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# Sustainable Tourism Community

# Tourism transition in the Mediterranean



## June 18-19 2026

## Report

Event hosted by the Centre of Contemporary Culture of **Barcelona**

Organised by Community4Tourism Project on behalf of the Sustainable Tourism Mission



CPMR  
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NECSTour  
European Regions for  
Competitive and Sustainable Tourism



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Mediterranean  
Action Plan  
Barcelona  
Convention





## Tourism transition in the Mediterranean | The MED Sustainable Tourism Convention 2026

The Mediterranean is at a critical crossroad in the transformation of tourism models. Climate change, resource pressure, social tensions and shifting demand patterns are challenging destinations to rethink tourism beyond growth-driven paradigms. At the same time, the region concentrates a unique diversity of natural, cultural and social assets that can support a fair and resilient transition.

On June 18-19, 2026, the Centre of Contemporary Culture of Barcelona (CCCB) hosted the **MED Sustainable Tourism Convention 2026**, with 225 participants from 17 Mediterranean and European countries gathered under the theme “Tourism transition in the Mediterranean”.

The third edition of the Convention featured a two-day programme combining plenary sessions, round tables and parallel sessions focused on climate change, water management, biodiversity, circular economy, destination digitalisation and the role of tourism within the Mediterranean blue economy.

The Convention included strong institutional participation and brought together leading experts from universities, research centres, European networks, development agencies, tourism destinations and the 22 projects – Thematic and Strategic - of the Sustainable Tourism Mission of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme.





## Institutional & Policy opening sessions

The **first day** of the Convention opened with welcoming remarks from **Judit Carrera**, Director of the Centre of Contemporary Culture of Barcelona (CCCB), **Soledad Bravo**, Manager Tourism Department, Barcelona Provincial Council, and **Curzio Cervelli**, Coordinator of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme.

As tourism policy is entering a new phase shaped by the European Green Deal, the digital transition and the growing need for resilience and competitiveness, at the EU and destination levels, new strategic agendas are redefining priorities, governance frameworks and instruments to guide the transformation of the tourism sector. The Openings, therefore included a Policy Session led by **Andreea Staicu**, Acting Head of Tourism Unit at the European Commission EU Transport, who presented emerging policy agendas for tourism, with a particular focus on European strategies and their implications for Mediterranean destinations.

The Opening Session of the Convention on the **second day** also featured institutional and political representatives.

**Ana Herrera**, Councilor of Tourism at Barcelona Provincial Council, and **Cristina Lage**, Tourism General Director at Generalitat de Catalunya, welcomed the audience followed by **Jordi Hereu**, Spanish Minister of Industry and Tourism, who presented the Spanish 2030 Tourism Strategy highlighting that multi-level governance and European coordination are indeed key to building a joint tourism strategy that improves people's lives while preserving the natural and heritage richness of territories and the authenticity of cultures.

### >> Resources

[Curzio Cervelli presentation](#)

[Andreea Staicu presentation](#)

#### Session recordings:

[Opening Session - 1st day](#)

[Policy Opening Session: The new EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy](#)

[Institutional Session - 2nd day](#)

[The Spanish 2030 Tourism Strategy](#)



## Tourism Transition in the Mediterranean | Keynote speech

**Claudio Milano**, researcher at the University of Barcelona, provided a strategic overview of the tourism transition in the Mediterranean. Reflecting on the challenges facing Mediterranean destinations today, from climate change to mounting pressure on local communities, he emphasised the importance of collaborating to develop a more sustainable, resilient and balanced tourism model.

He also emphasised the necessity to build common knowledge, commit to a shared infrastructure, establish indicators across borders and address housing and the demographic crisis, besides being able to connect together all the crises we are facing.

He concluded that if a transition does not redistribute, it is not a transition, but rather a reproduction of inequalities.

### >> Resources

[Claudio Milano presentation](#)

[Session recording](#)

## Quo Vadis Tourism?

Moderated by **Tim Fairhurst**, General Director at ETOA - European tourism association, the session brought together **Alessandra Priante**, President of the Italian Tourism Board and **José Antonio Donaire**, Sustainable Tourism Commissioner of the Municipality of Barcelona and invited a reflection on the future of tourism models and governance in the Mediterranean.

In fact, the challenge itself is not tourism policy; rather, it is ensuring that tourism is considered in all other policy-making processes.

During the session, the critical concept of limits was introduced. Managing a destination involves setting limits. Resources are finite: public space, water and the patience of residents. When tourism grows beyond these limits, the tourism model is damaged and the city loses its appeal to visitors. Limiting growth is a local, social and economic strategy for tourism policy.

### >> Resources

[Session recording](#)



## The role of the Mediterranean cooperation

Moderated by Vincent Ernoux, Coordinator of the Interreg NEXT MED Programme, the session saw the contributions of **Alessandra Sensi**, Head of Sector - Environment, Green and Blue Economy, at Union for the Mediterranean, **Gianni Chianetta**, Chair of Greening the Islands Foundation, **Marcello Scalisi**, Director of UNIMED - Mediterranean Universities Union, and **Flora Leroy**, EU Programmes Expert – Implementation & Monitoring Coordinator, Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions-Intermediterranean Commission (CRPM-IMC).

As we all know, the Mediterranean is one of the world's leading tourist destinations, yet it faces challenges that transcend national borders. Addressing these interconnected issues requires a coordinated regional response. In fact, fragmented responses are no longer enough; cooperation must evolve from isolated projects to coherent, transferable policies. The real competition is global, so cooperating across the Mediterranean on shared culture and challenges provides a strategic advantage rather than posing a risk.

In the cooperation framework, universities, data and education are underused levers that could represent a game-changer in harmonising tourism education across the region. At the same time, data, governance and the social dimension - including youth, women and geopolitics - must be central to future cooperation agendas.

### >> Resources

[Session recording](#)

## The Glasgow Declaration: state-of-the-art

Next November 2026 it will be the 5th Anniversary of the Glasgow Declaration and for sure a moment for reflections rather than celebration.

The session on the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism, moderated by **Adriana Tramullas**, Project Manager at NECSTouR with **Virginia Fernández-Trapa**, Programme Coordinator at UN Tourism, highlighted that while progress has been made, the real challenge lies in turning commitments into action at destination level.

There is still much to do. The three implementation barriers - **technical** (e.g. no standardised emissions methodology; transport and aviation are the hardest to abate, especially for islands), **resource-related** (e.g. staff capacity is stretched or untrained; tourism is not yet integrated into climate finance frameworks) **governance-related** (e.g. coordination across ministries/authorities with different mandates; coordination among horizontal and vertical governance) are structural, not exceptional. The latter remains a significant obstacle, while regenerative approaches and adaptation are gaining importance as the sector looks ahead to COP31.

### >> Resources

[Virginia Fernández-Trapa presentation](#)

[Session recording](#)



## The Thematic Papers and the concrete actions of the Mission's projects

Four Thematic Papers focusing on the circular economy, climate change adaptation, biodiversity and natural resources, and innovation and technology capacities were officially launched and presented during the MED Sustainable Tourism Convention 2026.

The Thematic Papers are the result of work carried out by the 22 Projects of the Sustainable Tourism Mission in collaboration with experts in the relevant fields. Although not policy recommendation documents, the Papers make valuable contributions to future policy papers on topics addressing and interweaving the theme of Sustainable Tourism.

The Thematic Papers are available at the following links:

[Smart and Data-Driven Destination Management for Sustainable Tourism in the Mediterranean](#) presented by **Tanja Armenski**, External expert. Senior Data and Public-Sector Analyst, Evidence-Based Policymaking, Statistical Modelling & Data Governance.

[Supporting Tourism Micro-enterprises and SMEs in their Transition to Circular Economy Practices](#) presented by **David Mora**, Strategic consultant in the tourism sector, partner of Verne Tourism Experts.

[Climate resilience in tourism coastal destinations: solutions from Nature and Cultural Heritage](#) presented by **Marianne Lang**, Consultant & Project Manager-Environment, Sustainable Development & International Cooperation.

[Beyond Projects: Institutionalizing Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism Practices in the Mediterranean](#) presented by **Mark Mansoldo**, Ecostack Innovations consultant.

The presentations of the Thematic Papers were followed by hands-on sessions in which the 22 projects of the Sustainable Tourism Mission, and not only them, had the possibility to present concrete actions, as well as the difficulties they encountered during project implementation or results transfer.

### >> **Session recordings**

[Presentation of the Thematic paper "Climate resilience in coastal tourism destinations: solutions from nature and cultural heritage"](#)

[Presentation of the Thematic paper "Beyond projects: institutionalizing biodiversity and sustainable tourism practices in the Mediterranean"](#)

[Presentation of the Thematic paper "Supporting Tourism Micro-enterprises and SMEs in their transition to circular economy practices"](#)

[Presentation of the Thematic paper "Smart and data-driven destination management for sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean"](#)



## Tourism and climate change; from theory to action

While climate commitments and strategies are increasingly present in tourism policies. Destinations need practical solutions that can be implemented, monitored and adapted over time.

**Véronique Evers**, Programme Officer at Priority Actions Programme/Regional Activity Centre (PAP/RAC), moderated this session with **Izidora Marković Vukadin**, Senior Research Associate at Institute for Tourism Croatia (NaTour4CChange project), **Marianne Martin**, Head of the Projects Unit, AVITEM (COOL NOONS project), and **Josep Rodriguez**, Head of Strategic Projects at Barcelona Provincial Council.

Speakers shared practical experiences and solutions already being implemented across the Mediterranean, and among these it is worth to mention as example, that the project NaTour4CChange is equipping destinations with climate risk assessments, planning toolkits and nature-based solutions, while the project COOL NOONS is addressing urban heat through cool paths, shading structures and citizen participation in five Mediterranean cities. Instead, the Barcelona Provincial Council, a signatory of the Glasgow Declaration, is developing its own climate action plan as both a commitment and a learning process.

### >> Resources

[COOL NOONS presentation](#)

[Session recording](#)

## Beyond sustainability: regeneration and biodiversity

**Arnau Bosch**, Destinations Sustainable Tourism expert, D'Aleph conversed with **Blanca Cros**, Director of Sustainability and Tourism Transformation, Catalan Tourist Board (Regenera4MED project), **Silvia Maria Carolo**, Consultant & Researcher, Veneto Region (MED4REGEN project), **Rafael Fernández Gómez**, Andalusian Agency for Agricultural and Fisheries Management (MED GIAHS project) and **Beatrice Briguglio**, Councilor of Tourism Taormina Municipality (INSPIRE project) on the concept of regenerative tourism and its practical implications for Mediterranean destinations.

Regeneration, in fact, builds on sustainability, it does not replace it. It demands a real cultural shift, with bottom-up governance bringing communities, policymakers and businesses to the same table.

In the same discussion, it was mentioned how biodiversity and agricultural heritage carry value beyond the product itself, and how tourists should become active participants in a place rather than passive consumers of it.

### >> Resources

[Session recording](#)



## Heritage and diversified tourism products

**Julie Wilson**, Dean for Research; Associate Professor, Faculty of Economics & Business, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya moderated a discussion among **Alvaro Dias**, Associate professor of the ISCTE University Institute of Lisbon (SMITour project), **Benedetta Diamanti**, Director of the European Route of Ceramics (MED-Routes project), **Pablo Morales**, Coordinator for international projects, Chamber of Commerce of Seville (MedDiet Go project) and **Helena Cvenkel**, Director for research and development, BSC Kranj Regional development agency of Gorenjska-Slovenia (MedSkyTour project) about the Mediterranean's cultural and natural heritage and the related products.

The discussion focused on how diversified products can contribute to more balanced, place-based and resilient forms of tourism, rather than viewing diversification simply as the creation of new products or the promotion of less visited places.

In fact, destinations swing between overtourism in popular areas and undertourism everywhere else. Diversification is the answer to both these issues. Technology should enhance, and not replace, authentic experiences.

### >> Resources

[MED-Routes presentation](#)

[Session recording](#)

## Water Scarcity and tourism

**Fernando Nardi**, Professor of Hydrology and Hydraulic Engineering, University of Rome Tor Vergata conversed with **Margherita Maniscalco**, Municipality of Pantelleria (WATERISE project), **Julia Saiz Pardo**, Responsible for European Projects, El Legado andalusí Andalusian Public Foundation (AQUAMAN project) and **Miquel Rovira**, Sustainability Area Director and Member of the Steering Committee at Eurecat – Technology Centre of Catalonia around the topic of water scarcity as it is one of the most critical and structural challenges facing Mediterranean destinations, intensified by climate change and seasonal tourism pressure.

The focus was mostly on islands and coastal areas as ideal testing grounds — where ancient water heritage, modern technology, behavioural awareness and policy converge. In those hotspots there is a core tension between the tourism dependence and the water sustainability. To face these difficulties, the WATERISE project constructed wetlands for wastewater, rainwater harvesting (incl. green roofs), atmospheric water generation via an ecological "warka tower", while AQUAMAN project worked on a catalogue of transferable Nature Based Solutions, as well as restoring old cisterns and lake restoration.

The session addressed the nexus between water management and tourism, reducing consumption, improving efficiency, strengthening resilience and shaping next-generation water governance.

### >> Resources

[Session recording](#)



## Circular Economy Transition

The tourism sector is a major consumer of resources and generator of waste, making the transition to circular economy models a strategic priority. This transition is particularly challenging for SMEs and micro-enterprises, which dominate the tourism ecosystem. Moderated by **Pau Pitarch**, Tourism and sustainable development expert, cofounder partner of PAX Tourism Advisors, this session saw the contributions of **Alessandro Miraglia**, Team Leader, Networking, Partnership & Communication Facility, MedWaves (Loop Zone project), **Guido Capanna Piscè**, Professor, University of Urbino, Sustainable Tourism and Experience Design Expert and **Gian Andrea Garancini**, 3win Action Secretary General (MAST project), **Julia Bonello**, Energy and Water Agency (EWA) from Malta (RECIRCLE MED project) and **Boris Golob**, CEO, STEP RI Science and Technology Park of the University of Rijeka (GreenSET project).

The panelists agreed that circularity tools were not built for SMEs, and that is a huge and real barrier. To make circularity work, the mindset has to shift from cost to investment and competitiveness.

### >> Resources

[Loop Zone presentation](#)

[MAST presentation](#)

[RECIRCLE MED presentation](#)

[GreenSET presentation](#)

[Session recording](#)

## Smart and Data-Driven Destination Management

Managing tourism flows has become a key concern for Mediterranean destinations facing congestion, overtourism and uneven spatial and temporal distribution of visitors. In this context, data and digital tools are increasingly essential to support more informed decision-making, adaptive management and evidence-based policies.

**Sandra Navarro**, Associate Lecturer, University of Alicante, Destination Management and Planning Consultant conversed with **Jordi Garreta**, Head of Tourism Department, Municipality of Terrassa (LIBECCIO project), **Enrico Collini**, Research fellow at the Department of Information Engineering (DINFO) at the University of Florence and a member of the DISIT Lab (TOURISMO project), **Nicola Camatti**, Applied Economics professor of University Ca' Foscari Venice (TO CARE MED project) and **Ioannis Mardikis**, Environmental Sustainability Specialist Department of Technical Cooperation of EPLO (HERIT ADAPT project) on how data-driven approaches and smart tourism tools are being applied in practice by public authorities, researchers and project initiatives to address these challenges.



What emerged was that interoperability is essential, and that technology must be integrated into governance, not bolted on. Another important aspect is that data can support more balanced, resilient tourism, but only with policy support, investment and real data-sharing frameworks behind it

[>> Resources](#)

[Session recording](#)

## Tourism as the leading sector of the Blue Economy

Tourism is deeply interconnected with the blue economy in the Mediterranean, particularly in coastal and maritime areas. While tourism can generate significant economic benefits, it also poses risks to marine ecosystems and coastal communities. **Marta Raspall**, Director of Institutional Relations at beon. Worldwide moderated a discussion among **Denis Grasso**, Project Manager, Institute for Transport and Logistics Foundation (PortCREW project), **Michele Cera**, Puglia Region, Responsible ETC projects for Tourism and Culture (ECO-SEAROUTES project) and **Lucia Prieto**, Mediterranean and Ecosystems Programme Assistant, IUCN Med to examine the role of tourism within the blue economy framework, focusing on sustainable coastal and maritime tourism practices. During the session, were presented initiatives that promote ecosystem protection, innovation and synergies between tourism and other blue economy sectors.

A common theme emerged: the need for governance that encourages public and private actors to work together, and a shift in focus from counting tourists to valuing the type of tourism they bring.

[>> Resources](#)

[Session recording](#)



## The Mediterranean Multi-Programme Mechanism

The MED Sustainable Tourism Convention offered a space where the Mediterranean Multi-Programme Mechanism and its flagship initiative, the Mediterranean Peer Learning Visits were further presented.

The session, facilitated by **Karina Behar**, European Projects Officer, Barcelona Provincial Council – Tourism Department, saw the contribution of **Pascale Faveau**, Project Officer Interreg MED Joint Secretariat who introduced the Mediterranean Multi-Programme Mechanism (MMM) and Mediterranean Peer Learning Visits (MPLV).

The session continued with the presentation of projects from the Mediterranean Multi-Programme Mechanism: MedBEESinessHubs & PLANBEE, ADRIJOROUTES, ADRINCLUSIVE and ARCHAEODIGIT.

More information about the [MMM Call is available here](#) and on MPLV is available [here](#).

### >> Resources

[Pascale Faveau presentation](#)

[MedBEESinessHubs & PLANBEE presentation](#)

[ADRINCLUSIVE presentation](#)

[ARCHAEODIGIT presentation](#)

[Session recording](#)

## Closing

The MED Sustainable Tourism Convention closed with a warm thank you from **Josep Rodriguez** and **Georgina Calvo**, from the Barcelona Provincial Council who also provided a quick update on the next appointments.

Looking forward to the next (and fourth) edition of the MED Sustainable Tourism Convention in 2029

### >> Resources

[Session recording](#)

### More information

The MED Sustainable Tourism Convention page is available at [this link](#)

[Photo gallery](#)

[MED Sustainable Tourism Convention 2026 Youtube Playlist](#)



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