URBAN AGENDA FOR THE EU

Sustainable Tourism Partnership

Draft Action Plan

April 2024

Disclaimer:

*** The Pact of Amsterdam states that the Action Plan 'can be regarded as non-binding'. Therefore, the actions presented in this Action Plan are not compulsory.***
(chapter 4 clause 19.)

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Table of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Name in English
AH	Affordable housing
CCI	Cross-cutting issues
CF	Cohesion Fund
CLLD	Community-led local development
CoR	Committee of the Regions
COSME	EU's programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DG	European Commission's Directorate General
DG CLIMA	European Commission's Directorate General for Climate
DG COMP	Directorate-General for Competition
DG ECFIN	Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs
DG EMPL	Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion
DG ENER	European Commission's Directorate General for Energy
DG ENVI	European Commission's Directorate General for Environment
DG EPL	European Commission's Directorate General for Employment
DG HOME	Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs.
DG REGIO	European Commission's Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy
DGUM	Directors-General Meeting on Urban Matters
DMMO	Destination Management & Marketing Organization
DSJC	Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition
EEA	European Economic Area
EIB	European Investment Bank
EIF	European Investment Fund
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund

ESF+	European Social Fund plus
ESPON	European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion
FUA	Functional Urban Area
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
HE	Housing Europe
INTERREG	European Regional Development Fund – European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) strand
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investments
JRC	European Commission's Joint Research Centre
PoA	Pact of Amsterdam
RFSC	Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities
RIS	Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation
ROP	Regional Operational Programme
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and Medium sized Enterprises
TG	Task Group
UA	Urban Agenda
UAETP	Urban Agenda Energy Transition Partnership
UDG	Urban Development Group
UDN	EU Urban Development Network
UN	United Nations
WG	Working Group

Definitions

An Action Plan is a document that (1) lists the specific actions that need to be taken, as well as (2) the relationships between these actions in order to achieve predefined goals in an integrated way. How the actions complement and support each other to create synergy is an important part of the Action Plan.

General Definitions

Actions should address a real need, have real and visible impact and concern a larger number of Member States and cities. Actions should be new: no reiterated elements which have already been done or which would be done anyway. Actions should be ready to be implemented: clear, detailed and feasible; a study or a working group or a network is not considered an action.

Deadline refers to the moment where the action should take place in order to be meaningful. A deadline refers to a specific day and time.

Recommendations are meant to suggest good policies, good governance or good practices examples which could be used for inspiration. For instance, these can be projects that have already been implemented and that are considered successful. The aim of such recommendations is to encourage their mainstreaming (implementation at a wider scale) and transfer (implementation across more Member States and cities).

Targeted stakeholders/governance level is meant as the type of stakeholders or the level of governance (EU/ national/ local) to whom the action is addressed, and where the results and outcomes of an action should be implemented and used. To describe why a stakeholder/governance level should be involved means that the partnership evaluated the action and reached the conclusion that an action fits the purpose.

Action Leader is member of the UAEU Thematic Partnership who accepted to take the leading role in a certain group of members (of the Thematic Partnership) and guide them in the process of defining, drafting, developing and in the end implementing a specific action of this Action Plan.

Timeline means a graphical representation of a period of time, on which important events are marked.

Definitions specific for the topic of the partnership

Sustainable Tourism is, following the UNWTO definition," tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities". (https://www.unwto.org/EU-guidebook-on-sustainable-tourism-for-development)

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objectives of the Partnership

The overarching goal of the Sustainable Tourism Partnership is to advocate for sustainable tourism practices by raising awareness and educating stakeholders, citizens, and policymakers about both its benefits and challenges. It aims to capitalize on the economic, social, and environmental opportunities presented by sustainable tourism to foster a balanced and resilient recovery, promote inclusivity, and drive innovation. Central to this objective is addressing the unique challenges associated with tourism in urban areas, recognizing its significance in fostering sustainable socioeconomic territorial development within urban environments.

Furthermore, the partnership seeks to identify and tackle urban issues by fostering collaboration among Member States, cities, the European Commission, and other stakeholders. By establishing a framework for dialogue, the partnership aims to develop effective policy solutions that address the specific needs of urban areas, as highlighted in the Pact of Amsterdam (2016).

The partnership's approach is guided by a functional interpretation of sustainable tourism, emphasizing a collaborative process of co-creation and co-implementation as outlined in the Transition Pathway for Tourism. This entails not only developing strategies but also committing to their full implementation to the best of the partnership's abilities. Recognizing the pivotal role of tourism in urban policy, the partnership emphasizes the importance of tailored strategies for sustainable urban tourism that consider local characteristics and needs.

Given the complexity of urban tourism issues, a multi-level governance approach is essential, involving stakeholders at various scales. On a broader scale, there is a clear need for reinforcing the joint vision and the EU multilevel and multi-stakeholder cooperation framework on sustainable tourism that is the Transition Pathway for Tourism and the European Tourism Agenda 2030, that considers urban stakeholder as equal partners. In alignment with the European Commission's work on Better Regulation and the principles outlined in the Pact of Amsterdam, the partnership has developed an Action Plan aimed at facilitating the implementation of existing EU initiatives in cities and enabling them to advocate for their needs at the EU level. Key focuses of the Action Plan include streamlining access to EU funding, promoting combined financing from EU funds (Better Funding), enhancing the knowledge base on urban issues, and facilitating the exchange of best practices (Better Knowledge). Through these initiatives, the partnership aims to support cities in implementing sustainable tourism practices and driving positive change at both local and EU levels.

1.2 Governance of the Partnership

1.2.1   Coordinator(-s) of the Partnership

Municipality of Genova (IT)
Municipality of Galati (RO)

1.2.2   Members of the Partnership

The Sustainable Tourism Partnership comprises 29 Members:

Cities (Urban Authorities):
- Municipality of Genoa (IT) **- Co-Coordinator**
- Municipality of Galati (RO) **- Co-Coordinator**
- City of Porvoo (FI)
- City of Venice (IT)
- City of Šibenik (HR)
- City of Zadar (HR) - **Action Leader**
- Municipality of Heraklion (EL) - **Action Leader**
- Municipality of Larissa (EL)
- Narva City Government, Department for City Development and Economy (EE)

Regions:
- Andalusia Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport (ES)
- Comunidade Intermunicipal da Região de Coimbra - CIMRC (PT)
- Rhine-Neckar Region Association (DE) - **Action Leader**

National Authorities:
- Ministry of Economics and Communication of Estonia (EE)

European/National City Umbrella-Organisations:
- Eurocities (BE) - **Action Leader**
- ICLEI European Secretariat (DE)

European Institutions:
- European Commission Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO)
- European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, social affairs and inclusion (DG EMPL)
- European Commission Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW)
- European Commission Directorate-General for Climate Action (DG CLIMA)
- European Commission Secretariat-General, European Commission Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (MARE)
- European Commission DG Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (EAC)
- European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC)

Other Stakeholders:
- Association for the Promotion of Tourism in Oradea and the Region (Visit Oradea)-APTOR (RO)
- Diputació de Barcelona (Barcelona Provincial Council) (ES) - **Action Leader**

- Fundació Visit València (ES)
- Ljubljana Tourism (SI)
- Mirabilia Network (IT)
- Visit.Brussels (BE)

1.2.3 Working method, process and timeline of the Partnership in defining the Action Plan

To improve the efficiency of the partnership's efforts, especially given the considerable number of partners involved, coordinators proposed the formation of specialized working groups focused on various aspects of Sustainable Tourism. These working groups delved into the comprehensive concept of sustainable tourism, exploring it through the lenses of three primary themes: Environment, Development, and Unbalanced Growth. Within these themes, a range of pertinent issues reflecting the current policy landscape, as identified by the EAA, were scrutinized.

The selection of topics for these working groups was a collaborative process involving the partnership members. Through an online survey and subsequent discussions during meetings, topics were chosen to cover a broad spectrum of sustainable tourism issues relevant to urban policies. During the inaugural face-to-face meeting held in Turin on March 15th, 2023, the outcomes of the survey were thoroughly deliberated and validated by all members.

To streamline the focus and organization of discussions, the topics were further refined and categorized, leading to the establishment of the working groups. Each working group was assigned specific topics to address, ensuring a comprehensive examination of sustainable tourism issues within urban contexts.

The 4 Working Groups of the partnership are divided as follow:

Environment:
1. Diputacio de Barcelona (ES)
2. Municipality of Heraklion (EL)
3. Ministry of Economics and Communication of Estonia (EE)
4. Andalusia Ministry of Tourism (ES)
5. Eurocities (BE)
6. European Commission Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW)
7. Municipality of Larissa (EL)
8. ICLEI European Secretariat (DE)
9. Fundació Visit València (ES)
10. visit.brussels (BE)

Development:
- WG1:
  1. Rhine-Neckar Region Association (DE)
  2. Municipality of Galati (RO)
  3. City of Venice (IT)

4. Municipality of Genoa (IT)
5. CIMRC (PT)
6. Eurocities (BE)
7. City of Poorvo (FI)
8. European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC)
9. European Commission DG Directorate - General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (EAC)
10. Association for the promotion of tourism in Oradea and the region (RO)
11. Mirabilia Network (IT)

- WG2:
    1. City of Zadar (HR)

    2. European Commission Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO)
    3. Municipality of Genoa (IT)
    4. Rhine-Neckar Region Association (DE)
    5. Association for the Promotion of Tourism in Oradea and the Region (Visit Oradea)-APTOR (RO)
    6. Eurocities (BE)
    7. Municipality of Larissa (EL)
    8. Narva City Government, Department for City Development and Economy (EE)

Unbalanced Growth:
    1. Eurocities (BE)
    2. City of Zadar (HR)
    3. City of Šibenik (HR)
    4. Andalusia Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport (ES)
    5. City of Venice (IT)
    6. Diputacio de Barcelona (ES)
    7. Ljubljana Tourism (SI)
    8. Fundació Visit València (ES)

The Partnership holds regular monthly meetings for internal coordination and decision making. It has organised 11 Partnership Meetings so far, both digital and in-person, as indicated in the following list:

1st Partnership Meeting - 15.12.2022 - online
2nd Partnership Meeting - 16.02.2023 - online
3rd Partnership Meeting - 15.03.2023 - in person (Cities Forum, Turin, Italy)
4th Partnership Meeting - 12.04.2023 - online
5th Partnership Meeting - 03.05.2023 - online
6th Partnership Meeting - 12.06.2023 - online
7th Partnership Meeting - 17 & 18.10.2023 - in person (Seville, Spain)
8th Partnership Meeting - 28.11.2023 - online
9th Partnership Meeting - 23.01.2024 - online
10th Partnership Meeting - 13 & 14.03.2024 - in person (Šibenik & Zadar, Croatia)

In the end of March, an online CALM meeting was organised to learn from the experience of other partnerships.

1.1.4 Consultations carried out during the development of the Action Plan

There has not been any public consultation to this moment. The Draft Action Plan will be submitted for consultation and further feedback in Q2/Q4 of 2024.

Nevertheless, during the development of the Actions, the Partnership took part in the online CALM, together with the representatives of the Greening Cities Partnership, organized on the 26th of March 2024, where members of more experienced Partnerships attended (Culture and Cultural Heritage, Public Procurement and Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees). After being presented the most developed Actions, they offered feedback and answered to key questions regarding the development of the Action Plan:, such as the relevance of the actions, indicators to be considered to ensure the consistency of the Action Plan, complementarities or overlapping with the Actions developed by other Partnerships, the methodology employed in defining complementarities between the Actions, recommendations for successful development and implementation of the Action Plan.

The recommendations received focused on the visibility of the actions, engagement of all members of the Partnership, impact on specific target groups, as well as on political level and careful and feasible planning of the implementation phase.

1.3 Background information

1.3.1 Background information used in the development of the Action Plan

The Sustainable Tourism Partnership contributes to implementing the EU Transition Pathway for Tourism and coordinates with other partnerships to ensure synergy and prevent redundancy. Aligned with EU strategic priorities in the field, particularly the post-pandemic recovery and the updated EU Industrial Strategy emphasizing green and digital transitions, the ST Partnership collaborates with stakeholders at all governance levels and Member States to contribute to and collaborate in the implementation of the transition pathway for the tourism ecosystem.

Urban tourism's contribution to European Green Deal strategies and climate targets underscores the significance of a competitive and holistic sustainability approach, supported by EU funding programs, policy guidelines, and legislation such as the New European Urban Mobility Framework, EU Cohesion Policy and "Short-term Rentals" Regulation.

Concerning the congestion of tourism flows in cities, a wide variety of specific features and tools have been discussed worldwide during the past years (UNWTO 2019). In Europe, the study "Unbalanced tourism growth at destination level. Root causes, impacts, existing solutions and good practices: final report" has been published in 2022. Many of these issues show also a strong link with the action and n.07 of the UA Partnership on Culture and Cultural Heritage.

The Report on the Transition Pathway for Tourism also calls for attention on the relationship between sustainable urban tourism and the renovation of the physical assets, namely of tourism-related buildings: in this perspective, the New European Bauhaus initiative seems relevant.

Significant tools are already available or on the way, in terms the appropriate use of data: the most significant one is the EU Tourism Dashboard, developed by the JRC, to provide visualisations of tourism-relevant indicators relating to policy objectives.

The EC has also supported a number of initiatives aimed at showcasing and supporting local practices in sustainable tourism, such as:

- EDEN – "European Destinations of Excellence"
- the European Capital of Smart Tourism
- the ECTN Cultural Tourism award.

Under the European Urban Initiative, sustainable tourism was one of the three topics of the second call for proposals for innovative actions1, with an overall indicative budget for the call of EUR 120 million from the ERDF. The selected projects that will focus on the topic will provide an additional source of knowledge and experience for the implementation of this Action Plan.

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[1] https://www.urban-initiative.eu/calls-proposals/second-call-proposals-innovative-actions
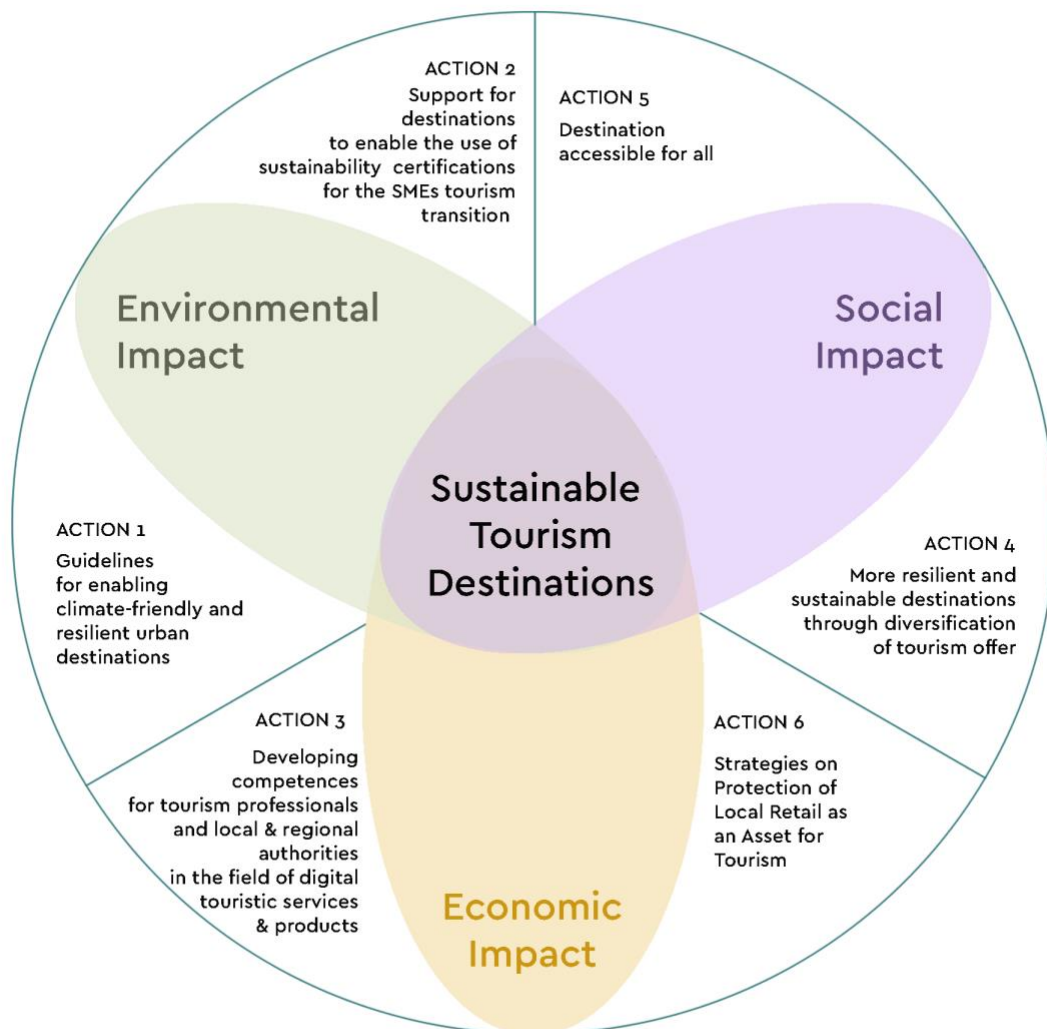
2 ACTIONS

Overview table of actions

Nº	Title	Short Description
1	Guidelines for enabling climate-friendly and resilient urban destinations	The action is intended to generate guidelines focused on how urban destinations should prepare climate action plans, communicate them, promote climate-friendly offer, attract climate-friendly demand and promote better tourists' behaviour in the destinations.
2	Support for destinations to enable the use of sustainability certifications for the SMEs tourism transition	This action has the aim of generating good practices and case studies for destinations in order to promote the use of Certifications for SMEs on tourism transition in line with the Green Claim legislation. This will contribute mainly towards better knowledge, supporting also regulation and funding.
3	Developing competences for tourism professionals and local & regional authorities in the field of digital touristic services & products	This action fosters key competences for tourism professionals, maximizing the impact and added value of digital tools. In line with the EU UA, we strive for a robust and cohesive European standard for competences in the field of sustainable tourism through digital innovations.
4	More resilient and sustainable destinations through diversification of tourism offer	This action will contribute to existing efforts to gather knowledge on challenges, opportunities, measurement and lessons learned, including through gathering and analysing good practices. It will seek to understand the available funding possibilities and recommend how best to utilise such opportunities and how the funding structure could be amended to more effectively support diversification. The recommendations on legal and financial incentives contributing to diversification of the tourism offer can offer an opportunity to suggest improving relevant regulations at many governance levels.
5	Destinations accessible for all	The action will explore opportunities to contribute mainly to the Better Knowledge pillar, seeking to acquire information on accessibility-related challenges and practices in urban destinations. However, given recent relevant legislative developments, the outcomes of the present action can contribute to the better implementation on EU-level accessibility-related legislation.

| 6 | Strategies on Protection of Local Retail as an Asset for Tourism | The action primarily seeks to contribute to the pillar of Better Knowledge. The action will contribute to existing efforts to gather knowledge on challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned, based on gathering and analysing of good practices. It will serve for evidence-based urban policymaking (informing regulations from local to EU levels and raising awareness among tourists), as well as for providing tailor-made solutions to major challenges. |

Integration

2.1 Action N° 01 – Guidelines for enabling climate-friendly and resilient urban destinations

Urban destinations should face the consequences of climate emergency, in terms of mitigation and adaptation. The Glasgow Declaration, adopted in 2021, paves the way to develop action plans for climate change in tourism aligned with measurement, decarbonisation, regeneration, collaboration and financing.

Targeted stakeholders/governance level: Local & regional authorities, DMOs, businesses

Deadline: 31/12/2025
Intermediate Deadline 1: 31/01/2025 – Diagnosis
Intermediate Deadline 2: 31/05/2025 – Guidelines
Intermediate Deadline 3: 31/12/2025 - Dissemination

2.1.1 Which of the three pillars is this action contributing to?

Better knowledge

Tourism sector, and urban destinations in particular, should tackle the consequences of climate emergency and develop climate-friendly value chains. However, it is still missing a pool of knowledge and capacity building to understand how to orientate the future action in this concern.

The action is intended to generate guidelines focused on how urban destinations should prepare climate action plans, communicate them, promote climate-friendly offer, attract climate-friendly demand and promote better tourists' behaviour in the destinations.

2.1.2 What is the specific problem?

The partnership has identified as main problems the following:

Lack of governance mechanisms to address the impact of climate change within the destinations that includes public and private stakeholders, residents as well as visitors.

• Need to empower DMOs to become real managers of the destination.

Action 1

- Missing involvement of local communities, including residents in multi-level governance schemes and need to reinforce tourism policies that contribute to the well-being of local communities.

- Lack of skills and knowledge on how to prepare and implement climate action plans at destination level.

- Insufficient innovation projects on circular and climate friendly tourism, management of water resources in tourist destinations or sustainable mobility in particular to areas with poor public transportation.

- Need to develop destination resilience plans against the impacts of climate emergency.

- Need to increase the uptake and visibility of sustainability tools, as well as consumers' demand and behaviour on sustainable options.

- Lack of knowledge of tools to recognize the value of culture and cultural heritage in promoting good sustainable and circular practices in defining tourism offers.

- Lack of capacity-building programmes, technical and financial assistance to support green transition for tourism stakeholders, including SMEs.

The action also affects some aspects related to better regulation and funding:

- Lack of knowledge on how to prioritize sustainable (tourism) service providers in public sector procurement.
- Need to develop regulations and guidelines for tourism SMEs in fields of diminishing food waste and increasing circularity of the services.
- Need to promote incentives to sustainable mobility.
- Lack of funding lines to support the implementation of climate action plans.

2.1.3 How do existing EU policies/legislations/ instruments contribute?

Urban destinations should face the consequences of climate emergency, in terms of mitigation and adaptation. The reference framework is the Glasgow Declaration, adopted in the COP-26 in Glasgow in November 2021. The Declaration is an urgent call for all stakeholders to commit to develop action plans for climate change in tourism aligned with the proposed pathways of measurement, decarbonisation, regeneration, collaboration and financing.

Moreover, EU tourism stakeholders are implementing both climate mitigation and adaptation measures, jointly agreed under the Transition Pathway for Tourism and European Agenda for Tourism 2030. As the stock-taking report of the Transition Pathway states, destinations and services are increasingly faced with the need to adapt the tourism

offer to changing climate conditions and to build mechanisms for crisis preparedness and management.

To support these efforts, the European Commission has published key reports on estimating and addressing the impact of climate change on tourism: Regional impact of climate change on European tourism demand, Strengthening cultural heritage resilience for climate change, and Compendium of good practices and solutions of climate change adaptation in the Outermost Regions of the EU. The action is also in line with the objectives of the project 'Sustainable EU Tourism – Shaping the Tourism of Tomorrow' launched in 2023, which will support DMOs in becoming more sustainable and resilient. The study on crisis management and governance in tourism launched in 2023 will also address crisis preparedness for extreme weather events. The Commission will publish in the spring 2024 a Communication on managing climate risks in EU and on water resilience.

With regards to the Tourism Transition Pathway, the action is aligned with these specific topics:

- Topic 4: Comprehensive tourism strategies development or update
- Topic 5: Collaborative governance of tourism destinations
- Topic 6: Sustainable mobility
- Topic 7: Circularity of tourism services
- Topic 8: Green transition of tourism companies and SMEs
- Topic 12: Research and innovation projects and pilots on circular and climate friendly tourism
- Topic 27: Support visibility of funding opportunities for tourism actors

2.1.4 Which action is needed?

The action is intended to generate guidelines focused on how urban destinations should prepare climate action plans, communicate them, promote climate-friendly offer, attract climate-friendly demand and promote better tourists' behaviour in the destinations. Furthermore, it addresses the need of resilience place in the tourism industry.

2.1.5 How will the action be implemented?

The action will be developed in three phases:

Phase A: Design the tool for collecting the information (Survey)

- Activity 1.1: Identification of key questions to be addressed.
- Activity 1.2: Design the survey.
- Activity 1.3: Identify target group & respondents.

This will be done using the expertise of the partnership and taking advantage of previous methodologies. EU Survey tool (GRDP complaint) will be used.
In addition, the survey will be jointly sent with other actions addressing questions to a similar target group.

Phase B: Analysis

- Activity 1.4: Analysis of current experiences within the UA Sustainable Tourism Partnership through a survey.
- Activity 1.5: Identification of urban destinations that have climate actions plans either under Glasgow Declaration or other resources.
- Activity 1.6: Identification of other climate-related experiences, including resilience plans (also identifying the lack of thereof as an indicator in identifying gaps).
- Activity 1.7: Problem trees for communication and participation, showcasing the main issues identified through the analysis.

In this phase, the contribution of external experts will be required.

Phase C: Collect and spread-out information

- Activity 1.8: Digital document to collect all the information: Best practices or Practical Guidelines. To be prepared by an external expert. A joint layout for action will be used.
- Activity 1.9: Webinar to introduce the findings carried out by project partners with a punctual contribution of external expert. ICLEI will be the partner responsible.
- Activity 1.10: Training/lecture based on findings carried out by project partners with a punctual contribution of an external expert.
- Activity 1.11: Dissemination activities in each urban destination carried out by projects partners.
- Activity 1.12: Peer reviews among partners carried out by interested project partners.

2.1.6 What resources are needed?

The action will be basically developed with the project partners' own resources, but some activities will require external expertise, as described in section 2.1.5.

2.1.7 Are there any risks foreseen?

Some risks identified along with foreseen mitigation measures are listed below:

- Lack of participation of the partnership. Prior contact will be made with partners to check their availability, interest and resources.
- Lack of time to complete the actions. The planning will take into account these risks in defining the timeline to fulfil the tasks.
- Low level of participation in the surveys. Partners will use all their networks to spread out the survey.
- Insufficient expert days. The dimension and ambition of outputs will be adapted to the available resources.
- Low participation in webinars/trainings. Partners will use all their networks to disseminate the activities and engage local stakeholders.
- Limited funds for organise activities in the destination. Define the activities according to the available resources.

2.1.8 Which members of the UAEU Partnership are involved in implementation of the action?

Action Leader(s)
Barcelona Provincial Council

Contributors
Municipality of Larissa
Municipality of Heraklion
Ljubljana Tourism
Fundació Visit València
Visit Brussels
Andalusia Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport
Ministry of Economics and Communication of Estonia
ICLEI European Secretariat
Eurocities
European Commission Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW)

2.1.9 What is the timeline of the implementation?
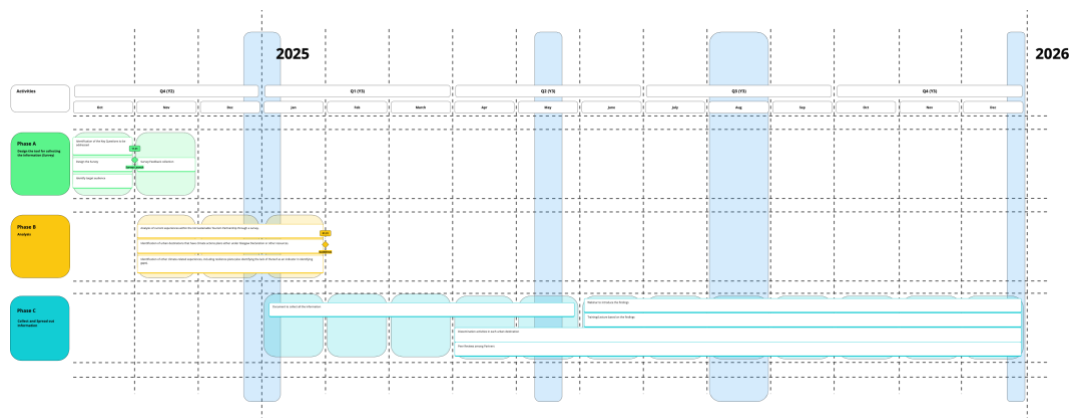
2.1.10 Which outputs will be produced?

- Guidelines for the development and communication of climate-friendly urban destinations
- 1 Webinar to introduce the findings
- Training/lecture based on findings
- Dissemination activities in each urban destination
- Peer reviews

2.1.11 Identify potential EU activities/legislative proposals that may result in considerable spatial imbalances, related to this specific action?

Some tools and initiatives already identified:
- Sustainable EU Tourism project on making destinations sustainable and resilient.
- Focus topics of the T4T Expert Group (DG GROW). For e.g. 3rd quarter of 2024 the expert group (green transition sub-group) will address a topic of changing holiday patterns due to climate change.
- EU Stakeholders Support Platform for Tourism.
- Commitments and pledges for the transition of EU tourism.
- Compendium of good practices for Smart Tourism Capitals.
- Tools developed by the UNWTO on the Glasgow Declaration and Circular Economy repository in One Planet Platform.
- Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS Index): A third-party evaluation of destination's Environmental, Social, Supplier and Destination Management performance. This benchmark serves to rank global destinations based on their sustainability performance, allows us to collect best practices, and stimulates healthy competition.
- Guidelines for preparing Tourism Climate Action Plans by the Euro-MED Sustainable Tourism Community (in preparation).
- SMARTA-NET project on mobility (DG MOVE).
- Be.CULTOUR project on circular cultural tourism (ICLEI)
- CITY DNA (European knowledge sharing alliance for cities and urban regions) - The organisation also runs a Sustainability Knowledge group.
- NECSTOUR - Network of European Regions for Sustainable and Competitive Tourism.

Key publications
- Envisioning tourism in 2030 and beyond. The changing shape of tourism in a decarbonising world, The Travel Foundation
- Regional impact of climate change on European tourism demand, JRC
- A Guide to Action on Climate Change, Miles Partnership
- Climate action in the tourism sector: an overview of methodologies and tools to measure greenhouse gas emissions, UNWTO.
- Handbook for the adaptation of destinations to the climate change (In Spanish, Manual para la adaptación de los destinos turísticos al cambio climático), INVATTUR
- Transition Pathway for Tourism. European Commission
- Beyond Tourism Guidebook, Be.CULTOUR project (ICLEI)
- Tourism Panel on Climate Change. Science-based stock-taking and assessment on tourism and climate change)
- European Commission Communication "Managing climate risks – protecting people and prosperity"
- European Environment Agency's report "European Climate Risk Assessment (EUCRA)"
- European Travel Commission Report "Climate change and tourism in Europe"
- Digital inventory of tools and practices for tourism: Tools and practices - European Commission (europa.eu)

- EU guide on data for tourism destinations: Smart Tourism Destinations

2.2 Action N° 02 – Support for destinations to enable the use of sustainability certifications for the SMEs tourism transition

This action will produce good practices and case studies for Destinations in order to promote the use of Certifications for SMEs on tourism transition in line with the Green Claim legislation that is coming, creating Handbook for DMMOs, good practices for SMEs on Green Transition, and developing of a pool of credible and transparent Certifications and activities on awareness for Certification use.

Targeted stakeholders/governance level: SMEs, Local & regional authorities, DMMOs

Deadline: 31/12/2025
Intermediate Deadline 1: 31/01/2025 – Diagnosis
Intermediate Deadline 2: 31/05/2025 – Best Practices
Intermediate Deadline 3: 31/12/2025 - Dissemination

2.2.1 Which of the three pillars is this action contributing to?

Better knowledge

This action has the aim of generating good practices and case studies for destinations in order to promote the use of Certifications for SMEs on tourism transition in line with the Green Claim legislation. This will contribute mainly towards better knowledge, supporting also regulation and funding.

2.2.2 What is the specific problem?

As already mentioned, the action is focused on better knowledge axis. The partnership has identified as main problems:

- Insufficient empowerment of DMOs to implement sustainable management tools and good practices in the local market.
- Need to involve local entrepreneurs into the green transition.
- Preparation and implementation of local / regional certification schemes.
- Lack of innovation projects on sustainable tourism.

- Missing raising awareness among SMEs and dispelling the fear on certifications.
- Need to creation of best practices - Certifications as a tool for promoting demand.
- Capacity-building programmes, technical and financial assistance to support green transition for tourism stakeholders, including SMEs.
- Need to Call for collaboration on the harmonizing of sustainable tourism statistics and indicators, for all the value / supply chain of tourism (from Destination to SMEs), going beyond EU Tourism Dashboard.
- Creation of the necessary green transition and Partnerships of DMMO, TOURISM Companies and SMEs (tourism supply chain) via capacity building and technology innovation, in order to provide in on-line platforms information about Certified / Assessed Sustainable Destinations and Certified Sustainable Accommodation / Tour Operators, etc.

The action also affects some aspects related to better regulation and funding:

- Lack of knowledge on how to prioritize sustainable (tourism) service providers in Transition into a more transparent and reliable market for SMEs.
- Implementation of new regulation on Green Claims.
- Prioritize sustainable (tourism) service providers in public sector procurement.
- Guidelines for tourism SMEs in Sustainability and Circular Economy.
- Validation and creation a comparable matrix of already existing label and certification systems.

The action also affects some aspects related to better funding:

- Funding the implementation of Good Practices.
- Incentives to sustainable / green transition of SMEs.
- Micro Financing for green transition.

2.2.3 How do existing EU policies/legislations/ instruments contribute?

The European Commission's Directive on Green Claims is a positive stride towards regulating environmental assertions by businesses, fostering environmental responsibility, and fortifying consumer trust. Nevertheless, the forthcoming implementation of this Directive may pose distinct challenges for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). Notably, recent legislations, including the Eco-design for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR), the Right to Repair Directive, and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), have heightened data collection, assessments, and reporting requirements, placing an additional burden on SMEs.

For European SMEs, adherence to European standards proves advantageous, as these standards are more accessible and tailored to their specific needs. Furthermore, European standards serve as a unified reference across European countries, requiring adoption at the national level and the withdrawal of conflicting national standards.

However, the intensified regulatory landscape is particularly daunting for SMEs, which often lack the financial and technical resources available to larger corporations. The onerous

nature of these requirements can impede their ability to market themselves as environmentally responsible, a crucial aspect of competitiveness in the current market. Consequently, there is a risk that many SMEs may opt for silence on their green initiatives due to legal uncertainties, financial constraints, or the fear of potential fines and reputational damage. Raising awareness, promoting good practices, and streamlining certifications can play a pivotal role in alleviating these challenges and ensuring that SMEs continue to contribute to sustainability efforts.

This action has the aim of generating good practices and case studies for Destinations in order to promote the use of Certifications for SMEs on tourism transition in line with the Green Claims legislation. This will be done through creation of Handbook for DMMOs, good practices for SMEs on Green Transition, development of a pool of credible and transparent Certifications and activities on awareness for Certification use.

The Action is aligned with specific topics of the Tourism Transition Pathway, in particular:

- Topic 3: Improving statistics and indicators for tourism
- Topic 4: Comprehensive tourism strategies development or update
- Topic 5: Collaborative governance of tourism destinations
- Topic 8: Green transition of tourism companies and SMEs
- Topic 12: Research and innovation projects and pilots on circular and climate friendly tourism
- Topic 13: Promoting the use of the PEF and OEF methodology and the development of sectorial category rules for the tourism ecosystem
- Topic 20: Awareness raising on changes in tourism demand and the opportunities of twin transition for tourism
- Topic 27: Support visibility of funding opportunities for tourism actors

2.2.4 Which action is needed?

The action has the aim of generating new knowledge and policy recommendations addressed to the whole tourism ecosystem and to showcase some strategies and best practices that could be transferred to urban destinations. This will be done through surveys, case-studies, workshops or collections of best practices.

In this action, generating good practices and case studies for Destinations in order to promote the use of Certifications for SMEs on tourism transition in line with the Green Claim legislation that is coming, creating Handbook for DMMOs, good practices for SMEs on Green Transition, and developing of a pool of credible and transparent Certifications and activities on awareness for Certification use.

2.2.5 How will the action be implemented?

The action will be developed in three phases:

Phase A: Design the tool for collecting the information (Survey)

- Activity 2.1: Identification of key questions to be addressed.
- Activity 2.2: Design a survey.
- Activity 2.3: Identify target group & respondents.

This will be done using the expertise of the partnership and taking advantage of previous methodologies. EU Survey tool (GRDP complaint) will be used.

In addition, the survey will be jointly sent with other actions addressing questions to a similar target group.

Phase B: Analysis

- Activity 2.4: Analysis of current experiences within the UA Sustainable Tourism partnership through a questionnaire.
- Activity 2.5: Identification of other experiences or possible schemes implemented on SMEs transition.
- Activity 2.6: Identification of financial tools for supporting the SMEs transition
- Activity 2.7: EU funding schemes (COSME call, NextGen, UA Innovative Actions...)

In this step, the contribution of external expert will be required.

Phase C: Collect and spread out information

- Activity 2.8: Digital document to collect all the information: Handbook for DMOs on good practices and certifications experiences for greening the SMEs in line with Green Claims. To be prepared by an external expert. A joint layout for action wil be used.
- Activity 2.9: Webinar to introduce the findings carried out by project partners with a punctual contribution of external expert. Heraklion will be the partner responsible.
- Activity 2.10: Training/lecture based on findings carried out by project partners with a punctual contribution of external expert.
- Activity 2.11: Dissemination activities in each urban destination carried out by projects partners.
- Activity 2.12: Peer reviews among partners carried out by interested project partners.

2.2.6 What resources are needed?

The action will be basically developed with the project partners' own resources, but some activities will require external expertise, as described in section 2.2.5.

2.2.7 Are there any risks foreseen?

Some risks identified along with foreseen mitigation measures are listed below:

- Lack of participation of the partnership. A prior contact will be made with partners to check their availability, interest and resources.

- Lack of time to complete the actions. The planning will consider these risks in defining the timeline to fulfil the tasks.
- Low level of participation in the surveys. Partners will use all their networks to spread out the survey.
- Insufficient expert days. The dimension and ambition of outputs will be adapted to the available resources.
- Low participation in webinars/trainings. Partners will use all their networks to disseminate the activities and engage local stakeholders.
- Limited funds for organise activities in the destination. Define the activities according to the available resources.

2.2.8 Which members of the UAEU Partnership are involved in implementation of the action?

Action Leader(s)
Municipality of Heraklion

Contributors
Barcelona Provincial Council
Municipality of Larissa
Ljubljana Tourism
Fundació Visit València
Visit Brussels
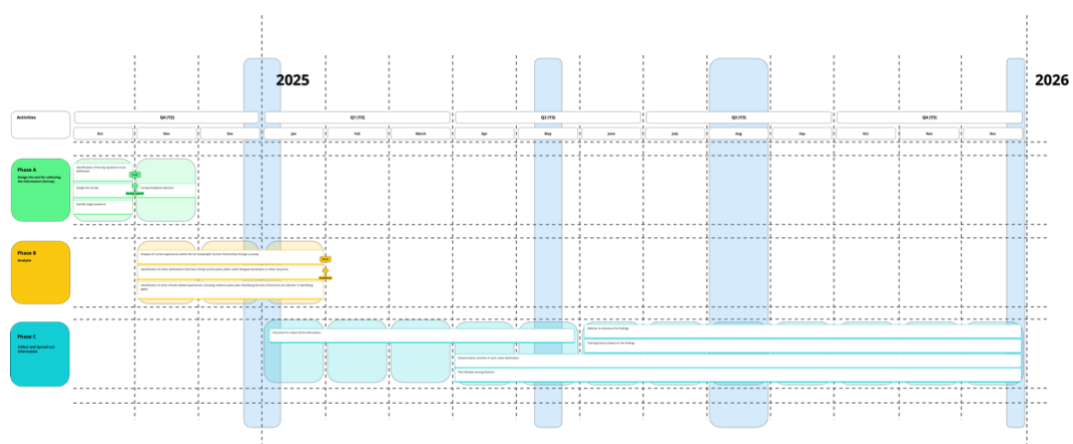Andalusia Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport
Ministry of Economics and Communication of Estonia
ICLEI European Secretariat
Eurocities
European Commission Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW)

2.2.9 What is the timeline of the implementation?

2.2.10 Which outputs will be produced?

- Handbook for DMOs on good practices, financial schemes and sustainability certifications experiences for greening the SMEs
- 1 Webinar to introduce the findings
- Training/lecture based on findings
- Dissemination activities in each urban destination
- Peer reviews

2.2.11 Identify potential EU activities/legislative proposals that may result in considerable spatial imbalances, related to this specific action?

Some tools and initiatives already identified:

- Work programme priorities of the T4T Expert Group on Green transition (DG GROW).
- EU Tourism Dashboard, JRC
- Products groups and criteria, EU
- Criteria for Sustainable Destinations, Hotels, Travel Agents, MICE by GSTC
- Travel Sustainable Budge Criteria, Booking.com
- Hotel Sustainability Basics, WTTC
- Good Travel Seal Certification
- European Tourism Indicators System for Sustainable Destination Management
- https://eismea.ec.europa.eu/news/call-expression-interest-crisis-management-and-governance-tourism-2023-07-17_en
- https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sustainable-eu-tourism-shaping-tourism-tomorrow_en
- D3HUB Competence Centre (d3hub-competencecentre.eu)

Key publications
- Transition Pathway for Tourism, EU
- Green Claims Directive Proposal
- Eco-design for Sustainable Products Regulation
- Eco-design working plan 2022-2024.
- The Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive
- Non-Financial reporting
- New EU Circular Economy Action Plan
- European Commission, A new industrial strategy for Europe, COM (2020)102
- Environmental Green Claims, Business Companion
- Position paper on the Commission proposal for a Directive on Green Claims, Euro Commerce
- Public Procurement Reform and Ecolabel, EU-EC
- Development of EU Ecolabel criteria for retail financial products, JRC
- What is Certification, Global Sustainable Tourism Council

2.3 Action N° 03 – Developing competences for tourism professionals and local & regional authorities in the field of digital touristic services & products

Our goal is to foster key competences in tourism professional, maximizing the impact and added value of digital tools. In line with the EU UA, we strive for a toolkit that lowers the barriers to get access to knowledges, fundings but also spotlight the challenges in the tourism industry.

Targeted stakeholders/governance level: Local authorities, Tourism professionals, Professionals developing digital services/products, Tourism responsible on country level/Ministry of Tourism.

Deadline: 31/12/2025
Intermediate Deadline 1: 31/03/2025 - Survey ready & local stakeholder group ready & prepared for the work ahead.
Intermediate Deadline 2: 31/05/2025 - Results of the survey
Intermediate Deadline 3: 30/09/ 2025 - First draft of tool/handbook
Intermediate Deadline 4: 30/11/2025- Finalized tool/e-handbook (outputs in digital versions)
Intermediate Deadline 5: 31/12/2025 - Communication & awareness campaign to all stakeholders

2.3.1 Which of the three pillars is this action contributing to?

Better knowledge   Better funding   Better regulation

This action will mostly contribute to the pillar of Better Knowledge as we aim to close possible gaps in competences in the field of digital touristic services & products by spreading awareness and providing access to already existing sources of Knowledge and Competences.

In addition, this action also contributes to Better Funding by including possible sources of funding and facilitate the application for funding opportunities and by aligning with existing projects like the EU Pact for Skills[2] or PanTour[3] project or by looking on Projects & Stakeholders on local levels this could be similar to the development of a Local Pact for

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[2] https://pact-for-skills.ec.europa.eu/index_en
[3] PANTOUR: Pact for Next Tourism Generation Skills - https://nexttourismgeneration.eu/pantour/

Skills. Moreover, this action can contribute to adaptions in Funding guidelines like the EU Funding Guide for Tourism & European Social Fund focusing on tourism, like the current ESF+-funding. Lastly this action can also impact the pillar of better regulation as this action shows the gaps and identifies the causes in dealing with digital products & services and new technology in the tourism sector. This can impact EU and local regulation, like the AI Act of concerning digital product, l. By having this action and its results in mind when shaping regulations regarding digitalization or new technology, the new guidelines may also tackle possible gaps of knowledge and competences before they can emerge among many people. The Ministries of tourism of the member states should be involved, as we know that different data standards can lead to a lot of challenges when creating digital services in tourism, by including the Ministries of tourism we can put a focus on this topic and therefore be able to contribute to better regulations regarding the different data standards! We need to spread awareness about the importance of a common data standard in tourism! In addition, a common European data standard could lead to more cross-border projects in terms of digital products and services.

2.3.2 What is the specific problem?

The specific problem addressed by the proposed action is the lack of (standardized) competencies, knowledge among tourism professionals in the European Union, particularly in the context of sustainable tourism and the integration of new digital products. The tourism industry is rapidly evolving, with advancements in digital technologies and an increasing emphasis on sustainability.

The identified problems can be summarized as follows:

- Lack of (standardized) Competencies: Because EU has no competence to harmonise or standardise curricula there is a lack of standardized competencies for tourism professionals, particularly in the intersection of sustainable tourism and digital products. We aim to close those gaps by developing toolkit like a one stop shop for knowledge, funding and regulations concerning digital products & service in the field of tourism.
- No common understanding of Sustainable Tourism: The need for sustainable tourism practices, covering social, environmental, and economic aspects, is growing. However, there is a lack of a common understanding for sustainable tourism among professionals across the EU.
- Limited Access to Knowledge and Skills: The existing knowledge and competencies in sustainable tourism and digital products are not readily accessible to all professionals. There is a need to bridge the gap and make relevant skills and expertise available to professionals throughout the EU.
- Fragmented Networking and Collaboration: The lack of a centralized network for tourism stakeholders contributes to a fragmented approach to knowledge-sharing and collaboration. This hinders the collective efforts of professionals to address common challenges and embrace best practices.
- No Common data Standards in Tourism: The way data is collected and stored in tourism is very diverse within the EU but also within the member states itself. A common data standard or at least a framework could lead to more efficient processes and more digital services & products in the Eu as it would lower the barriers for digital touristic products.

- Insufficient EU POLICIES & Funding Awareness: Tourism professionals may not be aware of recent police on the EU level & available funding opportunities, leading to potential gaps in financial support for sustainable tourism initiatives. Identifying and disseminating information on funding sources is essential for the industry's growth.

2.3.3 How do existing EU policies/legislations/ instruments contribute?

Alignment with Smart City Initiatives: As cities strive to become smarter and more connected, digital competencies align with broader smart city initiatives. Professionals can integrate digital touristic products into the overall smart city framework, fostering a holistic approach to urban development. In Addition to the abovementioned points, the actions contribute to some topics mentioned in the pathway for sustainable tourism:

- Topic 9: Data-driven tourism services
- Topic 10: Improving the availability of online information on tourism offer.
- Topic 11: Easily accessible best practice, peer learning and networking for SMEs
- Topic 16: Support for digitalisation of tourism SMEs and destinations

Moreover, this action links different already existing Projects & Instruments e.g.:
- Pantour!
- TOURBIT
- Resetting.eu
- Eudigitour.eu
- Pact for Skills
- inventory of digital tools and practices in tourism
- Green Comp
- Academia digital in Portugal

The difficulty is to be aware of all these different tools and projects and to know where to find them.

In addition, the AI Act of the EU, which is being shaped, can contribute to this action and vice versa as AI can be seen as one digital tool in the tourism sector. And in order to use the tool successfully certain knowledge and competencies about this tool are necessary. The AI Act can help us understand the needed competencies. But also, this action can help to shape regulations that anticipate certain risks.

Moreover, just recently was a report of the commission published about "Jobs in EU Tourism". This report focuses on staff and skill shortage in the European tourism industry. One of the main conclusions was that "Only one in five participants is aware of EU initiatives, among which the Pact for Skills in Tourism is the most cited." p.,25. In addition they also developed an objective set of key performance indicators is scalability, this means e ease of replicability or expansion of the practice by assessing the number of locations, sectors, or organisational levels where the practice can be implemented (p. 28).

A common data standard would directly contribute to much more scalable best practice solutions as the tourism data would already be available in the needed way.

2.3.4 Which action is needed?

This action is a significant step toward addressing the identified problems by providing a structured approach to developing competencies among tourism professionals. It establishes a standardized framework, promoting a shared understanding of sustainable tourism practices and the integration of digital products. By leveraging a unified European approach, the action contributes to harmonizing practices and advancing the tourism industry in the digital age.

The future goal is to have a well-established European framework/ Guideline for competencies in sustainable tourism and digital products.

This Toolkit should serve as a one stop shop for professionals, outlining the necessary skills and knowledge required to navigate the complexities of modern tourism. Simultaneously, the establishment of a European-level tourism academy would provide a centralized educational resource, ensuring ongoing professional development and knowledge exchange.

This action addresses multiple facets of the identified problem:

- Standardization of Competencies: The Toolkit aims to make knowledge and competencies available, bridging the gap in the diverse training methodologies and responsibilities among EU member states.
- Unified Understanding of Sustainable Tourism: By defining competencies for digital products and services in terms of sustainable tourism the action contributes to creating a shared understanding and promoting consistent practices across the EU.
- Access to Knowledge and Skills: The establishment of a tourism academy and the use of a Stakeholders Support Platform facilitates the accessibility of knowledge and skills, ensuring that professionals can easily access relevant information and expertise.
- Regulation and Funding Awareness: The tool serves as a conduit for sharing information on funding opportunities, addressing the issue of insufficient awareness among professionals. In addition to this we can use this tool to show the issues and challenges made due to a lack of standardization on terms of data. This can lead to changes among the members of the EU regarding their data standards in tourism.
- Spread awareness of a common data standard / best practice on data standards. As there many different tools used in the tourism industry there many ways how to collect and save data. This makes it often very difficult to collaborate with partners using a different way of maintaining their data digital. To overcome this obstacle, it its crucial to put a focus on this issue and to show the challenges coming from the lack of a common data standard in tourism.

The action's benefits extend to both cities and urban citizens:

1. Enhanced Sustainable Tourism Practices: Standardized competencies and data contribute to the adoption of sustainable practices, benefiting cities by minimizing environmental impact and ensuring responsible tourism.

2. Economic Opportunities: Improved competencies can stimulate economic growth by attracting more tourists, creating job opportunities, and supporting local businesses in urban areas.

3. Preservation of Cultural Heritage: The action promotes the integration of digital tools for cultural heritage promotion, enriching the cultural experiences of urban citizens and tourists alike.

4. Inclusive Community Engagement: The establishment of a network and academy encourages community engagement, ensuring that the benefits of tourism are shared inclusively among urban citizens.

5. Smart Urban Tourism: The action aligns with the concept of smart cities by fostering the adoption of digital technologies, contributing to more efficient tourism management, and enhancing the overall urban experience.

The action better reflects urban needs, practices, and responsibilities by:

1. Tailoring Competencies to Urban Dynamics: Recognizing the unique challenges and opportunities of urban environments, the toolkit can address the specific needs of cities in terms of cultural richness, sustainability, and responsible tourism.

2. Collaborative Urban Governance: The network promotes collaboration among various stakeholders, aligning with the collaborative nature of urban governance.

3. Sustainability Integration: The focus on sustainable tourism practices aligns with the urban agenda's emphasis on environmental responsibility and sustainability in urban planning and development.

4. Digitalization Trends: Acknowledging the prevalence of digital technologies in urban settings, the action integrates these tools to enhance tourism experiences, aligning with the digitalization trends in smart cities.

In summary, the recommended action represents a progressive and comprehensive solution to the identified problems, contributing to the advancement of sustainable tourism practices, fostering collaboration, and enhancing the overall urban tourism landscape across the European Union.

2.3.5 How will the action be implemented?

The implementation will be divided in 4 Phases as follows:

Phase A: Digital Services/Products and Stakeholders Mapping

- Activity 3.1: Digital Touristic Products/Services Introduction: The survey process begins with an introduction to digital services/products for stakeholders. We may need an external expert to have this introduction done.
- Activity 3.2: Local Stakeholder Group Constitution on a partner level. After having the introduction defined, every partner of this action needs to constitute their stakeholder groups, which should be addressed by this survey. We will have a general presentation of this action to show the purpose but also have some good examples of existing measures in the EU. An effective way to create a Local Stakeholder Group is the establishment of local/regional tourism and innovative HUBs, composed of key private and public actors. Based on the results of the survey on digital knowledge and skills gaps, HUB members can work closely on the issue of strengthening the digital skills of the tourism workforce.

- These HUBs aim to facilitate the exchange of best practices between the tourism and cultural sectors and can act as promoters of strategies and accelerators of innovative projects, identifying emerging trends and opportunities in the sectors and giving sustainability to local policies[4].

Phase B: Survey & Solutions

- Activity 3.3: It is important to have the target group defined before setting up the survey, as we need to know who exactly we will address to have the questions adapted accordingly. We also want every partner to have one workshop meet in a suitable way with their stakeholder group during the process of the survey creation. The survey will also be translated in the appropriate language of the stakeholder groups with this task we also need an external expert of the EU for the creation of the survey.
- Activity 3.4: After the survey was spread and conducted among the different stakeholder groups, we will have to analyse the results to find out the needs. Every partner will analyse/ summarise their surveys and retranslate them back to English. We then need to analyse those summaries to find out where the lacks in competencies and knowledges are, what is causing them and how we could close those gaps. For the analysis we also need support of an external expert.
- Activity 3.5: Using the results of the survey we can find suitable solutions to close the defined gaps but also to overcome the causes for this gap. Every partner must conduct a second workshop or meet in a suitable way with their stakeholder group to find out what would help them close the gaps and gain the needed competencies. After the workshop are done, we will gather the outcomes and merge them together in our toolkit. Potential outputs include a comprehensive Handbook or a more adaptable Toolkit, with support from DG/Eurocities This Toolkit shall be a flexible digital tool, where the stakeholders can set certain filters in order to find their needs and obtain possible solutions (e.g. possible fundings, best practices, knowledge hub, contact to experts). Solution Provision Solution Provision // Toolkit// Handbook. We may also need support of the EU in terms of already existing projects/tools.

Phase C: Ensuring Sustainability

- Activity 3.6: the last step is to ensure the sustainability of the tool itself. This means the tool needs to be updated on a regular base. The success of the tool needs to be measured. We need to ensure that the tool will be adapted to the needs of the stakeholder and new sources of knowledge or fundings will be added but also outdated input will be deleted. In addition, this action can also be adapted for other topics, like greening cities, and result in a toolkit accordingly.

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[4] The City of Venice is actively participating in the creation of a HUB to promote local food and wine heritage and develop digital skills as part of the Interreg Italy-Croatia TestEAT project. The Venice HUB will define the "challenges" for innovation in the city's food and wine industry and work with local educational and research institutions to initiate innovation labs (involving professionals, researchers, students, and educators) that will devise possible innovative solutions, such as improving the digital skills of the tourism workforce (online menus and ordering, time management, social media, and digital marketing).

2.3.6 What resources are needed?

To conduct this action in the explained way above we mostly need Human resources in terms of external expert hours for the survey creation, analysis and the mapping of solution to causes and gaps.

Human resources from the partners are needed to implement the action itself, as well as expert knowledge about ongoing projects and reports of the EU and access to networks and knowledge specific to the topic of the Action.

Also, technical expertise is needed for the design and analysis of the survey and for the toolkit.

In addition to this we need some financial resources to create a toolkit that matches the expectations.

2.3.7 Are there any risks foreseen?

The following risk are foreseen at the current state:

- Lack of interest/ importance: One significant risk is the potential for missing out on stakeholder interest. Failure to effectively engage or capture the attention of key stakeholders can lead to decreased participation, reduced buy-in, and ultimately, hindered progress towards project objectives. When stakeholders feel overlooked or disengaged, they may become less motivated to contribute their insights, resources, or support, thereby limiting the effectiveness and success of the endeavour. Thus, proactive measures to identify, understand, and cater to the interests and needs of stakeholders are essential for maintaining their engagement and ensuring the overall success and sustainability of the action. Therefore, it is crucial to have the stakeholders engaged in the process of creating the tool. But also, to have the benefits and advantages of this action / tool clear.

- Inclusivity: Ensuring inclusivity across diverse linguistic, cultural, and economic backgrounds is crucial. Efforts should be made to provide multilingual resources, address cultural sensitivities, and consider accessibility challenges.

- Delay in expertise process (provision): Another possible risk is the delay in expertise process by having the provision later than needed in the process. This could lead to a delay of the whole action as expertise is crucial in some steps as mentioned before.

- Outsourcing of Skills development: More often skills are outsourced by local authorities or tourism professionals. In order to tackle this risk Outsourcing of Skills development, we need to show the stakeholder that having the needed skills themself can help them to: not be depending on external providers, always have transparency and control, not encounter cost overruns in the long-term.

2.3.8 Which members of the UAEU Partnership are involved in implementation of the action?

Action Leader(s)
Rhein-Neckar Region Association

Contributors
Municipality of Galati
City of Venice
City of Porvoo
Intermunicipal Community of Coimbra Region
Mirabilia Network
Municipality of Genoa
Association for the promotion of tourism in Oradea and the region, RO
Stakeholder groups of every partner

2.3.9 What is the timeline of the implementation?
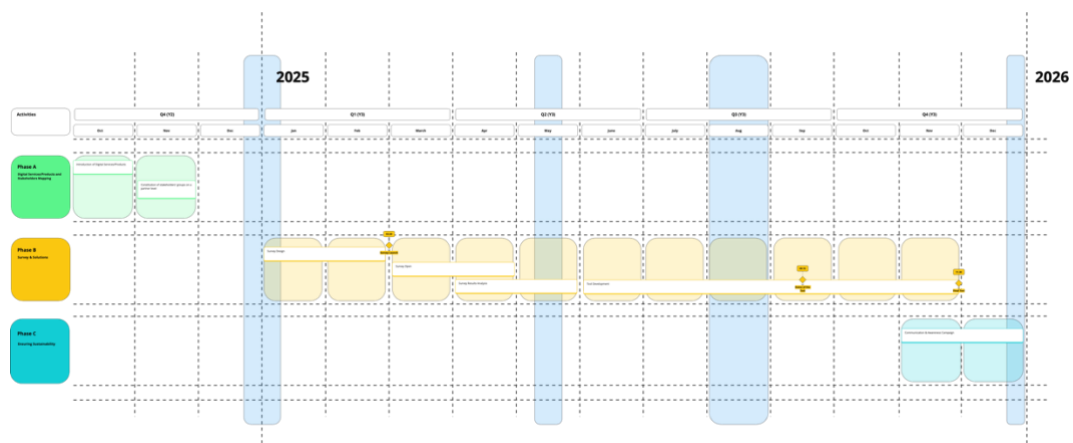
2.3.10 Which outputs will be produced?

This action will produce two workshops per partner in the creation phase of the survey and while mapping the gaps and their causes to the possible solutions as intermediate outputs. In addition to these outputs, we will have a presentation for this action to give the stakeholder groups a better understanding of the process, why it is important how they can help us and of the benefits and advantages.
The main output will be the toolkit to find the solution for every gap and its cause in terms of competencies regarding digital products and services in the field of sustainable tourism.

2.3.11 Identify potential EU activities/legislative proposals that may result in considerable spatial imbalances, related to this specific action?

- EU Digital Single Market Initiatives: Efforts to promote digitalization and innovation in tourism may inadvertently exacerbate spatial imbalances if they primarily benefit certain regions or urban areas with advanced digital infrastructure, leaving others behind.
- EU Accessibility Regulations: While initiatives to improve accessibility in tourism are crucial, stringent regulations without adequate support mechanisms may disproportionately burden smaller or less developed destinations, leading to spatial imbalances in compliance and implementation.
- EU Strategies for Rural Development: Strategies focusing on rural development and revitalization may inadvertently neglect urban tourism destinations, leading to spatial imbalances in funding allocation and policy support.
- EU Digital Skills Agenda: Initiatives aimed at enhancing digital skills in the tourism sector may benefit regions with established education and training infrastructure, potentially widening spatial disparities in digital readiness and capacity among tourism professionals.

2.4 Action N° 04 – More resilient and sustainable destinations through diversification of tourism offer

Diversification of the tourism offer is at the heart of the transformation of the tourism ecosystem, especially for urban destinations, and it can be categorised according to following three interconnected dimensions: time, space and activities. It is key to strengthening the resilience and sustainability of destinations, by offering solutions to decongesting destinations, effectively redistributing tourist flows in time and space, addressing seasonality and activate different local assets and urban areas through a diversified tourist offer.

Targeted stakeholders/governance level: Local and regional authorities, Destination marketing organisations, SMEs

Deadline: 31/12/2025
Intermediate Deadline 1: April 2025 - A handbook for urban authorities and other stakeholders compiling the good practices, recommendations and case studies on the different focus elements to foster the diversification of tourism offer.
Intermediate Deadline 2: November 2025 - Two dedicated workshops to promote the handbook, test the draft recommendations, convey relevant lessons learned and explore identified good practices.
Intermediate Deadline 3: December 2025 - Three promotional videos dedicated to raise awareness of local community on sustainable tourism.

2.4.1 Which of the three pillars is this action contributing to?

Better knowledge   Better funding   Better regulation

While the action seeks contributes primarily to the better knowledge pillar, the action will seek for multidimensional solutions from the perspective of urban destinations that are aligned with Better Regulation and Better Funding pillars in order to foster effective and innovative diversification of tourism. The action will be contributing to existing efforts to gather knowledge on challenges, opportunities, measurement and lessons learned, including through good practices. It will seek to understand the available funding possibilities and recommend how best to utilise such opportunities and how the funding structure could be amended to more effectively support diversification. The recommendations on legal and financial incentives contributing to diversification of the

tourism offer can offer an opportunity to suggest improving relevant regulations, including those funding, at many governance levels.

2.4.2   What is the specific problem?

The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic crisis hit the EU tourism ecosystem hard, with a significant loss of revenue, workforce and activity. Cities, like any other types of destinations, were forced to temporarily reimagine their approach to tourism and seek alternative solutions to comply with health & safety requirements and attract other segments of the tourism market.

While there have been some signs of recovery, the pandemic has exposed key structural vulnerabilities of the tourism ecosystem that need to be addressed to secure its long-term competitiveness, sustainability and resilience. Challenges such high degree of seasonality, over tourism and unequal geographical distribution in some destinations determine the intensity and characteristic of tourism flows, the pressure on infrastructure, services and resources and the balance between the sector, the local population and the environment. These challenges also may have urban angles, crucial to take into account for the sustainable and resilient recovery of the tourism ecosystem.

In the context of ever-changing consume preferences and high vulnerability of the sector towards external shocks, as seen with Russia's war in Ukraine, the spike in energy prices, rising inflation, and climate change, the drive for change in the approach for tourism is ever present in cities and other destinations. As part of the sustainable tourism approach, cities seek to ensure a more effective use of resources and ensure a positive impact on the ground in collaboration with all levels of government and relevant stakeholders including the local community.

Diversification of the tourism offer is at the heart of this change. It encompasses destinations' efforts to expand or adapt the tourism offer and effectively activate its assets in order to cater to different visitor needs and desires. It can also be a means for the destination to extend the tourism season beyond high peaks, balance the extent of tourism activity across its territory more evenly, and ensure a balanced socio-economic development and competitiveness in the destination, thus mitigating any risks brought by tourism.

However, cities' ability to adapt to these changes varies significantly. Concrete guidance and examples of good and innovative practices are needed in order to support locally diversified and customised touristic solutions.

2.4.3   How do existing EU policies/legislations/ instruments contribute?

While, the topics are not new in the context of EU level support, tourism diversification, seasonality and unbalanced tourism (or overtourism) are still high in the renewed EU level tourism agenda, as part of wider efforts to transform the tourism ecosystem towards a

more sustainable and resilient model. Topic 26 of the Transition Pathway for Tourism includes a dedicated action to diversifying and developing tourism services so that they benefit both residents and visitors. The European Agenda for Tourism 2030 also calls on the European Commission, Member States and other stakeholders to diversify tourism services "to service diverse audiences in all seasons and various locations" and "particularly across seasons and various locations".

The European Commission provides support for knowledge, networking and capacity building and dissemination of good practices that are relevant for the topic of diversification and resilience of destinations, addressing overtourism and seasonality. For example, the European Capital of Smart Tourism initiative seeks to reward and provide visibility to destinations working on innovative solutions in the categories of sustainability, digitalisation, cultural heritage and creativity and accessibility. From 2007 to 2023, the EDEN initiative[5] selected and promoted inspiring smaller lesser-known tourism destinations pioneering on sustainability and innovation. In 2023, the European Commission launched a project on 'Supporting sustainability and resilience of EU tourism destinations'[6] (called 'Sustainable EU Tourism – Shaping the Tourism of Tomorrow') to recognise key challenges in the change towards more sustainable and resilient tourism and provide targeted recommendations, twinning and peer-to-peer learning opportunities, as well as a communication campaign targeting DMOs and tourists and their behaviour.

From the funding perspective, many EU programmes and funding instruments provide opportunities [7] to support the diversification of tourism, including to extend the geographical and time scope of activities in destinations. Relevant measures have been included in many countries' Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRPs). In the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy programmes, Member States and regions have shown a high interest in supporting actions on diversification of the tourism offer, as well as addressing overtourism and seasonality, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund. In addition, sustainable tourism was one of the three topics of the second call for proposals of the European Urban Initiative-Innovative Actions[8] with an overall indicative budget for the call of EUR 120 million from the ERDF. The selected cities – to be announced in May 2024 - will be able to profit from up to EUR 5 million each to test urban innovative solutions, including in the field of sustainable tourism and the diversification of the tourism offer. The Commission co-funds projects through dedicated calls under the Single Market Programme (previously COSME), some of which have also targeted aspects related to diversification and resilience[9]. The Horizon 2020 programme (predecessor of Horizon Europe) has also supported numerous research and innovation projects that focus on diversification of the tourism offer from the multiple perspectives, such as developing new products and new impact-focused methods or supporting lesser-known destinations.

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[5] The European Commission published in 2022 the EDEN Best Practices Report, which showcases best practices from the initiative including on diversification of tourism offer in the respective destinations. https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/49254

[6] eTendering - Data (europa.eu)

[7] The Guide to EU Funding for tourism identifies a total of 17 EU funding programmes that support sustainable tourism, some of which could offer opportunities for diversification of the tourism offer and to address seasonality and overtourism https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/tourism/eu-funding-and-businesses/funding-guide_en

[8] [1] https://www.urban-initiative.eu/calls-proposals/second-call-proposals-innovative-actions

[9] For example, the 2015 call for proposals on increasing tourism flows in the low and medium seasons which supported 11 projects.

Examples of these projects are TExTOUR[10], IMPACTOUR[11], Be.CULTOUR[12], SmartCulTour [13], and SPOT[14].

In the Palma Declaration of 2023[15], EU Member States committed to "Encourage tourism stakeholders to put the continuing well-being of local residents in the heart of tourism development, building on the unique cultural and natural assets of the destination in a responsible and sustainable way". The Commission was also invited to "develop and strengthen the EU tools for best practice sharing… to make tourism truly sustainable, focusing on the economic, social and environmental aspects and on the governance of the tourism sector."

Considering the above, the opportunity for a meaningful action on diversification lies in steering the lessons learned from the above lines of work into one single entry point for the benefit of urban destinations. The Urban Agenda Partnership on Sustainable Tourism can then provide further recommendations based on the three dimensions on diversification and adapted to the new post-Covid context based on collected good practices and from recently tested solutions in partner cities contributing to the implementation of action.

2.4.4   Which action is needed?

Given the ambition and wide scope of action needed to implement this topic, diversification of the tourism offer can be categorised according to following three interconnected dimensions: time, space and activities.

Diversification across time

Actions under this dimension seek to directly seasonality of urban destinations in view of ensuring the extension of the tourism season more evenly across the year and, in some cases, easing tensions resulting from peak seasons and around specific events. This may enable the activation of assets and resources that may not be available during the busier periods as well as attract a wider audience.

Urban destinations should also consider exploring the possibility to boost tourism activity across the day following the same logic. Based on data showcasing the distribution of visitors in particular spots during the day, lesser frequented periods should be better communicated and marketed to visitors and residents. In particular, the night-time economy could also be a means for diversification, so long as a careful balance between night-time activity and the quality of life of residents is met.

Diversification across space

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[10]   https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101004687
[11] "https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/870747"https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/870747
[12] "https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101004627"https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101004627
[13] https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/870708
[14] https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/870644
[15] Consilum (2023) Palma Declaration: "The path towards social sustainability of tourism in the EU" Press release available at https://spanish-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/palma-declaration-path-towards-social-sustainability-tourism-eu/

Tourism is an important sector for urban economies that is inherently territorial and, in some cases, unevenly distributed across a destination. To diversify the tourism offer across space requires a comprehensive understanding of both the use of public space for touristic and non-touristic activity and the carrying capacity of a given urban destination, even at neighbourhood level. Diversification of the tourism activity in this sense allows to extend the geographical extent of the tourism activity and in some cases also relieving the pressure of overcrowded tourism sites and areas where tourism congestion is an issue.

In a similar manner as in the case of time, diversification across space allows urban destination to activate assets and resources by exploring the possibilities that new lesser-known zones with high tourism potential can provide. As a result of attracting visitors to said sites, the benefits that tourism activity may bring are better balanced geographically across the urban destination. In this respect, a careful attention should be placed on ensuring these new areas are adequately connected with the rest of the city and building effective means to manage tourism flows.

Extending the geographical reach of the tourism activity is a way to expand the benefits of tourism. As the tourism ecosystem is highly interconnected and can conduce to positive spillover effects into other areas, diversification of the tourism can reinforce the ecosystem's transformative role. However, the success and sustainability of actions in this dimension rests also on how well the tourism's negative externalities (including gentrification) are mitigated.

Because of COVID-19 pandemic crisis cities were forced to reimagine their approach to tourism. "Outdoor tourism" is an example of diversification strategy in the post-pandemic approach.

Diversification across activities

The destinations' ability to cater towards a wider audience, be it international, national and local visitors or taking into account different profiles, is key to reduce the dependency on certain segments of the tourism sector and reinforce its resilience especially in potential future external shocks. This requires expanding the tourism offer by exploring new products and activities building on existing or to-be developed assets. Recent trends also point towards more personalised offer and unique, authentic and immersive experiences focused on the wellbeing of visitors, local communities and the environment. Nevertheless, this diversification efforts should not result in a negative impact on the local community or the environment.

Common enabling factors

Across these three dimensions, there are a number of enabling factors that may better structure the diversification of tourism offer in a given destination that can facilitate a more effective and sustainable contribution to sustainable urban development. Among these are:

- A common vision for tourism for the city included in the sustainable urban development plan, that fosters interlinkages between tourism and other socioeconomic activities, co-created and co-implemented by all relevant stakeholder and a clear distribution of responsibilities between actors;

- Effective multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance structures in which the quadruple helix (government, academia, private sector and civil society) is represented and actively contributes;

- Existence of Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) with sufficient resources and competences to address the challenges and opportunities in the given urban destination;

- Effective monitoring system and availability of real-time data, especially in view of managing tourism flows, with key clear indicators;

- Effective communication means to promote the destination and offers;

- Capacity to use funding opportunities at local, regional, national and EU funding to enable the diversification of the tourism offer, based on identified territorial needs.

2.4.5   How will the action be implemented?

Taking into account the three dimensions and the common enabling factors for effective and innovative diversification of the tourism offer in urban destinations, the following activities are foreseen for the implementation of the action:

1) Collection of information on practices in urban destinations

A dedicated survey will be designed to collect information relevant to existing practices on diversification of tourism offer in destinations. This survey will be disseminated within and outside the partnership in order to reach a wide range of practices across the EU.

To complement the collection of first-hand information from destinations, this activity can also conduct desk research on available studies, reports or materials on the topic of diversification, tourism flows management and decongesting destinations. Whenever relevant, the experience EU funded project could contribute to the wealth of knowledge, including the identified Horizon 2020 projects, relevant tourism innovative actions from the second call for innovative actions of the European Urban Initiative and good practices co-financed by EU cohesion policy funds.

Whenever possible, partners involved in the implementation of the action can feed into this activity with ongoing projects related to diversification of the tourism offer implemented in their respective. For example, the City of Venice, also as partner in the Interreg Italy-Croatia co-financed "REEL" project, will be addressing the common challenge of diversification and relocation of tourist flows in Italy and Croatia by investing in alternative routes based on film settings. The City of Venice is willing to share its expertise in developing digital itineraries that showcase lesser-known locations.

2) Highlighting lessons learned and drafting recommendations.

From the information received, partners will extract the lessons learned, identify good practices and elaborate dedicated practical recommendations for relevant authorities and stakeholders.

These will focus on the following elements that have been identified as key to support the diversification of the tourism offer across the three interconnected dimensions and to strengthen the resilience of urban destinations:

- Development of a system of indicators for measuring and monitoring the diversification of tourism - by identifying the most suitable indicators for measuring and monitoring the development of tourism, the impacts of tourism and the state and changes in the environment caused by its influence. In this way, urban authorities would be able to control the development of tourism in this area in order to see and suppress the negative effects in time and to intensify the positive effects of tourism.

- Zoning and limiting certain tourist activities - by determining different types and sizes of zones, certain tourist activities can be controlled. This applies, for example, to zones adapted to pedestrian traffic, zones of limited vehicle traffic, zones of idle traffic (parking lots), zones related to types of accommodation facilities, zones related to various tourist products and services (e.g. cultural and historical sites, sport and outdoor activities, street festival and markets, coffee shops, bars, night clubs, restaurants, etc.) and others.

- Creation of a system of financial incentives or other policy tools for certain tourist activities - the development of a system of financial incentives or other available tools enables the control of tourist activities, and especially the direction of the development of the desired tourist activities in the city. This refers, for example, to the development of new and innovative tourist products and services, raising the quality of tourist products and services, including also information and visibility campaigns of said products/services and promoting the use of digital tools. This could also include support for thematic (digital) itineraries that contribute to delocalizing flows, enhancing marginal and less traveled areas within the destination and effectively link tourism assets, in line with the growing trend of the slow and the so-called "experiential" tourism.

- Promotion of the principles and goals of sustainable tourism development - sustainable tourism development is the only possible tourism development. In this context, the implementation of marketing campaigns intended especially for internal stakeholders in the destination is inevitable. It is also important to emphasize the principles and objectives of the sustainable development of tourism in this urban destination in communication with the tourist demand in order to attract them outside the main tourist season. As a separate target group, children of preschool and elementary school age, as well as young people who would be included in these programs, stand out.

3) Dissemination of the outcomes and peer learning

To ensure that the recommendations reach the intended target, partners will organise dedicated dissemination activities (such as conferences or workshops), inviting identified good practices to present their experiences.

Partners could also further explore the opportunities offered under the City-to-City exchanges or other capacity building opportunities under the European Urban Initiative, if relevant for the promotion of the recommendations of concrete projects/approaches to the diversification of the tourism offer in urban settings.

2.4.6 What resources are needed?

For the implementation of the action, involved partners will contribute to the design and implementation of the various foreseen activities and outputs according to their respective available knowledge, expertise and interest. In terms of knowledge, expertise on the different dimensions, access to relevant tourism-related networks and survey designs will be key to ensure the effectiveness of the foreseen action. Support from external expertise will be sought to complement where key gaps are identified to reinforce the work behind this action.

While no dedicated funding is foreseen for the implementation of the activities for this action, involved partners can contribute to the collection of best practices and the production of lessons learned and recommendations through the implementation of ongoing projects in their respective cities. These could be considered as practical case studies.

As the action includes a dissemination component, involved partners will also need capacity and dedicated human resources to organise the dedicated events and awareness raising activities.

2.4.7 Are there any risks foreseen?

- Low level of participation in the EU surveys
- Lack of relevant data
- Unclear allocation of responsibilities and limited time frame for the implementation of the activities
- Limited funds
- Limited visibility of the handbook
- Change in the political and regulatory landscape that may affect the implementation of recommendations in urban destinations

2.4.8 Which members of the UAEU Partnership are involved in implementation of the action?

Action Leader(s)
City of Zadar

Contributors
City of Genova

European Commission
City of Šibenik
Ljubljana
Diputacio de Barcelona
Eurocities
City of Venice

2.4.9   What is the timeline of the implementation?
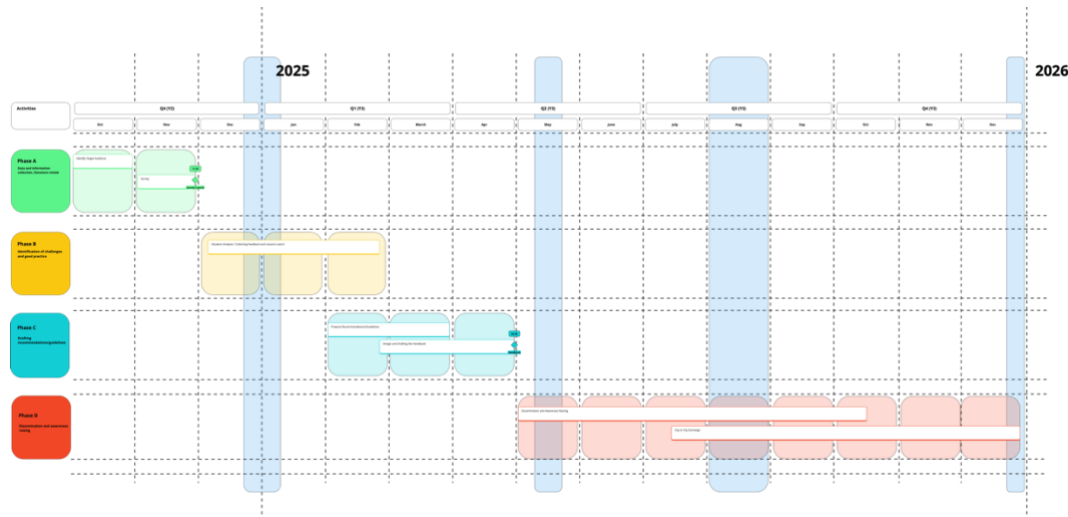
2.4.10 Which outputs will be produced?

- A handbook for urban authorities and other stakeholders compiling the good practices, recommendations and case studies on the different focus elements to foster the diversification of tourism offer.

- Two dedicated workshops to promote the handbook, test the draft recommendations, convey relevant lessons learned and explore identified good practices.

- Three promotional videos dedicated to raise awareness of local community on sustainable tourism.

2.5 Action N° 05 – Destinations accessible for all

Enursing that destinations are accessible for all means recognizing different needs and adapt the tourism offer to the specific needs of different tourist segments in order for tourism destinations to be enjoyed equally by everyone. Accessibility for all to tourism facilities, products, and services should be a central part of any responsible and sustainable tourism policy.

Targeted stakeholders/governance level: Local and regional authorities, Destination marketing organisations, SMEs

Deadline: 30/11/2025
Intermediate Deadline 1: January 2025 - A handbook for creating a suitable environment and assumptions for accessible tourism and tourism for all in urban destinations (based on survey results, previous research, best practices and other relevant literature).
Intermediate Deadline 2: June 2025 - A presentation of best practices of accessible tourism and tourism for all in urban destinations (based on the best practices).
Intermediate Deadline 3: November 2025 - Two workshops on implementation and promotion of accessible tourism and tourism for all.
Intermediate Deadline 4: November 2025 - Three promotional videos dedicated to raise awareness of local community on accessible tourism and tourism for all.

2.5.1 Which of the three pillars is this action contributing to?

Better regulation   Better knowledge

The action will explore opportunities to contribute mainly to the Better Knowledge pillar, seeking to acquire information on accessibility-related challenges and practices in urban destinations. However, given recent relevant legislative developments, the outcomes of the present action can contribute to the better implementation on EU-level accessibility-related legislation, therefore contributing to the Better Regulation pillar.

2.5.2 What is the specific problem?

Various changes in the socio-cultural, political, economic and technological environment have enabled a significant growth of tourist trips, especially in the last 30 years or so. However, despite these improvements, there are different segments of the tourist market, including persons with disabilities and elderly people, that continue to face a wide range

of barriers (be it physical, sensory, cognitive and cultural) before, during and after their stay. At the stage of travel planning, 39% of EU citizens (and higher amongst older persons) indicated in a 2021 Eurobarometer report that information regarding accessibility of destinations for persons with disabilities or reduced mobility was rather difficult or very difficult to find. This barrier is further aggravated by inaccessible infrastructure, services and products, and discriminatory practices directly in the destination, amongst other challenges. It is especially challenging for such segments of tourist demand to travel at a time of high concentration of tourists in destinations, due to large crowds, noise and other restrictions. Moreover, alongside physical and other barriers, high travelling expenses are a key factor discouraging many persons with disabilities from travelling, because they have also specific needs making their travel costs higher than for persons without disabilities.

Accessibility is understood as "vital pre-condition for effective and equal enjoyment of different civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights by persons with disabilities" according to article 9 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), to which the EU and its Member States are state parties. The Convention sets out legal obligations for members to ensure that the physical environment, information and communication, transport, facilities and services provided to the public ensure equal access for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others. This includes identifying and eliminating any barriers to this objective, since such barriers constitute as barriers to equal participation in society of persons with disabilities. These measures should also be applicable in the context of sustainable tourism in order to ensure that everyone can enjoy the destination and experience on an equal basis with others.

Lack of accessibility makes destinations loose on the opportunities that accessible tourism can bring to the local economy and the local population. 1.3 billion people in the world are estimated to experience a significant disability out of which 87 million people are in the EU. Moreover, 20.6% of the EU population is aged 65 or over, almost half of them reporting some form of disability. This constitutes a big segment of the market and population, whose specific needs are not adequately catered. According to the results of the 2021 Eurobarometer study, 39% of EU citizens considered that information on the accessibility of tourism services was a key factor in their choice for destinations.

Therefore, it is extremely important that tourist destinations recognize these different needs and adapt to the specific needs of the mentioned tourist segments in order to ensure the sustainable development of tourism in the destination. Also, the need to include the principle of involving local disability associations to address the topic of accessibility in destinations is necessary.

2.5.3 How do existing EU policies/legislations/ instruments contribute?

Accessibility has been a priority in EU support, including in actions relevant to sustainable tourism. In the last decade, there has been significant progress on EU level legislation in the area of accessibility across many areas, including ICT, product production and copyright law, which indirectly impact the tourism ecosystem. Most recently, the European

Accessibility Act (EAA)[16] obliges economic operators to ensure that products and services in the market are accessible, following key requirements[17].

The Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 is the current main guidance on accessibility for EU level policies and builds on the achievements of previous frameworks. As a key deliverable of said strategy, the Commission presented in September 2023 a proposal for a Directive establishing a European Disability Card and a European Parking Card for persons with disabilities valid in all Member States[18]. These cards will facilitate the cross-border recognition of disability status issues by national competent authorities, complementing existing national cards and certificates. As a result, persons with disabilities would be granted equal access to special conditions and preferential treatment in public and private services. These could include free entry, reduced prices, priority access, personal assistance, braille or audio guides, mobility aids and assistance animals. Political Agreement between the European Parliament and the Council of the EU on the proposal was reached in February 2024[1]. Given that the most common special conditions or preferential treatment are offered in the context of transport, cultural and tourism events and sites, the proposal and its future implementation are a crucial means to facilitate accessibility of urban destinations.

In the context of sustainable tourism and in line with the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, accessibility is also a priority under the Transition Pathway for Tourism (topic 25) and the European Tourism Agenda 2030. Targeted actions call for authorities at different governance levels and relevant stakeholders to raise awareness of the importance of accessibility in tourism, improve accessibility in the provision of tourism services and apply EU rules on accessible public procurement. The recent Plama Declaration of Tourism Ministers [19] also recognized accessibility as a pillar of social sustainability of tourism in line with the relevant EU-level strategic frameworks mentioned above.

To address the knowledge gap and gather all relevant information and good practices on accessibility, the European Commission launched the European Accessibility Resource Centre "AccessibleEU Centre". This one-stop-shop provides capacity building, expert training, monitoring and networking opportunities, including also resources of relevance for tourism.

EU funding also plays an important role in ensuring accessibility, including in the field of tourism. Under Cohesion Policy, accessibility is a horizontal principle to be ensured in all stages of funding (from programme design to implementation of actions and evaluation). In addition, many national, regional and Interreg programmes have programmed dedicated

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[16] Directive 2019/882

[17] These requirements concern certain products and services spelled out in article 2 and 3 and Annex I and III of the European Accessibility Act

[18] In this regard, the Directive establishing the European Disability Card and the European Parking Card for persons with disabilities establishes that Member States shall ensure that public authorities make the information on the special conditions, preferential treatment, and parking conditions and facilities that they offer to persons with disabilities publicly available, including through their websites where available, or by other suitable means. Member States shall also encourage private operators to make information on the special conditions, preferential treatment, and parking conditions and facilities they offer publicly available in accessible formats.

[19] https://spanish-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/news/palma-declaration-path-towards-social-sustainability-tourism-eu/

accessibility interventions to facilitate equal access to services at national and subnational levels across many fields, including under ERDF support for sustainable tourism. Handiscover[20] and ENTOURAGE[21] are examples of supported projects under Horizon 2020, the predecessor of Horizon Europe, looking into different accessibility perspectives in the context of sustainable tourism. Under COSME, the European Commission supported the development of accessible tourism itineraries[22] and fostered accessible entrepreneurship and management[23]. Accessibility is also one of the challenges looked at under the Sustainable EU Tourism project [24]which will gather replicable best practices and offer peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

The European Commission also recognises significant efforts and innovative solutions on accessibility at municipal level. The Access City Award[25] rewards cities for their progress in ensuring physical and virtual urban spaces are accessible for persons with disabilities. Accessibility is also a key dimension evaluated as part of the European Capital of Smart Tourism.

2.5.4 Which action is needed?

Accessible tourism is not called on to be a new type of tourism offering segregated trips only for people with disabilities. Instead, accessibility has to be mainstreamed into all kinds of tourism offers and experience, thus enabling all people to participate in the destination's activities and offers on an equal basis.

It is well known that physical access is a key factor for persons with disabilities to be able to travel. However, it is important to underline that accurate and reliable information about accessibility is crucial for visitors at each stage of their visit. Without such information, both before and during the visit, people with access needs cannot even consider travelling far from home.

Urban tourist destinations are often faced with a lack of sufficient accessible tourism services and infrastructure for persons with specific accessibility needs. Limited knowledge and information about specific needs contribute to limiting the full use of a significant part of the cultural and tourist assets of these areas.

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[20] https://www.handiscover.com/en-US/

[21] https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101032961

[22] A dedicated call for proposals on this topic was launched in 2015 and 2013. The results of selected projects can be accessed in the following links: https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/29421 ; https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/26685

[23] A call for proposals was launched in 2014 and the results of selected projects can be seen in the following links: https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/29422

[24] [1] Sustainable EU Tourism – Shaping the Tourism of Tomorrow - European Commission (europa.eu)

[25] Tthe annual Access City Award recognises EU cities that are making an outstanding effort to become accessible for persons with disabilities. The juries consider measures taken and planned in the areas of built environment and public spaces; transport and related infrastructure; information and communication, including new technologies (ICTs); and public facilities and services. 1st place winner will receive 150,000€; 2nd place winner 120,000€; 3rd place winner 80,000€.

To address this challenge, urban authorities need to conduct a thorough analysis of the destination and of needs of different visitors and facilitate the availability of information on accessibility of tourism sights, services and products. This work requires a close collaboration with all relevant stakeholder in the destination, including with local disability organisations, and additional awareness-raising and trainings for tourism providers, authorities and partners on how best to address these accessibility needs.

The new EU-legislation relevant to accessibility, especially the directive on the European Disability Card and the European Parking Card for persons with disabilities, offer an opportunity to further these efforts for the benefit of a more sustainable tourism offer in urban destinations.

2.5.5 How will the action be implemented?

The following activities are foreseen for the implementation of the action:

1) Collection of information on practices in urban destinations

A dedicated survey will be designed to collect information relevant to existing practices on accessibility in tourism urban destinations. This survey will be disseminated within and outside the partnership in order to reach a wide range of practices across the EU.

To complement the collection of first-hand information from destinations, this activity can also conduct desk research on available studies, reports or materials on the topic of accessibility in tourism. Whenever relevant, the experience EU funded project could contribute to the wealth of knowledge, including the identified Horizon 2020 projects, relevant tourism innovative actions from the second call for innovative actions of the European Urban Initiative and good practices co-financed by EU cohesion policy funds.

Whenever possible, partners involved in the implementation of the action can contribute to this activity with ongoing projects related to diversification of the tourism offer implemented in their respective city. For example, City of Sibenik is a partner in the SITE project - Shaping Inclusive Tourist Experiences, co-financed by ERDF under the 2021-2027 Interreg IT – HR programme. The SITE project aims to increase the attractiveness of tourist destinations in the Programme area and to foster tourism across the year through the cross-border dissemination of the culture of Universal Design (UD) in the tourism ecosystem by promoting social inclusion, participation and sharing also using ICTs to reduce barriers (architectural, sensorial, communicative) that limit access to people with disabilities or other needs, as families and the elderly, favouring non-discriminatory solutions.

2) Identifying good practices, reflecting on lessons learned and drafting recommendations for urban authorities and for better implementation of EU level accessibility regulations.

Following the initial desk research, this activity will consist in pooling all the knowledge collected into a handbook that would cover recommendations, based on best practices and lessons learned, on the following components:

- Mapping and analysis of the existing infrastructure of urban destinations adapted to tourists with different specific needs.

- Development of a one-stop shop or similar wide-ranging solutions to gather all available information about the accessibility of the destination and the availability of special conditions or preferential treatment, to facilitate the communication with persons with specific accessibility needs, and to provide tools to support tourism stakeholders in improving the accessibility of their websites/products/services, in line with the accessibility requirements set forth in Directive 2019/882 (the European Accessibility Act)[26], the soon-to-be adopted Directive on the European Disability Cards and with EU standard EN 301 549[27].

- Developing a system to enhance the accessibility of attractions (approaches, entrances, signs, audio-visual aids, etc.). and the availability of accessible information in tourism sites for persons with disabilities (translation of documents and signs into Braille, adaptation of websites of tourist boards and public institutions for persons with disabilities, placement of signs at different heights, creation of audio-visual guides, etc.).
- Implementation of educational programs intended for tourist workers and guides and other relevant tourism providers and stakeholders related to the needs of persons with disabilities, as well as for the local population.
- Developing specific tourism products, especially routes for persons with different specific disabilities (sound-based routes for blind and partially sighted people, sensory-based routes for deaf and deaf-mute people, etc.).

3) Dissemination of the outcomes

To ensure that the recommendations reach the intended target, partners will organise dedicated dissemination activities (such as conferences or workshops), inviting identified good practices to present their experiences.
Partners could also further explore the opportunities to circulate recommendations to relevant authorities in the context of the implementation of recent relevant EU level legislation in the field of accessibility.

2.5.6 What resources are needed?

There is a need of the availability of expertise in the topic with access to tourism-related networks and knowledge about specific accessibility needs.

The partnership needs the mechanism and expertise to monitor impact of actions. It is very important to have the capacity and human resources to organise dissemination events and encourage awareness raising. Promoting accessible tourism is more successful when

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[26] Directive (EU) 2019/882 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the accessibility requirements for products and services, OJ L 151, 7.6.2019, p. 70–115.
[27] EN 301 549 Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services, ETSI EN 301 549 - V3.2.1 - Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services

carried out through the combined and coordinated efforts of all stakeholders in the tourism sector.

For the implementation of the action, involved partners will contribute to the design and implementation of the various foreseen activities and outputs according to their respective available knowledge, expertise and interest. In terms of knowledge, expertise on the different dimensions, access to relevant tourism-related networks and survey designs will be key to ensure the effectiveness of the foreseen action. Support from external expertise will be sought to complement where key gaps are identified to reinforce the work behind this action.

While no dedicated funding is foreseen for the implementation of the activities for this action, involved partners can contribute to the collection of best practices and the production of lessons learned and recommendations through the implementation of ongoing projects in their respective cities. These could be considered as practical case studies.

As the action includes a dissemination component, involved partners will also need capacity and dedicated human resources to organise the dedicated events and awareness raising activities.

2.5.7 Are there any risks foreseen?

- Low level of participation in the EU surveys
- Lack of sufficient data and expertise on the topic
- Unclear allocation of responsibilities and limited time frame for the implementation of the activities
- Limited funds
- Limited visibility of the handbook
- Changes in the planning of the adoption of relevant EU level legislation

2.5.8 Which members of the UAEU Partnership are involved in implementation of the action?

Action Leader(s)
City of Zadar

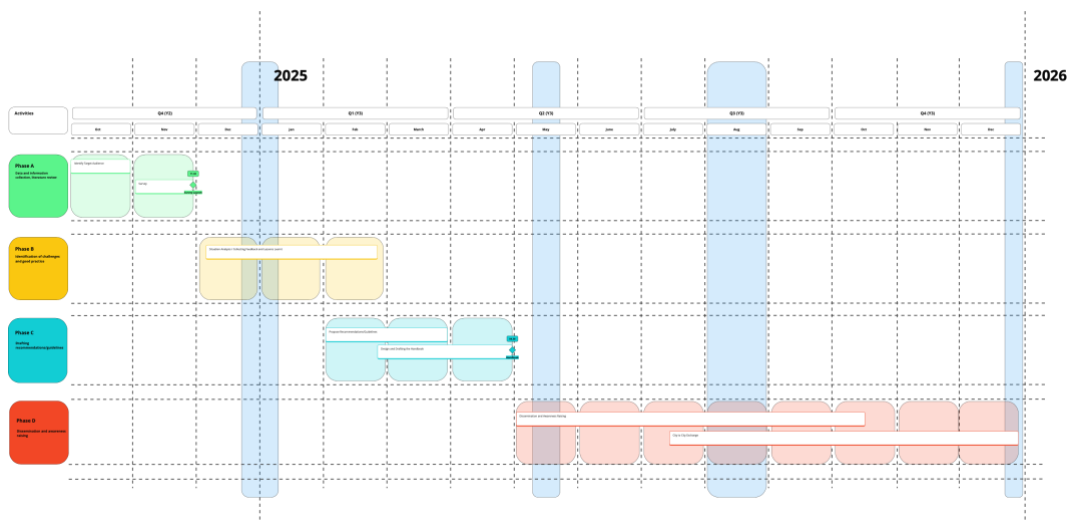**Contributors**
City of Genova
European Commission
City of Šibenik
Ljubljana
Diputacio de Barcelona

2.5.9 What is the timeline of the implementation?

2.5.10 Which outputs will be produced?

- A handbook for creating a suitable environment and assumptions for accessible tourism and tourism for all in urban destinations (based on survey results, previous research, best practices and other relevant literature) – deadline January 2025
- A presentation of best practices of accessible tourism and tourism for all in urban destinations (based on the best practices) – deadline June 2025
- Two workshops on implementation and promotion of accessible tourism and tourism for all – deadline November 2025
- Three promotional videos dedicated to raise awareness of local community on accessible tourism and tourism for all – deadline November 2025

2.6 Action N° 06 – Strategies on Protection of Local Retail as an Asset for Tourism

The action addresses the growing concern of cities towards the 'monoculturalisation' of city centres. The phenomenon, due to increasing number of visitors, impacts local economies and retail infrastructures which then reflect limited diversity. To support the authenticity, attractivity and vibrancy of historical centres as well as a diversified and inclusive local economy, this action seeks to identify and promote good practices in the field.

Targeted stakeholders/governance level: Local Authorities, SMEs
Deadline: 31/12/2025

2.6.1   Which of the three pillars is this action contributing to?

Better knowledge

The action primarily seeks to contribute to the pillar of Better Knowledge. The action will be contributing to existing efforts to gather knowledge on challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned, based on gathering and analysing of good practices. It will serve for evidence-based urban policymaking (informing regulations from local to EU levels and raising awareness among tourists), as well as for providing tailor-made solutions to major challenges.

2.6.2   What is the specific problem?

Tourism is one of the most important and fastest-growing sectors in Europe, which makes a significant direct and indirect positive contribution to EU economic growth, job creation and safeguarding. The Tourism ecosystem is represented by 99.9 % of SMEs and other small stakeholders, most of which consist of micro and small companies is particularly in hotels, bars and restaurants, with many owners operating independently or under franchise from large groups.

Tourism also has far-reaching impacts on and gets impacted by several other sectors such as, amongst others, transport, cultural and creative industries, agri-food, and retail and commerce. In particular, the latter represents a strategic asset for the tourism economy, both in terms of destination attractiveness and economic return. Suffice it to say that, in a region like Catalonia, up to 21% of direct and indirect spending related to tourism goes to the retail sector. In other words, tourism shopping and purchasing activities can be said to be complementary.

However, there are different models of 'tourism spending', that can define the visitor experience. One focused on quantity, feeding the souvenir fast economy; and another more oriented towards quality, supporting local traditional products. Economic benefits coming from retail and commerce activities must be balanced with social and environmental ones. In visiting destinations, incentives to understand the local culture and strengthen social bonds can be provided to inform tourist behaviour. Alongside this, local authorities should be able to implement adequate regulations protecting the health of the local retail economy.

Although after the Covid-19 crisis a shift in travelling habits that led to the configuration of a new 'form tourism', increasingly oriented towards sustainability and responsibility; mass tourism and souvenir business still represents a wide share of tourist commercial activities, leading to the monoculturalisation and touristification of city centres.

2.6.3 How do existing EU policies/legislations/ instruments contribute?

Regulation - EU - 2023/2411 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu) on the protection of geographical indications for craft and industrial products, entered into force on 16 November 2023.
This regulation is a priority for the Commission as Craft and industrial geographical indications contribute to the EU GDP, to intra-EU and external trade, employment, rural development, preservation of cultural heritage and development of tourism in the specific geographical areas.

This new GI system

- gives producers means to legally defend themselves in front of similar products of usually lower quality and boosts businesses since they act as a marketing tool.
- preserves traditional working methods and encourage them to pass on know-how to new generation of workers and craftsmen, retaining workforce.
- gives the opportunity to producers to demonstrate the quality of their products with an EU logo, fostering consumer trust.
- motivates producers to work together since they must agree on the definition of the products territory, characteristics, or enforcing rules and standards and encourages their cooperation with local authorities which in return will support them.
- allows the EU to negotiate trade and other bilateral and multilateral agreements with countries outside EU. Once the GIs are protected through these agreements, they do not have to be registered in these countries and in cases of infringements, the EU can take diplomatic action to stop this. With registration in the EU, the GIs will be protected also in all the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) member countries that are signatories of the Geneva Act on Appellations of Origin and Geographical Indications.

From 1 December 2025, it will be possible to request protection of a geographical indication at EU level for the name of craft and industrial products. In close cooperation with the Commission, Member States and the EUIPO are taking the necessary steps to fully implement the new scheme by December 2025. The Commission is preparing implementing and delegated acts and developing a solid communication and promotion campaign. The first EU CIGIs will be registered in the second half of 2026. On the other hand, the European Commission has also been engaged in or has supported a number of initiatives aimed at

showcasing and supporting local good practices in sustainable tourism. The most relevant are: - EDEN – "European Destinations of Excellence", - the European Capital of Smart Tourism, since 2018; - the ECTN Cultural Tourism award, since 2014, by the European Cultural Tourism Network (ECTN) in partnership with Europa Nostra, the European Travel Commission and NECSTouR, and most recently the European Capital of Small Retail.

2.6.4 Which action is needed?

Proximity economy and retail contribute to creating local value both in socio-economic and marking terms. In fact, they offer job opportunities and anchor commercial and entrepreneurial activities and services locally, thus reinforcing the socio-economic texture of the city and region. On the other hand, they also contribute to the concept of 'place identity', often representing local craftsmanship and traditional culinary products that are part of the cultural and historical DNA of the place and reflect the so-called *'local way of life'*.

To protect the authenticity of city centres and cultural heritage sites as well as to support the health of the retail local economy, adequate regulatory actions and awareness raising initiatives should be undertaken at local and regional level, in line with EU regulations. For instance:

- Issuing local regulations and legislation on tourism-related commercial and catering activities to limit the number of tourist shops and restaurants in the historical centre of the city, in line with the European Services Directive. For instance, the **City Council of Venice** issued a municipal regulation to limit the proliferation of economic activities of low quality, not compatible with the need to protect the cultural heritage and to preserve shops and commercial activities that serve also the residents.

- Developing an awareness raising campaign to inform tourists and visitors about more socially and environmentally responsible behaviours, for instance via:

  - Digital communication campaigns on the cultural, social, and economic value of local craft shops, locally produced goods, and traditional food catering (highlighting the value of local supply chains)

  - the #EnjoyRespectVenezia campaign, which aims to raise awareness about the impact of tourism. This campaign emphasizes the belief that responsible travel can contribute to sustainable development (City of Venice).

  - Competition among local retailers and producers to get the 'locally made' label (Bruges)

- Introducing incentives, such as tax relief or support schemes to encourage the establishment and/or opening of traditional crafts and trades, as well as co- financing marketing initiatives (Šibenik)

- The mapping of the current situation, listing all business premises in the city center and creating suggestions for thematic streets and quarters in the city center,

encouraging the opening of specialized shops (art galleries, tasting rooms, handmade souvenir shops, silent crafts, etc.)

- Organization of sale fairs and events and creating a pleasant shopping atmosphere

- Creation of a "doing business" catalogue and other tools for actively attracting desirable content to city center in accordance with established needs and themes

- Business premises on the ground floor of buildings in the city center can only be used for small local businesses, family-run crafts, boutiques, restaurants, etc.- BETTER REGULATION

- Securing stable local jobs via the year-long support of retail business activities to counter seasonality trends in tourism which affect local employment. (Šibenik)

2.6.5 How will the action be implemented?

To successfully implement the action and achieve the above-mentioned objectives, we will:

- Conduct preliminary desk research and literature review on the topic.

- Together with the support of an expert/expert group* design a meaningful survey to investigate the status of local retail economy in touristic destinations, understanding which successful strategies have been implemented on the ground to limit the monoculturalisation phenomenon.

- Analyse the results and include best practices in a report. The report will be structured as follows: Introduction: state of the art of retail economy in tourist destination; Collection of good practices; Conclusion).

- Organise two to three webinars to present good practices identified via the survey and disseminate the results of report.
- Create and distribute a catalog of business promotion in the city center, desirable business activities and themed streets.

- Leverage

*The expert group will comprise relevant stakeholders and experienced cities in the field.

2.6.6 What resources are needed?
- Identify financial incentives and additional options for financing.
- Commission / External Expertise for survey creation and analysis of results.
- Human resources needed.

2.6.7 Are there any risks foreseen?

- Low level of participation in the surveys
- Lack of data or insufficient data
- Political elections (change in political priorities)
- Limited support from partnership members
- Time to complete the activities and proposed actions
- Limited funds and resources

2.6.8 Which members of the UAEU Partnership are involved in implementation of the action?

Action Leader(s)
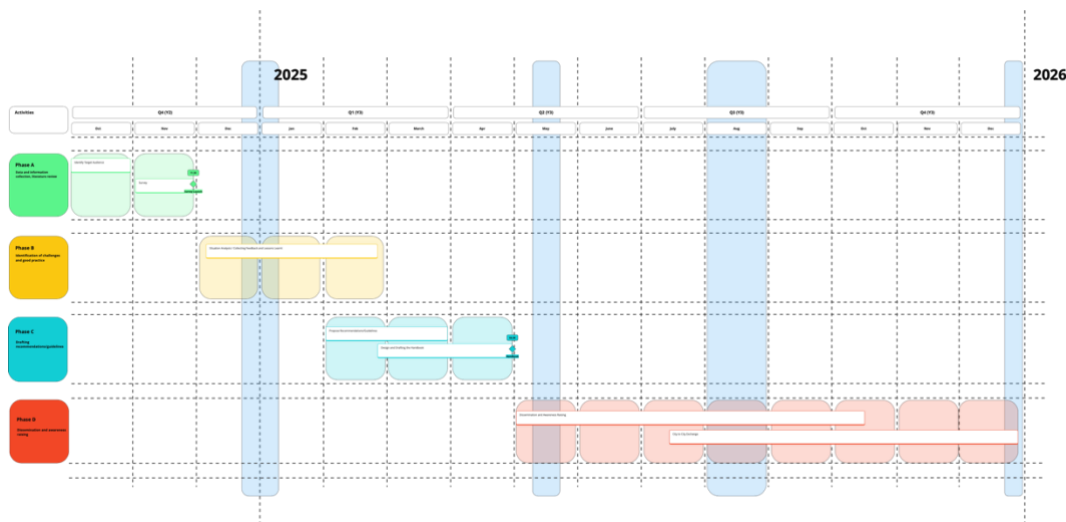Eurocities
Contributors
City of Genoa
DG REGIO & other DGs
DG GROW
City of Šibenik
Visit Valencia

2.6.9 What is the timeline of the implementation?

2.6.10 Which outputs will be produced?

The main output will consist of a report of good practices in the field of sustainable tourism linked to retail. The document will be promoted via:

- Report of good practices in the field
- Two to three online webinars (each including al least: 20 institutions from 7 countries for a total of 50 participants)
- Communication via partners' networks
- Catalogue of business promotion in the city center, desirable business and activities and themed streets.

3 CONTRIBUTION OF THE ACTION PLAN TO EU COMMITMENTS AND GLOBAL FRAMEWORKS

3.1 European dimension

3.1.1 Cross-cutting issues

The complexity of urban challenges requires integrating different policy aspects to avoid contradictory consequences and make interventions in Urban Areas more effective (Pact of Amsterdam clause 12).

Cross-cutting Issues represent key aspects to be considered in the overall work of the Urban Agenda for the EU and its Partnerships. Each Partnership shall therefore consider the relevance of the Cross-cutting Issues (Gijon Agreement clause 5).

The Cross-cutting issues are:

a) Promoting urban policy for the common good, inclusiveness, accessibility, security and equality.
b) Enhancing integrated and innovative approaches, notably through financing and in correlation to the green, digital and just transitions.
c) Supporting effective urban governance, participation, and co-creation.
d) Promoting multi-level governance and cooperation across administrative boundaries.
e) Harmonizing measures at different spatial levels and implementing place-based policies and strategies.
f) Supporting sound and strategic sustainable urban planning, and balanced territorial development.
g) Contributing to the acceleration of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda SDGs, the New Urban Agenda and Habitat III principles.

Cross-cutting Issues	Actions					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Promoting urban policy for the common good, inclusiveness, accessibility, security and equality.			■	■	■	
Enhancing integrated and innovative approaches, notably through financing		■	■	■		

and in correlation to the green, digital and just transitions.		X	X	X		
Supporting effective urban governance, participation, and co-creation.	X			X		
Promoting multi-level governance and cooperation across administrative boundaries.	X			X		X
Harmonising measures at different spatial levels and implementing place-based policies and strategies.			X		X	X
Supporting sound and strategic sustainable urban planning, and balanced territorial development.	X	X				X
Contributing to the acceleration of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda SDGs, the New Urban Agenda and Habitat III principles.	X	X	X	X	X	X

3.1.2   Link to the New Leipzig Charter

The New Leipzig Charter (adopted on 30 November 2020 under German Presidency of the Council of the European Union) provides a key policy framework document for sustainable urban development in Europe. The Charter highlights that cities need to establish integrated and sustainable urban development strategies and ensure their implementation for the city as a whole, from its functional areas to its neighbourhoods. The document is strongly aligned with the Cohesion Policy and its framework for sustainable urban development. Member States agreed to implement the Charter in their national or regional urban policies. The New Leipzig Charter is also accompanied by an Implementing document about the Urban Agenda for the EU.

Action O1: Guidelines for enabling climate-friendly and resilient urban destinations	
The Green City	This action directly aligns with the goal of promoting sustainability and resilience in urban areas by developing guidelines for climate-friendly urban destinations and tourism practices. It addresses the need for integrated and sustainable urban development strategies, as advocated in The Green City dimension of the Charter.
The Just City	
The Productive City	
Action O2: Support for destinations to enable the use of sustainability certifications for the SMEs tourism transition	
The Green City	By encouraging businesses to adhere to environmentally friendly practices, cities can advance their goals of environmental protection and resource conservation, in line with the principles of the New Leipzig Charter's vision for The Green City. Moreover, by reducing the ecological footprint of SMEs, cities can enhance the overall environmental quality and resilience of their urban areas, creating healthier and more sustainable living environments for residents and visitors alike.
The Just City	
The Productive City	By adopting sustainable practices, businesses can improve their long-term viability and resilience, reducing operational costs, and mitigating risks associated with environmental degradation. This contributes to the creation of a more dynamic and resilient urban economy, characterized by diverse and innovative businesses that are better equipped to thrive in a rapidly changing global landscape.
Action O3: Developing competences for tourism professionals and local & regional authorities in the field of digital touristic services & products	
The Green City	
The Just City	
The Productive City	Through the enhancement of digital competencies and the advocacy for digital integration in tourism, urban areas can amplify the effectiveness and competitive edge of their tourism sectors. This fosters a climate of innovation and productivity within urban economies.
Action O4: More resilient and sustainable destinations through diversification of tourism offer	
The Green City	This action mitigates the environmental impact of tourism by diminishing reliance on specific tourism segments, thus easing issues such as seasonality and overcrowding. By broadening the spectrum of activities and attractions, cities can attract a

	more varied visitor demographic, ensuring a more balanced distribution of tourist influx throughout the year.
The Just City	Diversification initiatives contribute to forging more inclusive and equitable urban landscapes by ensuring that the benefits of tourism are equitably distributed among local communities and businesses. Through the promotion of local cultural heritage, support for small-scale tourism ventures, and active engagement with local residents, cities can cultivate a sense of ownership and belonging among their inhabitants, thereby fostering social cohesion.
The Productive City	
Action O5: Destination accessible for all	
The Green City	
The Just City	By promoting accessibility in tourism destinations, cities can create more inclusive and equitable environments that cater to the needs of diverse populations.
The Productive City	
Action O6: Destination accessible for all	
The Green City	
The Just City	This action addresses concerns related to the preservation of local retail and cultural heritage in city centers, promoting a more diverse and inclusive urban environment. By protecting local businesses and supporting traditional crafts and trades, cities can maintain the authenticity and vibrancy of their historical centers while fostering socio-economic diversity.
The Productive City	Supporting local retail and proximity economy contributes to the productivity and economic vitality of cities by creating job opportunities, supporting entrepreneurship, and stimulating local economic growth. By investing in traditional crafts, local food production, and cultural heritage, cities can capitalize on their unique assets and differentiate themselves in the tourism market.

3.2 Global (International) dimension

3.2.1   New Urban Agenda (Habitat III)

The New Urban Agenda was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador, on 20 October 2016. It was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-eighth plenary meeting of the seventy-first session on 23 December 2016.

The New Urban Agenda represents a shared vision for a better and more sustainable future. If well-planned and well-managed, urbanization can be a powerful tool for sustainable development for both developing and developed countries.

The New Urban Agenda (Habitat III) and the UAEU are interlinked instruments at global and macroregional levels which foster a shared approach to sustainable urban development.

The core of the NUA is its Implementation Plan, which is divided into two sections:

    A. Transformative Commitments (NUA paragraphs 23 to 80); and
    B. Effective Implementation (NUA paragraphs 81 to 160).

A. Transformative Commitments

The UAEU contributes to the NUA Transformative Commitments for Sustainable Urban Development. The Transformative Commitments are grouped under the following three categories:

- Sustainable urban development for social inclusion and ending poverty (NUA paragraphs 25-42); and
- Sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all (NUA paragraphs 43-62); and
- Environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development (NUA paragraphs 63-80).

B. Effective Implementation

The NUA outlines five main pillars: (1) national urban policies, (2) urban legislation and regulations, (3) urban planning and design, (4) local economy and municipal finance, and (5) local implementation. These pillars are laid out across the following three sub-sections:

- Building the Urban Governance Structure: Establishing a Supportive Framework (NUA paragraphs 85-92)
- Planning and Managing Urban Spatial Development (NUA paragraphs 93-125)
- Means of Implementation (NUA paragraphs 126-160)

The Action Plan contributes to the UN New Urban Agenda (NUA) by aligning with its transformative commitments for sustainable urban development and supporting effective implementation through various pillars and sub-sections.

Sustainable Urban Development for Social Inclusion and Ending Poverty:
The Action Plan addresses this category by promoting social inclusion and poverty reduction through actions such as developing competencies for tourism professionals (Action 3) and supporting destinations to enable the use of sustainability certifications for SMEs (Action 2). These actions aim to enhance economic opportunities and empower local communities, thereby contributing to social inclusion and poverty.

Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Prosperity and Opportunities for All:
Actions such as diversifying tourism offerings (Action 4) and ensuring accessibility for all (Action 5) contribute to this category by promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth in urban destinations. By expanding tourism products and services and ensuring equal access to tourism opportunities, these actions create economic opportunities for all residents and support inclusive urban prosperity.

Environmentally Sustainable and Resilient Urban Development:
The Action Plan also supports environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development through actions such as enabling climate-friendly and resilient urban destinations (Action 1) and diversifying tourism offers (Action 4). By promoting climate-friendly practices, reducing dependence on specific tourism segments, and addressing issues such as seasonality and overcrowding, these actions contribute to building resilience and sustainability in urban destinations.

In terms of effective implementation, the Action Plan aligns with the pillars and sub-sections outlined in the NUA:

Building the Urban Governance Structure: The Action Plan establishes a supportive framework for sustainable tourism development by promoting collaboration among stakeholders, enhancing competencies, and facilitating the dissemination of best practices.

Planning and Managing Urban Spatial Development: Actions such as enabling climate-friendly destinations (Action 1) and supporting destinations to use sustainability certifications (Action 2) contribute to planning and managing urban spatial development by promoting sustainable land use and infrastructure development.

Means of Implementation: The Action Plan provides means of implementation for sustainable tourism development through capacity building, knowledge sharing, and stakeholder engagement, thereby supporting the effective implementation of the NUA.

3.2.2   The Sustainable Developments Goals of the UN

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. Central in the document are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Action Plan contributes to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

The Action Plan focuses on enhancing urban sustainability through initiatives such as greening cities, promoting sustainable tourism, and improving accessibility for all. These efforts align with Goal 11's objective of making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

Goal 13: Climate Action

By promoting climate-friendly urban development strategies, implementing nature-based solutions, and addressing climate-related challenges such as seasonality and resilience, the Action Plan contributes to mitigating climate change and its impacts, in line with Goal 13.
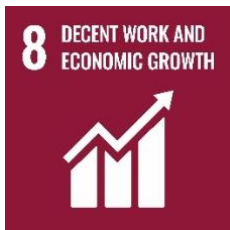
Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Through actions aimed at diversifying tourism offerings, supporting local retail businesses, and enhancing competencies among tourism professionals, the Action Plan fosters economic growth and decent work opportunities within urban areas, aligning with Goal 8.

Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being

The Action Plan's emphasis on promoting equitable access to green spaces, enhancing public health through urban greening initiatives, and improving the overall well-being of urban residents contributes to achieving Goal 3 by ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages.

Goal 10: Reduced Inequality

By promoting inclusive urban prosperity, equitable access to tourism opportunities, and social inclusion through greening initiatives, the Action Plan contributes to reducing inequalities within urban communities, thereby supporting Goal 10.

3.2.3   The Paris Agreement adopted at COP21

The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. It was adopted by 196 Parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France, on 12 December 2015. Its overarching goal is to hold' the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels' and pursue efforts 'to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.'

Since 2020, countries have been submitting their national climate action plans, known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs). Each successive NDC is meant to reflect an increasingly higher degree of ambition compared to the previous version.

Source: The Paris Agreement (2015). What is the Paris agreement? https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement (Accessed: February 16, 2024).

Enhancing Resilience:

Through actions aimed at promoting resilience in urban destinations, such as diversification of tourism offerings and development of climate-resilient infrastructure, the Action Plan helps cities adapt to the impacts of climate change. By building resilience, cities can better withstand extreme weather events and other climate-related challenges, aligning with the goals of the Paris Agreement to enhance adaptive capacity and strengthen resilience to climate-related hazards.

Supporting Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs):

The Action Plan's focus on implementing sustainable urban development strategies aligns with countries' efforts to enhance the ambition of their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) over time. By implementing measures outlined in the Action Plan, cities and regions can contribute to achieving the targets set out in their respective NDCs, thereby supporting the overall objectives of the Paris Agreement.

4 MONITORING

Action	Action Leader	Targeted stakeholders/ governance level	Deadline	State of Play
Action n°1 Guidelines for enabling climate-friendly and resilient urban destinations	Diputacio de Barcelona	Local & Regional Authorities DMOs SMEs	31/12/2025	
Action n°2 Support for destinations to enable the use of sustainability certifications for the SMEs tourism transition	Municipality of Heraklion	Local & Regional Authorities DMOs SMEs	31/12/2025	
Action n°3 Developing competences for tourism professionals and local & regional authorities in the field of digital touristic services & products	Rhein-Neckar Association	Local & Regional Authorities Tourism Professionals Professionals Developing digital services/products National Authorities related to Tourism Policy	31/12/2025	
Action n°4	City of Zadar	Local & Regional Authorities	31/12/2025	

More resilient and sustainable destinations through diversification of tourism offer		DMOs SMEs		
Action n°5 Destination accessible for all	City of Zadar	Local & Regional Authorities DMOs SMEs	31/12/2025	
Action n°6 Strategies on Protection of Local Retail as an Asset for Tourism	Eurocities	Local & Regional Authorities SMEs	31/12/2025	