Urban Agenda for the EU

Guidelines for enabling climate-friendly and resilient urban destinations

EUROPEAN URBAN INITIATIVE

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Objectives of the Partnership

The Sustainable Tourism Partnership seeks to advocate for sustainable tourism by raising awareness and educating stakeholders, citizens, and policymakers about its benefits and challenges. The overarching goal is **to leverage the economic, social, and environmental opportunities of sustainable tourism to foster a balanced and resilient recovery, promote inclusivity, and drive innovation**. A key focus is addressing the unique challenges of urban tourism, recognizing its critical role in fostering sustainable socioeconomic development within urban environments.

To achieve these objectives, the partnership promotes collaboration among Member States, cities, the European Commission, and other stakeholders. This collaborative framework aims to develop effective policies to address the specific needs of urban areas, as highlighted in the Pact of Amsterdam (2016). The partnership emphasizes a co-creation and co-implementation process, as outlined in the Transition Pathway for Tourism, with a commitment to fully implement strategies that are co-developed.

Recognizing tourism's pivotal role in urban policy, the partnership advocates for tailored strategies for sustainable urban tourism that consider local characteristics and needs. Due to the complexity of urban tourism, the partnership calls for a multi-level governance approach involving stakeholders at different scales. On a broader level, the partnership seeks to strengthen the joint vision of the EU's multilevel, multi-stakeholder cooperation framework on sustainable tourism, as outlined in the Transition Pathway for Tourism and the European Tourism Agenda 2030.

In line with the European Commission's principles of Better Regulation and the Pact of Amsterdam, the partnership has developed an Action Plan aimed at helping cities implement existing EU initiatives. The Action Plan focuses on streamlining access to EU funding (Better Funding), promoting combined financing from EU funds, enhancing the knowledge base on urban tourism issues, and facilitating the exchange of best practices (Better Knowledge). Through these efforts, the partnership aims to support cities in adopting sustainable tourism practices and driving positive change at both local and EU levels.

Within the parternship's action plan, this document responds to action 1 which aimed to generate guidelines focused on how urban destinations can develop climate action plans, communicate them, promote climate-friendly offer, attract climate-friendly demand, and promote better tourists' behavior within destinations. Precisely for that purpose, the present document includes real cases of destinations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism destinations across Europe are increasingly at the frontline of climate change. They face rising temperatures, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, extreme weather events, and shifts in visitor behaviour, all of which challenge the sustainability and resilience of their tourism economies. At the same time, tourism itself contributes significantly to global greenhouse gas emissions, resource consumption, and land-use pressures—often in areas already under environmental stress. In response to this dual role—both impacted by and contributing to climate change—destinations must transition urgently and systematically toward climate action. However, many local and regional authorities face critical barriers: limited resources, fragmented data, institutional complexity, and a lack of tailored planning guidance for the tourism sector.

This document, Guidelines for enabling climate-friendly and resilient urban destinations, is developed within the framework of the **European Urban Initiative (EUI)**. It aims to bridge the gap between high-level climate commitments and practical, on-the-ground action in tourism contexts. The guidelines are rooted in **the Glasgow Declaration**, and takes into account other initiatives like the existing **Blueprint for Tourism Climate Action Plans**, the accompanying **Toolkit for Regions and Destinations**, as well as other best practices and guidelines produced by European institutions, networks and European Territorials Cooperation framework, namely the **EU Transition Pathway for Tourism**, **European Green Deal** and **Green Leaf Award**, DG REFORM flagship Technical Support project "**Support to the tourism ecosystem: towards a more sustainable, resilient and digital tourism**", DG GROW funded "**Sustainable EU Tourism – Shaping the Tourism of Tomorrow**" project and many more. This guide seeks to operationalize them, providing interpretive support, illustrative examples, and direction for their implementation.

Objectives of the Document

The goal is to support destinations not only in understanding what needs to be done, but also how to do it—through inclusive governance, data-informed decision-making, and a strong alignment with international climate goals. With this in mind, the document aims to:

- Support local and regional authorities—especially those responsible for tourism planning and management—in designing and delivering effective, inclusive, and measurable Climate Action Plans (CAPs).
- Provide a structured, practical methodology that integrates existing resources (Blueprint, Toolkit, Scheduler, Action Planner, CAP Template) into a coherent and accessible guidance document.
- Align destination-level action with key international and European frameworks, especially the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism, the EU Green Deal, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Facilitate a shift from reactive, project-based efforts to systemic and participatory climate governance in tourism destinations.
- Promote peer learning and replicability by showcasing examples of actions, indicators, and governance models from real-world destinations.

Through this guidance, destinations are invited not only to plan for climate action but to reimagine tourism itself as a force for regeneration, resilience, and equity.

2. GUIDELINES

The following guidelines are designed to provide a step-by-step roadmap for destinations seeking to develop and implement a Climate Action Plan (CAP) tailored to the tourism sector. They build upon the foundations laid by the **Blueprint (Community4Tourism, 2024) and Toolkit (Natour4CChange, 2024)**, and are aligned with the **Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism**, ensuring consistency with global best practices.

Each guideline corresponds to a critical phase or pathway in the climate planning journey—beginning with internal preparation, moving through governance and analysis, and culminating in action, communicating, financing, and accountability. This structure reflects the real-world progression of climate planning processes, while allowing for flexibility based on the specific context and starting point of each destination.

Importantly, these guidelines are not prescriptive checklists, but rather a practical and adaptable framework. Destinations may choose to move sequentially through each phase, or focus on specific areas depending on their institutional capacity, stakeholder engagement status, or existing climate commitments.

Real tourism destination cases

The guidelines include 20 real tourism destination cases organised by each of the five Glasgow Declaration Pathways:

Measure

- Emission Measurement & Destination Monitoring - Visit Flanders - Belgium
- Tourism Destination Carbon Footprint Measurement - Valencia - Spain
- Protocol for the Calculation of Events Carbon Footprint - Andalusia - Spain
- Visitors Carbon Footprint & Offsetting - Donostia/San Sebastián - Spain

Decarbonise

- Model for mobility and pedestrian networks - Porto - Portugal
- Car-free Avenue - Tartu - Estonia
- Water Management - Benidorm - Spain
- Traffic regulation zone Dubrovnik's Historic Old City - Dubrovnik - Croatia
- Net Zero Hotel Radisson Red Oslo City Center - Oslo - Norway

Regenerate

- Addressing Heat waves in Urban Areas - Lisbon - Portugal
- Torino's inclusion in the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme - Turin - Italy
- Green Regeneration of Industrial Zone - Llepaja - Latvia

Collaborate

- CopenPay - Copenhagen - Denmark
- Visit Scotland Business Support Hub - Scotland - UK
- NECSTouR Climate HUB

Finance

- Grants for Sustainable Tourism - Valencia - Spain
- Sustainable Tourism Funds - Region Occitanie - France
- Support Towards Green Key Label and Green Destination Label - Estonia
- Grants for Carbon footprint measurement, Climate Action planning and Circularity - Gorbeia - Spain
- Ecotax - Balearic Islands - Spain

1

Prepare Yourself to develop your Climate Action Plan

Why Preparation Matters

Developing a Climate Action Plan (CAP) is not simply a technical exercise. It is a strategic, institutional, and political undertaking that requires a solid foundation before actions can be meaningfully proposed or implemented. Destinations—whether cities, regions, or protected areas—operate within complex governance systems, involve diverse stakeholders, and face a wide array of climate risks and tourism-related environmental challenges.

This is why preparation is not a preliminary step, but a central part of climate planning. Without it, even well-intentioned strategies risk becoming disconnected from local realities, unfeasible due to lack of capacity or support, or misaligned with broader legislative and funding frameworks. Preparation ensures that:

- The organizational structure and internal resources are fit to lead or coordinate the plan.
- There is an awareness of existing climate and tourism-related commitments, at all levels of governance.
- The destination is equipped to act strategically, inclusively, and transparently throughout the planning and implementation process.

Ultimately, effective preparation increases legitimacy, strengthens ownership, and enhances the chances of successful climate action over the long term.

A significant strength of the current planning environment is that destinations no longer need to start from scratch. A coherent set of resources has already been developed to help tourism destinations prepare, design, and implement climate action plans. These include:

- **The Blueprint for Tourism Climate Action Plans (Community4Tourism, 2024):**
  This document provides a comprehensive framework, guiding principles, and thematic logic for CAP development. It ensures alignment with key international frameworks, including the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism, and offers specific guidance on how to integrate mitigation, adaptation, biodiversity protection, and systems thinking into planning processes.

- **The Climate Action Planning Toolkit for Regions and Destinations (Natour4CChange, 2024),** which includes:
  - A **Scheduler**: a time-based, step-by-step template to organize planning activities across months and weeks.
  - An **Action Planner**: a matrix that helps destinations prioritize climate-related actions based on factors like urgency, cost, internal capacity, and tourism impact.
  - **Action Examples**: a rich database of climate actions undertaken by other destinations to serve as inspiration and reference.
  - A **CAP (Climate Action Plan) Template**: a structured format that destinations can adapt and populate as their own planning process evolves.
- **UN Tourism and One Planet resources related to Glasgow Declaration,** which includes:
  - **Case Study Repository:** A curated collection of real-world examples from signatories, showing how destinations and businesses adopt each pathway.
  - **Policy Guidance for National Tourism Administrations**: A handbook to help integrate tourism climate action into national policy, with examples and recommendations for the five pathways.
  - **Engagement Pack for National Tourism Administrations**: A toolkit offering step-by-step guidance for policymakers starting with the Glasgow Declaration, including stakeholder coordination and action planning.
  - **UNEP's Recommended Actions**: A framework of early-stage actions for signatories to include in climate strategies.
  - **Glasgow Declaration Implementation Report (2023)**: An overview of over 400 signatory updates, highlighting progress, implementation challenges, and opportunities across the five pathways.

Together, these resources offer **not just tools, but a method**—rooted in practicality and real-world application—that destinations can adapt to their specific contexts. They were created based on collaborative work with local and regional authorities and validated through pilot cases, ensuring their relevance and usability.

Important note: The purpose of this guideline document is not to duplicate the content of the Blueprint or the Toolkit. Instead, it aims to **support their implementation**, provide additional interpretation, and guide destinations through the strategic reasoning behind each step. These documents should be understood as **core companions** to this guideline, referenced and used consistently throughout.

Having grounded your climate action planning in the logic and tools described above, the next essential components involve:

- **Defining Governance Structures**: Who will lead the process? Who needs to be involved? What forms of coordination, accountability, and stakeholder participation are required to ensure the plan is co-owned and deliverable?
- **Conducting a Situational Analysis**: What is the destination's climate and tourism-related reality? What data and assessments already exist? Where are the main vulnerabilities, emission sources, and pressures on ecosystems?

These are not just technical steps. They are fundamental for creating a **legitimate, context-aware, and strategically sound action plan**. Sections 2 and 3 of this document will delve into these areas in detail, building directly on the foundational work set out in the Blueprint and Toolkit.

2

Governance

Governance is not merely a structural aspect of planning—it is the **core operating system** through which climate action is imagined, decided, resourced, and implemented. In the context of tourism destinations, governance plays a particularly vital role due to:

- The **multi-sectoral nature of tourism**, involving transport, energy, environment, infrastructure, and culture.
- The need to **balance public, private, and community interests**.
- The long timelines required for climate mitigation and adaptation strategies to bear fruit.
- The frequent mismatch between **administrative jurisdictions and tourism ecosystems**.

A sound governance structure ensures that the climate action plan is institutionally embedded, interdepartmentally supported, and co-created with relevant stakeholders, thereby enhancing its legitimacy, resilience, and adaptability over time.

Key Governance Principles

Effective climate action governance in destinations should be grounded in the following principles:

1. Mandate and Leadership

There must be a **clear institutional mandate to lead the CAP process**—whether it's a Destination Management Organization (DMO), a regional tourism board, or a local public authority. This entity should have:

- The political and administrative legitimacy to coordinate climate action.
- Internal capacity or access to technical support.
- Authority to convene stakeholders across sectors and levels of government

Refer to the Toolkit's Scheduler section 2.4 for detailed prompts on securing this organizational mandate.

2. Vertical and Horizontal Coordination

Climate action in tourism requires coordination:

- **Vertically**, across local, regional, national, and European levels of governance.
- **Horizontally**, across departments such as tourism, environment, mobility, energy, and public works.

This includes integrating climate priorities into existing planning instruments like destination management plans, urban mobility plans, or biodiversity strategies.

3. Transparency and Accountability

Governance systems must include mechanisms for:

- Tracking progress on actions (e.g. indicators, dashboards).
- Public communication of results.
- Assigning roles and responsibilities for implementation and review.

Participatory Action: Governance as a Shared Process

Perhaps most critically, governance in climate planning must be participatory. Climate change affects communities unequally, and tourism decisions have direct implications for residents, workers, businesses, and visitors. Therefore, climate action planning must:

- **Engage the voices of local stakeholders** early and meaningfully.
- Reflect the experiences of vulnerable and underrepresented groups.
- Promote **collaborative decision-making** rather than top-down prescriptions.

The Blueprint underscores this point, emphasizing that "a plan designed in isolation—without community input—is unlikely to succeed in implementation or long-term buy-in".

Recommended stakeholders to include:

- Local tourism businesses and associations
- Environmental NGOs and climate researchers
- Public transport operators and urban planners
- Cultural actors and community organizations
- Residents, especially those impacted by tourism pressures
- Youth and future generations

Tools such as focus groups, participatory workshops, surveys, and deliberative forums can be used throughout the process, not just in consultation phases.

Institutionalizing Participation

Participation should not be an isolated event, but rather:

- **Institutionalised** through formal structures (e.g. climate action working groups, steering committees, stakeholder advisory panels).
- **Resourced** through budget, facilitation, and communication channels.
- **Monitored** to ensure inclusivity, representativity, and continuity.

Destinations should also identify **existing collaborative platforms** (e.g. regional tourism observatories, innovation hubs, participatory budgeting forums) that can be mobilized to support the CAP process.

Governance as a Living System

Finally, governance structures should be understood as dynamic. Climate action is not linear. Plans will need to be adapted in response to evolving scientific knowledge, stakeholder feedback, and implementation outcomes. A well-designed governance model anticipates this by:

- Embedding **feedback loops**.
- Scheduling **regular evaluations**.
- Ensuring that **learnings are institutionalised** into future policy and programming.

3 Situation Analysis

No two destinations face the same climate risks, emission sources, governance contexts, or tourism pressures. **A Climate Action Plan must be grounded in a thorough understanding of the destination's unique situation**—socially, environmentally, institutionally, and economically. This ensures that proposed actions:

- Are relevant and proportionate to actual risks and vulnerabilities.
- Build upon existing initiatives and capacities rather than duplicating efforts.
- Are strategically targeted to deliver maximum impact with available resources.
- Can be effectively monitored, with measurable baselines and contextual indicators.

A well-executed situation analysis supports the CAP in being **evidence-based, tailored, and justifiable**—essential qualities for implementation, stakeholder trust, and future funding opportunities.

Key Dimensions to Explore

The Blueprint and Toolkit recommend analysing the situation through four major lenses, each of which aligns with a practical component of CAP design. The goal is not to collect data for its own sake, but to inform priority-setting, stakeholder engagement, and action development.

1. Existing Climate-Related Policies, Plans, and Actions

Rather than planning in isolation, the CAP should map and build upon:

- International and EU frameworks (e.g. Paris Agreement, EU Green Deal, Transition Pathway for Tourism).
- National and regional legislation (already developed climate diagnosis, climate plans and laws). Current local climate actions by the destination, its departments, and civil society.
- Tourism-related sustainability efforts, even if not labelled as "climate actions."

The Toolkit's Scheduler Sections 2.1–2.3 and Action Examples document are particularly useful here, along with the CAP Template for organizing findings.

2. Climate and Biodiversity Risk

Understanding the key risks posed by climate change to the destination—its ecosystems, communities, and tourism infrastructure—is the first analytical step. This includes:

- Physical risks: heatwaves, drought, coastal erosion, flooding, wildfires.
- Biodiversity threats: habitat fragmentation, species loss, ecosystem degradation.
- Socioeconomic vulnerabilities: impacts on public health, marginalized groups, and local economies.
- Impacts on tourism: infrastructure disruption, seasonality shifts, insurability issues, safety perception.

The Toolkit's Scheduler Section 1.2 and Blueprint (pp. 12–13) provide guiding questions and recommended resources such as national risk assessments, the IPCC, and the European Climate Risk Assessment (EUCRA).

3. Tourism's Contributions to Climate Change

A meaningful CAP must address the **emissions and environmental pressures associated with tourism activities**, even if exact data is limited. Areas to explore include:

- GHG emissions from transport, accommodation, events, and infrastructure.
- Supply chain impacts (e.g. food systems, construction, water usage, waste).
- Land use and ecological footprint of tourism developments.

As noted in the Blueprint and Glasgow Declaration guidance, **precise data is less important than directional understanding**. Benchmarking with other destinations or using proxy tools (e.g. CO2rism, Finnish Visitor Survey) can provide usable insights.

Methods and Sources

A robust situation analysis should draw on both **quantitative and qualitative inputs**, including:

- Environmental and social datasets (Climate observatories, Statistics Institutes).
- Municipal and regional plans, reports, and GIS maps.
- Community consultations and stakeholder workshops (to capture local knowledge).
- Existing research and assessments from academic institutions and NGOs.

Where resources are limited, destinations should consider phasing the analysis—starting with available data and deepening over time, or focusing on priority zones (e.g. protected areas, coastal zones).

Output: A Strategic Baseline for Action

The result of the situation analysis should be a **diagnosis document or chapter** that:

- Summarizes climate and biodiversity risks to the destination.
- Identifies the destination's tourism-related contributions to climate change.
- Maps existing climate policies and actions already in place.
- Highlights institutional strengths and weaknesses.
- Establishes a **baseline for future monitoring** and action prioritization.

This diagnosis forms the basis for the next sections of the CAP, where **actions will be identified and aligned** with the Glasgow Declaration pathways.

4

Measure

Measuring is the foundational action from which all other climate strategies emerge. For urban destinations, this means establishing a solid emissions baseline—covering both territorial and tourism-related sources—and identifying high-impact sectors where interventions can be most effective. It involves selecting internationally recognised standards (e.g., GHG Protocol, ISO 14064, CRREM) and developing local data partnerships, including with tourism operators, utilities, transport agencies, and digital platforms.

Across the destinations analysed in this publication, one key lesson emerges: robust measurement frameworks generate trust, mobilise cross-sector participation, and allow cities to translate climate goals into operational roadmaps. Destinations that start by mapping their most emission-intensive activities—mobility, energy use, infrastructure, and accommodation—are better positioned to prioritise actions, attract funding, and communicate progress transparently. In several cases, even partial but verified footprints helped unlock national or European support.

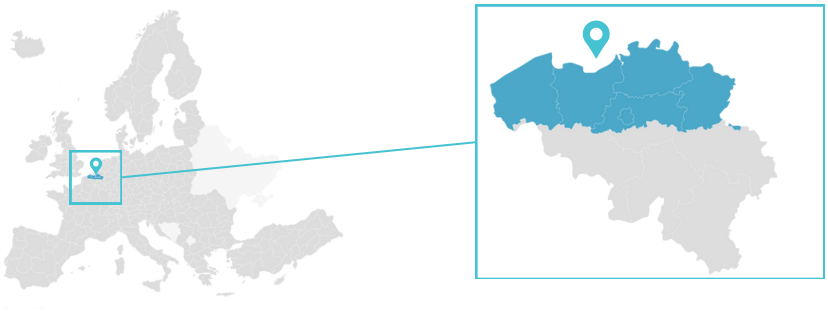
The cases included are:

- Emission Measurement & Destination Monitoring - Visit Flanders - Belgium
- Tourism Destination Carbon Footprint Measurement - Valencia - Spain
- Protocol for the Calculation of Events Carbon Footprint - Andalusia - Spain
- Visitors Carbon Footprint & Offsetting - Donostia/San Sebastián - Spain

4

Emission Measurement & Destination Monitoring

Flanders, Belgium



CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Flanders is a densely populated, popular tourism region in Belgium with significant visitor flows from many foreign source markets. With climate goals tightening in Europe, Visit Flanders recognized that understanding the carbon footprint of incoming tourism is essential for intelligent, targeted mitigation strategies. This is part of the VISIT FLANDERS ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMME. The challenge was to move from generic estimates to market-specific, destination-level emissions data or specific emissions data for certain sub-sectors (e.g. cruises) that can inform policy, marketing, and infrastructure planning.

OBJECTIVE

To quantify and monitor greenhouse gas emissions of transportation, accommodation and activities associated with inbound tourism from the twelve largest source markets, and transport related emissions of all other international markets, integrate those figures into the Flanders Destination Barometer, assess the emissions impact of sea and river cruises and benchmark overall sustainability performance through international indexes.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

- Together with Breda University, Visit Flanders calculated transportation, accommodation and activities emissions for the 12 largest tourism source markets and transportation emissions from all other international markets and integrated them into the Destination Barometer.
- In 2019, a separate comprehensive study estimated the ecological impacts of sea and river cruise tourism in Flanders (ports, vessels, passengers) with both economic and environmental dimensions.
- Since 2019, Visit Flanders participates in the GDS-Index, measuring 70 sustainability indicators annually.
- The Destination Barometer includes emissions as environmental indicators alongside social and economic metrics.

If you want to know more please contact:
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HOW?

- Collaboration with Breda University for methodological design, data collection, and emissions modeling.
- Use of tourism flows data (visitor numbers, average stay, origin markets) to estimate transport emissions for each market.
- Use of market surveys for emissions modelling of accommodations and activities of 12 main markets.
- Commissioned a dedicated cruise impact study, analyzing ship operations, passenger behavior, fuel usage, port operations, and emissions.
- Integration of emissions figures and environmental metrics into the Destination Barometer, mapping trends over time.
- Annual participation in the GDS-Index: benchmarking, third-party evaluation, and receiving performance recommendations.

WHY DID IT WORK?

- Institutional commitment: Visit Flanders embedded sustainability and measurement into its core mandate (Ecological Sustainability Programme).
- Collaboration with academic partners enabled rigor and credibility in modeling and methodology.
- The Destination Barometer framework already existed; adding emission indicators fit smoothly into the existing measurement architecture.
- Benchmarking via GDS-Index created external accountability, peer comparison, and motivation for improvement.
- The cruise study filled a data gap and allowed targeted interventions in a high-emission tourism segment.

DID PART OF IT NOT WORK? WHY?

- The cruise study, while detailed, may still underestimate indirect emissions (supply chains, upstream fuel production) and may not capture real-time changes in cruise operations.
- Emission estimates for visitor transport rely on modeled assumptions (e.g. modes of transport, occupancy, route choices) which introduce uncertainty.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- Destination-level measurement of visitor emissions is feasible when anchored in strong partnerships and institutional will.
- Adding emission metrics to existing destination monitoring systems helps institutional uptake and coherence.
- Specialized segments (e.g., cruise) demand dedicated studies rather than generic averages.
- Regular updates, data validation, and scenario revision are essential to maintain relevance and accuracy.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

- Visit Flanders — lead agency initiating and integrating the measurement efforts.
- Breda University — academic partner for emissions modeling of source markets.
- Researchers from Visit Flanders and consultants contracted by Visit Flanders for market surveys and the cruise impact study.
- GDS-Index (external benchmarking organisation) evaluating performance.
- Local port authorities, cruise companies, tourism businesses (for gathering vessel and passenger data).
- Regional data agencies and statistical offices supporting visitor flow and accommodation data.

WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ACTION(S)?

- Policy-makers and planners gain clearer guidance on where emission reductions can be targeted (transport, accommodation, cruise).
- Visit Flanders itself and the DMO community, with a more credible evidence base and benchmarking to steer sustainability strategies.

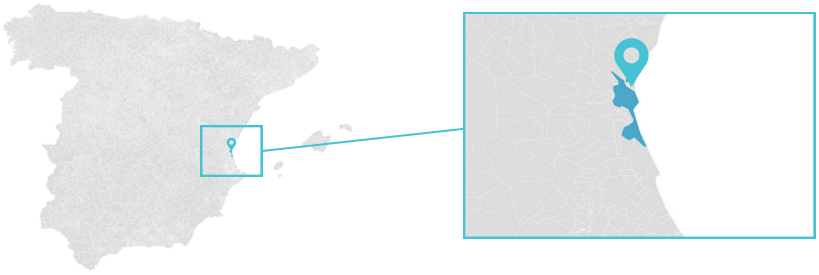
BUDGET INVESTED TO LAUNCH AND TO MAINTAIN

Funding sources: research budget of Visit Flanders.

4

Tourism Destination Carbon Footprint Measurement

Spain, Valencia



CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Valencia, European Green Capital 2024, European Capital of Smart Tourism 2022, a dynamic Mediterranean city with a population of nearly 800,000, welcomed over 6 million overnights in 2024 and it faces growing challenges related to climate change, urbanization, and tourism pressure. As a coastal destination, the city is particularly exposed to rising temperatures, sea level rise, and extreme weather events and as such the city sees tourism as part of the solution. A lack of standardized methodologies for monitoring tourism's carbon footprint made it difficult for the city to establish baselines and design effective mitigation actions. Recognizing these challenges, the City of Valencia set out to become a pioneer in sustainable urban tourism by measuring and reducing the carbon footprint generated by tourism activities. This effort required coordination between municipal departments, the tourism sector, and environmental experts, alongside access to reliable data and the political will to integrate climate goals into tourism planning.

OBJECTIVE

The main objective was to quantify the carbon footprint of tourism activity in Valencia to establish a scientific baseline, inform data-driven policy, raise stakeholder awareness, and guide effective strategies toward decarbonizing the tourism sector while improving sustainability performance.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

- Valencia became the first city in the world to scientifically measure and publish the full carbon footprint of its tourism activity.
- The achievement positioned Valencia as a global leader in climate-responsible urban tourism. This international recognition helped within internal stakeholders of the city itself, so that they could see the role that tourism can play as part of the solution also.
- The data was used to identify emission sources across the tourism value chain and define targeted actions to reduce them.
- This achievement was a catalyst for tourism businesses to start measuring it as well and taking measures to reduce it.

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HOW?

Visit Valencia Foundation and Global Omnium, entity to which Valencia Water Foundation pertains, signed an agreement to collaborate. The city was very interested in moving forward, but it was not clear how to. At the same time Global Omnium, was interested in defining this methodology for the city, to design it together and pilot it in Valencia. So they developed the methodology to follow ISO 14064 and GHG reporting. Data was collected across all tourism-related sectors, including transport, accommodation, food services, and attractions. Emissions were classified by scope (direct, indirect, value chain) and analyzed for the baseline year. The results were made publicly available to foster transparency. The process involved strong political leadership, cross-sectoral cooperation, and stakeholder engagement, including hotels, transport operators, and local businesses. The carbon footprint measurement, AI-powered, informed the process of implementation of the Tourism Sustainability Plan and inspired voluntary reduction efforts by key actors. The full tourism value chain was taken into account. Digital tools and open data platforms supported ongoing monitoring and public communication.

WHY DID IT WORK?

Visit Valencia had previously participated in an European project called Castwater where expertise from beyond tourism were involved, and this hybridization of expertise from environmental, water management, urban planning, tourism fields had been an enriching experience.
Strategic vision by city officials and Visit Valencia management. Water remained a key topic to keep addressing so when the city was thinking on actions to implement its strategy, and discuss it with other agents beyond tourism the interest of Valencia Water Foundation was just a perfect fit.
Moreover, the high level of stakeholder engagement was critical to be able to move forward.

DID PART OF IT NOT WORK? WHY?

Obtaining data for all aspects was a key issue, some impacts in the end could not be taken into account since the needed disaggregation was not feasible.
Furthermore, the original idea intended to be more ambitious, for instance, within airlines and cruise companies aiming at distinguishing those that use the more efficient vessels, and be able to prioritize those. Data was not available in a sustainable manner with this detail.
Additionally, Global Omnium and Valencia Water Foundation have the right skills and equipment, but these skills are not widespread.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- Measuring tourism's carbon footprint is complex but essential to drive real climate action.
- Political will, data transparency, and stakeholder collaboration are key enablers.
- Standardized, science-based methodologies build trust, shape policies, and empower destinations to act decisively.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Visit Valencia Foundation & Global Omnium and Valencia Water Foundation leading the process, and collaborated with numerous tourism and environment stakeholders for accessing data and agreeing on the metodology.

WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ACTION(S)?

Local tourism businesses, specially SMEs, and local government.

BUDGET INVESTED TO LAUNCH AND TO MAINTAIN

Each year 18.000€ financed by Visit Valencia own funds.

4

Protocol for the calculation of events carbon footprint

Spain, Andalusia

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Andalusia, located in southern Spain, is one of the most visited regions in the Mediterranean attracting millions of visitors annually (36million in 2024). As a Mediterranean region, Andalusia is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change: rising average temperatures, prolonged droughts, water scarcity, and increased frequency of extreme weather events such as heavy rains. These environmental pressures not only affect biodiversity and agriculture but also threaten the long-term sustainability of tourism and event-hosting capacity.

Until recently, there was no harmonized tool in the region to assess or reduce the climate impact of events. While individual organizers may have adopted sustainability actions, the lack of a structured methodology hindered systematic carbon management. The challenge was to create an accessible, scientifically sound, and practical protocol that could be used across a wide range of events—supporting Andalusia's broader climate goals and aligning with international commitments like the 2030 Agenda and the EU Green Deal.

OBJECTIVE

To provide a clear, standardized methodology for calculating and reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from events in Andalusia—encouraging organisers to design and deliver sustainable, low-carbon, and socially inclusive gatherings.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

- A comprehensive protocol aligned with ISO 14064 and the GHG Protocol was created.
- The protocol includes a calculator that enables calculation across all event phases (setup, celebration, dismantling).
- Templates and tools were developed to simplify data gathering and reporting.
- There is a specific section for event promoters to register their Carbon Footprint in the official Andalusian registry (SACE).
- The protocol was recently launched and already 11 events have registered their carbon footprint.
- Measures to reduce and offset emissions were compiled in a practical action plan.
- Awareness among event organizers, suppliers, and participants was raised.

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cambioclimaticoandalucia.csma@juntadeandalucia.es

HOW?

The Andalusian Office for Climate Change, belonging to the Regional Government of Andalusia – Directorate-General for Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change develop the protocol. The protocol was developed within the framework of the Andalusian Climate Action Plan (PAAC), which operationalizes climate action strategies across various sectors in the region. From a methodological perspective, the protocol provides guidance on setting system boundaries, collecting activity data (e.g., energy, mobility, catering), applying emission factors, and calculating total event emissions. It also includes methodological annexes with emission factors, ready-to-use data templates, calculator, mobility survey guidelines, and a detailed reduction action plan. During the development of the methodological framework, several pilot events were selected to test and fine-tune the developed tools. Pilot events included events of varying nature and scale, in impactful areas: especially sports events, such as the 2022 Copa del Rey football final in Seville; musical events, such as the start of Manuel Carrasco's tour in Seville in 2023; and institutional events, such as the 26th edition of the Andalusian Environmental Awards. Subsequently, among the organizations that have requested event registration to date are various types, such as associations, city councils, and the Andalusian Regional Government itself, with a clear strategy to promote increasingly sustainable events. The protocol includes simplified reporting tools and training recommendations to support adoption by organizers regardless of their technical background. Pilot implementations and public presentations—such as the launch during FITUR—helped demonstrate feasibility and raise awareness.

WHY DID IT WORK?

The success of the initiative lies in its solid foundation of multi-level governance, its integration within Andalusia's climate policy instruments like the PAAC and SACE Event Registry, where promoters' efforts to design more sustainable events are publicly recognized. The protocol is technically robust, aligns with international standards, and is supported by practical tools that make implementation accessible across event types. Its credibility, local relevance, and participatory design built strong ownership among municipalities and organizers, while growing public and institutional demand for climate action helped create a receptive environment for its adoption and visibility.

DID PART OF IT NOT WORK? WHY?

Adoption remains voluntary. Not all organizers have the technical capacity to collect detailed data or the financial resources to invest in emissions compensation. Also, limited awareness among smaller-scale events may hinder widespread application. The protocol's impact now depends on communication, training, and incentives for broader uptake.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- Commitment at the highest level within the city coulcil has facilitated that different departments (environment, tourism, etc.) work together aligned.
- Clear objectives and strategies have significantly contributed to the project's success.
- Investments in replacing outdated system elements and maintaining well-functioning infrastructures will pay off in the long term.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

- Regional Government of Andalusia – Directorate-General for Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change
- Andalusian Office for Climate Change

WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ACTION(S)?

- Event organizers and suppliers across Andalusia
- Municipalities promoting sustainable tourism and events
- Attendees, local communities, and small businesses
- The broader Andalusian society through climate mitigation actions

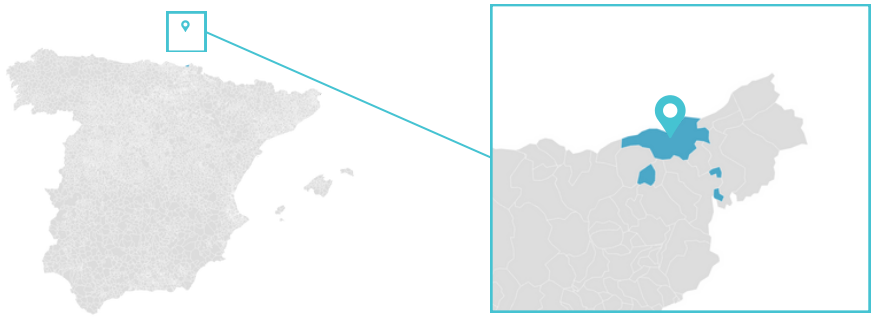
COST & FUNDING SOURCE

The registration for the Andalusian System of Compensation Emissions is completely free of charge. The expenses are covered by the organization's internal resources.

4

Visitors Carbon Footprint & Offsetting

Spain, Donostia/San Sebastián



CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Donostia/San Sebastián, a renowned coastal destination in the Basque Country, in 2024 has reached 2,3 million overnights of domestic and international tourists and many more same day visitors. While tourism has brought economic benefits, it has also contributed to increasing environmental pressures—particularly in terms of transport emissions, energy consumption, and seasonal crowding. One of the key challenges was the lack of visibility around the environmental impact of individual visitor choices, and the need to connect visitors more directly to the city's climate commitments. There was also a broader need to raise awareness and enable voluntary behavior change among travelers in a respectful and engaging way.

OBJECTIVE

The primary objective was to develop a user-friendly carbon footprint calculator tailored to the visitor experience in Donostia/San Sebastián. The tool aimed to make tourism's environmental impact more tangible to visitors while aligning with the city's broader sustainable tourism strategy and the Basque Government's climate policies. It sought to empower travelers to understand, reflect on, and potentially offset the carbon impact of their trips—turning awareness into action.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

- A dedicated carbon calculator for visitors was developed and integrated into the official tourism website of Donostia/San Sebastián.
- During the first months more than 600 users have used the calculator and the page has been seen more that 1000 times
- The tool allows users to input variables such as mode of transport, accommodation type, and activities to calculate their travel footprint.
- The calculator provides suggestions for emission reduction and local offsetting options, fostering a climate-conscious travel mindset.
- The initiative helped position the destination as a climate-responsible city, and was well-received by sustainability-conscious travelers and partners.
- It serves as a data collection instrument, enabling the city to gather anonymized insights on visitor profiles and behaviors for improved planning.

If you want to know more please contact:
Donostia San Sebastian Turismoa
press_turismoa@donostia.eus

HOW?

The tool was developed in collaboration with local environmental experts and digital designers, ensuring both scientific rigor and user accessibility. The design focused on keeping the interface simple, visually appealing, and available in multiple languages. It was hosted directly on the tourism board's website, making it visible and accessible to potential visitors during the trip planning phase. Communication efforts included promotion on social media, integration into visitor information centers, and engagement with local hospitality providers to encourage its use.

WHY DID IT WORK?

The initiative worked because:

- it balanced environmental education with practical usability.
- Rather than overwhelming users with technical detail, it offered an interactive and personalized experience that fostered reflection without judgment.
- Crucially, it was embedded within the city's broader tourism strategy and benefited from strong institutional support, particularly from Donostia Turismoa and the municipality's environmental department.
- Its alignment with citizen and visitor expectations of Donostia as a green and responsible city enhanced its acceptance and credibility.

DID PART OF IT NOT WORK? WHY?

Although visitors have shown interest in knowing their carbon footprint, there has not been any direct offsetting. Moreover, some users found it difficult to interpret their results without contextual benchmarks (e.g. "Is my footprint high or low?").

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- Simplicity and visual clarity are key to engaging visitors with environmental data.
- Voluntary tools need strong communication and placement strategies to reach users effectively.
- Benchmarking and storytelling help contextualize results and turn awareness into motivation.
- Cross-department collaboration strengthens both design and implementation.
- Data from tools like these can feed back into tourism planning in a non-invasive way.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

- Donostia/San Sebastián Tourism Board (Donostia Turismoa) led the initiative.
- Environmental and data experts contributed to the methodological design.
- Local technology partners supported the digital development and hosting.
- Collaboration with municipal sustainability and climate departments ensured policy coherence.

WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ACTION(S)?

- Visitors have gained a simple, educational tool to understand and reflect on their climate impact.
- Destination managers benefit from data insights on visitor transport and accommodation choices.
- Local offsetting and sustainability initiatives may receive greater attention and support.
- The tourism sector enhances its sustainability credentials, aligning with global climate goals and visitor expectations.

BUDGET INVESTED TO LAUNCH AND TO MAINTAIN

- Development and launch costs: 10,000€
- Annual maintenance and updates: 500€

5

Decarbonise

The decarbonisation pathway is where ambition meets engineering and operations. Urban destinations striving for climate neutrality must translate measurement outputs into emission-reduction actions—targeting transport systems, building energy consumption, public lighting, event infrastructure, waste systems, and the tourism value chain.

Decarbonisation also includes indirect emissions—such as food sourcing, digital infrastructure, and procurement practices—that demand broader supplier engagement.

The cases studied in this report show that cities taking visible steps—such as phasing out fossil fuel-based transport, enabling shared micromobility, upgrading public buildings to near-zero energy standards, or requiring green procurement in tourism-related concessions—are sending strong market signals and shifting citizen expectations. Some actions, like re-zoning for walkability or launching electrified tourist shuttle loops, required high initial investment but yielded significant returns in air quality, climate performance, and public satisfaction. Multi-actor governance and lifecycle costing were critical enablers of success.

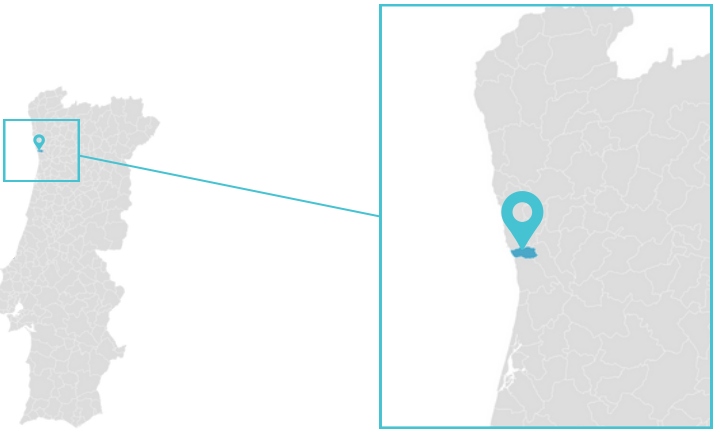
This section includes the following cases:

- Model for mobility and pedestrian networks - Porto - Portugal
- Car-free Avenue - Tartu - Estonia
- Water Management - Benidorm - Spain
- Traffic regulation zone Dubrovnik's Historic Old City - Dubrovnik - Croatia
- Net Zero Hotel Radisson Red Oslo City Center - Oslo - Norway

5

Model for Mobility and Pedestrian Networks

Portugal, Porto



CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Porto, UNESCO World Heritage City, Portugal's second most visited city after Lisbon, recorded a total of 6.2 million overnight stays in 2024, marking a 6.9% increase compared to 2023. Tourism revenues from accommodations reached approximately €492 million, reflecting Porto's strong positioning as a cultural and urban destination. However, this popularity brought growing pressure on the historical city center, leading to issues related to traffic congestion, emissions, and overcrowding in heritage areas. The challenge was to reduce car dependency, improve pedestrian accessibility, and protect the historic urban fabric while ensuring the tourism experience remained vibrant and inclusive.

OBJECTIVE

The city's goal was to transform the historic center into a pedestrian-first and climate-friendly zone, supported by a comprehensive network of sustainable mobility solutions. The initiative aimed to create seamless connections between key urban attractions and neighborhoods, enhance accessibility for all users, and promote low-emission transportation for both residents and visitors.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

- Over 10 hectares of historical city centre converted into pedestrian-only zones.
- Creation of a 55-kilometre cycling network throughout the city.
- Deployment of 210 bicycle and scooter sharing stations.
- Installation of 3 major vertical mobility systems: Guindais Funicular, Lada Elevator, and Miragaia Mechanized Stairs.
- Public transport fleet fully accessible with ramps and wheelchair space.
- Dozens of pedestrian routes upgraded with tactile paving, ramps, and lowered crossings to enhance mobility for all.
- Estimated reduction in car traffic in the historic centre since implementation.
- Positive impact on tourist satisfaction scores related to walkability and ease of access.

If you want to know more please contact:
Fátima Santos, Director, Visit Porto, visitporto@cm-porto.pt

HOW?

Led by the Municipality of Porto, the initiative combined local policy, urban planning, and EU funding. Implementation was gradual and participatory, allowing adaptation over time. Infrastructure upgrades were coordinated with public transport authorities, urban mobility companies, and community stakeholders. Tactical urbanism measures, signage updates, and strong communications helped manage change and engage businesses and residents.
The transformation began with strategic bans on car traffic and surface parking in the historic core, phased over several years. Pedestrian-first planning was supported by clear signage, repaved walking routes, and redesigned public spaces. To address Porto's elevation differences, the city installed mechanized solutions like elevators and funiculars that serve both tourists and locals. The bike and scooter-sharing systems were rolled out through public-private partnerships and integrated with public transport. Accessibility upgrades were prioritized, ensuring that infrastructure met the needs of people with disabilities, older adults, and families with children. All interventions were supported by digital mobility platforms and real-time transport information systems, improving the user experience. Planning was data-driven and aligned with the city's Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan. Recently studies have been conducted to evaluate the impact of the tourism activity in the city, with stakeholders, residents, tour operators and tourists.

WHY DID IT WORK?

- strong political will, long-term urban planning vision, and citizen engagement.
- Strong alignment with EU climate and urban resilience goals enabled co-financing and broader policy support.
- Collaboration between the city, transport agencies, and civil society ensured responsiveness and long-term buy-in enhanced its acceptance and credibility.
- Multi-modal integration ensured that pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and people with reduced mobility were all considered.
- Gradual implementation allowed the city to refine and improve the design based on user feedback.
- The bike and scooter sharing networks helped solve the "last mile" problem.

DID PART OF IT NOT WORK? WHY?

Some resistance arose from local businesses concerned about losing vehicle access. With the aim of ensuring efficient and sustainable use of public space, from October 2024 onwards, access by tourist vehicles and occasional passenger transport services to downtown Porto and the historic centre are subject to prior authorization. Additionally, some signage and route changes initially caused confusion but were resolved through iterative updates and public input.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- Incremental changes are key to building public acceptance and correcting design flaws.
- Accessibility must be central to any mobility reform.
- Combining active mobility and public transport strengthens system resilience.
- Local business engagement is essential for smooth transitions.
- Ongoing monitoring and transparency ensure legitimacy and effectiveness.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

- Porto City Council (lead planning and coordination)
- Transport operators (Metro do Porto, bus network, funicular systems)
- Bike and scooter sharing companies
- Local communities, disability advocacy groups, tourism businesses
- National and EU co-funding mechanisms

WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ACTION(S)?

- Residents and tourists enjoy safer, cleaner, and more inclusive public spaces.
- Visitors benefit from a more coherent and car-free tourism experience.
- Local businesses gain from increased pedestrian flows and enhanced public realm.
- People with disabilities experience improved urban mobility and independence..

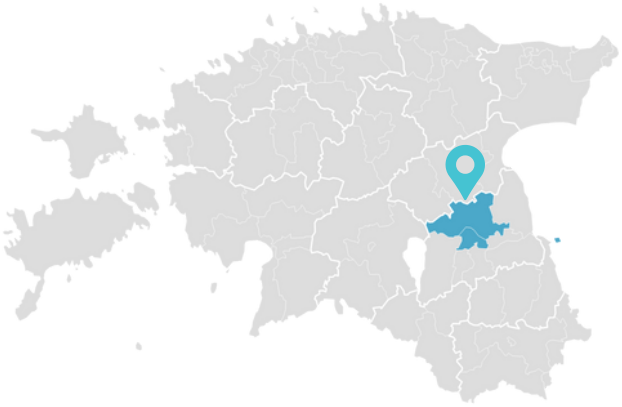
BUDGET INVESTED TO LAUNCH AND TO MAINTAIN

Funding sources: own funds.

5

Car-Free Avenue

Estonia, Tartu



CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Tartu, Estonia's second-largest city, sought to address the combined challenges of reliance on private cars, underutilised public spaces, and low environmental awareness following the COVID-19 pandemic disruption. The city's Vabaduse puiestee (Vabaduse Avenue)—a central, multi-lane thoroughfare—was traditionally dominated by vehicular traffic. With reduced car usage in 2020, the city saw an opportunity to experiment with reimagining public space in the urban core while promoting climate and livability goals.

OBJECTIVE

To temporarily transform the central Vabaduse Avenue into a pedestrian-led, multifunctional, cultural boulevard during summer, thereby:

- Demonstrating the potential of human-centric street design,
- Encouraging sustainable mobility and public discourse on car dependency,
- Revitalizing urban life, connecting key areas (Old Town and riverfront),
- Raising awareness about environmental issues through experiential programming.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

- Car-free pedestrianisation of Vabaduse Avenue over summer periods since 2020.
- Area covered: approximately 6,600 m² of urban space repurposed.
- Attendance: drew around 18,000 visitors in first two weeks (2020) in a city of ~100,000; by 2023–24 cumulative attendance reached ~825,000 visitors.
- Cultural programming: over 200 events in early editions—including workshops, music, cinema, yoga, children's play. By 2023, ~100 events in a single season.
- Recognized by Green Destinations, ranking among top "Environment & Climate" success stories.
- The street is now being redesigned into a much more people-friendly environment to be finished by 2030.

If you want to know more please contact:
Sten Svetljakov, Tartu City Government, Sten.Svetljakov@tartu.ee

HOW?

- Temporary street closure to traffic during summer months (typically July), converting Vabaduse Avenue into a pedestrian plaza with movable furniture, pop-up stages, seating, green features, and cultural stalls.
- Collaborative urban programming, involving Tartu City, cultural organisers, local businesses, youth centers, and community groups, hosting workshops, performances, outdoor cinema, and children's play zones.
- Green event practices: 100% renewable energy powering installations, waste sorting, reuse of materials, reusable dining ware with deposit, inclusion of plant-based and local foods, food-sharing for leftovers.
- Spatial design encouraging safe social distancing, inclusion of pollinator patches, sustainable educational materials about biodiversity and climate, and visual messaging around mobility.

WHY DID IT WORK?

- Contextual opportunity: Pandemic-induced reductions in traffic provided a rare window for urban experimentation.
- Cultural and experiential programming made the street vibrant and attractive, drawing diverse age groups and fostering emotional connection with the city.
- Environmental insight: blended urban design with green messaging, allowing citizens to experience alternative street use while raising awareness on mobility, sustainability, and inclusive design.
- Visibility and recognition: being acknowledged internationally reinforced confidence among local stakeholders and provided a benchmark for replication.

DID PART OF IT NOT WORK? WHY?

- Safety concerns: when partial traffic reintroduced (e.g., 2022), parents voiced safety issues for children playing without supervision in mixed-use zones.
- Format variability: changing layouts and reduced spatial coherence in some years undermined user experience; highlighted importance of consistent design and planning.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- Temporary, human-centric urban interventions can catalyse dialogue, shift norms, and support climate strategy processes.
- Cultural programming and inclusivity are central to engagement—bridging generations, residents, and tourists.
- "Green event" measures (renewable energy, reuse, local food) show that climate ambition can be embedded even in short-term activations.
- Budget volatility must be managed—clear resource planning and contingency models are essential.
- Safety, design consistency, and community trust are critical for replicable street experiments.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

- City of Tartu (municipal government)
- Tartu 2024 Foundation, cultural programme organisers
- Local partners: Tiigi Seltsimaja, Tartu Market, Youth Work Centre, businesses, NGOs
- Cultural and urban designers, event managers, sustainability NGOs

WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ACTION(S)?

- Residents, who accessed a car-free public space for leisure, community and cultural participation
- Families and seniors, enjoying inclusive, free, and health-positive environments
- Local businesses, benefitting from increased footfall and visibility during summer
- Tourists, gaining memorable, walkable, and vibrant urban experiences
- City administration, gaining insights into mobility alternatives and public space potential

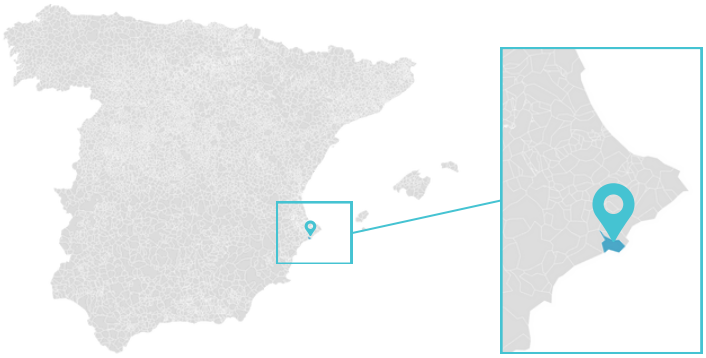
BUDGET INVESTED TO LAUNCH AND TO MAINTAIN

- Each year estimated annual cost ranged from 80.000€ to 200.000€.
- Funding sources: municipal budgets, cultural programming funds (especially during European Capital of Culture year), in-kind contributions from partners

5

Water Management

Spain, Benidorm



CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

The key challenge is water scarcity and pollution.
Originally designed in the 1950s as a holiday destination, Benidorm's population grew from about 6,000 in the 1960s to nearly 75,000 by 2025. Today, it stands as a major Mediterranean tourist hub, recording 15.4 million overnight stays (2024). Direct tourism employment is estimated to represents 44% of the local employment, tourism generates roughly 41% of the local GDP, 800million euros. Benidorm's tourism offering spans coastal, maritime, and inland water-based activities, as well as sports, culture, gastronomy, and health and wellness.
The local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is Visit Benidorm—a non-profit public-private partnership governed by a Foundation Board chaired by the city's mayor.
In the late 1970s, severe droughts triggered a major policy shift. Like much of Spain, Benidorm faces chronic water shortages due to irregular rainfall and river depletion. The rising population and hotel infrastructure have significantly increased demand for water and other resources, intensifying pressure on local supply systems.

OBJECTIVE

The objective is to manage water supply, take risk prevention measures, raise awareness about water consumption and risk prevention and reuse water for watering parks and gardens.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

- Reduction in water consumption despite population growth and increase in hotel overnight stays.
- Achievement of 95% water efficiency (96.4% in August 2023), well above the Spanish average (70%).
- 36% reuse of treated water in agriculture, gardens, and street cleaning.
- Benidorm withstands stress tests at +700% of demand in high season by modulating supply, pressure, efficiency, power, and purification capacity.
- Watering 156,000 square meters of public green areas and 127,000 of private green areas with regenerated water. During 2024, 34% of the treated water underwent tertiary treatment to be used for both agricultural and urban purposes.

If you want to know more please contact: promocion@visitbenidorm.es
Laura García Castellano

HOW?

Benidorm has implemented a comprehensive approach to integrated water management through a combination of infrastructural, technological, and educational initiatives:

- Advanced Wastewater Infrastructure: The city operates a sewage system that separates rainwater from wastewater. This enables the production of compost from wastewater sludge for agricultural use, and biogas for electricity generation—powering six municipal vehicles. An innovative AI system optimizes bioreactor aeration, minimizing energy consumption while maintaining water treatment quality.
- DINAPSIS Innovation Centre: Established in 2017 with municipal funding, DINAPSIS serves as a hub for research, innovation, and digital transformation in sustainable water management.
- Smart Water Monitoring: A real-time monitoring system tracks water consumption, quality, and incidents. AI-driven condition monitoring helps predict sewer network aging and forecasts maintenance needs up to 50 years in advance. This is supported by approximately 1,600 installed smart meters.
- Public Awareness Campaigns: The "Lo del agua en serio" campaign, led by the City Council and Hidraqua, promotes responsible water use among residents.
- Beach Water Efficiency Measures: Showers have been replaced by seawater footbaths equipped with sensors. These support a weekly monitoring program of hygiene parameters in water, sand, and footbaths, contributing to improved water quality management.
- Climate Resilience Strategies: In collaboration with the municipality, Benidorm continuously adopts measures to mitigate climate risks and drought. These include investments in cutting-edge technologies to enhance water production. Notably, in 2020, Benidorm became the first Spanish municipality with over 50,000 inhabitants to implement a Climate Change Adaptation Plan (PACC).

The second project has implemented the regenerated water network for watering parks and gardens.

WHY DID IT WORK?

High level of stakeholder engagement, as the private sector, the public sector, and the residents worked together.

DID PART OF IT NOT WORK? WHY?

The economic downturn caused by the decline in fishing was also a challenge for financing the necessary infrastructure measures.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- Commitment at the highest level within the city coulcil has facilitated that different departments (environment, tourism, etc.) work together aligned.
- Clear objectives and strategies have significantly contributed to the project's success.
- Investments in replacing outdated system elements and maintaining well-functioning infrastructures will pay off in the long term.
- Thanks to the increased efficiency of the water supply, tourism can thrive.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Benidorm City Council – different departments working together.

WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ACTION(S)?

Local residents; Tourists; All tourism service providers; Local farmers and producers;
Local businesses. Local government

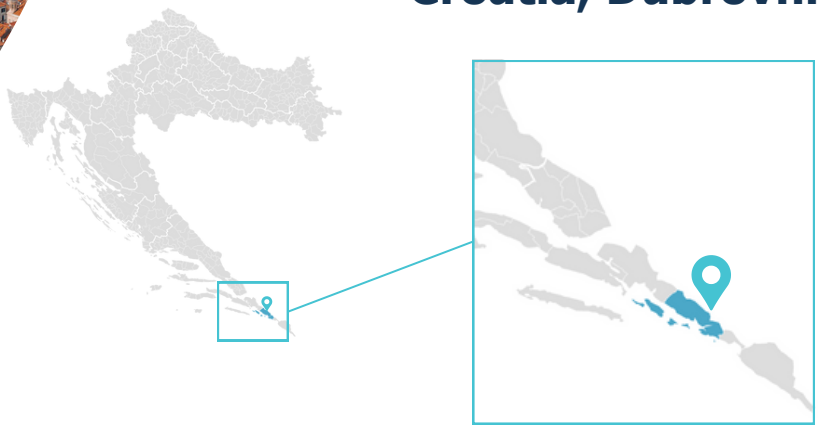
COST & FUNDING SOURCE

385.000.€ NEXT Generation Funds for the latest project. 230,000 € for the water monitoring system by municipal funds co-financed at 50% by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). In the last seven years, 22.5 million euros have been invested in the renovation of supply, sewerage and rainwater networks by the city. Some projects were also financed by the regional or national government.

5

Traffic regulation zone Dubrovnik's historic Old City

Croatia, Dubrovnik



CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Dubrovnik, Croatia's top tourism destination, welcomed 4,5 million overnight stays in 2024, a 9% increase year-on-year. The city as a whole is home to 42,000 residents. Its UNESCO-listed Old City, was suffering from excessive vehicle congestion, noise, and air pollution—factors threatening its centuries-old stone streets, resident quality of life, and visitor experience. Cruise ships, taxis, transfers, and short-term rental vehicles all contributed to severe traffic problems and cultural stress in the core heritage area.

OBJECTIVE

Launched on June 2, 2025, the new Traffic Regulation Zone aimed to significantly reduce vehicle flow within and around the Old City, prioritize residents and authorized transport, protect cultural assets, and enhance the urban environment for both locals and visitors. The measure sought to balance heritage preservation with sustainable mobility and tourism management.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

- The introduction of the Special Traffic Regulation Zone limited unauthorized vehicles from entering key historic areas.
- As of early July, approximately 2,500 fewer vehicles entered daily, with travel time on key routes reduced from ~20 to ~5 minutes.
- Vehicle access was restricted to residents with permits, licensed transfers, and authorized taxis, while others were directed to park at the Public Garage.
- The zone aligns with UNESCO and ICOMOS guidelines aimed at protecting the city's historic core.

If you want to know more, please contact:
City of Dubrovnik, press@dubrovnik.hr
Please view:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjmvXVLONpA&t=5s

5 Traffic regulation zone Dubrovnik's historic Old City

HOW?

The City Council approved the traffic regime based on legal changes to Croatia's Road Traffic Safety Act.
Entry and circulation are now managed via electronic monitoring and signage. A phased approach included community workshops, a pilot period, and scheduled enforcement starting June 2nd 2025. Exceptions are granted to emergency and intervention vehicles. Citizens who, due to unexpected situations (such as medical visits, pharmacy runs, or visits to sick family members), must enter or cross the Zone have three days to justify their passage through the City's Traffic Management Centre. Other categories such as persons with disabilities, residents with permanent address within the historic core, or private accommodation providers with secured private parking are entitled to access upon prior regulation of their status.
The city also coordinated with national ministries and UNESCO, while providing clear visitor communication through guides and local operators.

WHY DID IT WORK?

- Strong legal and institutional alignment—compliance with national law and UNESCO recommendations—gave it legitimacy.
- The gradual rollout, backed by aimed communication, allowed users and businesses to adjust.
- Electronic monitoring ensured transparent enforcement, encouraging adaptation and compliance.
- The initiative prioritized the dual benefit of tourism quality and urban heritage conservation.

DID PART OF IT NOT WORK? WHY?

Initial confusion emerged among tourists and taxi drivers unfamiliar with the permit requirements. A handful of businesses feared customer loss due to parking constraints.
These were addressed through temporary signage, permit guides for accommodations, and establishing delivery and loading exemptions. Continued fine-tuning of enforcement thresholds ensured minimal disruption to genuine service needs.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- Legal grounding and cultural authority (UNESCO alignment) build acceptance.
- Electronic systems enable scalable, enforceable urban mobility zones.
- Pilot phases and clear communication help avoid shock and resistance.
- Balancing restriction with exemptions (e.g. for deliveries) supports urban resilience.
- Traffic reduction benefits heritage and the visitor experience, reinforcing tourism positioning.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

- City of Dubrovnik, including the Mayor's office and Traffic Department.
- National ministries, providing legal and regulatory support.
- UNESCO and ICOMOS, advising on heritage criteria.
- Local businesses, resident associations, taxi companies, and private transfer operators.
- Tourism agencies and visitor service providers, for outreach and coordination.

WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ACTION(S)?

- Residents, who enjoy better traffic flow, reduced noise, better air quality, and safer streets.
- Emergency and intervention services experience better access and response times.
- Tourists, experiencing improved ambiance and easier navigation.
- Cultural heritage, now better protected from emissions-related deterioration.
- Local authorities, gaining a scalable model for visitor management and climate-friendly urban mobility.

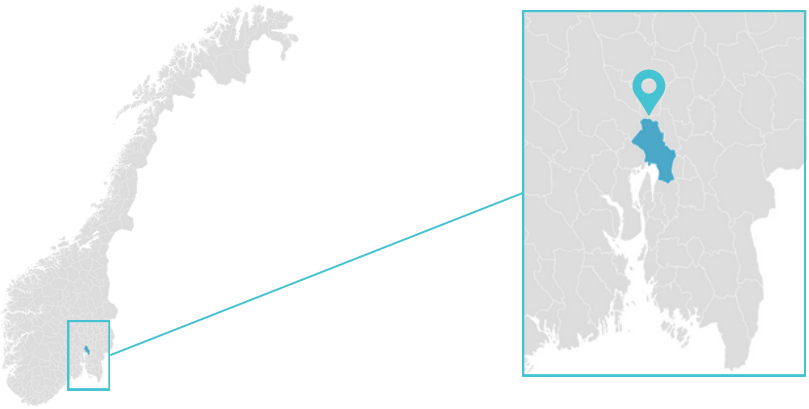
BUDGET INVESTED TO LAUNCH AND TO MAINTAIN

The project was financed with the City of Dubrovnik budget. For the core technical solution, an amount of 850.000€ + VAT was allocated.

5

NET ZERO HOTEL RADISSON RED OSLO CITY CENTER

Norway, Olso



CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Radisson RED Oslo City Centre, located in the heart of Norway's capital, is housed in a building from 1939 that opened in 2010 as a mid-scale hotel built before sustainability standards became mainstream.

OBJECTIVE

Transform the existing Oslo city-centre hotel into a Verified Net Zero establishment, eliminating greenhouse gas emissions across Scope 1 and 2, ahead of the 2040 Net Zero Methodology for Hotels, and become a model for low-carbon urban tourism.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

- Verified Net Zero status confirmed by TÜV Rheinland.
- 100 % renewable energy powering heating, cooling, hot water, kitchen and fitness.
- Complete elimination of fossil fuels (gas) onsite.
- Up to 40 % reduction in food-related CO_2 emissions via low-carbon menu redesign.
- Remaining emissions offset through Agreena carbon removal credits from over 2,300 farmers regenerating 4.5 million hectares.
- Waste minimized: digital tracking (eSmiley), Too Good To Go partnership, bulk amenities, full recycling.

If you want to know more please contact:
responsiblebusiness@radissonhotels.com

HOW?

The hotel was comprehensively retrofitted, guided by the Net Zero Methodology for Hotels and aligned with the GHG Protocol. Scope 1 & 2 energy emissions were eliminated by switching all services—heating, hot water, cooking, cooling—to electricity sourced entirely from renewable energy, including Oslo's low-carbon district heating derived from waste incineration, biofuels and datacentres. Scope 3 emissions were reduced via supply-chain reforms: partnering with Swedish startup Klimato to redesign menus, sourcing seasonal and local produce, and labelling meals with carbon levels A to E to inform guest choices. Food waste was tracked and reduced via eSmiley software, surplus meals redistributed through Too Good To Go, and guest rooms equipped with recycling bins and bulk zero-plastic amenities are recycled via Clean the World. All additonal amenities such as razor, toothbrush are plastic free and available on demand via the e-concierge app. Paper waste reduction was enabled by the same digital concierge app, which offers all information on Verified Net Zero.
Additionally, the hotel integrated sustainability into staff training, procurement policies, and guest engagement. Employees received tailored training on low-carbon operations, sustainable service protocols, and how to communicate these values to guests. Procurement was restructured to favour circular and certified products with traceable carbon impacts. To involve guests, Radisson RED introduced transparent in-room sustainability sustainability information, including on how the Net Zero stay is achieved, and low impact experience suggestions.

WHY DID IT WORK?

- Strong corporate and local leadership committed to verified Net Zero transformation
- Clear, science-based methodology (GHG Protocol + Net Zero for Hotels) built trust
- Balanced sustainability with guest experience, offering low-carbon comfort without compromise
- Use of local renewable infrastructure and circular food/waste systems anchored the hotel in Oslo's eco-systems
- Independent external verification eliminated risks of greenwashing

DID PART OF IT NOT WORK? WHY?

Radisson is closely monitoring guest satisfaction and response, as well as market share compared to relevant competitors. All initial data are very positive.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- Conversion of existing buildings can achieve verified Net Zero standards
- Energy, operations and supply-chain reforms must be holistic and integrated
- Transparency and third-party verification are vital to credibility
- Sustainability investments may raise costs, but guests value low-carbon credentials
- Food and waste systems are significant emission sources (over 50% and approximately 10% of scope 3 emissions) and should be prioritized

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

- Radisson Hotel Group (owner & operator) leading strategy
- TÜV Rheinland as independent verifier
- Klimato for menu design and carbon-labelling
- Platforms: eSmiley, Too Good To Go, Clean the World for waste and amenity systems
- Oslo municipality / energy suppliers, supplying renewable district heating and electricity

WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ACTION(S)?

- Guests, enjoying modern hospitality with a fully verified net-zero footprint
- Radisson Hotel Group, positioning itself as a sustainability leader and command higher yield accommodations

BUDGET INVESTED TO LAUNCH AND TO MAINTAIN

Development and launch costs: range from 1 to 5 k EUR per available room, depending on the starting situation of the hotel and location.
Annual maintenance and updates: (5–10 %) in operating budget, offset by premium room pricing

6

Regenerate

Regeneration is the dimension of climate action where environmental ambition becomes visible and tangible. It focuses on restoring degraded spaces, enhancing biodiversity, protecting soils and water systems, and increasing the climate resilience of both natural and built environments. In urban destinations, this means greening public spaces, naturalising grey infrastructure, investing in urban forests, and aligning tourism flows with ecosystem capacity.

What the reviewed destinations demonstrate is that regeneration is not a luxury—it's an adaptive necessity. From tackling heat islands with green corridors to repurposing derelict land for climate-positive uses, regeneration projects improved not only the environment but also social cohesion and destination appeal. Several cities activated tourism stakeholders in the stewardship of natural assets or channeled tourist taxes into landscape restoration. However, regeneration requires careful design, cross-sectoral partnerships, and long-term funding—especially where land ownership is fragmented or ecological monitoring is under-resourced.

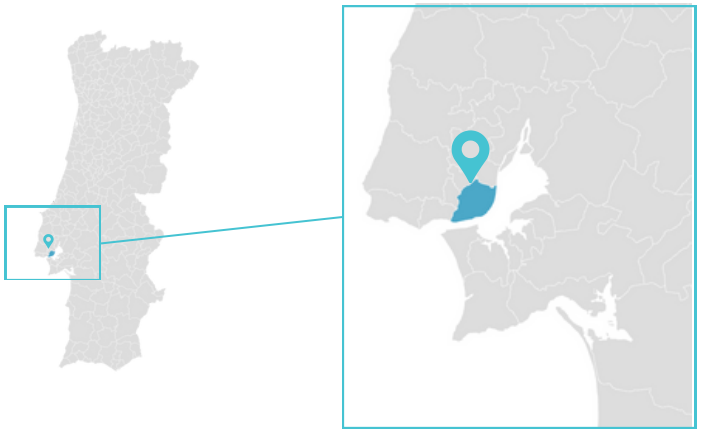
The cases are the following:

- Addressing Heat waves in Urban Areas - Lisbon - Portugal
- Torino’s inclusion in the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme - Turin - Italy
- Green Regeneration of Industrial Zone - Liepaja - Latvia

6

Addressing Heatwaves in Urban Areas

Portugal, Lisbon



CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Lisbon, one of Europe's sunniest capitals, increasingly grapples with heatwaves and intensifying urban heat island effects, with temperature differences of up to 5.5 °C between dense built areas and surroundings, the city's steep topography, tiled surfaces, narrow streets, and limited tree canopy exacerbate heat accumulation and thermal discomfort. Recognizing this risk, Lisbon has integrated climate adaptation into its governance frameworks - via the Municipal Climate Adaptation Strategy and, more recently, through the successful completion of its Climate City Contract Plan under the EU's "100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030" mission.

OBJECTIVE

To reduce heat-related risks and improve urban thermal comfort by implementing nature, based and urban planning interventions, such as cool routes, green corridors, shading, and thermal monitoring, targeted at vulnerable neighborhoods and high-traffic tourist zones.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

- Installation of 18 microclimate sensors in eight green spaces to monitor urban heat dynamics.
- Identification of urban heat differentials of up to 5.5 °C between worst-hit areas and reference points located in the Monsanto Forest Park, which comprises extensive forested areas.
- Mapping of cool routes (urban and green area paths) to guide residents and visitors through shaded, vegetated, or water-adjacent corridors.
- Pilot design phase for green walls, shade structures, and other urban cooling measures, aiming for implementation before summer seasons.

If you want to know more https://coolnoons.interreg-euro-med.eu/ please contact: dmaevce.daeac@cm-lisboa.pt

HOW?

Lisbon's approach combines high-resolution heat monitoring, urban mapping, stakeholder co-design, and nature-based interventions. Initially, micro-sensors were deployed in parks and green areas across the metropolitan region to collect real-time thermal data, aiding in identifying hotspots and modeling UHI patterns.

Through the Interreg Euro-MED Cool Noons initiative, urban planners, experts, stakeholders and municipal teams co-created "cool routes" that favor shaded networks and green spaces, fostering safer, cooler mobility for residents and tourists. Proposals for green walls, reflective coatings, and shading structures are being studied for feasibility, with a view to pilot deployment ahead of heatwave seasons.

Underpinning these efforts is Lisbon's integration of adaptation strategies within policy instruments like the Municipal Climate Adaptation Strategy and the Lisbon Climate City Contract 2030.

WHY DID IT WORK?

- Data-driven targeting: Sensor networks provided the empirical basis for the assessment of urban heat island effect under different conditions.
- Cross-sector collaboration: Engagement of urban designers, planners, scientists, and municipal staff fostered practical, context-sensitive solutions.
- Nature-based emphasis: Strategies leveraged Lisbon's green spaces and topographical strengths for passive cooling, enhancing both resilience and livability.
- Policy integration: Alignment with existing climate frameworks ensured coherence and continuity in implementation.

DID PART OF IT NOT WORK? WHY?

Several interventions remain in the study or feasibility phase, delaying practical application. For instance, green walls and shade structures are still under technical and economic review, limiting immediate impact. Additionally, underdeveloped urban vegetation hinder comprehensive rollout.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- Urban heat mitigation must be evidence-based and localized, driven by microclimate data.
- Multidisciplinary collaboration enhances solution relevance and stakeholder buy-in.
- Nature-based solutions—green corridors, shading, reflective materials—offer efficient, dual-purpose resilience.
- Embedding adaptation within strategic planning improves sustainability and
- maintainability.
- Pilot projects need firm implementation pathways and consistent institutional support.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

- Lisbon City Council, Environment and Urban Planning departments.
- University of Lisbon (Faculty of Sciences, Centre for Ecology, Urban Climate researchers).
- Interreg Euro-MED Cool Noons project and external experts (urban planners, climate scientists).
- Citizens and local stakeholders, involved in route testing and design workshops.

WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ACTION(S)?

- Residents, via improved thermal comfort and safer pedestrian paths.
- Tourists, through cooler, greener urban routes that enhance walkability and well-being.
- City planners, gaining usable climate data and tested intervention models.
- Public health and municipal services, able to better anticipate and manage heatwave impacts.

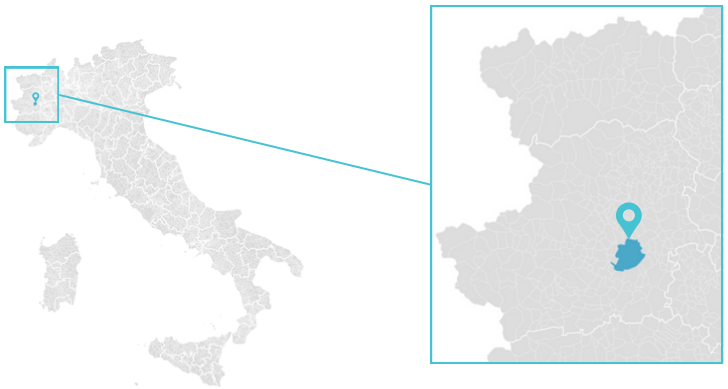
BUDGET INVESTED TO LAUNCH AND TO MAINTAIN

A combined investment of about €1.13 million, considering the antecedents to the Interreg EURO-MED Cool Noons, supported Lisbon's urban-heat adaptation initiatives: deployment of 80 microclimate sensors (€403,440, municipal funds), the Urban Heat Island project (€445,700, supported by the EU Cohesion Fund), and the Cool Noons initiative (€278,332.50, 80% funded by Interreg EURO-MED). Ongoing operation and maintenance are covered by Lisbon's annual municipal budget.

6

Inclusion in the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme

Italy, Turin



CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Turin, Italy's historic industrial capital, and its surrounding region have faced ecosystem degradation amidst dense urbanization. The challenge was to harmonize urban development with biodiversity conservation, protect riverine and hilly ecosystems, and support sustainable urban-rural integration. This tension called for a strategic nature-based framing that trusted both conservation and development.

OBJECTIVE

Secure UNESCO MAB recognition to establish the Collina Po Biosphere Reserve, encompassing the River Po corridor and Turin hillsides. The aim was to institutionalize a multi-zoned conservation-development model, enhance sustainable stewardship, promote ecological recovery, and support the city's transformation into a climate-resilient and livable destination.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

- Designation of 171,233 ha as the MaB UNESCO Collina Po Biosphere Reserve in 2016.
- Governance across 1.488.247 inhabitants accross 86 municipalities (Turin and surrounding provinces).
- Core areas: 3,853 ha; Buffer zone: 21,161 ha; Transition areas: 146,219 ha
- 14 nature reserves
- Conservation of rich biodiversity: riverine wetlands, gravel shores, oxbows, riparian forests, habitats for 136 bird species and various fauna.
- Established logistics and support functions for research, education, monitoring, and sustainable development.

If you want to know more please contact:
Cristina Cerutti, Turismo Torino,
C.Cerutti@turismotorino.org

6 Inclusion in the Unesco Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme

HOW?

- Originated from local landscape branding efforts (2011's "Collina Po" project), building community and institutional partnerships.
- From 2014, engaged local stakeholders in participatory planning and technical-scientific consultation, leading to the 2016 UNESCO designation.
- Structured into core, buffer, and transition zones with differing usage and development privileges.
- Governance coordinated by regional authorities alongside partners like SMAT, IREN, GTT Group, and technical support from SiTI (Istituto Superiore sui Sistemi Territoriali per l'Innovazione).
- Systemic valorisation strategy: the MaB CollinaPo urban reserve is an important laboratory for experimenting with the coexistence of the urban and natural environment. This synergy is strategic for defining the area's valorisation actions and related activities to make them known through direct experience.

WHY DID IT WORK?

- Built on pre-existing collaborative frameworks and territorial identity ("Collina Po" project).
- Structured zoning allowed for integrated conservation and development—matching UNESCO's MAB objectives.
- Multi-stakeholder governance ensured alignment between urban, rural, scientific, and cultural interests.
- The UNESCO label enhanced prestige and global positioning, aiding regional sustainable tourism and urban branding.

DID PART OF IT NOT WORK? WHY?

- While UNESCO designation provides a strong framework, long-term funding for implementation can lag, especially for research and monitoring expansions.
- Coordination across 85+ municipalities poses complexity in harmonizing policies and actions.
- Urban-rural balance remains delicate: ensuring development pressures don't undermine ecological goals is an ongoing governance challenge.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- Territorial branding and early-stage collaboration are vital for securing UNESCO designations.
- Zoning enables cities to reconcile urban growth with ecological safeguarding.
- Multi-stakeholder governance (public authorities, research institutes, utilities) strengthens legitimacy and implementation capacity.
- Inclusion in global networks enhances visibility, research exchange, and adaptive resilience.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

- Regional authority of Piedmont as lead coordinator.
- Institutions: Ente Parco del Po Piemontese, Città metropolitana di Torino, Parchi Reali, SMAT, IREN, GTT Group providing economic support.
- Technical partner: SiTI Institute providing scientific advice.
- Local governments: 86 municipalities
- UNESCO MAB Programme as designating body.

WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ACTION(S)?

- Local residents, through healthier ecosystems, enhanced green spaces, and sustainable development models.
- Researchers and educators, with a living laboratory for nature-human interaction.
- Tourism sector, with new nature-based and cultural diversification opportunities.
- Municipal planners, gaining expertise in integrated and nature-positive urban form.

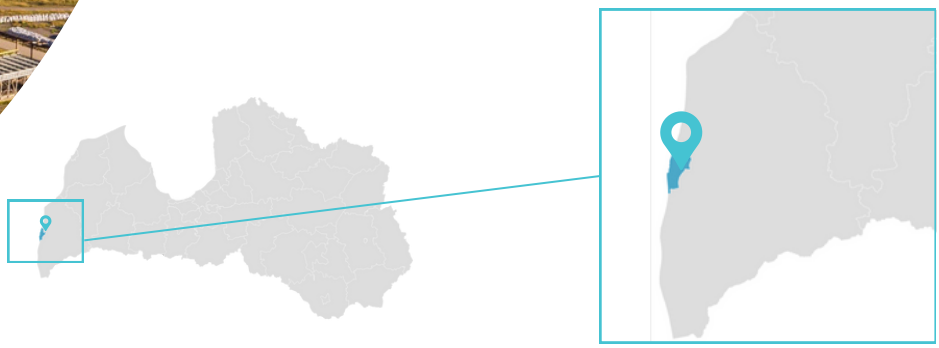
BUDGET INVESTED TO LAUNCH AND TO MAINTAIN

Funding sources: own budget and projects Siti Naturali UNESCO e ZEA per l'educazione ambientale 2022 152.796€; Siti Naturali UNESCO e ZEA per il Clima 2023 2,5M€; Siti Naturali UNESCO e ZEA per l'educazione ambientale 2023 156.569€.

6

Green transformation of industrial zone

Latvia, Liepaja



CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Liepāja, a coastal city in Latvia, faced the common post-industrial challenge of underutilized and decaying industrial zones. In 1995–1996, the city faced deep economic depression, with unemployment levels in Karosta and Tosmare reaching approximately 30%.
These areas, once central to the city's economy, had become barriers to social cohesion, environmental health, and urban growth. With high pollution levels, limited public accessibility, and fragmented urban landscapes, these zones presented both a challenge and an opportunity for sustainable redevelopment. The city recognized the urgent need to transform these obsolete spaces into assets that could contribute to a greener, more inclusive urban future. Industrial Tourism is being designed and developed to diversify the income in this area.

OBJECTIVE

The primary objective was to regenerate disused industrial areas by transforming them into green public spaces. This aimed to enhance environmental sustainability, improve urban livability, and create inclusive spaces for community engagement while preserving the industrial heritage of the city. A key part of the vision was to reconnect fragmented neighborhoods and establish Liepāja as a forward-thinking city embracing sustainable development and offer this for visitors to see, to understand the city's industrial heritage and it current green commitment.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

- 28 new factories established
- 2000 new jobs

Liepāja successfully converted several former industrial sites into accessible, multifunctional green areas that now serve as community hubs. These spaces offer recreational facilities, event zones, pedestrian and cycling routes, and areas for biodiversity regeneration. Notably, the city managed to preserve historic elements of the industrial infrastructure, integrating them into the design as cultural and educational features. The project has improved air quality, encouraged active mobility, and attracted both residents and tourists to previously neglected parts of the city. 1.500 new jobs and landing 250M€ investment are expected in the near future.

If you want to know more please contact:
Sintija Pusaudze, Liepāja Region Tourism Information Office manager@liepaja.travel

6 Green regeneration of industrial zone

HOW?

In 1997, two-thirds of Liepāja's territory was designated as a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) by law, offering favorable conditions for business. The Liepāja SEZ Authority and the Liepāja City Municipality are developing the Industrial Park on the former Liepājas Metalurgs territory, adjacent to Lake Liepāja, a Natura 2000 protected area.

Key milestones:

- 2018: Memorandum of Understanding signed among the Ministry of Economics, Investment and Development Agency of Latvia (LIAA), SIA FeLM, Liepāja City Council, and Liepāja SEZ Authority.
- 2021: Approval of the Liepājas Metalurgs territory development program and inter-institutional agreement for implementation.
- 2022: Local spatial plan and remediation program approved.
- 2023: Strategy for the Industrial Park (2023–2028) approved; infrastructure construction projects developed; EU funding application approved.
- 2023: Lease agreement signed with SIA Liepāja Steel for the dismantling and removal of the electric arc furnace by December 31, 2025
- 2024: Construction begins on street sections, utility networks, and full electrification of the territory.
- 2024: Liepāja Sustainable Industry Centre stakeholders meet to develop an action plan to ensure energy independence and economic development for Liepāja, Latvia, and the Baltic Sea region and signed a joint declaration to implement strategic private investment projects in green energy and smart manufacturing, leading to the establishment of the Liepāja Sustainable Industry Centre in the SEZ.

The centre aims to become a leading Baltic hub for green energy and technology and a Key Industrial Heritage Tourism Attraction.

Key projects:

1. Offshore Wind Support Base and Heavy Cargo Terminal in the port for Baltic Sea wind park construction (Van Oord, Euroports, Smulders).
2. Hydrogen Plant and Terminal – Using renewables to produce green hydrogen (CIS Liepāja).
3. Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) Plant – Supporting aviation's transition to green fuels (GI Terminals).
4. Hydrogen-Powered Aircraft Manufacturing – Based at Liepāja Airport (Fokker Next Gen Latvia).
5. CO_2 Export Terminal – For captured industrial emissions storage and transportation (GI Terminals).

WHY DID IT WORK?

The project's success lies in its integrated and participatory approach. By aligning environmental goals with cultural identity and urban functionality, Liepāja created a solution that was both visionary and context-sensitive. Strong political leadership, community ownership, and careful heritage conservation contributed to broad public support. The mixed funding model ensured financial feasibility, while a long-term maintenance strategy reinforced project sustainability.

DID PART OF IT NOT WORK? WHY?

One challenge was the delay in cleaning up contaminated soil in heavily polluted areas, which postponed development phases. Bureaucratic hurdles in securing permits for heritage buildings also caused some setbacks. These issues were largely due to initial underestimation of environmental risks and complex regulatory processes tied to heritage protection. However, adaptive project management helped overcome most barriers over time.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- Integrated planning is essential
- Special Zone definition for its unique situation was critical
- Early stakeholder engagement ensures greater buy-in.
- Environmental assessments must be thorough from the start to avoid delays.
- Urban regeneration can be a tool not only for physical transformation but also for fostering local identity and pride.
- Maintenance plans and funding continuity are vital for long-term impact.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Municipality of Liepāja, Liepāja Special Economic Zone (SEZ), local urban planning and environmental agencies, heritage conservation experts, community associations, local artists, and entrepreneurs.

WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ACTION(S)?

Residents, local businesses and educational institutions.

BUDGET INVESTED TO LAUNCH AND TO MAINTAIN Initial transformation 10M€ EU Cohesion Policy funds, annual maintenance 250.000€ municipal budget

7

Collaborate

Collaboration is the engine of transformation. No urban destination can deliver a meaningful climate plan without involving its wider ecosystem: public utilities, business associations, tourism suppliers, universities, local NGOs, and residents. This pathway involves creating structured participation spaces, co-governance bodies, working groups, and collaborative investment frameworks.

The cases examined reveal that collaboration becomes effective when roles, benefits, and expectations are clear. Cities that convened destination-wide climate forums or signed voluntary ESG pacts with tourism actors reported stronger alignment between public goals and private behaviour. Success also depended on compensating smaller actors for their engagement effort—whether through technical assistance, training, or preferential access to funding mechanisms. Destinations should see collaboration not as a consultation box to tick, but as an ongoing social contract that distributes climate responsibility fairly and accelerates change.

The cases included are:

- CopenPay - Copenhagen - Denmark
- Visit Scotland Business Support Hub - Scotland - UK
- NECSTouR Climate HUB

7

CopenPay

Denmark, Copenhagen

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Copenhagen, already renowned for its responsible urban infrastructure and cycling culture, seeks to transform tourism from an environmental burden into a positive force for change. Despite strong green infrastructure, many tourists default to less conscious habits—flying, using cars, or ignoring local eco-practices. A study highlighted that while 82% of tourists want to act consciously, only 22% actually do (EU Urban Mobility Observatory). The city faced the challenge of bridging this "intention–action" gap and encouraging visitors to actively embrace low-impact behaviors during their stay.

OBJECTIVE

CopenPay was created by Wonderful Copenhagen to motivate visitors to make conscious choices—like biking, using public transit, volunteering in cleanups, or choosing plant-based meals—by turning those choices into a form of "currency", redeemable for local experiences and rewards.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

- 29% increase in bike rentals during the 2024 pilot
- 100% participant satisfaction, with 98% guests recommending the initiative to other potential visitors
- Expansion in 2025 to over 90 attractions, three times larger footprint, and running for nine weeks
- 100+ cities around the world expressed interest in replicating the initiative
- Wide participation by ~90 to 100 attractions offering rewards

If you want to know more please contact:
Elisabeth Markussen, Wonderful Copenhagen, ema@woco.dk

HOW?

Tourists join CopenPay via an online landing page, revealing a list and a map of participating attractions. They then perform conscious actions—like renting a bike, picking up litter, choosing plant-based meals, or arriving by train or electric vehicle—and provide simple proof (photo, receipt, ticket). In return, they earn non-monetary rewards such as free bike rentals, canoe tours, museum entries, coffee, yoga sessions, or vegetarian meals.

The program runs in summer—in 2024 for 4 weeks, and in 2025 expanded to 9 weeks with more partners and rewards.

The project from the first idea to implementing took 6 weeks. 50 partners were contacted and 26 partners joined immediately in 2024, the ones that did not join it was a time issue not lack of interest. In 2025 they joined, and in 2025 100 partners joined. Workshops were developed to explain the concept and how it works and to find out if business would have some hours of the day were they have less customers and CopenPay could work to feed in some customers in that time slot. Moreover, businesses spread the word among other tourism businesses.

WHY DID IT WORK?

- Simple and easy to use, there are no restrictions, it is immediate.
- Trust-driven model: Leveraging Denmark's high-trust culture allowed minimal verification, encouraging participation.
- Positive reinforcement over penalties: Rewards shifted perceptions—from sacrifice to joyful engagement.
- Tangible local experiences: Rewards incorporated cultural, recreational, and gastronomic offerings, strengthening tourists' connections to the city.
- Strategic scaling: Pilot success enabled rapid expansion, enhancing reach and impact across attractions.

DID PART OF IT NOT WORK? WHY?

So far everything has worked.
The only issue is no-shows, this is something they are looking into address.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- Positive framing matters: Framing conscious choices as opportunities rather than obligations boosts engagement.
- Scalability is possible—but adaptable: Expansion is viable with tailoring to local context.
- Collaboration is key: Partnerships across tourism, green, and cultural sectors amplify impact.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

- Wonderful Copenhagen (official tourism board) – program designer and driver
- Over 90–100 local partners: Museums, cultural venues, cafes, outdoor activity providers, urban farms, transportation companies
- Municipality of Copenhagen

WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ACTION(S)?

- Tourists, who enjoy engaging, conscious experiences and savings.
- Local businesses and cultural institutions, benefiting from increased footfall and visibility.
- Community and environment
- Cities worldwide, now exploring similar models for sustainable tourism transformation.

BUDGET INVESTED TO LAUNCH AND TO MAINTAIN

Part of the work was conducted in house. The biggest investment was allocated to communicating the initiative, for instance 2 movies were done. Other partners joined to communicate for free.
Maintenance costs are in house.

7

VISIT SCOTLAND BUSINESS SUPPORT HUB

UK, Scotland

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Scotland's tourism sector plays a key role in the national economy but faces increasing pressure to decarbonise in line with the government's Net Zero 2045 targets. Many small and micro businesses lack the expertise, tools, and capacity to take their first steps in climate action. In response, VisitScotland has restructured its business support system into a centralised, digital-first hub, simplifying access to guidance and climate-related resources for the sector.

OBJECTIVE

To empower Scotland's tourism and event businesses—especially SMEs—with easy-to-access, practical tools and guidance to understand, reduce, and report their climate impacts, and embed sustainability in operations, products, and strategy.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

- Launch of the VisitScotland Business Support Hub, housing climate and sustainability support alongside other business areas.
- Consolidation of sustainability content under a dedicated Climate Action & Sustainability section.
- Many businesses reached in early outreach campaigns linked to the "Destination Net Zero" programme.

If you want to know more please contact: Tiomóid Foley, Visit Scotland, tiomoid.foley@visitscotland.com

7 Visit Scotland Business Support HUB

HOW?

- VisitScotland design and deliver the Climate Action Workbook, downloadable via the Hub. It was extensively user-tested by industry.
- The Workbook covers energy, waste, and business travel emissions, offering auto-calculations via embedded UK-based carbon factors.
- The Hub provides step-by-step advice through articles and templates on themes such as:
  - How to Create a Climate Action Plan
  - Sustainability Certifications
  - Improving Energy Efficiency and Waste Management
  - Communicating Green Credentials to Visitors
- Resources are delivered in clear, modular language and tailored to non-expert users.
- All support is freely accessible online, ensuring low-barrier entry for SMEs across Scotland.

WHY DID IT WORK?

- One-stop platform: Centralisation of guidance helped reduce fragmentation and confusion for SMEs.
- Actionable tools: The Climate Action Workbook combines measuring, reviewing, and planning into one cohesive process.
- Trust and credibility: Delivery through VisitScotland ensured high institutional trust among users.
- Alignment with policy: The support hub operationalises national strategies like Destination Net Zero and Scotland's Climate Change Plan.

DID PART OF IT NOT WORK? WHY?

- Scope: Initial tools focus primarily on Scope 1 and 2, some Scope 3 have been recorded but the more complex supply chain emissions are out of scope.
- Resource constraints: Some businesses may still lack staff time or confidence to maintain regular tracking without external support.
- Transition pathway: Businesses using the workbook may need assistance when shifting to more advanced tools or certification schemes.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- Free, trusted, and easy-to-use tools drive real adoption among SMEs.
- Centralised online support improves visibility and continuity.
- Ongoing guidance—from entry-level to advanced stages—is needed to ensure climate action maturity over time.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

- VisitScotland — Lead developer, administrator, and promoter via the Business Support Hub.
- Tourism SMEs — pilot users, and long-term implementers.

WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ACTION(S)?

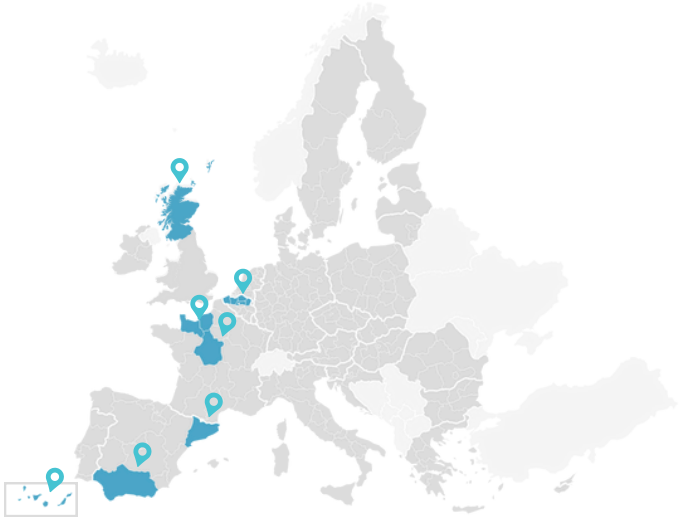
- Tourism SMEs — gained clarity on emissions and actionable plans.
- VisitScotland and public agencies — can report progress and support sector-wide decarbonisation.
- Visitors and residents — benefit from more sustainable, lower-impact tourism offerings.
- Scotland's net-zero strategy — reinforced by sector-wide engagement and progress tracking.

BUDGET INVESTED TO LAUNCH AND TO MAINTAIN

Own resources were used for these actions.

8

NECSTouR Climate Hub



CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

NECSTouR (Network of European Regions for Sustainable and Competitive Tourism), a founding signatory of the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism, published its own Climate Action Plan in 2022 to support and accelerate climate action by European regional destinations. Recognizing the differences among its members in terms of capacity, access to data, climate literacy, and other challenges, NECSTouR launched a Task Force of 30+ sustainability managers to co-design a specific platform to support implementation of the Glasgow Declaration and EU Green Deal objectives.

OBJECTIVE

The Climate Hub was created to support NECSTouR member regions in accelerating and aligning their climate action strategies in tourism. Its aim is to facilitate learning, resource sharing, policy alignment, and coordinated action among European regions, helping them transition toward more resilient, decarbonized and regenerative tourism models.

Since the creation of the Hub, climate action has been scaled up and embedded into NECSTouR's strategic roadmap "2030 Pathway" with the specific strategic objective to support regions in deploying climate actions towards decarbonisation and adaptation.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

Since its launch as a dedicated space on NECSTouR's members-exclusive platform, the NECSTouR Climate Hub has evolved into a dynamic space gathering more than 300 subscribers from 40 different European regions and 30 academic and research institutes. From front-runners to beginners, the Climate Hub gathers all types of tourism destinations to build a common pathway for taking climate action. Through the Hub, NECSTouR has successfully raised awareness and strengthened commitment to the Glasgow Declaration, with 10 members now listed as signatories. Additionally, climate action is being actively integrated into member activities, with at least 50% of the network reporting progress in this area.

If you want to know more please contact: Adriana Tramullas, NECSTouR, adriana.tramullas@necstour.eu

HOW?

The Climate Hub's core work combines:
1/ A Knowledge Programme combining regular online webinars and exclusive in-person workshops led by experts.
2/ Quality tools and methodologies that provide actionable information and concrete roadmaps to support regions on the journey towards net zero. A key highlight is the Blueprint for Tourism Climate Action Plans, a practical guide for Regional Authorities and Destination Management Organizations on how to develop a strategy for acting on climate.
3/ Good practices collected within the network to provide inspiration. Regions such as the Canary Islands, Normandy, Scotland, and Centre-Val de Loire have already contributed valuable examples.
4/ Pilots and EU-funded projects such as Community4Tourism and Tour4Clima allow NECSTouR to leverage existing knowledge, methodologies, and networks, while also expanding the Hub's outreach and impact across European regions.
5/ Strategic partnerships provide members the opportunity to engage with the Glasgow Community and UNWTO and align with the European Commission's priorities (e.g. the Tourism Transition Pathway and the EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change).

WHY DID IT WORK?

It thrives thanks to a clear strategic roadmap with annual milestones and a co-creation process led by its members. Its leadership combines the Executive Team with active contributors from the network, ensuring strong direction and engagement. It also benefits from synergies with EU-funded projects, which enhance its reach and resources. Finally, it draws on the expertise of academic institutions within the network, grounding its actions in solid research and shared knowledge.

DID PART OF IT NOT WORK? WHY?

It brings together member regions at varying stages of climate action development, each with unique challenges. Some struggle with limited internal capacity or political support, while others face barriers such as insufficient data, limited access to funding, or difficulties engaging stakeholders.
To address these disparities, the Hub fosters collaboration and shared learning by pooling the collective knowledge of its members, disseminating broadly applicable guidelines, and creating spaces for open dialogue.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- Involving members in the co-creation of the Climate Hub ensured it was tailored to their needs and fostered strong engagement.
- Embedding climate action into NECSTouR's strategic roadmap provided clear direction and helped maintain consistent progress.
- Sharing practical tools and good practices enabled regions to take concrete steps toward climate action..
- Facilitating peer learning and open dialogue helped regions overcome differences and focus on common solutions.
- Collaborating with EU projects and academic institutions expanded the Hub's resources and grounded its actions in credible research.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

- NECSTouR Executive Team, as the coordinating body.
- VisitScotland, as Board of Directors leader for climate action.
- Practitioners and expert teams from DMOs and regional authorities including Flanders, Andalusia, Catalonia, Canary Islands and Normandy.
- Representatives from the European Commission providing policy frameworks.

WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ACTION(S)?

- Direct beneficiaries: NECSTouR's members, regional and local tourism authorities and DMOs. Specifically, their sustainability, research and projects teams who actively participate in the Hub's activities.
- NECSTouR's associated members, academic and research institutes also benefit from the knowledge sharing and can provide their expertise.
- EU institutions benefit from the network's ability to act as a catalyst, helping bring the Tourism Transition Pathway and Green Deal strategies to subnational tourism entities.
- As a long-term ambition, NECSTouR would also like to target the tourism sector, businesses and communities, as indirect beneficiaries of the Climate Hub activities.

BUDGET INVESTED TO LAUNCH AND TO MAINTAIN

Funding source: NECSTouR's own means: Operational budget from membership fees; In-kind support from members & Executive Team; Contributions from international experts & academic members; EU-funded projects.

8

Finance

Finance is often seen as a barrier to climate ambition—but in practice, it is a design challenge. The finance pathway helps urban destinations secure, blend, and manage the funding required to implement their climate strategies. This includes not only public funding (municipal budgets, recovery funds, green bonds) but also private capital, philanthropic investment, and destination-level revenue instruments (such as tourist eco-taxes or revolving climate funds).

Insights from the featured cases show that climate investments gain traction when they are tied to measurable outcomes and co-benefits—such as health improvements, social inclusion, or job creation. Destinations that designed modular budgets by project phase, leveraged local financing institutions, or aligned actions with ESG-aligned investors were more successful in implementation. Importantly, finance teams need capacity-building too: many municipalities lack the in-house skills to prepare climate-smart business cases or meet reporting requirements from blended finance sources.

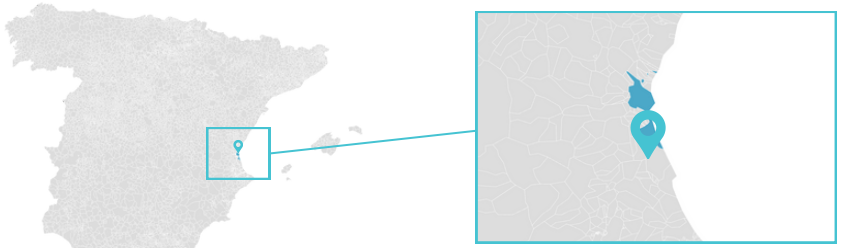
The cases included are:

- Grants for Sustainable Tourism - Valencia - Spain
- Sustainable Tourism Funds - Region Occitanie - France
- Support Towards Green Key Label and Green Destination Label - Estonia
- Grants for Carbon Footprint Measurement, Climate Action Planning and Circularity - Gorbeia - Spain
- Ecotax - Balearic Islands - Spain

8

Grants for Sustainable Tourism

Spain, Valencia



CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

As a leading urban tourism destination and European Green Capital 2024, Valencia faced the challenge of ensuring that its growing visitor economy transitioned toward climate neutrality. While the city made significant advances in destination-level sustainability planning, thousands of local tourism-related businesses—especially small and micro-enterprises—lacked access to the tools, knowledge, or capacity to measure their environmental impact. The main challenge was to bridge the gap between city-level climate goals and SME-level action, enabling the private sector to play an active role in decarbonisation efforts.

OBJECTIVE

The programme aimed to provide technical support to 3,000 local tourism service providers, namely: accommodation, food and beverage, agencies, etc., to help them measure their carbon footprint, understand their emissions sources, and receive tailored recommendations for reduction. A broader objective was to align the city's climate neutrality goals with concrete business-level change, while promoting a recognisable sustainability label that motivates progress and increases visibility among visitors.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

- Over 2,500 local tourism-related businesses received individualised carbon footprint assessments.
- Each business was provided with a customised emissions report and an action plan for reducing their impact, focused on areas like energy efficiency.
- The initiative supported the creation and adoption of the "Negocio Local Sostenible" label, a public recognition granted to participating and committed businesses.
- It strengthened data collection at the city level, contributing to a better understanding of sector-wide emissions and informing broader tourism and climate policies.
- Many businesses began implementing low-cost, high-impact changes, such as shifting to renewable energy providers or improving insulation.

If you want to know more please contact:
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HOW?

The programme was led by Ajuntament (City Council) de València and executed by the Chamber of Commerce of Valencia. A network of technical consultants and environmental advisors visited participating businesses or supported them virtually to conduct carbon footprint assessments using standardised calculation tools adapted to tourism operations. Businesses were guided step-by-step and received not only diagnostics but also personalised recommendations and a report to support ongoing improvement. The initiative also included capacity-building workshops, peer-learning sessions, and public promotion of the certified businesses.

WHY DID IT WORK?

It worked because:

- Valencia's tourism sector had previously supported the city's bid for the European Green Capital, leading to the establishment of the Green Pact, which included a network of dedicated companies. These initiatives encouraged businesses to lower their emissions, making the programme an ideal fit as companies were already interconnected.
- The grant programme offered was locally embedded, technically sound, and designed for inclusivity—addressing the real constraints of small businesses while making participation free and voluntary.
- The integration of recognition through certification, practical tools, and one-on-one technical support built trust and engagement.
- The political backing of Valencia's sustainability agenda and its alignment with the city's recognition as European Green Capital (2024) provided strong momentum and legitimacy to the initiative.

DID PART OF IT NOT WORK? WHY?

One limitation was that not all companies engaged at the same pace, some micro-businesses were harder to reach. Additionally, while measurement and planning were successful, the implementation of long-term reduction measures was often constrained by limited financial capacity or technical know-how. Continued support, monitoring, and access to incentives were flagged as necessary for deeper transformation.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- Hands-on technical assistance is essential to empower SMEs to take climate action.
- Voluntary recognition schemes motivate participation when well-communicated and trusted.
- Public-private collaboration at the local level is key to aligning city goals with business realities.
- Carbon measurement must be paired with practical, cost-sensitive guidance to lead to change.
- Sustained climate action by SMEs requires follow-up mechanisms, including funding, training, and progress tracking.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

- Ajuntament de València – lead authority and funding source.
- Chamber of Commerce of Valencia - managing the funds, contracting technical assistance, etc.
- Fundación Visit València – communicating and raising awareness.
- Environmental consultancies and carbon accounting experts – technical delivery.
- Local business associations – support in recruitment and dissemination.
- Tourism SMEs – direct beneficiaries and co-creators of climate solutions.

WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ACTION(S)?

- Tourism businesses, especially SMEs, gained concrete tools, recognition, and improved environmental performance.
- Visitors benefit from increased transparency and access to more sustainable service providers.
- The city advanced toward its climate neutrality and sustainable tourism targets.

BUDGET INVESTED TO LAUNCH AND TO MAINTAIN

Annualy it implies 141.000€.
It has been running for 3 years already.

8

Sustainable Tourism Funds

France, Occitanie

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Occitanie, with its rich cultural heritage and rural tourism, hosted 237 million overnight stays in 2024. So, tourism is also a key economic pillar. Yet it puts strong pressure on natural resources and infrastructure, especially during the high season, when the population can increase five to tenfold in certain areas. Moreover, the tourism sector vulnerability to climate change remains a concern.

The tourism sector—especially among rural hotels, restaurants, and small-scale operators—lacked the technical resources to transition to eco-friendly practices aligned with post-pandemic recovery and national climate goals. Barriers included limited access to financing, insufficient diagnostic tools, and low awareness of sustainable solutions.

OBJECTIVE

Developing more sustainable tourism, ensuring responsible visitor management, and promoting soft mobility are essential in order to:

- Accelerate the ecological transition of tourism activities;
- Reduce vulnerability to climate change;
- Preserve the territory's attractiveness and resilience.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

- From 2021 to 2024, the Sustainable Tourism Fund, managed by ADEME on behalf of the French government, was allocated €70 million under the France Relance and Destination France recovery plans.
- Nearly 600 companies benefited from a sustainable tourism diagnostic in Occitanie, 4.000 companies at the national level.
- 410 received financial support
- Amounting to €8.6 million in total aid

If you want to know more please contact:
Christelle Bedes, ADEME,
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HOW?

The Sustainable Tourism Fund supported numerous tourism stakeholders — hotels, accommodations, restaurants, and agritourism businesses — in implementing customized action plans.

The program offered free environmental assessments and financial support for concrete initiatives such as:

- Reducing water and energy consumption;
- Cutting waste;
- Promoting sustainable mobility;
- Enhancing local production;
- Obtaining environmental labels;
- Raising awareness and improving communication.

WHY DID IT WORK?

- Barrier-Free Access: Fully funded support removed economic obstacles for small operators.
- Local Delivery: CCIs and UNAT's trusted networks ensured accessibility and relevance.
- Comprehensive Support: From diagnostic to planning to funding, the process was seamless and integrated.
- Strategic Alignment: Embedded within post-COVID recovery (France Relance and Destination France recovery plans) and regional green strategies, enhancing policy traction.

DID PART OF IT NOT WORK? WHY?

This support only reached 10% of rural enterprises. It is important to keep promoting and spreading these good practices within the ecosystem of stakeholders, particularly through the professional federations most committed to sustainable tourism.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- Combining funding, expertise, and accessibility is vital for climate transition among micro and small tourism operators.
- Local institutions (e.g., CCIs, UNAT) play a key delivery role in scaling support equitably.
- Clear eligibility and tailored support structures increase program uptake.
- Complementing diagnostics with subsequent capital investment opportunities strengthens impact.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

- ADEME (public energy and environment agency) – funder and technical partner
- the Occitanie Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI)
- UNAT (social tourism network);
- the departmental tourism agencies of Gard, Lot, Haute-Garonne, and Hérault;
- and several local development territories (PNR Grands Causses, PNR Haut-Languedoc, PNR Causses du Quercy, and Sydel du Pays Cœur d'Hérault).

WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ACTION(S)?

- Rural tourism operators – gained both diagnostic insight and financial support
- Local economies – through revitalized, sustainable offerings and extended seasons
- Visitors – enabled access to greener tourism products
- Regional resilience – through diversification and sustainable capacity building

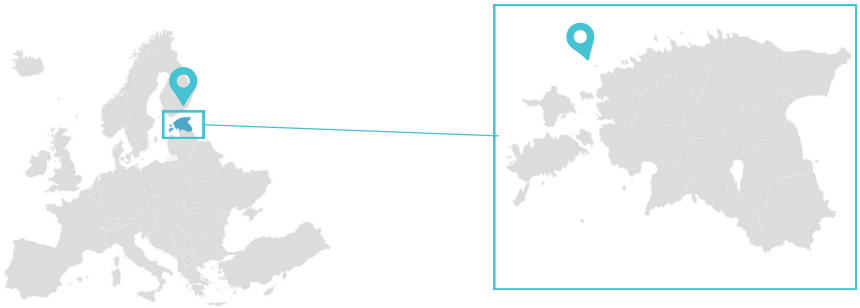
BUDGET INVESTED TO LAUNCH AND TO MAINTAIN

France government funds: 70million€.

8

Support towards Green Key Label and Green Destination Label

Estonia



CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Estonia has numerous destinations and tourism businesses committed to sustainability and climate change. Hence, Estonia has ambitions to position its tourism sector as sustainable and climate-resilient. But many small tourism enterprises and destinations faced limited capacity, knowledge gaps, and financial barriers to obtain recognized eco-labels. Without external support, uptake of labels like Green Key or Green Destinations remained slow, limiting the country's ability to credibly brand itself as a responsible destination.

OBJECTIVE

To accelerate sustainability label adoption in tourism by providing support (technical, financial, organizational) for businesses to obtain the Green Key label and for destinations to pursue Green Destinations certification, thereby improving operational sustainability, reputation, and destination-level climate alignment.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

- The number of Green Key certified tourism businesses in Estonia has increased to 87 by recent years.
- All seven pilot destinations in Estonia (e.g. Hiiumaa, Tartu, Saaremaa, Lahemaa, Järvamaa, Pärnu, Rakvere) achieved Green Destinations status in 2021 and renewed/advanced their awards in 2023.
- Some destinations upgraded certification levels (e.g. Lahemaa from Gold to Platinum, Tartu to Platinum) between cycles.
- A new destination gained the Golden Award in 2025, Tallinn.
- New destinations, such as Läänemaa, are getting acquainted with the initiative in 2025 are starting to engage in the process.

If you want to know more please contact:
Ede Teinbas, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication

8 Support towards Green Key Label and Green Destination Label

HOW?

- Estonian Business & Innovation Agency integrated sustainability as part of its ESG support mandate, offering grants, advice, and tools to businesses.
- Visit Estonia developed a Sustainability Plan to guide enterprises adopting Green Key, and assisted destinations with toolkits for sustainable destination management. Estonia started working with Green Key in 2001.
- Destinations participated in a Green Destinations pilot certification programme (introduced in 2020), which included capacity building, destination assessments, training on criteria, and benchmarking.
- Local stakeholder engagement, destination coordinators, and iterative improvement processes were used to align criteria to Estonian context.

WHY DID IT WORK?

- Institutional backing: the support came from national agencies with resources and legitimacy (EIS / Enterprise Estonia).
- Holistic support: combining advice, funding, and tools lowered barriers for small tourism enterprises.
- Phased approach: pilot certification allowed learning and adaptation before full scaling.
- Destination-level alignment: multiple municipalities engaged, enabling peer learning and leverage of local identity.
- International benchmarking: participation in recognized labels gave external credibility and motivation.

DID PART OF IT NOT WORK? WHY?

- The Green Key program had slow uptake initially, the first 20 years, many enterprises had to self-learn before structured support was offered. This support arrived during COVID, Estonia Government allocated significant funds. More companies joined. Support was sustained from 2020 to 2024 fully and from 2025 onwards the support is reduced to cover 50% of the process. Since this support has been reduced some businesses cannot bear the cost, but new ones are joining.
- Some smaller destinations or enterprises may lack skills, staff or resources to identify this opportunity (mostly at the beginning) and to maintain certification or continuous improvement Moreover, differences among destinations in capacity led to uneven performance or slower progress in certain regions.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- Strong leadership is the key to launch and sustain the process and the sustained messages over time.
- Institutional mandate and funding stability are key to maintain support over time.
- Certifications are powerful levers when accompanied by support (training, subsidies, toolkits).
- Piloting first helps tailor criteria and processes to local contexts before broad rollout.
- Destination-level clustering (multiple municipalities) helps share resources and build momentum.
- Continuous renewal and upgrading of certifications encourages ongoing sustainability improvements.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

- Estonian Business & Innovation Agency – program support, grants, advisory role.
- Visit Estonia – sustainability planning and destination-level coordination.
- Green Destinations Foundation – provider of certification framework in international context.
- Individual tourism businesses (hotels, accommodations, restaurants) applying for Green Key.
- Local destination authorities / municipalities implementing the pilot Green Destinations.
- External trainers, auditors, and sustainability consultants engaged in capacity building.

WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ACTION(S)?

- Tourism enterprises that now hold or maintain certification and gain reputational and operational sustainability improvements.
- Destinations and regions that gain recognized sustainable branding, attracting responsible travelers.
- Residents visitors and environment, through reduced environmental impacts and better-managed tourism growth, and more sustainable experiences to enjoy.
- National tourism strategy, with stronger alignment toward climate goals and international visibility.

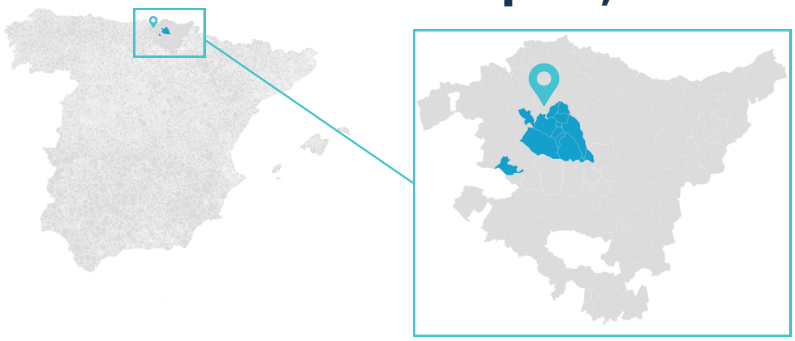
BUDGET INVESTED TO LAUNCH AND TO MAINTAIN

Estonian Business & Innovation Agency own funds (Estonia's government budget) now to support the companies and EU funds since the beginning for launching the project.

8

Grants for Carbon footprint Measurement and Climate Action Planning and Circularity

Spain, Gorbeia



CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

Nestled between the provinces of Álava and Bizkaia in northern Spain, Gorbeia is a nature-based tourism destination centered around the Gorbeia Natural Park, the largest natural park in the Basque Country, Spain. Mount Gorbeia, rising 1,481 meters above sea level. Surrounding it is a diverse ecosystem of beech and oak forests, karstic landscapes, rivers, and wildlife.

Gorbeia has taken proactive steps to address the risks posed by climate change. One of the key initiatives is the promotion of low-impact tourism activities, such as hiking, cycling, birdwatching, and nature interpretation. These activities are designed to minimize environmental disruption while connecting visitors with the local ecosystems. Interpretive trails, guided experiences, cultural visits to small villages like Areatza and Orozko, and agro-tourism experiences, and educational panels raise awareness about the importance of climate adaptation, forest conservation, and local biodiversity.

Moreover, the destination encourages year-round visitation to reduce pressure. The destination has a very small number of tourism companies despite the high affluence of same-day visitors and tourists.

OBJECTIVE

The objective has been to finance tourism businesses measuring their carbon footprint, their circularity, developing their climate action plans and taking practical measures to decarbonize.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

- 11 tourism companies (rural houses, museums, hotels, outdoor activities, restaurant, tourism apartments, wellness establishments) have signed the Glasgow Declaration
- 11 tourism companies (rural houses, museums, hotels, outdoor activities, restaurant, tourism apartments, wellness establishments) have developed their Climate Action Plan and are implementing it already
- 14 tourism companies (rural houses, museums, hotels, outdoor activities, restaurant, tourism apartments, wellness establishments) have measured their carbon footprint, most of them are in the minimum already, very low compared to similar companies country wide
- 14 tourism companies (rural houses, museums, hotels, outdoor activities, restaurant, tourism apartments, wellness establishments) have measured their circularity

If you want to know more please contact:
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HOW?

Gorbeia's approach to sustainable tourism is deeply rooted in collaboration among municipalities, environmental agencies, local businesses, and tourism offices. The region participates in broader Basque and European initiatives aimed at integrating climate adaptation into destination management. This includes alignment with the Basque Tourism Code of Ethics and the 2030 Basque Tourism Strategy, both of which promote climate-resilient, inclusive, and responsible tourism.As such Gorbeialde (county development agency) achieved NEXT Generation Funds to be able to finance this for companies and to also finance for companies to advance on decarbonizing. Gorbeialde launched a tender, a union of companies won and provided the services of measuring carbon footprint, measuring circularity, counselling on Glasgow Declaration signing and side by side with companies developing their respective climate action plans. As a result of this first phase of the project, some companies have identified that they are doing everything they can and simply maintain that and perhaps compensate CO2 since they cannot reduce further, and some companies they need to:

·Change the electricity provider so that 100% of the energy is renewable

·Install aerothermal solutions / solar panels etc.

·Install temperature management systems dividing spaces with remote control

·Raising awareness among visitors to recycle

·Measure carbon footprint every year

·Measure waste generation and take effective measures to reduce

Local accommodation providers, such as rural guesthouses and eco-lodges, have embraced energy efficiency measures, waste reduction strategies, and the use of local, seasonal products in their offerings. Many of them are involved in environmental certification programs that validate their sustainable practices and help communicate their commitments to environmentally conscious travelers. To further support tourism companies to decarbonize the second phase includes financing tourism companies to precisely advance on the areas identified on phase 1.

WHY DID IT WORK?

High level of stakeholder engagement, particularly Gorbeialde and the private companies and a couple of institutions managing public museums.

DID PART OF IT NOT WORK? WHY?

The project was conducted during spring and summer, and some companies prioritized their business rather than advancing on this topic despite being interested.

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

- Skillful team at Gorbeialde with vision to detect this opportunity, dialogue with the different municipalities and make it happen engaging private sector companies.
- Commitment at the highest level, meaning the mayors and tourism counsellors at each municipality was key for Gorbeialde to go after NEXT Generation Funds
- Commitment by private tourism companies to decarbonize, they were very committed to this already, so they immediately embraced the project.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Gorbeialde Rural Development Agency (and the municipality mayors involved therein) and 14 tourism companies, which are the majority of the companies in this rural area.

WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ACTION(S)?

Tourism companies and local government.

BUDGET INVESTED TO LAUNCH AND TO MAINTAIN

180,000€ Next Generation Funds. One off.

8

Ecotax

Spain, Balearic Islands

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

The Balearic Islands—Mallorca, Menorca, Ibiza, and Formentera—are top tourism destinations, with over 18.7 million visitors in 2024. While tourism remains the region's main economic driver, it has placed considerable strain on territorial and environmental resources, demanding ongoing investment in infrastructure and quality services. Ensuring long-term sustainability requires a shared effort by public institutions and the private sector to preserve the islands' natural and cultural heritage.
To address these challenges, the regional government introduced a Sustainable Tourism Tax (ITS) in July 2016. This "ecotax" funds environmental protection, heritage restoration, skills training, and off-season promotion. It also supports actions against illegal tourism, improves safety and inspections, and fosters more responsible tourism through sustainability awareness.

OBJECTIVE

To internalize the environmental and social costs of tourism by imposing a daily fee, on overnight stays and cruise arrivals—with revenues dedicated to environmental protection, fight against climate change, water management, cultural and historical heritage restoration, sustainable tourism, natural environment, social welfare, tourism diversification, training and employment, innovation, and research—to transit towards a more responsible and sustainable tourism model.

WHAT WAS ACHIEVED?

- Since it was introduced in 2016 until the 2024-2025 Call, a total of 297 projects have been approved for a total amount of around EUR 847 million financed by the tax, in 9 years of application.
- Last 2024-2025 Call for instance, is funding a total of 79 projects, valued at EUR 376.9 million:
- €247.3M for water cycle & environmental conservation, 34 projects.
- €47.9M for low-season tourism (culture, sport) and improvement of tourist areas, 21 projects.
- €29.8M for heritage restoration, 12 projects.
- €25.3M to combat illegal supply, inspection, and safety, 7 projects.
- €11.2M for sustainable tourism, 1 project.
- €8.0M for tourism quality, 1 project.
- €6.0M for tourism innovation and research, 2 projects.
- €1.4M for training and employment, 1 project.

If you want to know more please contact:
AETIB, direccion@aetib.caib.es
www.illessostenibles.travel

HOW?

How does it work?

- Tourists pay the tax when staying in tourist accommodations and tourist cruise ships. Tourist dwellings collect the funds and transfer them to the regional government tax agency.
- The tax applies to all overnight stays excluding: children under 16 years of age; 50% reduced rates apply to longer stays, and passengers on cruise ships whose home port is in the Balearic Islands are exempt from paying the tax.
- The tax rates vary by accommodation type and low-high season (e.g., €4 five and four-star superior hotels per person/night in summer to €1 off-season, and from €1 Hostels, lodgings, guest houses, inns high season to 0.25€ off-season). Higher rates apply during peak season (1May-31Oct) and are reduced by 50% during low season (1Nov-30Apr) to manage flows and encourage off-season visitation.

Who decides how the funds are invested?

- Ecotax Governance is overseen by a deliberative Commission evaluating funding proposals, defining annual priorities, and ensuring alignment with strategic goals. It includes representatives from regional and local governments, environmental groups, business federations, and trade unions. Funding decisions are based on technical criteria such as territorial balance, social & environmental impact, and identified regional needs. For 2025, 7 priority areas have been established: Environment, Cultural Heritage, Training and Quality, Destination Improvement, Tourism Innovation & Research, Social Welfare, and Responsible Tourism.

WHY DID IT WORK?

- The tax is purpose-driven, transparent, and ring-fenced toward sustainability, heritage, and local resilience.
- It was integrated into governance via a commission for amplified impact.

DID PART OF IT NOT WORK? WHY?

A deficiency in information about the tax was detected. It is important to inform visitors and residents about how the funds raised with the eco-tax are invested, so that everyone knows where the funds are allocated to. For this reason, a new website has been launched in 4 languages; information is being provided through QR codes; and communication campaigns are being launched at the three airports of the Balearic Islands under the slogan: "your islands, your holiday, your contribution".

MAIN LESSONS LEARNED

A tax transparently managed, can contribute to improve tourism and build consensus around environmental and sustainable development investment priorities.

Moreover, aligning ecotax with multi-level funding frameworks (e.g., EU funds) would allow for more ambitious long-term interventions, especially given the maturity of the Balearic Islands destination, which needs for more modern and attractive infrastructures.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

- The Balearic Islands Tourism Strategy Agency (AETIB) administers and allocates ITS-ecotax resources ensuring proper distribution, and monitors the projects. It also provides technical, administrative, financial and legal support to facilitate access to grants and showcases the funded projects under the "Illes Sostenibles" brand, making results visible to both, residents, and visitors.
- The regional Government of the Balearic Islands collects the funds through its Tax Agency.
- Public entities (municipalities, island Councils and Balearic Government departments) submit proposals to the annual calls and later implement the selected projects.
- The Sustainable Tourism Tax Commission evaluates proposals and selects the projects to be funded.

WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE ACTION(S)?

- Residents, via improved infrastructure, safer public spaces, environmental protection, and better economic, social, culture and education opportunities.
- Visitors, enjoying higher-quality, modernised infrastructures, Heritage conservation and protected natural environments.
- Tourism businesses benefit from destination enhancement; thus, they can improve and diversify services, in terms of quality, sustainability employment and circularity.
- Cultural and natural heritage, preserving historical sites and ecosystems.
- Researchers, educators, and local workforce, gaining access to training, and new employment.

BUDGET INVESTED TO LAUNCH AND TO MAINTAIN

Annual revenue of ecotax: It depends on the number of tourist overnights (around EUR 130 million per year). New Web launch costs (2025): Frontend website: EUR 50.000; Marketing materials and website contents: EUR 200.000. Maintenance costs (per year): around EUR 1 million; Staff costs: EUR 650.000 dedicated to project monitoring, legal, financial, and administrative tasks.; Web: EUR 30.000; Production of marketing materials: EUR 70.000; Communication campaigns: EUR 250.000.

9 Communicate

Strategic communication is essential to climate action—not only to raise awareness, but to build legitimacy, generate behavioural change, and activate stakeholders. For urban destinations, climate communication should go beyond generic sustainability messaging. It must explain the urgency and logic of action, highlight citizen and visitor benefits, and offer clear pathways for engagement. Climate communication in urban destinations must go far beyond press releases and awareness slogans. It is a strategic function of governance, designed to sustain momentum, foster collaboration, preempt resistance, and shape the behaviours of diverse actors — from public agencies and tourism businesses to residents and visitors.
Effective communication for climate action must be multi-level, multi-channel, and multi-audience. It needs to speak to both hearts and minds, using storytelling, transparency, and participation to embed climate priorities into the public consciousness and the operating logic of the destination.

Internal institutional communication and coordination

Best practices include:

- Rotating leadership to distribute ownership.
- Shared intranet platforms or dashboards where departments upload KPIs and progress updates.
- Co-developed communication briefs for external messaging, reducing duplication and contradiction.

Resident-facing communication and awareness raising

Residents must not be passive spectators but active agents in the transition. Climate plans should include permanent communication campaigns tailored to neighbourhoods, schools, and civic spaces — combining analog and digital tools. Campaigns can highlight individual contributions, showcase local climate champions, and connect climate action to everyday concerns like heat relief, air quality, cost of living, or walkability.

Common tools include:

- Open climate forums or town halls twice a year.
- Local signage in regeneration or mobility projects explaining the climate logic behind them.
- School partnerships with climate education modules and youth ambassador programmes.
- Climate storytelling through local media and social media accounts managed by the municipality.
- Gamified platforms where residents log climate-friendly behaviours for symbolic rewards.

Visitor-oriented communication and behavioural nudging

Tourism-specific communication is also essential. Destinations should design pre-arrival, on-site, and post-visit messaging to help visitors understand and respect the climate priorities of the city. This includes nudging behaviour related to mobility choices, waste disposal, water use, and destination-sensitive practices.

Effective approaches observed include:

- QR codes on hotel check-in material linking to climate-friendly itineraries or mobility options.
- Digital campaigns through OTAs or DMO websites encouraging visitors to "travel lighter" (e.g., offsetting, choosing green certified providers).
- Climate messages embedded into tourist information centres, transport hubs, and cultural venues.
- Partnerships with tourism guides and interpreters to integrate environmental content into experiences.

Such communication not only educates, but increases destination differentiation and attracts conscious travellers who are more likely to respect local norms and contribute to sustainability.

Strategic framing and tone

Across all audiences, the way climate messages are framed matters. Successful destinations tend to:

- Use solution-oriented language rather than only highlighting risks.
- Focus on co-benefits: better air, greener spaces, more inclusive streets.
- Communicate with visual storytelling, using maps, infographics, and community testimonials.
- Avoid "doom-and-gloom" narratives unless framed with local agency and achievable actions.

Avoiding greenwashing is paramount. All communication must be based on real commitments and measurable progress. Messaging that exaggerates achievements or downplays gaps risks undermining trust and credibility, especially among local civil society or media.

Resourcing and governance

Communication should not be an afterthought. It must have:

- A dedicated team (internal or external), with skills in narrative development, visual design, public engagement, and tourism communication.
- A clear governance link to the climate action team or interdepartmental committee.
- A defined annual budget, ideally representing 5–10% of the overall plan, depending on campaign scale and duration.

Cross-financing with tourism marketing budgets or partnering with national or regional communication programmes can also increase impact without duplicating effort.

Destinations profiled in this report used diverse formats—from citizen science and digital dashboards to public campaigns co-designed with schools and business communities. A key success factor was consistency: aligning climate messaging across tourism promotion, urban planning, and community outreach prevented fragmentation and increased resonance. Destinations must also be prepared to communicate setbacks transparently, and to continuously update the public on progress and next steps. Allocating at least 5–10% of the climate plan's budget to communication and stakeholder activation is advisable.

In sum, communication, when done with intention, clarity and continuity, becomes a lever for transformation. It builds trust, supports behaviour change, aligns stakeholders, and activates participation. Destinations that invest in this strategic function are more likely to implement ambitious actions, secure broader political and social support, and position themselves as future-ready, climate-smart places to live and visit.

10 Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring and reporting are the backbone of climate action governance. Without reliable and recurring monitoring systems, urban destinations risk drifting from their targets, failing to assess effectiveness, or losing credibility with residents, stakeholders, and funders.

Climate action plans in the tourism context must account for the dynamic interaction between emissions, infrastructure, visitor flows, and social equity. Therefore, monitoring systems should track not only greenhouse gas emissions but also co-benefits (e.g., health, biodiversity), negative externalities (e.g., displacement, environmental pressure), and policy implementation milestones.

1. What to monitor and why

The first task is defining key performance indicators (KPIs). These should:

- Reflect the climate goals and sub-goals of the plan.
- Be measurable with existing or realistically obtainable data.
- Cover both outputs (e.g. km of bike lanes built, % renewable energy used in public buildings) and outcomes (e.g. emissions reduced, modal shift in visitor transport).
- Be linked to short-, medium-, and long-term milestones.

A well-designed monitoring system should integrate indicators across multiple categories:

- Environmental: emissions (Scope 1–3), energy intensity, urban temperature, biodiversity levels, resource use (water, materials).
- Social: accessibility improvements, local business inclusion, job quality in tourism, perceived fairness of measures.
- Governance: number of projects accomplished via interdepartmental cooperation, stakeholder involvement rate, delivery rate of scheduled actions.
- Tourism-specific: % of overnight stays in certified accommodations, volume of visitors using sustainable transport, seasonality patterns, pressure on public spaces.

2. How to monitor — structures and tools

Successful destinations typically combine digital infrastructure, technical partnerships, and organisational routines to enable effective monitoring. Examples include:

- Central data platforms or dashboards, often built on open-source or commercial systems, which allow departments to input and visualise progress in real time.
- GIS-linked data layers to monitor urban heat islands, green space coverage, or tourism congestion hotspots.
- Sensor-based systems, such as air quality monitors, noise sensors or smart meters for water and energy use in public infrastructure.
- Tourism observatories equipped to integrate climate and sustainability indicators with visitor data.
- Regular third-party assessments, whether through national platforms, EU-funded projects, or certification schemes that require ongoing data disclosure.

To manage this, cities often assign monitoring duties to:

- The municipal climate team (coordinating across departments).
- A dedicated Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) unit within the sustainability or planning department.
- In some cases, external technical partners, universities, or NGOs with data capabilities.

3. Reporting and disclosure

Reporting translates data into decisions. Urban destinations should commit to transparent, periodic, and audience-specific reporting, including:

- Annual progress reports that communicate action delivery rates, indicator evolution, lessons learned, and updated forecasts.
- Mid-term reviews tied to funding cycles or election mandates.
- Tourism-focused sustainability bulletins, aimed at industry stakeholders, showing climate progress and business opportunities.
- Public dashboards (web-based) that allow residents and visitors to explore local climate performance — with easy-to-understand visuals, summaries, and calls to action.

Best practices include:

- Linking climate reporting to broader municipal budgeting and strategic planning cycles.
- Offering open data formats for researchers, journalists, and civil society to independently track and interpret progress.
- Including a section on "What didn't work and why" to build public trust and foster a culture of adaptive management.

4. Cost, capacity, and governance considerations

Monitoring and reporting are often underfunded despite their importance. Destinations should plan to allocate approximately:

- 5–8% of their total climate action budget to monitoring infrastructure and staff capacity.
- Additional funds if external data providers, APIs, or licensing agreements are needed.
- Training for municipal staff to interpret and use data for decision-making (not just to report upwards).

Crucially, monitoring must be embedded in legal mandates and governance structures to outlive electoral cycles. Cities can adopt climate transparency ordinances, integrate KPIs into procurement contracts, or include monitoring expectations in public-private partnership agreements.

5. The strategic value of monitoring

Beyond technical compliance, monitoring and reporting serve four strategic purposes:

1. Accountability: Holding departments and stakeholders to their commitments.
2. Learning: Identifying which actions are working, and adapting others.
3. Mobilisation: Showing residents, businesses, and funders that progress is real.
4. Replication: Allowing others to learn from your experience and scale best practices.

Destinations that invest in credible monitoring systems are better prepared to respond to climate shocks, communicate effectively, and unlock performance-based financing.

11 Transparency

Transparency is a foundational principle of effective climate action — not simply as a reporting obligation, but as a lever to strengthen trust, improve governance, and accelerate impact. For urban destinations, climate transparency means clearly communicating what is being done, how decisions are made, what resources are being allocated, and what results are being achieved.

Transparent climate governance is particularly important in tourism-intensive urban areas, where residents may perceive sustainability initiatives as favouring visitors over locals, or where businesses are affected by new standards and regulations. By being open about trade-offs, progress, and failures, cities can foster constructive dialogue, citizen engagement, and industry buy-in.

What should be made transparent?

Cities should develop a clear transparency framework detailing which documents, datasets, and processes will be published, how often, and in what formats. Key elements include:

Strategic and operational documents

- Full versions of the Climate Action Plan, including appendices, emission inventories, stakeholder consultation summaries, and action matrices.
- Implementation schedules and roadmaps, showing which actions are underway, delayed, or modified — ideally with version control.
- Internal governance structures: membership of climate task forces, technical committees, and steering groups.

Financial data

- Budget allocations per pathway, department, and initiative.
- Sources of funding (e.g., municipal budgets, EU funds, private partnerships).
- Performance-based financing mechanisms and disbursement criteria.

Monitoring and evaluation

- Annual or biannual progress reports, including KPIs, emissions trajectories, cost-benefit data, and implementation ratios.
- Audits and evaluations, including third-party validations and responses to audit findings.
- Data used for reporting to national and international frameworks (e.g., Covenant of Mayors, CDP Cities, UNFCCC).

Tourism-specific data

- Visitor flows and associated carbon footprints.
- Distribution of tourism tax revenues or climate-linked fees.
- Reports on business engagement with voluntary ESG programmes.

How to operationalise transparency?

Transparency must be embedded in digital systems, institutional routines, and legal mandates. Examples of practical mechanisms include:

- A dedicated climate transparency portal, ideally as part of the city's official website, housing all relevant documents and datasets with filtering/search functionality.
- Open data platforms that allow users (residents, researchers, journalists, businesses) to access raw datasets — from mobility emissions to green space metrics.
- Citizen-accessible dashboards with intuitive visualisations of progress toward climate goals (e.g., barometers, infographics, traffic-light coding).
- Public records of stakeholder consultations, showing who was consulted, how feedback was addressed, and which ideas were incorporated.
- Climate observatories or citizen panels that oversee transparency practices and co-evaluate progress.

Barriers and enablers

Despite its benefits, transparency often encounters resistance due to:

- Institutional inertia or siloed data systems.
- Lack of capacity to prepare data for publication (e.g., anonymisation, formatting, licensing).
- Political concerns over exposing underperformance or policy delays.

To overcome this, destinations should:

- Allocate specific resources and personnel to transparency tasks.
- Provide training to public officials on open governance and data publication.
- Use open government laws to create mandatory disclosure timelines.
- Build partnerships with civil society organisations and universities that can support dissemination, verification, and analysis.

Transparency as an investment

While not always resource-intensive, transparency does require:

- A digital infrastructure capable of hosting and updating datasets securely and accessibly.
- Staff time for documentation, formatting, approval, and dissemination.
- Translation or accessibility tools to reach wider audiences, including non-native speakers, people with disabilities, or underrepresented groups.

Destinations that succeed in building transparent systems often spend between 3–5% of their climate plan implementation budget on communication, data publication, and public engagement functions — particularly if the transparency system is part of a broader digital transition.

Why does transparency matter?

Transparency delivers multiple strategic benefits:

- Builds public trust, especially when difficult decisions (e.g., new mobility restrictions or eco-tax reforms) are made.
- Prevents greenwashing by tying communication to measurable action.
- Enables peer learning, allowing other cities to replicate or adapt effective policies.
- Unlocks funding, as most climate finance mechanisms — from EU funds to international donor programmes — require robust documentation and participatory reporting.
- Improves internal governance, by clarifying roles, surfacing bottlenecks, and embedding a culture of accountability.

Transparency is not only about publishing PDFs — it's about cultivating a culture of openness, responsiveness, and learning. Destinations that embrace transparency as a pillar of climate governance demonstrate leadership, invite collaboration, and create the conditions for sustainable success.

Conclusions

Urban destinations stand at a critical crossroads. On one side, they face intensifying climate threats — rising temperatures, water scarcity, extreme weather, biodiversity loss — compounded by the pressures of tourism flows that are often seasonal, concentrated, and carbon-intensive. On the other, they are uniquely positioned to lead the shift toward a more just, inclusive, and climate-friendly tourism model.

This publication presents a practical and structured approach to that transformation, framed around five interconnected pathways — Measure, Decarbonise, Regenerate, Collaborate, and Finance. These are not sequential steps, but mutually reinforcing arenas of action, each essential to building credible and durable climate strategies. Their implementation demands not only technical adaptation, but also institutional courage, stakeholder trust, and long-term vision.

The cases compiled here demonstrate that real change is not only possible — it is already happening.

Across small and large cities, from northern to southern Europe, destinations are:

- Measuring their emissions and material impacts with increasing granularity.
- Piloting decarbonisation projects that reduce fossil fuel dependency while improving public infrastructure.
- Restoring urban ecosystems and aligning tourism flows with environmental limits.
- Developing shared governance with businesses, residents, and researchers.
- Innovating in finance — blending public funds, donor support, and private capital to scale up action.

These experiences show that no destination is too early or too late to begin. Some started with a carbon footprint; others began with mobility plans, nature-based solutions, or public engagement campaigns. What matters most is establishing an integrated, adaptive framework that evolves over time and responds to local context.

The value of real-world cases

One of the most cited barriers among city teams is "We don't know what to do or where to start". This guide aims to eliminate that excuse. The cases provide not just inspiration, but pragmatic reference points:

- What types of actions are technically feasible?
- What budgets are typically required?
- What governance models enable success?
- What pitfalls can be avoided?

These are not theoretical best practices — they are real responses to climate urgency under political, financial, and social constraints. By focusing on replicability and operational detail, the guide offers a bridge between high-level climate goals and grounded municipal action.

Cross-cutting enablers

Beyond the five pathways, several cross-cutting lessons have emerged that apply to all destinations:

- Communication is action: The narrative and visibility of climate plans influence public perception, business behaviour, and political continuity.
- Monitoring ensures credibility: Transparent, verifiable tracking of progress builds trust, secures funding, and supports adaptive management.
- Transparency invites accountability and partnership: Cities that open their planning and performance data create shared ownership and reduce resistance.
- Time matters: Climate ambition must be translated into timelines and operational sequences, with clear roles, milestones, and review points.
- Equity is essential: Without inclusive design and distribution of benefits, climate plans risk deepening social divides — especially in tourism areas where gentrification, noise, and commodification already create tension.

What success looks like

Success will look different in every city — but across contexts, climate-friendly and resilient destinations share certain characteristics:

- Their climate plans are embedded in local mandates, not outsourced or symbolic.
- They coordinate tourism, environment, urban planning, and economic development strategies.
- They engage businesses and residents as co-owners of change, not passive recipients.
- They align sustainability goals with destination branding and visitor expectations.
- They invest in capacities, not just infrastructure — from data literacy to climate governance.

A final call to action

The climate clock is ticking — and urban destinations cannot afford delay. But they also cannot afford disjointed, cosmetic actions that fail to address structural drivers. The path forward requires courage to confront legacy models, commitment to inclusive design, and openness to innovate, iterate, and learn from peers.

Whether your city is preparing its first climate action plan or strengthening an existing one, this guide is meant as a living document — a starting point, a support tool, and a platform for exchange.

As tourism rebounds, the most competitive destinations will not be those that attract the most visitors, but those that demonstrate purpose, resilience, and integrity in how they host, grow, and regenerate.

Your city's climate transformation starts now. Let it be visible, measurable, and shared.

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