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**Sustainable
tourism**



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“Tourism transition in the Mediterranean”

Thematic Paper of the MED Cluster on Climate Change Adaptation

Climate resilience in coastal tourism destinations:
solutions from Nature and Cultural Heritage



NECSTour
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Mediterranean
Action Plan
Barcelona
Convention



A project labelled by the UfM



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Why climate resilience matters for Mediterranean tourism destinations

- Tourism is a major source of income and employment
- Tourism is concentrated in coastal and island destinations, particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts
- Natural ecosystems and cultural heritage are key tourism assets

The Mediterranean is simultaneously:

- **Climate hotspot:** warming around 20% faster than the global average
- **Tourism hotspot:** world's leading tourism destination
- **Biodiversity hotspot:** exceptional but vulnerable ecosystems

Climate resilience is emerging as a strategic priority across Mediterranean coastal and island destinations

Why climate resilience matters for Mediterranean tourism destinations

Peak tourism periods increasingly coincide with periods of highest environmental stress.

Climate change pressures (examples)
Heatwaves
Water scarcity
Coastal erosion
Extreme weather events



Tourism system pressures (examples)
Strong seasonality
Coastal concentration
Pressure on resources
Pressure on natural/cultural sites

→ Increasing vulnerability of Mediterranean coastal destinations

Key challenges for Mediterranean coastal destinations

Natural ecosystems and cultural heritage: key assets under pressure

Main drivers

- Heatwaves and rising temperatures
- Sea-level rise and coastal erosion
- Growing tourism pressure

Consequences

- 🌿 Ecosystem degradation
 - Loss of essential habitats and ecosystem services
 - Mass mortality events
 - Spread of invasive species and algal blooms
- 🏛️ Heritage degradation
 - Structural deterioration
 - Restricted access
 - Higher conservation costs

Key figures

- Summer max temp could rise by up to +7°C by 2100
- Sea level could rise by 37-90 cm by 2100
- 37 UNESCO coastal sites already at risk from flooding and 42 from erosion



Key challenges for Mediterranean coastal destinations

Tourism models facing structural constraints

Traditional tourism model

- Strong seasonality
- Coastal concentration
- Continued growth in visitor numbers

Consequences

- Tourism demand peaks when water availability is lowest
- Heatwaves reduce visitor comfort and outdoor activities
- Climate impacts increasingly affect destination attractiveness and reputation

Key information

- Peak summer attractiveness projected to decline significantly by mid-century
- Potential shift of tourism demand towards higher-latitude destinations
- Many destinations remain poorly equipped to support year-round tourism

A growing mismatch between tourism models, resource availability and climate realities!



Key challenges for Mediterranean coastal destinations

Governance and implementation challenges - Why is action difficult?

Fragmented governance

- Tourism, climate adaptation, water, biodiversity and cultural heritage often managed separately
- Responsibilities distributed across multiple sectors and administrative levels
- Limited coordination hinders integrated responses

Limited implementation capacity

- Insufficient funding
- Limited technical capacity
- Gaps in data and tools

From planning to action

- Sustaining stakeholder engagement over time
- Bridging knowledge gaps to make complex concepts such as climate resilience accessible and actionable
- Ensuring long-term impact beyond project funding periods



Opportunities for climate-resilient coastal tourism

Climate resilience should be seen not only as a response to risks, but as an opportunity to rethink tourism systems.

Nature-based solutions	Cultural heritage-based solutions
Reduce climate risks	Diversify tourism experiences across seasons and territories
Restore ecosystem functions	Mobilise traditional knowledge
Improve water regulation	Improve visitor comfort and accessibility
Reduce heat stress and erosion	Reduce pressure on coastal hotspots
Enhance destination attractiveness	Strengthen territorial identity

Climate resilience can act as a driver of innovation, enhancing destination attractiveness and supporting more sustainable local economies.

The solutions developed by the MED Cluster on Climate Adaptation

PROJECT	CATEGORY	SOLUTION	MAIN FOCUS
COOL NOONS	Operational urban solution	Cools Paths - Urban cooling routes	Heat adaptation, NbS
HERIT ADAPT	Methodology / governance model	HERIT-ADAPT Sustainable Tourism Model	Cultural heritage
NaTour4CChange	Toolkit	Climate Action Planning Toolkit	Planning & governance, NbS
AQUAMAN	Governance framework	Water Scarcity Living Labs	Water resilience
Regenera4MED	Governance framework	Integrated Governance Model	Regenerative tourism
MED4REGEN	Ongoing development		Regenerative tourism
WATERISE	Ongoing development		Water resilience

These projects provide transferable solutions that can inspire climate resilience action across Mediterranean destinations.



Key messages from the MED Cluster on Climate Adaptation



Building climate-resilient Mediterranean destinations requires:

- Participatory governance
- Integrated approaches
- Nature and cultural heritage-based solutions
- Scaling up
- Strategic foresight

Climate resilience is becoming a condition for the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of Mediterranean destinations.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION



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Contacts:

- Marianne Lang - consultant - mariannelang.pro@gmail.com
- Eloise Leguérinel - Plan Bleu - eleguerinel@planbleu.org
- Adriana Tramullas - NECSTouR - adriana.tramullas@necstour.eu

