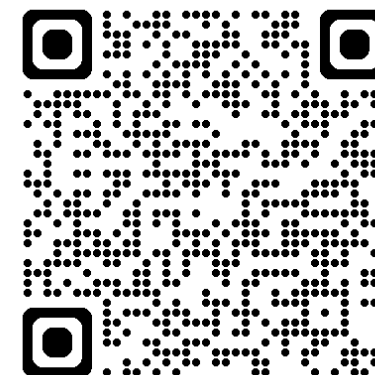European Commission
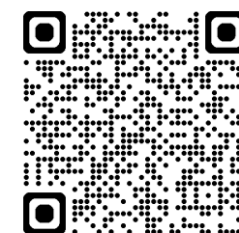
EU Tourism Platform

Single platform for the EU Tourism Transition Pathway

Discover actionable insights and strategies on the Transition Pathway Stakeholder Support Platform for EU Tourism ecosystem to drive sustainable growth and innovation in your tourism business.

Join the pathway ›

Photo by David Marcu

Access updated information through resources (articles, studies, guidelines, reports….)

Discover stakeholder pledges & best practices

Explore events, courses, support and funding opportunities

Connect with members from around the world using the interactive map

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in Sustainable EU Tourism

Contact us

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European Commission