OPENING SESSION

Elodie Nunes, Executive Secretary of Intermediterranean Commission of the CPMR (CPMR-IMC), opens the Task Force meeting announcing that it will address the crucial subject of sustainable tourism. In particular, the meeting focuses on the follow-up of the previous events regarding efficient tools addressing evidence-based sustainable tourism planning, the empowerment of tourism stakeholders, the elaboration of an all-year-round strategy for a more sustainable and inclusive tourism and the development of ecotourism in protected areas. Before introducing today’s agenda, Ms Elodie Nunes reminds the importance of the Interreg MED HERIT DATA project focusing on intelligence, open data, and their use to better manage tourism flows in natural and cultural heritage destinations. The HERIT DATA project celebrated its final event at the end of April 2022 and the CPMR-IMC is now inviting its regions to sign its Memorandum of Understanding, giving access to trainings in the framework of the project and to other opportunities.

The meeting will address two projects final outputs from WINTER MED and DestiMED PLUS projects, which are currently in their capitalization phases. Therefore, the meeting is divided into two sessions hosted by the CPMR-IMC; a first session focusing on all-year round sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean Maritime and Coastal territories; a second session addressing the adoption of a sustainable ecotourism model through the creation of a Mediterranean Ecotourism Consortium (MEC) and the current development of its policy roadmap. Sessions are followed by capacity building sessions.

To introduce the Task Force meeting, George Alexakis, Coordinator of the Intermediterranean Commission Task Force and Vice Governor of Kriti Region, recalls some political context and last updates on sustainable tourism in Mediterranean regions. Tourism is a key sector for most Mediterranean regions and the participation of the CPMR-IMC is essential in the development of the sector such as in the coordination process of the implementation of the European Union tourism transition. The CPMR Intermediterranean Commission is indeed currently involved in several strategic initiatives in sustainable tourism, notably at the international, European, and Mediterranean level.
instance, in the framework of the new Interreg Euro-MED programme, sustainable tourism is a crucial sector to build the Mediterranean of tomorrow.

George Alexakis mentions the main topics defined by the Agenda and the Task Force on sustainable tourism, including the WINTERMED project focusing on all year-round sustainable tourism in Mediterranean islands through the promotion and implementation of a transnational strategy. He also alludes to the DestiMED PLUS project, which supports the development of an integrated approach for ecotourism, and the socio-economic benefits it brings to local communities with a minimal burden on the environment and climate.

He underlines that the CPMR Intermediterranean Commission and its regions are fully committed to build a more resilient tourism economy based on a stronger coordination of policies at different levels and including all stakeholders. The outcome of today’s exchanges will contribute to the debate and policy making at European level and Mediterranean level for a smarter, greener, and more resilient tourism.

SESSION 1 – ALL-YEAR ROUND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN MARITIME AND COASTAL TERRITORIES

Moderation: Flora Leroy, CPMR-IMC Project and Policy Officer and Michele Colavito, Sustainable Tourism expert and Senior Consultant

The WINTER MED Sustainable Tourism Transnational Year-Round Strategy for Mediterranean Island Destinations

The first session, entitled All-year round sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean Maritime and Coastal territories, is kickstarted by Dr. Nagore Uresandi, CEO at IN2destination, and consultant involved in the WINTER MED project. She points out the transnational logic of the WINTER MED project before introducing the WINTER MED Sustainable Tourism Transnational Year-Round Strategy for Mediterranean Island Destinations. Based on a set of policy guidelines the strategy intends to lessen the pressures on these islands, most of them exacerbated by unsustainable tourism, and bring a shift towards a green, integrated, and innovative tourism that provides long term sustainable growth. Recommendations include channelling more resources and investing in year-round touristic offers to better tap into the cultural and environmental potential of the territory, and thus move away from the overexploitation coastal areas in summer. The Session moves forward with Flora Leroy, CPMR-IMC Project and Policy Officer who presents the WINTER MED Policy Paper. After summarizing the policy framework on which the document is built upon, she details the 9 policy recommendations for the desesonalisation of the territories for the extension of the touristic season included in the document. In her final point Flora Leroy stresses that the CPMR-IMC and its project partners are currently working on disseminating the project’s key outputs to the targeted actors: their commitment to the WINTER MED Memorandum of Understanding is paramount to initiate the capitalisation of results in other territories and to participate in their integration into policies.

The presentations are followed by a capacity building exercise led by, Michele Colavito, consultant for the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). He begins with some introductory remarks about the UfM & CPMR Handbook: Shared methods and tools for relaunching a sustainable tourism strategy. The paths detailed in this Handbook target experts and actors from the political field with the underlying objective of creating new synergies resulting in the adoption of sounder recovery and transition policies. Then, Marino Spilotros, Project and Policy officer at ASSET Puglia Region (Italy), shares a good practice by detailing how its region designed and implemented as of 2016, the first regional strategy
for year-round tourism in Italy called Puglia 365. Involving local stakeholders, working on the calendar of local and regional events, and fully considering local people's wellbeing are 3 main axes that will strengthen Puglia Region's 2030 Strategic Plan. Then, after recalling that a climate, an energy, and a sanitary crisis are currently impacting Mediterranean destinations, Nikola Tsiparas stresses that a sustainable tourism was a necessity for islands. While challenges (i.e., transport, resource supply, tourism income dependency) stem from this transition, moving towards sustainable tourism also comes with sizable opportunities to better tap into the islands’ potential. At this extent, Nikola Tsiparas cites Mediterranean cooperation projects and EU tools as key enablers to catalyse the development of sustainable tourism, but also the blue and green economies.

This first part is concluded by an interactive question-answer session animated by Michele Colavito. It enables regions to gauge their level of progress related to the implementation of the WINTER MED strategy to support the recovery of the tourism sector and its sustainable transition. This interactive session aims at enabling the regions to gauge their level of progress based on a set of 7 questions. The results reveal that some of these actions and policies have already been implemented such as the implementation of Public-Private governance system, the conditional access to recovery subsidies based on sustainability criteria, the promotion of the destination in responsible tourism demand niches, and the elaboration of paying touristic experiences which rely on the destination’s identity. However, two questions on the existence of governance mechanisms to facilitate transnational cooperation and the development of innovation and research programmes receives more balanced answers, pointing out a more restrained adoption of such measures.

SESSION 2 – TOWARDS THE ADOPTION AND SCALE-UP OF A JOINT INTEGRATED AND SUSTAINABLE ECOTOURISM MODEL

Moderation: Nidaa Botmi, CPMR-Islands Commission (IC) Project Officer and Michele Colavito, Sustainable Tourism expert and Senior Consultant

A joint Mediterranean Consortium to strengthen the integration of conservation and tourism policies in the Mediterranean

To open Session II, “Towards the adoption and scale-up of a joint integrated and sustainable tourism model”, Dolores Ordoñez, Chief technical officer at AnySolution, and consultant for DestiMED PLUS project presents to the audience the Terms of Reference of the MEC (Mediterranean Ecotourism Consortium). She firstly addresses how ecotourism can create a balance between the essential conservation of the environment and the various tourism activities, securing the well-being of local populations if managed in a sustainable and responsible manner. Dolores Ordoñez defines the MEC as an “umbrella” of existing regional conservation and tourism departments, with the idea to cover any ecotourism initiative implemented in the Mediterranean and promoting the approach developed in the frames of the DestiMED PLUS project and by the MEET Network. The MEC serves then as a new network for the exchange of good practices and data among Mediterranean tourism stakeholders and monitors policies to accelerate the integration of ecotourism practices in the region. Given that DestiMED PLUS finishes in June 2022, she emphasizes the need to ensure the continuity of the network beyond the project life, hoping for new funding opportunities. Hopefully, the MEC will allow the dissemination of the concept of eco-tourism and become the reference, including all Mediterranean regions and every actor in the ecotourism field.

Strategic policy areas to focus on and influence for ecotourism development and management
**Christoph Schröder**, Project manager and GIS Expert at ETC-UMA, presents then the second DestiMED PLUS deliverable, the Mediterranean Ecotourism vulnerability map. This vulnerability map works as a state of play of the pressures generated by tourism activities in particularly in Mediterranean Protected Areas and feeds evidence-based results that should influence policies proposals and policymaking. He underlines that, to reach the vulnerability score and create the map, they combined the tourism pressure map and the protection layer. The map is now in the process to get in more details and extract characteristics of the regions to create a “typology” of regions. They are as well analyzing how tourism pressure and ecological footprint correlate.

**Pierrick Le Guillou**, Project Technician at AnySolution focuses on the MED Ecotourism Policy Roadmap, identifying the strategic policies and influencing for ecotourism development and management. This steering document is a blueprint for the MEC and aims to be implemented by the Mediterranean Regions. It identifies where and how to influence the regional, national and EU strategies, policies and regulations for ecotourism development and ensures the integration of conservation and tourism policies. To create this roadmap, the methodology was to review the documentation available, notably from the DestiMED PLUS project, categorized the recommendations and defined strategic priorities, Ecotourism Governance, Date Management and Monitoring, and Networking. After presenting these three priorities, he focuses on the importance of collecting data related to ecotourism as information is needed to take initiatives. Pierrick Le Guillou stresses that the document is currently being prepared and that the axis and priorities are being discussed with the different Mediterranean Regions in order to improve the roadmap.

**Second Capacity Building Session Reflection on the co-creation of a policy roadmap for the governance of ecotourism in the Mediterranean**

The meeting moves forward with some political and technical feedback from member Regions. For the Balearic Islands, **Francesc Mateu**, Director of AETIB, recalls the increasing number of tourists (2019: 16 million tourists) and exposed the Balearics situation and the solutions elaborated to remedy the dreadful impacts of mass tourism during the high season in his region (two third of the tourists are coming in the summer months). He stresses his support to sustainable tourism and highlights the biggest achievement, the Tourism sustainable Tax. Soon, a new tourism law on the idea of circularity (Every hotel must install water-saving devices in bathrooms, prohibit single-use amenities and change oil boilers for gas or electric ones to emit 57,600 kilos less CO2 per establishment each year), will pass. It represents a new step forward for the Balearics towards a new model of tourism based on values and not volume and supposed to secure sustainable and responsible economic growth. He hopes that this new positioning of the Balearic Islands on tourism will reach the public and is ready to continue his support to sustainability. **Giuseppe Garofalo**, from ASSET Puglia Region, shares the strategic actions and contributions from Puglia in terms of Ecotourism. He firstly recalls the importance of tourism as his Region depends on it, as it is one of the most attractive seaside Region. He shares then his Region’s interest in Ecotourism and concrete strategic actions putted into place. For instance, Puglia is currently focusing on a "cycling tourism" and created bike itineraries and linked services, generating an economical input and cooperation between private and public actors.

Consisting in an open question session, the second capacity building session, led by **Nidaa Botmi**, project Officer at the CPMR-Islands Commission and Michele Colavito, brings participants to reflect on the documents presented during the session. First, some inputs are provided on the vulnerability map, in particular **Marino Spilotros** nurtures the discussions with riveting comments on how to better evaluate hidden tourism thanks to social media and so improve the quality of data. Questions related to the policy roadmap also triggers comments. More specifically, according to participants, public-private cooperation and consultations are two privileged ways to influence policies at regional level.
The idea of a size market evaluation in demand terms of the Mediterranean is also suggested as an appropriate indicator for data-driven decisions. Last, Marino Spilotros declared that given the rapid transformation taking place its territories, the Adriatic Ionian region would be interested in being studied in the framework of the MEC, recommendations and best practices could be learnt from a case study.

WRAP-UP AND CONCLUSIONS

Elodie Nunes (CPMR-IMC), concludes the meeting by listing the coming events of the CPMR-IMC.

Last, Eleni Hatziyanni, project officer at DG MARE convenes all participants at the event S3 for sustainable blue economy – Brokerage event on coastal and maritime tourism hosted DG MARE Helsingborg (Sweden) on June 15th, 2022.

This Task Force meeting represents a great opportunity for the Intermediterranean Commission, together with the Islands Commission and their respective members to share food for thought that will serve to improve current tools, initiatives, and projects of the Mediterranean Sustainable Tourism Community and to ramp up efforts for a more sustainable and resilient tourism.