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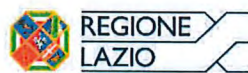
## **WP6 CAPITALISATION**

### **Annex I of the Granada Charter**

**Reflection Paper - Towards a roadmap for the  
setting up of a Mediterranean Network of  
Sustainable Tourism Observatories (NSTO)**

**Project Partner: Conference of Peripheral Maritime  
Regions – Intermediterranean Commission**

This reflection paper has been developed by the IMC-CPMR, with the help of the BEST MED project partners.





## **Project BEST MED – 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

### **DEVELOPING A NETWORK OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM OBSERVATORIES**

#### **REFLECTION PAPER: TOWARDS A ROAD MAP FOR THE SETTING UP OF A MEDITERRANEAN NETWORK OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM OBSERVATORIES (NSTO)**

##### **SUMMARY**

###### INTRODUCTION

1) NSTO OBJECTIVES – Tasks	4
2) WHO IS PART OF IT – Who can participate	5
3) WHO IS IT FOR – Who can benefit from the network's results	6
4) MANAGEMENT PROCESS – How it works	7
5) STRUCTURE – How it is organised	9
6) LONG TERM GOALS	11
7) NEXT STEPS FOR THE BEST MED PROJECT	11

## INTRODUCTION

This document is a working draft in preparation for the "BEST MED Seminar on NSTO development and data management standards", scheduled for 16 December 2021 in Rome, which continues the development of the concept of a Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (NSTO) in the Mediterranean, previously presented during the "technical workshop" held in Rome on 9-10 December 2020.

The in-depth analysis carried out during BEST MED project<sup>1</sup> and various technical seminars<sup>2</sup> examined the existing methodological approaches to the collection and management of tourism data, and also outlined the main results and guidance of previous MED projects and other European and international initiatives that have addressed the issue of data management with the aim of improving its availability, transparency, comparability, interoperability and systemisation for greater support in decision-making.

Based on this experience, a series of structural and instrumental shortcomings are highlighted in the system for collecting and analysing tourism data. Specifically:

- a lack of coordination between the various requirements and the different methods of data collection and analysis;
- different approaches in the use of tools and the reporting of results;
- gaps in the availability of information and in the interoperability of the various existing systems.

In order to develop appropriate policies for the planning and management of sustainable tourism on the basis of "solid" information, it is necessary to apply methodologies that are shared by all parties involved in the collection and analysis of tourism data.

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<sup>1</sup> Deliverable 3.2.1 Proposal for a standard system of Big Data sets available at Med level - <https://best-med.interreg->

<sup>2</sup> Report on Technical Workshop "Data Management for Sustainable Tourism - Moving towards a network of tourism observatories for a better governance in the Mediterranean" - Work Package n 3 Studying

The BEST MED project therefore decided to kick start a path toward a more methodological sharing, in order to facilitate multi-level cooperation between all parties involved in data collection and analysis, and especially to share standards, tools and solutions geared to a common direction. The parties involved are tourism observatories and other public or private bodies (eg employment agencies which collect data on employment in tourism, bodies handling big data etc).

Broad, comprehensive and homogeneous dissemination of information; improving the skills of human resources; equitable sharing of tools, standard procedures, opportunities, technologies and data are in fact essential for the implementation of innovative strategies and initiatives, with the ultimate goal of guiding decision-making processes and moving towards sustainable productivity and development, partly in order to shape, tailor and guide the various decision-making processes in real time.

## 1) NSTO OBJECTIVES - Tasks

The idea of the NSTO brings together the main parties involved in data to share ideas, techniques and tools, and to build multi-level cooperation in order to seek the best solutions and work in a common direction. The objectives of the NSTO are in particular:

- a) Cooperate in the sharing of data management strategies and models relating to sustainable tourism;
- b) Share information and specific tools useful for that purpose along with best practices and develop capacity building actions encouraging the transfer of knowledge in line with sector skills;
- c) Develop joint projects and activities, also in relation to the funding opportunities available at EU, national, regional and local level;
- d) Further develop the existing info hub<sup>3</sup> already integrated in the BEST MED web portal which aims at collecting and systemizing in a dedicated "resource centre" key information, documents, news, events and in general knowledge related to the monitoring and data management in the field of sustainable tourism, to pave the way for the creation of the MED NSTO.
- e) Collect (re-usable) data on sustainable tourism relevant for the Mediterranean NSTO in real time and use it to elaborate new documents, studies or analysis;
- f) Contribute to the goals and activities of UNWTO INSTO and the EU works on data in the field of sustainable tourism (e.g. connect with or power up some specific activities, help collect useful information, give advice, support the implementation of strategies etc.).

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<sup>3</sup> Link to the Info hub <https://best-med.interreg-med.eu/info-hub/introduction/>

## **2) WHO IS PART OF IT - Who can participate**

In addition to partners of the BEST MED Project, the initiative is open to public and private bodies involved with data collection and analysis, not only for improving the way they assess tourism trends for different purposes, but also for developing and boosting deeper analysis and their own tourism strategies (e.g. also using data from telephone cells for more complete analysis).

These bodies undertake to share approaches, methodologies, data and resources on the basis of the network's objectives and tasks (to be further refined in a future workplan), contributing to the widest and most complete collection of tourism data possible. Specifically, for adherence to the NSTO, the observatory / organisation / entity must meet one of the following conditions:

- a) operate in the field of tourism data collection related to Eurostat or other national / regional, public or private statistical bodies;
- b) be an official (sustainable) tourism observatory operating in the Mediterranean basin;
- c) be an observatory / body / organisation operating in the Mediterranean basin that handles and monitors data on sustainable tourism, even if not formally recognised;
- d) be an observatory / body / organisation operating in the Mediterranean basin that handles and monitors data on tourism in general, and is interested in and committed to operating also in the field of sustainable tourism, even if not formally recognised;
- e) be an observatory / organisation participating in the MITOMED+ project or other Interreg MED projects related to sustainable tourism;
- f) be an observatory / organisation involved with the partners of BEST MED Project activities (PLS, Focus Groups, Living Lab...).

Furthermore, results may be shared and exchanged with other "supporting" parties, who can participate directly or indirectly in the activities of the observatory, supporting the achievement of

its objectives via the sharing of good practices or other actions. They can even be entities belonging to other areas and geographical zones outside the Mediterranean.

The participants in the NSTO undertake to share ideas, methodologies and strategies for the collection and common management of data in the field of sustainable tourism, in particular to:

- use data collection methods validated by the NSTO (big data, statistical collection, surveys etc);
- employ data-sharing tools common to all components of the NSTO (platforms, tools etc).

### **3) WHO IS IT FOR - Who can benefit from the network's results**

Initially, the Med NSTO addresses BEST MED partners and the observatories that have joined so far the network promoted by the project, in order to contribute to the planning and development of future proof sustainable tourism policies as well as for a more in-depth analysis and constant monitoring in some local areas.

At a more advanced and structured stage, a number of organisations will be able to make use of the data collected, and their methods of accessing and/or contributing to the statistical “container” and “tool box” that could be created. Such bodies include:

- a) The European Commission: different Directorates (e.g. GROW, MARE, REGIO, CLIMA, ENV) and tools/instruments such as Eurostat and the Virtual Tourism Observatory;
- b) Member states: ministries, agencies (eg the Italian National Tourism Agency and others working in the development of SMEs, innovation, investment, energy efficiency, renewable energy sources, environmental protection and climate etc.), statistics offices;
- c) Regional and local bodies: public entities (or specific directorates inside their bodies), Destination Management Organizations (DMOs / DMCs), etc.;
- d) Public and private entities such as scientific institutions, research centres and universities that deal with data and tourism;



- e) Private entities (enterprises or associations in the tourism sector that can contribute to the activities of the NSTO).

In the future, long-term scenario, the possibility of access also by the interested public, both professional and general, will be considered.

#### **4) MANAGEMENT PROCESS - How it works**

The management system is currently based on the “embryo” created with the “info hub” of the BEST MED platform. The “resource centre” currently takes the form of a virtual web page<sup>4</sup>, integrated in the Interreg MED virtual platform (BEST MED section), and linked to all existing web platforms dealing with tourism (including the UfM Blue Economy platform).

The platform already features:

- A library section which brings together studies, publications and training material, in addition to platforms dealing with the central themes of BEST MED. This section during the last phases of BEST MED could be further powered with more materials and a search engine or a more structured user-friendly layout.
- A regularly updated section of news about relevant activities and events, not limited to that concerning the Interreg MED Community. This includes, for example, information on available training courses, seminars, conferences and any other events of interest coordinated by other key organisations and related to the central themes of BEST MED.
- A simple initial mapping of entities (organisations, observatories etc) interested in being part or following BEST MED activities and contributing to building together the future MED Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories.

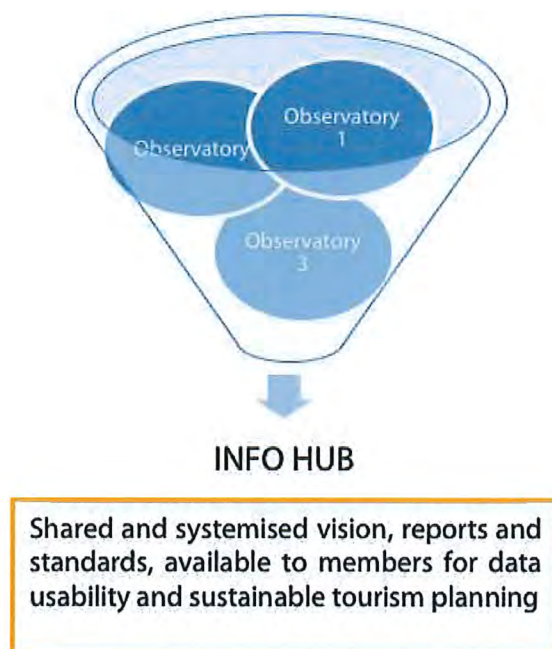
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<sup>4</sup> <https://best-med.interreg-med.eu/info-hub/introduction/>

By following the proposed route, this web page will not only remain active even after the conclusion of the BEST MED project, but also constitute a single hub to allow the sharing of:

- Tourism data management tools, platforms (eg Mitomed+ Data Platform, BEST MED Data Platform etc), best practices, studies and research etc;
- A constantly updated map showing all the participants in the network, distinguished by theme and type, and indicating their websites and contact details in addition to their specialisations in terms of the type of data collected;
- Relevant results of all projects of the MED Programme (such as SMARTMED and the Sustainable Tourism Community), and other relevant EU programmes;
- Strategic vision for sustainable tourism planning.

The info hub should effectively act as an online space for sharing general, technical and sector-based knowledge relating to the monitoring and management of data on sustainable tourism, collecting and systemising pertinent information and facilitating cooperation between experts.



For the future, depending on potential additional funding support and collaboration among partners, the info hub could further evolve transforming the “resource centre” into a more developed “knowledge centre” that could offer the possibility to use meta data and develop maps and graphs, and or to consult maps/analysis made by the Observatory/its partners on specific relevant topics.

## **5) STRUCTURE - How the organization of the Med NSTO can evolve**

With a view to managing the shared info hub beyond the conclusion of the BEST MED Project and on the basis of the new objectives set, the organization model that is proposed seeks to provide for an evolutionary path that from a simple and less formal coordination system can draw the path to become a more structured organisation at multiple levels. Specifically:

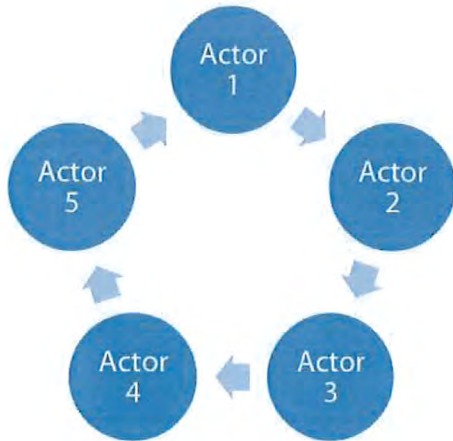
A **first phase**, would include a strengthened coordination among subjects (the observatories that have already manifested interest), sharing procedures and methodologies. The NSTO would continue to work with a non-legally formalized and “horizontal” structure, where an organisation/entity (or a tandem of) would take care of animating the network, exchange and capitalize on existing opportunities. Leadership could be refreshed each year or biannually. Tasks could be distributed according to the will of participating organization and based on a jointly developed road map or work plan. This first phase would rely much on the will of cooperation and own resources of the promoters.

A **second phase**, could entrust and power up the development of the key activities of the MED NSTO (e.g. knowledge center, gathering of data, analysis/studies, networking via events, information etc.) - to a specific consortium that could have it funded by EU and national-regional resources within a new project proposal to be submitted, for instance, to the future Euro-Med Interreg programme (e.g. institutional, horizontal or modular testing/transferring project). This would allow to consolidate dynamics, start with the production of concrete results, reach a critical mass and a more concrete impact on mainstreaming and influence on tourism policies at all levels.

A **third phase**, more mature, could foresee the coordination and management of the NSTO by a legally constituted subject, which could provide for instance an organizational structure including a scientific committee and an annual budget to use for the main activities etc. The source of the

budget should be defined together with the components of the network, it could be a mix between the participation/contribution from the different observatories and EU – National funds obtained in competitive bids.

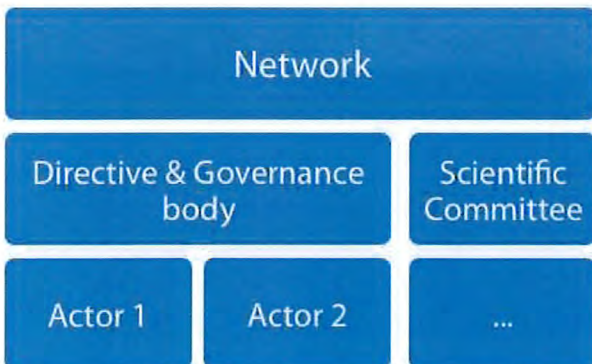
*First phase: Horizontal coordination*



ACTION	
<b>Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- task forces / focus groups</li> <li>- meetings</li> <li>- exchange of experiences</li> <li>- proposals for new planning</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reports on data collection methodologies</li> <li>- New planning reports</li> <li>- Governance (for strategic projects)</li> </ul>

*Third phase: "legally constituted" structure*

The structure could be created from scratch or rely on an existing body, for example an organisation already developed for other projects, including at regional level.



ACTION	
<b>Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>collects data</li> <li>collates the data</li> <li>produces analyses</li> <li>drives the collection of new data</li> <li>distributes the data</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes</b>	Produces new output, including in statistical terms

As an alternative or complementary option (e.g. in phase one-two) the NSTO could be absorbed by or in any case strongly connected to the initiative of UNWTO on INSTO. It could also strongly contribute to the achievement of other flagship initiatives as the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in the Tourism Sector and to the EU future Tourism Pathway.

## **6) LONG TERM GOALS**

In the long term, the NSTO could be able to focus on objectives that are more complex from both strategic and instrumental perspectives, such as:

- a) Define and systemise methodologies and parameters for data collection;
- b) Collect and manage data: statistics, big data, indicators (particularly in the area of sustainability);
- c) Make data available to be used (by all type of relevant public - private users) for the strategic planning of sustainable tourism;
- d) Implement automated tools for data collection and management.

## **7) NEXT STEPS FOR THE BEST MED PROJECT**

The present reflection paper and the main proposals that it includes will be discussed during the BEST MED Seminar on 16/12/2021 and afterwards by the project partners so to be translated in a consolidated road map that would be the basis for the discussion of the last and more political workshop that the project will organize on the topic in March 2022.

The key points of the next deliverable, the "Road Map towards a Med NSTO" could be then included in the forthcoming "Granada Charter" of the project that will translate the information collected in the MED S&C Path Model into clear and simple political messages and will be aimed at European policy design, institutions, Maritime regions with the aim of sustainability, contributing also to the horizontal Interreg MED project on Sustainable Tourism.

The engagement of the promoters of the Charter regarding the development of the NSTO could be included under as a specific point and the more complete "Road Map towards the development of a Med NSTO" can be considered an annex.

Meanwhile the "Info hub" can be further developed as well as specific ideas on how to power up via synergies with key players and EU funds/programmes the setting up of the Med NSTO (e.g. new project proposals).