OPENING SESSION

Elodie Nunes, Executive Secretary of the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission (CPMR-IMC), introduces the context of this Task Force meeting on Culture and Sustainable Tourism, as the follow-up of a previous Task Force meeting organised on May 25th focusing on the key outcomes of WINTER MED and DestiMED PLUS projects. Ms Nunes then explains that the objective of this current Task Force is to discuss about the last outputs of MED tourism projects and put them into perspective with the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism.

George Alexakis, Coordinator of the CPMR-IMC Task Force on Culture and Sustainable Tourism and Regional Councillor of Crete, in charge of European & International Affairs, recalled that this meeting takes advantage of the momentum marked by the implementation of the Next Generation EU recovery instrument and the launch of the new programming period 2021-2027. He mentions the fact that the CPMR has joined the Glasgow Declaration as a parallel political initiative that arose in the framework of COP26 and reiterates to the CPMR-IMC member regions his strong encouragement to join the Declaration.

He adds that the CPMR has recently supported the promotion of this initiative in the framework of the EU Transition Pathway for Tourism, notably by responding to the “Call for commitments and participation in the co-implementation”. He continues by saying that the Intermediterranean Commission and its regions, through their participation in European Territorial Cooperation projects have initiated the implementation phase of governance models that had been introduced during previous meetings. The IMC-CPMR believes that this is the right time to discuss the development of these projects, but also to highlight their importance in the construction of
European public policies. These projects put theory into practice and allow regions to develop tools that will make the transition of Mediterranean territories towards greener and smarter tourism a reality.

He highlights the Mediterranean Ecotourism Consortium (MEC) which gathers Regional Ecotourism Coordination Tables (RECs) involved in the DestiMED PLUS Interreg MED project. The meeting of today is of particular importance since the CPMR-IMC will now host the meetings of the MEC within the framework of the Task Force, as agreed during its last General Assembly in Sevilla.

He also mentioned that this event will allow participants to discuss the activities of the BEST MED project and in particular the close link between the BEST MED Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (MED NSTO) and its link with the International Network of Sustainable Tourism (INSTO) of the UNWTO.

Finally, he points out that the CPMR-IMC and its regions are fully committed to building a more resilient tourism economy, based on a stronger coordination at various levels with all relevant actors in the field as highlighted again in the CPMR-IMC Final Declaration 2022 entitled “15 key recommendations for a Cooperative and Sustainable Mediterranean”.

INTRODUCTION

The Glasgow Declaration

Jeremy Smith, Climate Specialist at the Travel Foundation, highlights that destinations must lie at the heart of climate action as they connect all the value chains of tourism, an industry that accounts for 8% of global greenhouse gases and yet it is generally there that climate risks and impacts are the most felt.

J. Smith presents the steps towards the creation of the Glasgow Declaration which results of a collaboration between the UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization), the UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme), Visit Scotland and the Travel Foundation while many others key stakeholders provided key inputs through a consultation process. He also stresses the achievable and science-based character of the climate objectives set.

Launched at COP26, 600 entities have now endorsed the Glasgow Declaration, therefore committing to reach net-zero by 2050, deliver Climate Action Plans (CAPs), report on progress, and follow the 4 pathways: Measure, to track and disclose all travel and tourism-related emissions which is today a real challenge for the industry; Decarbonize, to set and deliver targets aligned with climate science to accelerate the efforts of the sector towards carbon neutrality; Regenerate, to protect, restore and support nature’s ability to absorb carbon, shelter biodiversity, supply food and water and remain an asset for tourism and Collaborate to coordinate the efforts by strengthening governance and capacity.

After giving momentum to climate action in the tourism sector, the Travel Foundation now focuses most of its energy on supporting the signatories to build the capacities to deliver on their Climate Action Plans, report on progress and ratchet up their ambition, says Jeremy Smith. He
concludes by presenting the example of Visit Scotland, the first climate action pilot destination of the Glasgow Declaration. Public and private tourism actors in Scotland have been supported in the elaboration of Climate Action Plans and planning framework while they have also worked at aligning the plans with other key sectors (i.e., energy, transport).

Political and technical feedback from member regions

Ronald Anthony Sultana, Director of the Ministry of tourism of Gozo (Malta) provides insights on the projects and actions carried out by Gozo to enhance tourism sustainability. He briefly presents the Interreg projects BESS, focusing on pocket beach management, and Destination SMEs before stressing the progress made on green public mobility and rural space planning to halt soil erosion and create attractive rural landscape, this being of particular relevance towards the implementation of the Glasgow Declaration.

SESSION 1: MEDIUM TO LONG TERM POLICY INTERVENTIONS TO PAVE THE WAY FOR SUSTAINABLE GOVERNANCE OF ECOTOURISM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

DESTIMED PLUS

Flora Leroy, CPMR-IMC Project and Policy Officer presented the DestiMED PLUS MED Ecotourism Policy Roadmap, the CPMR-IMC being the founder and key promoter of this steering document. By identifying the actions and policy interventions for regions to start with and follow over time, it sets milestones on how to follow each of the Mediterranean Ecotourism Consortium (MEC) strategic axes (governance, data monitoring and networking). The roadmap also urges regions to commit towards sustainability by taking actions and joining initiatives, in particular the Glasgow Declaration as underlined by Flora Leroy who then pinpoints relevant synergies that connects it with the MEC initiative.

She underscores how the definition of precise objectives and the Public-Private collaboration that are fostered by the Glasgow Declaration could help the MEC deliver on its mandate. Moreover, both the regenerate pathway and the MEET methodology, promoted by the MEC, recognizes conservation as a fully-fledged element in the development of tourism products and are valuing its unleashed potential for climate action and tourism. Thus, by focusing on the development of an integrated ecotourism, the MEC greatly supports the objectives of the Glasgow Declaration in terms of carbon emission reduction and conservation, and even provides tools (guidelines, good practices database, etc.) to support action at regional level.

Political and technical feedback from member regions

José Francisco Benitez, EU Projects Adviser on Tourism at the Andalusian Regional Government, reacts saying that either we all lose, or we all win. He encourages participants to work further in the same direction, ramp up advocacy efforts to engage more stakeholders and disseminate the tools/initiatives to help them take actions.

Emanuela Manca, expert for the Environmental Sustainability Service of Sardinia Region and DestiMED PLUS project’s partner, draws an apt parallel between Sardinia’s interlinkage approach
connecting its climate change, sustainable development, conservation and tourism strategies and the ambition of the MEC to do so at the Mediterranean level. She also takes this opportunity to highlight the ambition of Sardinia Region to work in a cross sectoral way and so involve representatives of the agricultural, the transport and the energy sector to decarbonize the tourism sector.

SESSION 2: TOWARDS JOINT ACTIONS AND COOPERATION FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PLANNING AND DATA MANAGEMENT

BEST MED

Erica Peroni, Technical Area Expert at Lazio Region, stresses that in the BEST MED efforts of paving the way for the creation of a Mediterranean Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (MED NSTO), partners first studied the existing needs in terms of collection and management of tourism data, looking at the different existing methodologies as well as the results of other European projects. This network is open to any organisation operating in the field of tourism data collection in the Mediterranean basin. Stakeholders from other geographical areas supporting the initiative can also join the Network. The aim is for the members of the Network to benefit from its actions, but also the European institutions and all tourism stakeholders. To do so, one of the first objectives of the creation of this NSTO was to set up an Info Hub containing the latest information on sustainable tourism and data in the Mediterranean.

Today the objective is to consolidate the Network, and to think about the post-BEST MED project. For this purpose, the project has delivered a MED NSTO Roadmap, identifying one important step with the set-up of a MoU to be signed between partners and interested observatories to continue the cooperation. A second important step towards the implementation of the network would be the submission of a Interreg Euro-MED Testing Thematic Project to deliver more operational tools to the MED NSTO.

Maria Garcies, Project and Policy Officer at the CPMR-IMC explains that the Glasgow Declaration puts the focus on three key elements advocated through the MED NSTO which are the importance of monitoring and measurement for more sustainable tourism, the importance of involving all stakeholders and the need to strengthen governance and capacity for action at all levels. More concretely, the MED NSTO contributes and allows to link two pathways of the Glasgow Declaration, the pathways on "measuring" & on "collaborate", and the declaration of “shared commitment to unite all stakeholders in transforming tourism to deliver effective climate action”.

The main commitment of the Glasgow Declaration’s signatories is action, but also to deliver management plans and create the necessary evidence to support this action. However, as highlighted during our last BEST MED workshop by Mr Dirk Glaesser (Director of the Sustainable Development of Tourism department at the UNWTO), creating evidence and linking it to the necessary management plans are two areas where there are shortcomings. The MED NSTO could
play a role in improving this situation in the Mediterranean, contributing to create evidence at destination level.

**Political and technical feedback from member regions**

José Francisco Benitez, EU Projects Adviser on Tourism at the Andalusian Regional Government and partner of the BEST MED project, states that the objectives of the NSTO and the Glasgow Declaration cannot be achieved without good collaboration, saying that the stakeholders must be at the heart of everything.

Ana Moniche, Technical Expert at Turismo Andaluz comes to testify that Andalusia has a long tradition in measuring the sustainability of tourism. For example, they are leading the Tourism of Tomorrow Lab set up by NECSTouR. They are building a common data department that will create a network of regions supporting the measuring of tourism sustainability. Also, within the ToT Lab they are working on the Technical Support Instrument from the DG Regio of the European Commission. In the framework of this Instrument, they are working with a specific number of regions (Andalusia, Valencia, Catalunya, Navarra) in collaboration with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to develop several indicators measuring the sustainability of tourism to improve policy making and to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals as well as the Green Deal and the Carbon Neutrality Objectif for 2050. They will have a kick off meeting in September, for a project of 2 years.

**WRAP UP AND FUTURE ACTIONS**

*Introduction to the Interreg Euro-Med 2021-2027 programme for Thematic Projects*

Georgina Calvo, European Project Officer at the Diputació de Barcelona, presents us the INTERREG Euro-MED Call for Thematic Projects, reminding that the call is currently open until the 27th of October and must focus on the two priorities “Smarter Mediterranean” and “Greener Mediterranean”.

This call targets the four thematic missions of the programme: “Strengthening an innovative sustainable economy”; “Protecting, restoring and valorising the natural environment and heritage”; “Promoting green living areas” and “enhancing sustainable tourism”. All project applicants should choose which specific mission they will focus on, knowing that they cannot mix distinct types of projects. The three distinct types of projects eligible for this call are the study projects, the transfer projects, and the test projects. She recalls some important requirements for the projects, such as including a coordination strategy with the thematic community projects and Institutional Dialogue projects, planning a Carbon footprint mandatory activity and indicative type of solutions for each specific objective.
Closing words

Elodie Nunes, Executive Secretary of the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission concluded by recalling the contribution of the DestiMED PLUS and BEST MED Projects to this Task Force and its members and gave an update on the next steps for each project. She pointed out that DestiMED PLUS project has a Memorandum of Understanding available for signatures to engage in the implementation of MEC activities. The BEST MED project has the NSTO MoU to be signed by observatories, as well as the Granada Charter. This project will hold a joint Final Event in collaboration with SMARTMED project on the 14th of September in Granada (Spain) and online. Both projects will share a policy session involving the European Institutions. She finally highlighted that the SMARTMED project has a Memorandum of Understanding to be signed by the tourism stakeholders to engage in coordinated integrated tourism action & planning. She closes the event by calling for support to build partnerships on sustainable tourism.