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# MIST Project

Empowering Micro Destinations for Sustainable Tourism



# *HANDBOOK*



# THE PROJECT IN SHORT

<b>ACRONYM TITLE</b>	<b>MIST</b> Empowering Micro Destinations for Sustainable Tourism
<b>FUNDING PROGRAMME LENGTH</b>	ERASMUS+, Key Action 2, Small Scale January 2024 - December 2024
<b>GENERAL OBJECTIVE</b>	The general objective of MIST is to contribute to the development of knowledge sharing and capacity building among tourism stakeholders across Europe.
<b>SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES</b>	<p>The specific objectives are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To promote the implementation of sustainable tourism strategies in micro destinations that benefit both visitors and local communities.</li><li>2. To increase the understanding and skills related to sustainable micro-destination development for policy makers and planners. These skills include cross disciplinary understanding of the impacts on sustainable tourism in the microdestination as a whole from decision and policies made in its parts.</li><li>3. To increase the awareness of community based approaches for placemaking and micro-destination development, an area where the knowledge and research from academia seldom meets reality</li></ol>
<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collection and benchmarking of good practice</li><li>• Transnational seminar to promote the sustainable and responsible development of micro-destinations.</li><li>• Handbook collecting practices on promoting the sustainable and responsible development of micro-destinations</li></ul>
<b>LEAD PARTNER PARTNERS</b>	Visit Halland (SE) SERN, SveDest (SE); Liepāja region tourism information office (LV); Kvarner Region Tourist Board (HR)
<b>WEBSITE</b>	<a href="https://mist-project.eu/">https://mist-project.eu/</a>

**VISITHALLAND.COM**  
*Coastal Living*

**Liepāja**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

About Mist	p. 4
Partners of the MIST Project	p. 5
• Region Halland, Sweden	p. 5
• Kvarner Region, Croatia	p. 6
• Liepāja, Latvia	p. 6
• SERN and Borgotaro, Italy	p. 7
Introduction	p. 9
Activity 1 - Focus group and GAP Analysis	p. 9
I. Focus groups Summary	p. 9
II. Gap Analysis Summary	p. 10
III. Key Insights and results from MIST Activity 1	p. 11
• Region Halland	p. 11
• Kvarner Region	p. 12
• Liepāja	p. 13
• Borgotaro	p. 14
IV. Overall project-wide insights	p. 15
Activity 2 - Transnational Seminar	p. 16
Areas of intervention and collection of good practices	p. 17
Best practices	p. 18
• Region Halland	p. 18
• Kvarner Region	p. 22
• Liepāja	p. 33
• Borgotaro	p. 36
Identification of key areas of needs for sustainable development	p. 41
Conclusions	p. 42
Annex 1 - MIST Local Workshop reports per partner	p. 43



# ABOUT MIST

With travel becoming more accessible, the emergence of microdestinations has become increasingly evident. Defined as smaller, lesser-known locations with distinct tourist appeal, microdestinations offer visitors unique cultural, natural, and historical attractions that often contrast with mainstream tourism spots. Microdestinations hence hold significant potential for developing and sustaining local tourism. However, they are also vulnerable to tourism's negative impacts, as limited resources and knowledge can hinder efforts to create sustainable tourism strategies. Without careful planning, microdestinations often face challenges like hyper-seasonality, swings between over- and under-tourism, environmental degradation, and cultural commodification.

The project's primary objective has been to bridge knowledge gaps about sustainable tourism by utilizing the expertise and resources from a diverse consortium of partners, including municipalities, tourism organizations, community members, academia, local government, and public sector stakeholders, to create a sustainable development framework specifically for microdestinations. Region Halland has served as the lead partner, with other key participants including Svensk Destinationsutveckling AB, SIA Liepājas Reģiona Tūrisma Informācijas Birojs, SERN (Sweden Emilia Romagna Network), and Turistička zajednica Primorsko-goranske županije.

The collaborative efforts among these partners culminated in the production of a handbook. This handbook consolidates best practices identified through a series of activities, such as benchmarking successful strategies and hosting a transnational seminar in Sweden. The resource is designed to support sustainable development strategies for microdestinations by presenting effective approaches to address common challenges like managing seasonal fluctuations, promoting cultural integrity, and protecting local environments.

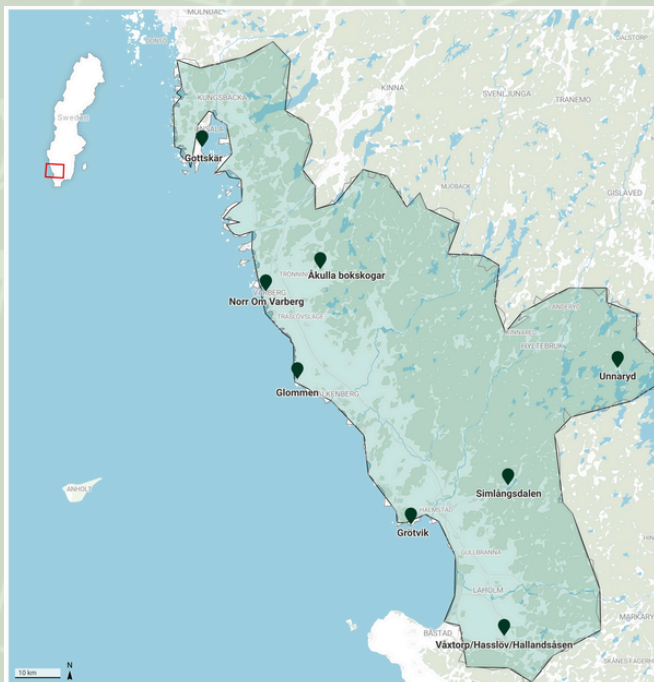


# PARTNERS OF THE MIST PROJECT

## **Region Halland, Sweden**

Visit Halland is the tourism department of Region Halland. Halland is a county located on the southern west coast of Sweden. There are six municipalities and approximately 350 000 inhabitants. Halland as a destination is famous for its beautiful coastal landscape with smaller coastal cities, which in combination with the inland offers a variety of experiences in a small area. They work in close collaboration with the municipalities and companies in Halland to develop the tourism industry in the region. Halland's work has a clear international focus and is primarily conducted in the areas of marketing, analysis, competence development and destination development. Its vision is to develop Halland into a sustainable destination with accessible and attractive experiences for visitors year-round. The goal is for Halland to sustainably double the number of international visitors by 2030 and to consistently be among the five most visited regions in Sweden.

The participating micro destinations in the project are:



- Micro destination Våxtorp/Hasslöv/Hallandsåsen, located in the inland in southern Halland.
- Micro destination Grötvik, located on the coast in southern Halland.
- Micro destination Simlångsdalen, located in the inland in southern Halland.
- Micro destination Unnaryd, located in the inland in the middle of Halland.
- Micro destination Glommen, located on the coast in the middle of Halland.

- Micro destination Åkulla bokskogar, located in the inland in the middle of Halland.
- Micro destination Norr Om Varberg, located in the inland in northern Halland.
- Micro destination Gottskär, located on the coast in northern Halland.

## **Kvarner Region, Croatia**

Kvarner Region Tourist Board is the tourism department of Region Kvarner in Croatia. The Kvarner Region in Croatia, home to approximately 300,000 inhabitants, is a captivating blend of coastal beauty, charming islands like Krk and Lošinj, and lush national parks such as Risnjak. Known for its historic towns like Rijeka and Opatija, it offers a rich cultural heritage and Austro-Hungarian architecture. Tourists enjoy pristine beaches, sailing, hiking, and wellness tourism in luxury spas. The region is also a gastronomic haven, featuring fresh seafood, olive oil, and local wines. Kvarner's mix of Mediterranean charm and Alpine influences makes it a perfect getaway for relaxation and adventure. The activities of the Kvarner Region Tourist Board are primarily focused on upgrading the general conditions regarding the stay of tourists in the region, promoting the tourist product of the Kvarner Region, raising awareness of the significance of economic, social and other effects of tourism as well as of the need for and importance of preserving and upgrading all elements of the tourist product, with an emphasis on environmental protection.



Mošćenička Draga and Crikvenica are the two chosen microdestinations situated in the Kvarner Region. Mošćenička Draga is a small, charming seaside municipality with a population of around 1,500 residents, known for its pebble beaches and rich fishing heritage. Crikvenica is a town with approximately 10,000 inhabitants, has a rich history and is famous for its sandy beaches, health tourism, and family-friendly activities. Both destinations highlight the region's natural beauty and cultural heritage.

## **Liepāja, Latvia**

Liepāja is the 3rd largest city in Latvia and the 10th largest in the Baltic States. About 70,000 people call Liepāja their home, their place of study and work. It has become a modern city with a global outlook, but at the same time retaining the comforts typical of a small town.

Liepāja is a favorite travel destination, enticing many with its unique tourist attractions. Enchanting people with a city center rich in cultural and architectural treasures, as well as tempting with its spacious beach where beachgoers revel in



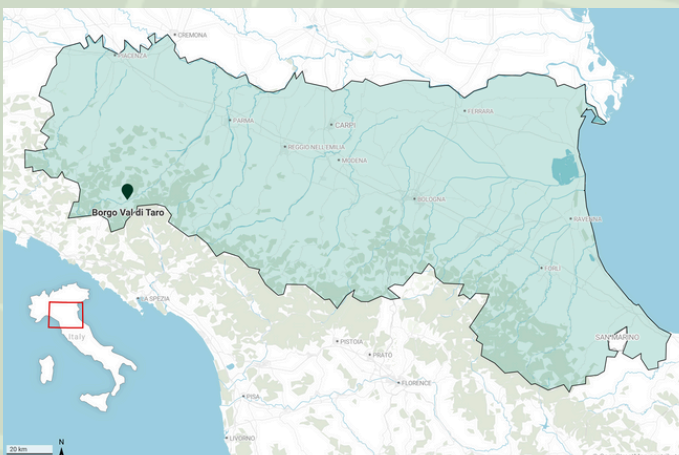


the unusually fine white sand. Notwithstanding its compact size, the city combines everything necessary for a complete and memorable vacation. Liepāja has a rich history of culture, art and sports. There are events taking place all year long that cater to any taste – from exhibitions of local artists to performances by internationally recognized artists, from classical music concerts to

to grand beach festivals, from amateur sports competitions to world championships.

### **SERN and Borgotaro, Italy**

Sweden Emilia Romagna Network (SERN) is a not-for-profit organization of Swedish and Italian actors created in 2005 with the aim of fostering north-south cooperation between Italy and Sweden. It gathers more than 60 members, mainly local and regional public actors, collaborating towards the creation of more Digitalized, Green and Sustainable, and Inclusive Communities. SERN is a multilevel network since its activities stretch over several policy areas and involve different levels of government as well as different types of actors (both private and public organizations) like education institutions, cooperatives, and NGOs. Over the years SERN has acquired extensive experience in working on sustainable tourism by successfully implementing projects focusing on enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of European municipalities in the field of tourism.



In this project, SERN decided to focus on Borgotaro Municipality Microdestination which is also associated partner of the MIST project. Participation in the MIST project by the Municipality of Borgotaro is essential as it allows to question and reflect on the impact of tourism at the micro-destination level, by emphasizing the territory's strengths to maintain

and strengthen them and to identify critical issues and possible solutions necessary to move in the tourism sector in a dynamic and timely manner in the face of new market demands.



The municipality of Borgo Val di Taro, counting 6,783 inhabitants, boasts several important assets, which over the years have become increasingly preponderant in the priorities of tourists. A gastronomic heritage of absolute relevance, placed in an even larger and more relevant promotional context such as the territory of the Province of Parma. A slow territory, geographically located on the border of three regions with great attractiveness such as Liguria, Tuscany and Emilia Romagna. In fact, thanks to its geographical location and a territory deeply rooted in nature and biodiversity, the Municipality has always exhibited a strong inclination towards tourism. Due to the special recognition given to the IGP-certified porcini mushroom, which serves as the primary economic and touristic driver, each year Borgotaro hosts the Porcini Mushroom Fair, an event of international renown and the leading fair in the sector.

# INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries and an important source of foreign exchange and employment, while being closely linked to the social, economic, and environmental well-being of many countries. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities”. Micro destinations - smaller parts of a larger destination – fit the UNWTO description but rarely fit the local governance structure of a destination. The UNWTO translation of the goals to a tourism setting is aimed on a national level, yet it is on the micro destination level that the effects of tourism appear most urgently for local community. The positive and negative effects of tourism hang in the balance and as long as that balance is not included in a governance structure, local issues will arise and remain unaddressed.

Sustainable efforts on a micro level have a direct impact on life in local communities and can have a positive or negative impact on many of the Global Sustainability Goals. Tourism can bring opportunities for economic and cultural exchange but can also be the source of economic stress, weakening of local community and adverse effects on the environment.

If you envision tourism as a scale where you would put large weights on either side to balance regional tourism, the scale is much smaller on the micro level and the weights – the capacity of micro destination - need to be handled with much more care. Too much of a good thing might cause irreversible damage. On the other hand, tourism can help highlight local customs, strengthen local food systems and resilience if the challenges of micro destinations can be identified and addressed by local governance systems.

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## Activity 1 – Focus groups workshops with local stakeholders and Gap Analysis

### 1. FOCUS GROUPS MEETINGS SUMMARY

The first activity envisaged by the project MIST was the implementation of the local Focus group workshops with key stakeholders in the local touristic ecosystem.

The main scope of the Focus Groups meeting held at local level was to identify with the help of the local stakeholders the challenges that each microdestination faces in the field of sustainable tourism development. Additionally, the Focus groups meeting was crucial to benchmark the best practices for the sustainable development of both established and emerging microdestinations from among the participating members.

Through this process, it gathered and identified practices most suitable for adaptation to other European settings and which could later be included in the final handbook.

The focus groups meeting took place in summer between July and September 2024, on-site or online as well as through individual interviews with local stakeholders, according to partner's preference.

During the focus group, each partner tried to provide collaborative answers to the following guiding questions, conceived by Svedest:

1. *What is the best thing about our micro destination?*
2. *How does tourism impact daily life in our micro destination?*
3. *What are some of the challenges that you face in your micro destination?*
4. *Describe a solution to a challenge that you are proud of.*

The results gained from the local focus groups have been collected and included in this handbook under annex 1.

## II. GAP ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Through in-depth analysis, project partners have identified specific knowledge gaps, unmet needs, and potential improvement areas for each micro destination. This evaluation provides a foundation for tailored practices aimed at bridging these gaps, ensuring that each partner can maximize their impact and contribute to the project's overall success. By addressing these gaps, partners aimed to create a cohesive approach that fosters growth, collaboration, and the achievement of shared objectives across the MIST network.

The type of actors subject to the GAP analysis carried out in the framework of the MIST project are **Regional Entities** who often providing overarching policies, funding, and cross-municipal coordination for sustainable tourism initiatives; **Municipalities** who are directly responsible for local infrastructure, community engagement, and integrating tourism with municipal services; and **Destination Management Organizations (DMOs)** focusing on destination management, marketing, brand development, tourism strategy, and relationship building often working closely with local businesses and community groups.

Each of the above-mentioned actors faces distinct gaps in current practices and strategies on sustainable tourism. Indeed, Regions face limited consistency in policies across municipalities, leading to fragmented strategies for sustainable tourism.



They need coordinated frameworks to support sustainable practices across municipalities, along with data collection to inform policies.

Instead, Municipalities struggle to align different departments and balance tourism with local needs. They require training on sustainable tourism impacts and methods to integrate tourism into municipal development plans without compromising the quality of life for residents.

Finally, Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) have limited resources to support all aspects of sustainable tourism, especially for work on the micro level, particularly in marketing and stakeholder engagement. They need support in community outreach and funding to build capacity for internal promotion and development of sustainable tourism practices while also managing the carrying capacity of micro destinations.

### III. KEY INSIGHTS AND RESULTS FROM MIST ACTIVITY 1

The following paragraphs present key insights and comparisons derived from the gap analysis and local focus group workshops for each project partner.

#### **REGION HALLAND**

##### **Key Insights**

Halland emphasizes grassroots, long-term micro-destination development. Challenges include the perception of tourism as a low-priority sector and inter-departmental coordination within municipalities. Encouraging sustainable, community-focused tourism and balancing regional roles with local autonomy are also priorities.

Therefore, the following gaps were identified for **Halland**:

- **Low priority of tourism in municipal Plans:** Tourism is often viewed as a secondary sector in municipal planning, with a focus on other areas of development. This results in insufficient long-term investment and resource allocation, limiting tourism's growth and its potential economic impact on the region. This is especially true for micro destinations where it is hard for a municipality to justify special attention to some areas of its territory.
- **Internal communication and coordination:** Halland faces challenges in aligning different municipal departments on tourism objectives. Conflicting priorities or lack of cross-departmental collaboration can delay or complicate the implementation of sustainable tourism initiatives, reducing the effectiveness of efforts to create a coherent tourism strategy.
- **Challenges in demonstrating tourism value:** Halland struggles to convey the value of tourism to residents and local decision-makers, which leads to limited community support and a perception that tourism is non-essential. Without community buy-in, sustainable tourism initiatives may lack the social foundation needed for long-term success.

- **Long-term support for grassroots tourism:** Many tourism projects in Halland are funded on a short-term basis, which does not align with the long-term needs of micro-destinations. Grassroots tourism initiatives require consistent, incremental support, and the lack of stable funding disrupts the continuity of these projects, limiting their potential to contribute to sustainable development.

### Unique micro destination features in Halland

Halland has a regional approach where support for micro-destinations is limited to defining their identities and help engaging with visitors seeking authenticity.

### Similarities with other partners

Issues with sustainability, community engagement, and lack of long-term resources for micro-destination development.

## **KVARNER REGION**

### Key Insights

Overcrowding during peak seasons, environmental impacts, and “apartmentization” (conversion of housing to tourist rentals) are major issues. Some towns face challenges with limited stakeholder engagement and strategy implementation. Successful sustainable practices include waste reduction and eco-friendly transport initiatives.

Therefore, the following gaps were identified for **Kvarner**:

- **Overcrowding during peak season:** The high influx of visitors during the summer season overwhelms local infrastructure, leading to congestion, overuse of resources, and strain on public services like waste management and water supply. This impacts the quality of life for residents and reduces the visitor experience, risking negative perceptions of the destination.
- **Environmental impact management:** Kvarner struggles with managing the environmental degradation caused by tourism, particularly in sensitive natural areas. Issues include pollution, loss of biodiversity, and damage to landscapes. Limited resources and conservation measures create a gap in mitigating these negative impacts, threatening the sustainability of the natural attractions that draw visitors.
- **“Apartmentization” of housing:** Many residential properties are converted into short-term rentals, reducing the availability of affordable housing for locals. This trend also disrupts community cohesion and creates conflicts between residents and tourism operators, as locals may feel displaced by the influx of tourists.

- **Coordination among municipalities:** Each town and municipality in Kvarner has its own tourism management approach, resulting in fragmented development and inconsistent visitor experiences. Without a coordinated strategy, sustainable development efforts are less effective and can lead to missed opportunities for regional synergy.

### Unique micro destination features in Kvarner

Focus on sustainability projects like zero-waste and e-mobility, and preservation of local culture amid tourism pressures.

### Similarities with other partners

Challenges in managing high visitor numbers, sustainable tourism, and coordination between stakeholders.



### Key Insights

Stakeholders value a strong cultural scene and vibrant atmosphere. Major challenges include seasonality, coordination among tourism providers, and sustainable transportation. The unregulated apartment rental market is also a concern. Stakeholders emphasized the need for cohesive tourism packages and a unified approach to boost off-season appeal.

Therefore, the following gaps were identified for **Liepāja**:

- **Seasonality dependence:** The destination heavily relies on summer tourism, resulting in low visitor numbers during autumn, winter, and spring. This creates economic instability and limits employment opportunities year-round, as many tourism businesses cannot sustain operations during the off-peak seasons.
- **Fragmented stakeholder collaboration:** Tourism operators and cultural entities in Liepāja often work independently, lacking a unified approach to tourism development. This gap reduces the effectiveness of destination marketing and limits the ability to create coordinated experiences that could attract and retain more visitors.
- **Unregulated accommodation market:** The growth of informal apartment rentals (e.g., Airbnb) creates unfair competition for licensed accommodation providers, making it difficult to enforce quality standards and regulatory requirements. This unregulated market also impacts housing affordability for residents, causing tension between locals and tourists.
- **Sustainable transportation options:** Liepāja has limited sustainable transport alternatives (like eco-friendly public transport), which restricts accessibility for visitors preferring low-carbon options. This gap not only impacts accessibility but also limits the destination's appeal to environmentally conscious travellers.



### Unique micro destination features in Liepaja

A diverse cultural offer and historic-modern cityscape. Seasonality and fragmented collaboration between stakeholders pose distinct challenges.

### Similarities with other partners

Issues with seasonality, transportation, and a desire to boost off-peak tourism.

## **BORGOTARO**

### Key Insights

This micro-destination faces seasonal and “hit-and-run” tourism, notably with mushroom picking tourists. Key goals include diversifying tourism offers year-round and improving collaboration among local operators. Emphasis on using local cultural and natural assets, such as the creation of an Ecomuseum, to extend visitor engagement.

Therefore, the following gaps were identified for **Borgotaro**:

- **Seasonal “hit-and-run” tourism:** Borgotaro attracts tourists mainly during the mushroom picking season, often for short, one-day visits. This transient tourism limits economic benefits for local businesses, as visitors do not stay long enough to engage with other attractions or services, reducing overall revenue for the destination.
- **Collaboration with local operators:** There is a lack of partnership and networking among tourism operators, local businesses, and the municipality, which hinders the ability to create a holistic visitor experience. This gap limits tourism’s potential to create a cohesive and engaging offering that encourages longer stays and repeat visits.
- **Underutilized cultural assets:** Borgotaro has valuable cultural and natural assets (like its biodiversity and local heritage), yet these are not fully integrated into its tourism offerings. The limited promotion and usage of these assets mean the destination misses opportunities to diversify its attractions and appeal to a broader audience.
- **Limited digital presence:** Insufficient investment in digital marketing and promotion restricts the destination’s visibility to potential visitors, particularly for off-peak and unique experiences. This lack of digital engagement hinders its competitiveness in the tourism market and limits awareness of what Borgotaro can offer beyond seasonal attractions.

### Unique micro destination features in Borgotaro

Specific focus on “mushroom tourism” and strategies to convert it into overnight stays. Recent improvement in inter-municipal collaboration and arranging festivals.

### Similarities with other partners

Seasonality challenges, need for stakeholder collaboration, and focus on sustainable tourism practices.

## IV. OVERALL PROJECT-WIDE INSIGHTS

### SIMILARITIES ACROSS PARTNERS

- **Seasonality:** All destinations struggle with off-peak tourism, requiring strategies to attract visitors year-round.
- **Sustainable practices:** A shared focus on sustainability, including reducing environmental impacts and promoting eco-friendly transport.
- **Collaboration:** Emphasis on stakeholder coordination and knowledge sharing across regions.
- **Cultural identity and local engagement:** Partners agree on the importance of preserving and promoting local culture to enhance visitor experiences.

### UNIQUE CHALLENGES

- **Apartmentization in Kvarner and Liepaja:** Conversion of housing for tourism use is a particular issue in these regions, impacting local housing affordability and availability.
- **Specific tourism types:** Unique tourism types in all the microdestinations, even within the same region, offer distinct challenges and opportunities for connecting tourism with place development.

### SUMMARY OF COMMON GAPS ACROSS PARTNERS

This section summarizes common gaps identified across partners, highlighting key areas where enhanced collaboration and improvements are needed to achieve shared goals.

- **Seasonality:** Each partner struggles with seasonally concentrated tourism, leading to economic instability and underutilization of local resources outside peak times. This gap affects the sustainability of jobs, services, and business operations in each destination.
- **Carrying capacity:** Without adequate measures to protect natural resources and manage tourism's social and environmental impacts, partners face risks of eradicating their assets unique small-scale assets like local culture and biodiversity, which are often central to their tourism appeal.
- **Stakeholder coordination:** Fragmented collaboration among stakeholders limits the potential for integrated destination development. Gaps in coordination hinder efforts to create cohesive tourism experiences and sustainable practices.
- **Community integration:** Engaging and involving local communities in tourism planning is often limited. This gap affects impacts on local community and can lead to pushback, reducing tourism's long-term viability.
- **Marketing and branding:** Insufficient marketing resources and fragmented branding efforts make it difficult for micro-destinations to stand out, particularly when competing with larger destinations. Limited digital presence and brand clarity reduce their ability to attract diverse visitor segments but reduces the risks of breaking the carrying capacity if they are too successful.

## Activity 2 – Transnational seminar

From October 15th to 17th Visit Halland hosted the transnational seminar in Halmstad. The second of two activities in the MIST-project. The three-day seminar aimed to promote sustainable and responsible development of micro-destinations through presentations, discussions, and exchanges of knowledge, expertise, and experience among participating partners. The attendants consisted of all participating partners of the project, that is SERN, SveDest, Liepaja region tourism information office, Kvarner Region Tourist Board and Visit Halland, the leading partner of the project and the host of the seminar. Additionally, a group of representatives of the local Swedish microdestination in Region Halland attended the meeting and showcased their practices to make their microdestination sustainable.

During the two-day workshop in Sweden, the partnership engaged in sharing insights and lessons learned from prior workshops and discussions. Participants explored success factors and challenges in destination development through focused dialogue. A dedicated workshop on micro-destinations and place development was held to deepen understanding and promote knowledge sharing. Stakeholders actively exchanged experiences and best practices, fostering collaboration and strengthening strategies for sustainable place development.

With these insights from Activity 1, Gap Analysis and discussion between partners, the most promising threads to use for the three-day seminar in Halland have been the following.

- **Mapping and network building:** Facilitate a collaborative space for partners to share insights on common issues, which will help each understand gaps and effective solutions.
- **Data-driven insights for tourism:** Consider data collection on visitor patterns, particularly off-season, to inform strategies and measure success and share these insights.
- **Sharing good practices:** Presentations from all partners giving more insights on the micro destinations setting and give the challenges life. With both similarities and unique features this would give the partners the chance to reflect on their own work through seeing the work of others.

### Areas of Intervention and Collection of Good Practices from MIST Partners

Drawing from workshop in Halland insights, Partners have identified at least ten areas of intervention where stakeholders within micro-destinations need targeted support. These areas represent essential aspects of sustainable development, effective management, and community engagement that are vital for the success



of MIST partners. Addressing these needs will not only strengthen individual stakeholder capacities but also foster the overall resilience and attractiveness of micro-destinations.

The primary areas of intervention identified are as follows:

- 1 MICRO DESTINATION MANAGEMENT**  
Ways to manage the micro level and interact with stakeholders on a level where governance models do not apply.
- 2 SEASONALITY MANAGEMENT**  
Strategies to attract tourists year-round, reducing dependence on peak seasons.
- 3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**  
Increased inclusion of local communities in decision-making to maintain cultural integrity and foster local support.
- 4 STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION**  
Improved coordination among local stakeholders to unify tourism strategies and offerings.
- 5 SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION**  
Development of eco-friendly transportation options to address last mile challenges, reduce carbon footprint and support accessibility.
- 6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REDUCTION**  
Implementation of waste management, water conservation, and pollution control measures.
- 7 FUNDING AND RESOURCES**  
Financial support and resources to implement sustainable tourism practices, especially in rural or smaller destinations.
- 8 TOURISM DIVERSIFICATION**  
Expansion of tourism products beyond high-demand activities to include cultural and off-peak attractions.
- 9 KNOWLEDGE AND CAPACITY BUILDING**  
Education for stakeholders on sustainable tourism practices and strategic planning.
- 10 DIGITAL MARKETING AND BRANDING**  
Assistance with branding, digital engagement, and promotion of micro-destinations in a competitive market.

## Identification and description of at least 2 good practices per partner

Each partner demonstrated effective practices that align with sustainable tourism goals, and can match with the above mentioned areas of intervention. In the following section a detailed description of the practices is reported where the time, the resources, the actors involved and the outcomes are included for each practice. Moreover, partners try to explain their potential for replicability.



### GRASSROOTS ENGAGEMENT AS KEY SUCCESS FACTOR

The successful micro destinations are built on local community engagement where local stakeholders work toward common goals.



#### **Description of the practice**

We found that the most successful micro destinations thrive on the active participation and commitment of the local community. By involving local stakeholders—such as residents, businesses, and organizations—and aligning their efforts toward shared objectives, these destinations create a strong foundation for sustainable growth and development. This collaborative approach ensures that everyone has a vested interest in the destination's success, fostering a sense of ownership and pride within the community.

#### **Time needed**

The time needed for the practice to be implemented varies widely depending on the current local engagement and collaboration in the micro destination. In the project, we discovered that some micro destinations already collaborate quite effectively, working toward a shared vision and common goals—meaning no additional time would be required to implement this practice. However, other micro destinations lack both a unified vision and strong collaboration frameworks, which presents a need for foundational work to establish these elements. Depending on the micro destination's composition of stakeholders and its conditions for engagement, this can take between 6 months up to one year to reach.

An important first step would be to evaluate the current state of community involvement, identify key stakeholders, and understand the needs of the different stakeholders in the micro destination. The second step for implementing the practice would be to initiate workshops to establish shared goals and objectives for the micro destination.

### **Resources needed**

Again - depending on the nature of the micro destination different resources are needed. For the micro destination lacking shared vision, goals and collaboration frameworks a variety of resources are needed, both human and financial along with time investment and knowledge.

### **Actors involved in the implementation of the practice**

Local stakeholders in the micro destination, municipalities, project leaders, facilitators/moderators. Depending on the current system of the destination the regional DMOs could also be involved.

### **Outcomes / Impact of the practice**

The most important outcome of the practice is:

- Stronger relationships and trust among local stakeholders.
- A unified sense of purpose and pride in the destination.
- Increased willingness to work together on shared challenges and opportunities.

### **Potential for replicability**

The practice has high potential of being replicated in other destinations.

## **GRASSROOTS SUPPORT FOR MICRO-DESTINATIONS**

Municipal support for locally driven tourism projects without heavy-handed oversight and just enough financial support.

**3<sup>v</sup> COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT**

### **Description of the practice**

We found that a successful way for our municipalities to support locally driven tourism projects, such as micro destination development, involves providing necessary but limited backing/funding, to avoid excessive control or intervention. This approach strikes a balance, offering just enough financial resources and logistical assistance to empower local stakeholders to shape their own tourism development. The municipality's role is to facilitate and encourage local efforts, offering guidance and limited funding when necessary, but allowing the community to lead the way in creating authentic, sustainable tourism experiences that align with local values and needs.

### **Time needed**

The time needed depends on the current state of collaboration between municipal authorities and local communities, as well as the level of preparedness within the municipality to adopt such an approach. In Halland, this varies a lot between the different municipalities.

If there is no current collaboration the first step would naturally be to establish this. Once the collaboration has been established, the next step would be to assess the financial support needs of the micro destinations. After that, if it's not already existing, a municipal financial support system needs to be created, including a clear funding framework. To successfully implement the practice, actions to increase the knowledge regarding sustainable financing in micro destinations will also be of importance, including alternative financing models. The knowledge will be important to create sustainable financial development in the micro destinations, making sure they are not dependent on financial support from the municipalities.



### **Resources needed**

A variety of resources are needed, both human and financial along with time investment and knowledge.



### **Actors involved in the implementation of the practice**

Micro destinations, municipalities, regional DMOs.



### **Outcomes / Impact of the practice**

The outcome of implementing grassroots support for micro destinations is a more sustainable and resilient tourism ecosystem, where local communities are empowered to drive their own development. By providing the right level of financial support and guidance, without heavy oversight, municipalities help foster a sense of ownership among local stakeholders. This leads to a more cohesive, collaborative community with a shared vision for tourism that reflects local values and priorities. Over time, micro destinations become less dependent on municipal funding as they adopt alternative, sustainable financing models, ensuring their long-term viability.



### **Potential for replicability**

The practice has high potential of being replicated in other destinations.

## **CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL COLLABORATION**

Ways of working with a micro destination designed to improve collaboration and alignment across municipal departments for micro destination support.



### **Description of the practice**

One of our key takeaways from the project was the importance of collaboration across different departments. This means creating structured ways of working together to improve communication and coordination both within municipal departments and with regional partners, all to support micro-destinations. By working together, stakeholders can create a unified strategy to help micro-destinations grow and thrive in a sustainable way.



By sharing resources, knowledge, and expertise, these groups can coordinate efforts and ensure that local tourism initiatives are integrated into broader regional and municipal policies. This collaborative framework helps streamline decision-making, increase impact and ensure that the needs of micro-destinations are fully addressed, from infrastructure planning to community engagement and marketing.

### **Time needed**

The time needed to implement a cross-department in Halland would vary widely between the municipalities. Most municipalities already have some sort of collaboration in place, although not regarding micro destinations. To implement this, the first step would be to ensure engagement from relevant departments and regional stakeholders, making sure the micro destination development is a priority among the entire municipality and region. To achieve this, a network of relevant stakeholders should be established. From this, a shared vision and common goals should be created. This would involve organizing meetings and workshops with the stakeholders, which could be a time-consuming process. After a shared vision is created, it would be important to define roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder. Naturally, some departments would be more involved than others.

### **Resources needed**

A variety of resources are needed, both human and financial along with time investment and knowledge.

### **Actors involved in the implementation of the practice**

Different departments of the municipalities and regional stakeholders.

### **Outcomes / Impact of the practice**

Creating a good collaboration between municipal departments and regional stakeholders is crucial for successful and sustainable micro destination development. It not only ensures that all aspects of the destination are aligned and working toward common goals, making it a more unified, coordinated and effective approach to micro destination development, but also enables the full scope of a micro destination's needs to be addressed - from infrastructure to marketing and everything in between.

### **Potential for replicability**

Depending on the stakeholder system, the practice can be replicated. However, if the stakeholder system differs a lot from Halland, another approach might be needed.



## CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE: ECOMUSEUM MOŠĆENIČKA DRAGA

Ways of working with a micro destination designed to improve collaboration and alignment across municipal departments for micro destination support.



### Description of the practice

The Ecomuseum Mošćenička Draga, founded in 2012, serves as an exemplary model for sustainable development in micro-destinations by preserving and promoting maritime heritage. The Ecomuseum's activities emphasize the inclusion of the local community, fostering a collective sense of ownership and participation in sustainable tourism practices. This involvement ensures that development aligns with community needs, enhancing the resilience and attractiveness of Mošćenička Draga as a tourist destination.

Key activities include workshops on traditional fishing and shipbuilding, the annual Festival and regatta of traditional sailing boats and interactive educational programs for all age groups. These initiatives not only attract visitors but also engage residents, strengthening the community's connection to their heritage.

The Ecomuseum's sustainable approach is bolstered by its participation in numerous EU-funded projects, which provide financial support crucial for the implementation of its initiatives. This funding facilitates the development of resources and programs that address common challenges faced by smaller destinations, such as managing seasonal fluctuations, promoting cultural integrity, and protecting the local environment. Membership in the Association of Mediterranean Maritime Museums (AMMM) and awards like the SKAL International Sustainable Tourism Award 2016 and the Destination of Sustainable Cultural Tourism Awards 2022 underline its effectiveness and impact.

By preserving both tangible and intangible cultural heritage the Ecomuseum ensures the transmission of knowledge to younger generations, fostering a sustainable tourism model that integrates education, tradition and environmental stewardship. Through these concerted efforts, Mošćenička Draga exemplifies how small, rural destinations can achieve sustainable growth, leveraging local assets and community involvement to create a balanced and thriving micro-destination.



## Time needed

1. Initial Planning (6 months): Form partnerships, secure funding (e.g., EU grants) and outline objectives and activities.
2. Community Engagement (3 months): Host informational sessions to involve local stakeholders and foster community support.
3. Development Phase (12 months): Establish infrastructure for workshops, educational programs, and exhibitions.
4. Pilot Programs (6 months): Launch initial workshops and events to test and refine approaches.
5. Full Implementation (ongoing): Regularly run events, workshops and heritage preservation activities while monitoring outcomes.



## Resources needed

- Financial: EU project funding, local government grants.
- Human Resources: Heritage experts, educators, local craftsmen, event coordinators and volunteers.
- Materials: Traditional boat-building materials, educational equipment, marketing resources.
- Facilities: Spaces for workshops, events, and artifact storage/exhibitions.
- Technological Resources: Audio-visual equipment for presentations, online promotional tools and digital archiving systems.



## Actors involved in the implementation of the practice

- Local Government and Municipalities: Provide support and policy alignment.
- Ecomuseum Staff: Manage operations, develop programs and oversee events.
- Local Community: Participate in workshops, share knowledge and volunteer.
- Educational Institutions: Collaborate on educational programs.
- EU and Regional Cultural Organizations: Offer financial and technical support.
- Associations (e.g., AMMM): Provide networking and knowledge-sharing opportunities.



## Outcomes / Impact of the practice

- Cultural Preservation: Revitalized interest in maritime and traditional practices.
- Community Involvement: Enhanced pride and participation in local heritage.
- Economic Growth: Increased tourism and associated revenue streams.
- Educational Benefits: Knowledge transfer to younger generations and tourists.
- Awards and Recognition: Multiple accolades emphasizing the Ecomuseum's success.



## Potential for replicability

This practice has significant potential for replication in other rural and coastal microdestinations. Key success factors include securing initial funding, fostering community involvement and leveraging local traditions. The Ecomuseum's integration of cultural education and sustainable tourism can serve as a blueprint for other regions seeking to balance heritage preservation with economic development.



## ZERO WASTE PROJECT (ISLAND OF KRK)

Successful waste reduction initiatives set a standard for sustainable tourism



### Description of the practice

The Island of Krk in Kvarner has achieved a groundbreaking milestone as the first Zero Waste island in Croatia and the second in the world, a recognition awarded by Zero Waste Europe. This achievement is the culmination of years of dedicated collaboration among the island's seven local self-government units. By implementing innovative waste management strategies and transitioning to a circular economy, Krk has established itself as a leader in sustainable development for microdestinations.

**6** ENVIRONMENTAL  
IMPACT REDUCTION



Krk's Zero Waste initiative addresses common challenges in microdestinations, such as seasonal population fluctuations, by promoting effective waste reduction and management practices. The island has achieved a 58% separation rate for collected waste, reduced mixed waste by 22% per capita compared to the national average and invested in crucial infrastructure, including a sorting facility, composting plant and seven recycling yards. These efforts have significantly minimized the environmental impact of tourism, ensuring high living standards for residents and fostering a culture of sustainability among visitors.

A key component of the initiative is community involvement. Through education campaigns and active participation in waste management, Krk's residents and local businesses have embraced sustainable practices. Recent surveys confirm high levels of satisfaction among residents, underscoring the initiative's success in enhancing quality of life while protecting the local environment.

This innovative practice demonstrates how microdestinations can harmonize tourism, community well-being and environmental conservation. Krk's Zero Waste journey is a testament to the power of local action in achieving global sustainability goals.



### **Time needed**

1. Assessment and Planning (1-2 years):
  - Conduct baseline assessments of waste production and management.
  - Develop a Zero Waste strategy, including infrastructure planning and community engagement.
2. Infrastructure Development (2-3 years):
  - Construct facilities such as sorting plants, composting units, and recycling yards.
  - Establish collection systems for separated waste streams.
3. Community Engagement and Education (Ongoing):
  - Roll out educational campaigns for residents and tourists to promote waste separation and reduction.
  - Regularly update and involve the community in decision-making.
4. Implementation and Monitoring (Ongoing):
  - Begin waste collection and management operations.
  - Continuously monitor waste streams, separation rates, and community feedback.
  - Adjust strategies based on performance metrics.



### **Resources needed**

- Financial Resources: EU project funding, local government grants, and sponsorships.
- Human Resources: Skilled personnel for waste management operations, community coordinators to lead education and outreach efforts, environmental experts to guide strategic planning.
- Technical Resources: Waste collection vehicles and equipment, digital systems for monitoring and reporting waste data, resources for renewable and eco-friendly alternatives (e.g., compostable bags).



### **Actors involved in the implementation of the practice**

- Local Self-Government Units: Seven municipalities on Krk collaborated to implement and manage the Zero Waste strategy.
- Municipal Utility Company: Ponikve Eko Otok Krk d.o.o. played a central role in infrastructure development and waste operations.
- Local Community: Residents and businesses actively participated in waste separation and reduction efforts.
- Non-Governmental Organizations: Organizations like Green Action provided strategic support and expertise.
- Tourism Sector: Local tourism boards and businesses aligned practices with sustainable tourism principles.
- International Bodies: Zero Waste Europe and the Mission Zero Academy (MiZA) supported certification and strategy refinement.



### **Outcomes / Impact of the practice**

1. Environmental Impact Reduction:
  - 58% of waste is separated for recycling.
  - Mixed waste per capita is 22% below the national average.
2. Sustainable Tourism:
  - Positioning Krk as a model for responsible tourism, attracting environmentally conscious visitors.
3. Enhanced Quality of Life:
  - Residents report high satisfaction levels due to cleaner surroundings and participatory governance.
4. Recognition:
  - Krk has gained international recognition for its achievements.



### **Potential for replicability**

The Zero Waste initiative on Krk demonstrates strong replicability for other microdestinations due to the following factors:

- Scalable Framework: The approach can be adapted to different sizes and capacities of local communities.
- Clear Strategy and Guidance: Organizations like Zero Waste Europe provide resources and expertise for communities aiming to replicate the model.
- Community-Centered Approach: The model emphasizes active participation, fostering local ownership and sustainable practices.
- Tourism Integration: The strategy aligns with the principles of sustainable tourism, making it relevant for destinations with seasonal fluctuations.

However, successful replication requires tailoring strategies to local contexts, including governance structures, cultural dynamics and available resources. The initiative's collaborative, data-driven, and inclusive framework offers a robust template for other regions seeking to advance sustainability goals.



## ARCA ADRIATICA VIRTUAL MUSEUM

Offers a virtual tour highlighting maritime heritage across Italy and Croatia, enhancing cultural and natural heritage promotion

10 DIGITAL MARKETING  
AND BRANDING

2 SEASONALITY  
MANAGEMENT

### Description of the practice

The Virtual Museum Arca Adriatica represents an innovative approach to preserving and promoting the Adriatic maritime heritage through digital tools and cross-border collaboration between Croatian and Italian partners. Developed as part of the EU project Arca Adriatica, the museum showcases the rich maritime heritage while addressing common challenges faced by microdestinations, such as seasonal tourism fluctuations and the need for cultural preservation.

The museum provides an immersive virtual tour of the Adriatic maritime heritage, covering diverse categories such as maritime architecture, navigation tools, cultural and historical artifacts, memorial sites, and underwater heritage. By leveraging cutting-edge technology, the museum offers global accessibility through the internet and mobile applications while serving as a resource for multimedia displays in interpretation centers. The Virtual Museum Arca Adriatica supports sustainable tourism by reducing the environmental strain of physical tourism while promoting cultural integrity. Its digital format ensures the preservation of maritime heritage without the need for resource-intensive infrastructure. By highlighting local stories and traditions, it strengthens the identity of microdestinations and encourages sustainable engagement with cultural heritage.

The virtual museum acts as a digital gateway, attracting culturally curious tourists and offering a year-round platform for engagement. By integrating mobile applications and online tools, the project ensures continuous promotion and visibility, reinforcing the destination's cultural appeal.

The Virtual Museum Arca Adriatica is an exemplary model of how digital innovation can drive sustainable development in microdestinations, protecting cultural heritage while engaging the global audience



### **Time needed**

1. Planning and Collaboration (1-2 years):
  - Identify key stakeholders and partners across borders.
  - Develop a strategic framework for cataloging, digitization, and museum structure.
2. Data Collection and Cataloging (1 year):
  - Measure, record, and catalog maritime heritage artifacts.
  - Conduct fieldwork to document on-site and underwater cultural elements.
3. Development of Digital Infrastructure (1-2 years):
  - Procure and install necessary technical equipment.
  - Design and program the virtual platform, including mobile apps and a user-friendly database.
4. Content Creation and Uploading (6 months):
  - Digitize artifacts and create interactive content for the museum.
  - Incorporate multimedia features for immersive experiences.
5. Testing and Launch (3-6 months):
  - Conduct technical testing of the platform.
  - Launch the virtual museum with a marketing campaign to ensure visibility



### **Resources needed**

- Financial Resources: EU project funding
- Technical Resources: High-quality digital recording equipment (e.g., scanners, cameras, underwater recording tools), programming tools for database creation and app development, servers and cloud storage for hosting the museum's extensive catalog.



- Human Resources: Project coordinators and heritage experts for cataloging and planning, IT specialists for platform design, maintenance and app development, local stakeholders, including historians, artisans and community members, for storytelling and data collection.

### **Actors involved in the implementation of the practice**

- Lead Institutions: Croatian and Italian project partners.
- Community and Local Stakeholders: Local residents and experts contributed artifacts, stories and cultural insights.
- Technical Teams: Programmers and digital content creators for the virtual platform.
- Cross-Border Collaboration: Partners from both Croatia and Italy worked together to ensure comprehensive representation of maritime heritage.
- Educational Institutions: Schools and universities contributed research and engaged in pilot testing of the platform.

### **Outcomes / Impact of the practice**

#### 1.Cultural Preservation:

- Safeguards maritime heritage by creating a digital archive accessible worldwide.

#### 2.Educational Opportunities:

- Offers an interactive learning tool for students, researchers, and enthusiasts.

#### 3.Tourism and Branding:

- Promotes microdestinations in the Adriatic region, attracting year-round virtual visitors.
- Strengthens the identity and appeal of local communities in the global market.

#### 4.Community Engagement:

- Involves residents in storytelling and heritage preservation, fostering pride and stewardship.

#### 5.Environmental Benefits:

- Reduces the ecological footprint associated with physical tourism by offering virtual alternatives.

### **Potential for replicability**

The Virtual Museum Arca Adriatica is highly replicable for other regions or destinations seeking to preserve and promote their cultural heritage. Key factors contributing to its replicability include:

#### 1.Adaptable Framework:

- The digital platform can be tailored to different types of heritage, such as historical landmarks, folk traditions, or ecological conservation.

#### 2.Cost-Effective Outreach:

- A virtual museum can attract global audiences without requiring extensive physical infrastructure.

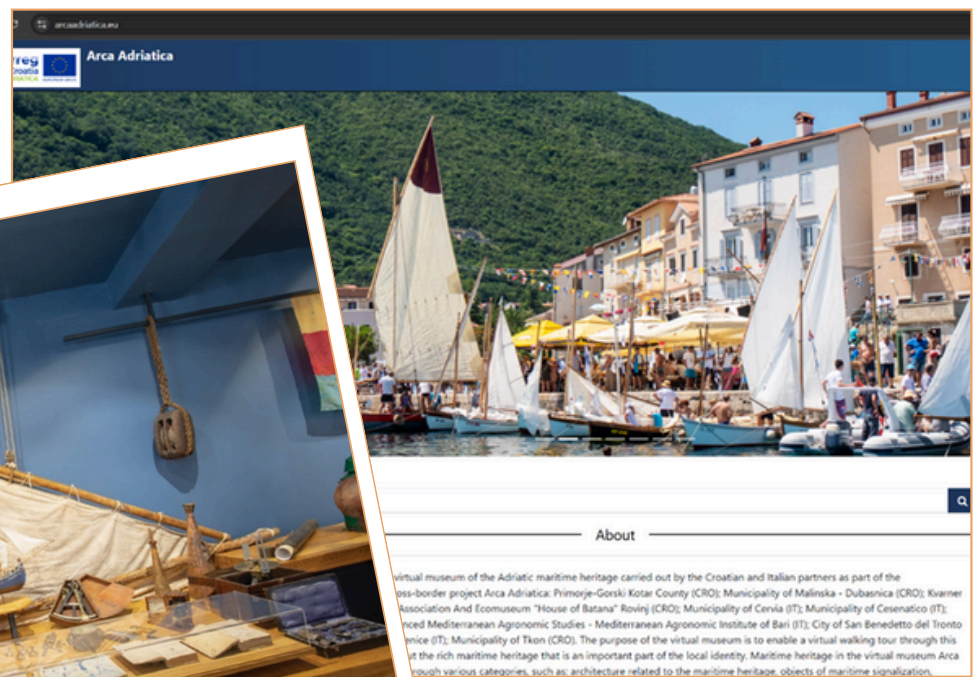
#### 3.Scalable Technology:

- The tools and methods used for cataloging and digitalization can be applied to other destinations with similar heritage themes.

#### 4. Cross-Border Collaboration Model:

- The project demonstrates the value of partnerships across regions, encouraging knowledge sharing and mutual promotion.

With appropriate funding and stakeholder involvement, the Arca Adriatica approach can serve as a blueprint for microdestinations worldwide to protect their heritage while boosting sustainable tourism and community engagement.



### ISLAND OF MALI LOŠINJ - TOP100 SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE STORY

Offers a virtual tour highlighting maritime heritage across Italy and Croatia, enhancing cultural and natural heritage promotion

**9 KNOWLEDGE AND CAPACITY BUILDING**

#### **i** Description of the practice

The recognition of Mali Lošinj as part of the "Green Destinations Top 100 Stories 2024" celebrates its innovative and sustainable approach to addressing environmental challenges while fostering the development of a microdestination. Through the project "A New Perspective on the Lošinj Underwater World" by the Blue World Institute, the destination combines education, technology and community engagement to promote sustainable tourism and environmental conservation.

The project emphasizes the preservation of Lošinj's marine ecosystem, home to protected species like dolphins and other vulnerable marine life. By integrating cutting-edge technologies, such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), it raises awareness of environmental threats like underwater noise pollution and its impact on marine organisms. Interactive elements, including QR code-enabled educational materials (Scan the Island) and VR experiences, allow users to understand the marine ecosystem's fragility and the importance of its protection.

Moreover, the initiative introduces eco-friendly infrastructure, such as new info panels that disseminate knowledge about marine biodiversity and sustainability practices. These measures align with waste management, water conservation and pollution control goals, contributing to a broader strategy for environmental protection.

Lošinj has evolved into a leading example of a sustainable microdestination. Participation in the Green Destinations Top 100 Stories since 2016 underscores its commitment to responsible destination management. The "New Perspective on the Lošinj Underwater World" project further strengthens this reputation by making the destination attractive year-round, not just during peak tourist seasons. The integration of AR and VR technology offers a modern, interactive way to engage visitors, adding depth to their experience and promoting longer stays.

### **Time needed**

1. Planning and Collaboration (6–12 months):
  - Engage stakeholders, define project goals, and secure funding.
  - Develop partnerships with environmental and tourism organizations.
2. Development of Digital Tools and Infrastructure (1–2 years):
  - Design and implement AR and VR experiences, including the Scan the Island module and acoustic VR displays.
  - Install information panels and create educational materials.
3. Community Engagement and Education (6–12 months):
  - Conduct workshops and training sessions for local stakeholders.
  - Educate residents and tourism operators on marine conservation.
4. Testing and Launch (6–12 months):
  - Pilot digital tools and experiences.
  - Organize public events to introduce the project to locals and visitors.
5. Ongoing Monitoring and Promotion (Continuous):
  - Monitor the environmental impact and visitor engagement.
  - Promote the project through global platforms such as the Green Destinations Top 100 Stories.

### **Resources needed**

- Financial Resources: EU project funding, local government grants, and sponsorships.
- Technical Resources: High-quality digital recording and programming tools for immersive experiences, Infrastructure for QR code systems, virtual displays, and info panels.

- Human Resources: Marine biologists and conservation experts for content creation, technological experts to develop and maintain digital tools, educators to train local participants.
- Physical Resources: Facilities for hosting workshops, such as the Lošinj Marine Education Center, equipment for monitoring underwater environments and recording acoustic data.

### **Actors involved in the implementation of the practice**

- Primary Stakeholders: Blue World Institute, as the lead organization for the project, Lošinj Tourist Board for promotion and branding.
- Local Community and Tourism Operators: Residents and businesses actively involved in marine conservation initiatives.
- Technology and Design Teams: Developers of AR/VR modules and educational content.
- Environmental Organizations: Partners and advisors contributing to the preservation of biodiversity.
- Global Recognition Platforms: Organizations like Green Destinations.

### **Outcomes / Impact of the practice**

1. Environmental Conservation:
  - Increased awareness of marine biodiversity and threats like underwater noise pollution.
  - Active steps taken to protect the habitats of endangered species, including dolphins.
2. Community Development:
  - Stronger engagement of locals in sustainable tourism and conservation efforts.
  - Enhanced local pride and knowledge about the marine environment.
3. Tourism and Branding:
  - Establishment of Mali Lošinj as a leader in sustainable tourism and innovation.
  - Year-round appeal to eco-conscious travelers and digital tourists.
4. Education and Awareness:
  - Advanced tools for educating future generations about marine ecosystems.
  - Accessible educational content for global audiences through QR codes and VR platforms.

### **Potential for replicability**

The success of the “A New Perspective on the Lošinj Underwater World” project demonstrates its strong potential for replicability in other microdestinations. Key elements that make it adaptable include:

1. Scalable Digital Solutions: AR and VR technologies can be tailored to showcase other natural or cultural heritage features.
2. Community-Centered Approach: Training and engaging local stakeholders ensure long-term impact and community support.



3. Education as a Pillar of Sustainability: The focus on education creates lasting value for both local populations and visitors.

4. Global Recognition Framework: Participation in initiatives like Green Destinations Top 100 Stories motivates other destinations to adopt similar strategies.

By combining technological innovation, community involvement and environmental conservation, the project offers a replicable model for sustainable tourism and microdestination development.



## EVENT-BASED CULTURAL TOURISM: DIGITAL EVENTS CALENDAR PLATFORM

Coordination between local cultural venues and tourism boards to create a diverse year-round cultural program.

2 SEASONALITY  
MANAGEMENT

4 STAKEHOLDER  
COLLABORATION

### *i* Description of the practice

Taking into account the wide range of events in the off-season, the municipality decided to offer all event organizers a single platform where, when introducing their event, the municipality could additionally advertise it on its communication channels. Thus, achieving that the tourist information center, cultural and sports administrations have a convenient tool in which to obtain information about the events taking place in the city and the organizers of the events, in addition to advertising opportunities for free.



## Time needed

Approx. 3 months for programming and design development.



## Resources needed

5 000 € and personal for administration



## Actors involved in the implementation of the practice

Municipality, after platform was done – event's organizers who put in all their events.



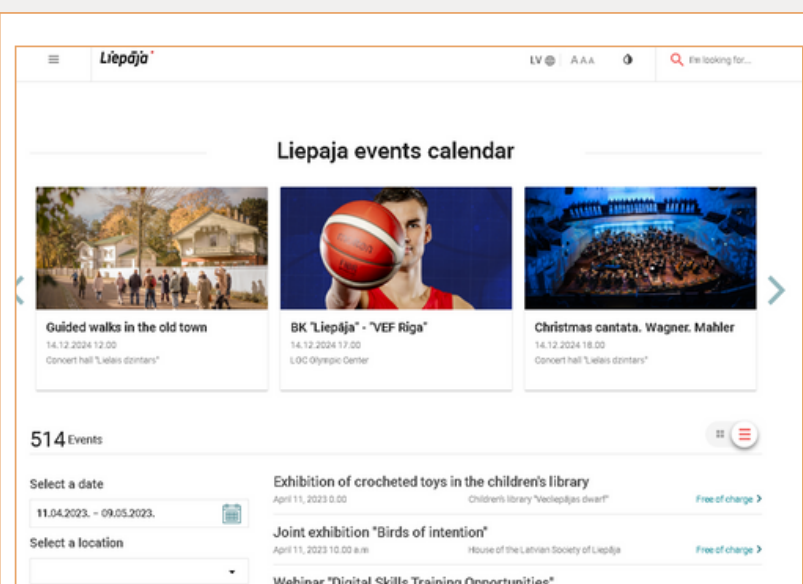
## Outcomes / Impact of the practice

One single tool for all events promotion.



## Potential for replicability

In our city no need for another similar tool, but we hope for similar tools in regions and national level, to get a marketing tool for wider region when it needed in international destination presentations worldwide.



### Christmas concert program

The contemporary Latvian a cappella group "Latvian Voices" and the virtuoso guitarist Kaspars Zemītis invite you to the Christmas concert program "SNOW", which is both a wintry play on words and a sincere intention of the artists to give the most beautiful musical performance to their listeners.

Human voices, listeners and guitar sounds come together in this program.

## LIEPĀJA CITY GIFT CARD

Implementing one gift card for all tourism entrepreneur's products and services.

4 STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

### Description of the practice

Since the Liepāja Tourism Information Center is a municipal company, the State Audit Office of Latvia, the Competition Council and the Office for Combating Corruption Crime do not allow highlighting and promoting one company out of all. They can only be promoted all together. In order to find a solution for the unified sale of tourism companies, highlighting the best products of each company in a legal way, the Liepāja gift card was created. Entrepreneurs themselves can decide to participate in it, and only those companies that want to be included in the gift card are recommended.

### Time needed

1 month.

### Resources needed

5000 € for cards design mock-up and printing them.

Actors involved in the implementation of the practice: municipality and more than 100 tourism entrepreneurs

### Outcomes / Impact of the practice

This became as a most popular gift for all occasions not only in Liepāja, but in all Latvia, as well, because was a unique idea.

### Potential for replicability

Not from a local perspective, but already has been replicated in another regional city.





## USE OF UNIQUE LOCAL PRODUCT TO STRENGTHEN THE TOURISM OFFERING - PORCINI MUSHROOM MANAGEMENT AND RELATED ACTIVITIES

Showcase local biodiversity and heritage, like the Porcini mushroom, to encouraging longer visitor stays.

1 MICRO DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

4 STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

### Description of the practice

The management of the Borgotaro Porcini Mushroom represents the main asset and economic/tourist engine of the Valley, of Borgo Val di Taro, and more generally of the Valley. Known throughout Italy, the area has known, valued, processed and offered the product for hundreds of years. Since 1996 it has enjoyed the recognition of the I.G.P. mark, the only mushroom in Europe and the world to enjoy this important certification. This has led over the years to an important increase in tourists interested in gastronomy, research and harvesting of the product. The collector can go to the Valley, purchase from any bar/restaurant and commercial establishment a daily ticket that authorizes collection. The management and issuance of tickets is entrusted to the Comunalie, or "collective domains" whose properties are inalienable and indivisible; these properties, of extensive acreage, are enjoyed collectively by the rightful owners. In September, an average of about 16,000 tickets were reportedly purchased and distributed in the area.

### Time needed

Obtaining certification is not quantifiable. It is certainly a long-term project. Even the very attractiveness of the collection apparatus and access in the areas concerned is the result of word of mouth that originates from as far back as 1606.

### Resources needed

A super partes body that can manage, administer and regulate the P.G.I. specification a protection and verification consortium. Collaboration with administrations and law enforcement agencies for checks and possible sanctions on misconduct and harmful behavior.

### Actors involved in the implementation of the practice

Municipalities of Alta Valtaro, Consorzio di tutela Fungo Porcino I.G.P., Comunalie, Union of Municipalities, Emilia Romagna Region, Province of Parma, Strada del Fungo Porcino

### Outcomes / Impact of the practice

The impact of this practice is fundamental to the social and economic fabric of Borgotaro. It represents the main economic asset of the valley. Most of the area's tourists are attracted by this very phenomenon, alongside which an offer focused on outdoor and nature activities has been cleverly developed.



## Potential for replicability

The phenomenon is replicable with other assets, although it certainly cannot be a replicable practice in the short term. The added value of this attractiveness is precisely given both by the goodness of the product, but also by all those skills gained and developed over centuries of experience of a population in very close contact with that particular asset.



## ENVIRONMENTAL AND HIKING GUIDES COURSES (AIGAE COURSES)

Environmental and hiking guides courses (AIGAE Courses): VET courses for developing skills of local guides on food and biodiversity storytelling of Borgotaro

1 MICRO DESTINATION  
MANAGEMENT

2 SEASONALITY  
MANAGEMENT

4 STAKEHOLDER  
COLLABORATION

8 TOURISM  
DIVERSIFICATION

9 KNOWLEDGE AND  
CAPACITY BUILDING

## Description of the practice

One of the most interesting aspects and one that has produced concrete effects on the affluence in the Valtaro territory, especially not in the period when the phenomenon of over tourism occurs, is given by the training courses organized by the Forma Futuro entity. The Borgotaro office, in fact, has been organizing for years courses mainly inherent to the sphere of the Outdoor world (mycology courses, environmental hiking guides, tour leaders and food and wine tour leaders). The purpose of these types of courses, is to introduce competent professionals to the area, who can tell the story of the territory in a knowledgeable way. By providing quality services, an equally excellent target audience is targeted. Geologists, first aid experts, biologists and food and wine professionals take turns along with many other leading figures in their respective fields in order to offer the most complete and excellent package possible. It is a very concrete strategy to redistribute tourist access by avoiding peaks of over tourism, differentiating the various offerings according to the personal disposition of each individual guide, under the common denominator of skills, qualifications and the right information for an aware and purposeful tourist. The undeniable quality of the courses provided has allowed, within a very

few years, to have a national resonance. At this time approximately two courses per year for each “discipline” start with classes never less than 20/25. Confirming this, provenance data indicate widespread attendance throughout the country. Very large attendance from central and southern Italy, paradoxically greater than local demand. The quality and seriousness of the offerings is also confirmed by the institution's first-rate role in collaboration with the Emilia-Romagna Region on the creation and specialization of tour leaders from a wine and food perspective.

This project has served as a “model” and leader of courses inherent to the sector. It is important to emphasize how this reality is in harmony and enhances the tourism offer and the local communication brand. The continuous dialogues and collaborations with, for example, the mushroom road, and with all other realities operating in the outdoor and food and wine sectors are an excellent example of virtuous and effective cooperation.



### **Time needed**

The environmental guiding course involves a 4–5-month course of study. Classes are held online once/twice a week and last 3 hours each. Approximately once/twice a month, in-person and field classes are held from nine in the morning to eighteen hours.

The tour leader course has fewer hours, is shorter in duration but the mode of meetings and lectures remains the same.



### **Resources needed**

The Entity assigns the various classes to professionals who have achieved excellence in their respective fields. Primarily, the resources to draw on are precisely the tutors and lecturers. After that comes into play the network of contacts and cooperation between entities such as, as mentioned above, the mushroom road, the dairy, and the Sigeric tourist services cooperative. This is done in order to teach future guides about the excellent realities of the area, with a view to networking and dialogue of all relevant realities within the tourism apparatus.



### **Actors involved in the implementation of the practice**

The actors involved in curating the course are the training institution, the Emilia Romagna Region, the economic entities and activities involved (e.g., Borgotaro Cheese Factory, Sigeric Tourist Guides, Porcino Mushroom Museum, etc.) and to a lesser extent the municipalities.



### **Outcomes / Impact of the practice**

The impact is not minor. First, the courses attract every three to four months, classes of at least 25 people (often several classes start) who come to the area during that period. Second, people are trained locally who are likely to operate in the area as well. The skills taught such as food and wine, through recognition of plants and shrubs, to orientation, first safety and rock recognition, allow for an absolute quality tourist offer, capable of attracting a medium-high target audience always attentive to the excellence of the tourist offer.

### Potential for replicability

It is possible to set up training courses for environmental and hiking guides with a focus on the local with a specific focus on the flora and fauna of the local ecosystem, so as to provide new job opportunities for residents by enhancing and publicizing the environmental, historical, and cultural heritage of the micro destination.



### INTER-MUNICIPAL COLLABORATION FOR EVENTS: TAROCENOROCK FESTIVAL

Festivals like TAROCENOROCK, which combine resources across municipalities to attract visitors year-round.

**2** SEASONALITY  
MANAGEMENT

**8** TOURISM  
DIVERSIFICATION

#### Description of the practice

The municipality of Borgotaro is considered the capital of the Valtaro valley. For this reason, communication and interconnection with neighboring municipalities are constant and growing. One of the most virtuous and functional examples of collaboration among neighboring municipalities is the TAROCENOROCK FESTIVAL. An event that began in 2022, which has been followed by ever-increasing interest, involvement and attendance. Year after year, efforts have been made to involve other municipalities and neighboring areas.

This festival is part of the 'Musica in Castello' summer cultural circuit with free admission, created in 2003 from the desire to promote music, art, culture, theatre, comedy and dance events with free admission in the host municipalities. Integrated communication allows even micro-locations to have a not inconsiderable visibility throughout the region, which is touched by the event.



### **Time needed**

In the February-March period, the municipalities, the artistic direction and all the actors involved meet to define the budget, identify the artists and compile a harmonious and collective program.

In the specific case of Valtaro, the charitable purpose must also be added: thanks to the help of the local fire brigade, which is committed to providing concrete help for the various evenings, several donations have been made to the fire brigade and the local station. A further positive aspect is the fact that, in order to promote the events and the circuit as much as possible, an Instagram page should be created dedicated to the various evenings, the artists and their promotion. A positive contribution to increasing visibility, participation and interest around the event



### **Resources needed**

To date, in fact, the festival also includes the municipalities of the neighboring Val Ceno, a sign that the event and, more generally, the cooperation between municipalities is working and growing. Bardi, Compiano, Borgo Val di Taro and Bedonia, these are the municipalities involved, with a view to medium-long term co-operation and coordinated planning. The activity is funded by the Municipalities involved and with the profit collected from the previous and with the profits generated by the organization of the previous year's festival.



### **Actors involved in the implementation of the practice**

The actors involved in the organization are the councilors, the artistic direction and, concretely, all the operators and technicians involved in logistics. In some cases, the councilors collaborate directly with mayors and police forces.



### **Outcomes / Impact of the practice**

The economic impact is significant. The evenings of existing events bring a large turnout of a rather targeted, quality audience. Supporting activities such as bars and restaurants benefit due to a greater influx of spectators.



### **Potential for replicability**

The potential for replicability is very high since it is possible to apply this collaboration methodology to each type of event. The success factor of this initiative is the tight collaboration with the neighboring municipalities for what a deep dialogue is crucial.





## Identification of key areas of needs for sustainable development in micro-destinations

The project identified several areas crucial for advancing sustainable development in micro-destinations:

- **Balancing growth with carrying capacity:** Implementing sustainable practices that prevent social and environmental degradation due to tourism activities.
- **Community-driven tourism:** Creating opportunities for locals to participate in tourism activities, strengthening cultural identity.
- **Infrastructure upgrades:** Investing in waste management, transportation, and housing to accommodate tourists sustainably without overwhelming local resources.
- **Addressing seasonality:** Monitoring and managing tourism to prevent overtourism and strain on resources during high intensity months.
- **Support for low-impact tourism options:** Promoting eco-tourism, cultural tourism, and wellness tourism as alternatives to high-impact activities.

# CONCLUSIONS

Micro destinations are not "one thing" and therefore a multitude of micro destinations will lead to a seemingly high level of unique challenges. These challenges happen in places where the gap between governance and intervention is the largest. This heightens the sense of helplessness from the micro destination perspective and hopelessness from the governance perspective.

Yet the good practices show that through engagement with local community from the region and municipality, these issues can be addressed in a way that not only alleviates the negative impacts of tourism but also strengthens the local sense of place, cultural traditions, the environment and living conditions. Not as a spill-over effect but rather at the core, where the spill-over is something for the tourists to enjoy. Something is absolutely at the centre of micro destination development and that is that there are no quick fixes. Strengthening environmental, social and economic aspects of a place takes time if it is to be seen as sustainable.

When a micro destination is consistently over carrying capacity there is very little room to harness the benefits because all attention is on minimising the negative impact. This is further complicated by the fact that carrying capacity is not an objectively verifiable number but rather something that is based on the lived experience of local community. The negative impacts of tourism are always present but when the micro destination is operating just below carrying capacity then it is easier to also harness the environmental, social and economic benefits thus improving the lived experience in the process.

The project has identified some leading indicators that impacts the lived experience, and these can be included to inform strategies and offer a redefined and more granular measure of success.

The ten identified primary areas of intervention offer regional, municipal and DMO actors the basis for long- and short-term planning. Working with these ten primary areas requires inter-organisational collaboration on a strategic, tactical and operational level but it is dependent on opening a seat at the table for the voice and emergent nature of the micro destination.



# Annex 1

## MIST Local Workshop reports per Partner

### Halland

DATE AND PLACE
10th of June 2024, Falkenberg Strandbad.
STAKEHOLDER SELECTION
The main focus of the workshop was the micro destination perspective. We invited representatives from the DMO's of Hallands six municipalities, who in turn were asked to invite representatives from their various micro-destinations. 8 different micro destinations were represented on the workshop, along with DMO representatives from four municipalities.
MODALITY
2-hour workshop with smaller group discussions and sharing the main insights in the full group.
AGENDA
<p><b>Introductions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brief introduction of Visit Halland and the project.</li> <li>Everyone gets to introduce themselves. Which micro destination do they represent and what is the best thing about their micro destination?</li> </ul> <p><b>Part 1: A micro destination perspective.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perspectives on micro destination development from the micro destinations. What are things that we as a regional stakeholder must not forget?</li> </ul> <p>Short fika-break.</p> <p><b>Part 2: Challenges and opportunities.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What specific challenges are you faced with in your micro destination?</li> <li>What opportunities do you see in developing your micro destination?</li> </ul>
STAKEHOLDER META-ANALYSIS
<p><b>1. What methods do we use to engage with stakeholders?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group discussions.</li> </ul> <p><b>2. What methods do we use to gather their input?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listening to their thoughts and discussions, taking notes.</li> </ul> <p><b>3. What issues came up that you expected?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marketing and branding.</li> <li>Lack of resources (time and money).</li> <li>Challenges in collaboration. Different perspectives on how things should be done, different opinions on how to develop places.</li> <li>Challenges in contact with the municipality.</li> </ul> <p><b>4. What issues came up that you didn't expect?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No real surprises came up during the discussions this time.</li> </ul>

## STAKEHOLDER LEAD-IN QUESTIONS (COLLECTION OF STAKEHOLDERS 'REFLECTIONS')

### 1. What is the best thing about our micro destination?

- We didn't take notes on this question. It was more of an opener, to get to know each other etc.

### 2. How does tourism impact daily life in our micro destination?

We did not explicitly discuss this question; however, it was covered in parts of the other questions discussed, namely:

- Perspectives on micro destination development from the micro destinations. What are things that we as a regional stakeholder must not forget
- What specific challenges are you faced with in your micro destination?
- What opportunities do you see in developing your micro destination?

### 3. Summary: "Things We Must Not Forget"

- The role of associations and non-profit associations is central but varies in pace compared to companies.
- Many who are involved in clusters work full-time with other things. Time and energy are not always enough.
- Development is sometimes hindered by municipal boundaries and bureaucracy.
- Balance between economic and social development is important.
- Preserve the site's unique characteristics and cultural heritage.
- Effective marketing and use of existing networks is needed
- There are people who are afraid of development and do not want to develop.
- Respect for All: There should be space for both small and large entities.
- Grassroots perspective is important. Important with curiosity from the public. We must not come in as a region or municipality and take over and remove creativity or commitment
- Use existing networks when creating projects from a municipal and regional perspective. What is already in place? Do not start new groups.
- Tailored Solutions: It is not "one size fits all" in micro-destinations: You need to tailor what sustainable development should look like in the various micro destinations. Find a solution for that particular destination.

### 4. What are some of the challenges that you face in your micro destination?

- a.Lack of time and human resources: Difficult to find volunteers and maintain engagement. Need for project managers.
- b.Lack of financial resources: Marketing locally and internationally is challenging for small entities.
- c.Difficulty in finding collaborations: Hard to find partners for cooperation.
- d.Extending the season: How to do it and involve others?
- e.Developing a place: Where to start? Who to contact?

### 5. Describe a solution to a challenge that you are proud of.

We did not explicitly discuss this question; however, we discussed opportunities in developing a micro destination:

- Summary: "Opportunities"
- Collaboration and knowledge Exchange: Between micro-destinations to synchronize efforts and do things together when each is too small alone.
- Collaboration: Frequent meetings between clusters in Halland. Listening to grassroots.
- Celebrate efforts and community: Business galas to celebrate contributions and create a common direction.
- Welcoming and make space for new forces (youth)
- By creating clusters you can get the opportunity to attract new entrepreneurs.



## Kvarner

DATE AND PLACE
<p>The survey was sent on September 3, 2024, following an in-person workshop held on June 12, 2024, with the directors of the Kvarner Region tourist boards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During the workshop, it was agreed upon which stakeholders would be included in the survey</li> <li>The reason for sending the survey and collecting data in this manner is that, during the tourist season, we were unable to hold an onsite workshop with stakeholders, as they were all heavily occupied with their work</li> </ul> <p>Location: Kvarner Region, Croatia</p>
MODALITY
<p>The report is based on a survey conducted among ten localities across the Kvarner Region. The survey was distributed electronically, gathering input from stakeholders representing the towns and municipalities of Krk, Punat, Lopar, Ičići, Čavle, Lovran, Matulji, Kraljevica, Mali Lošinj and Rab.</p>
STAKEHOLDER SELECTION
<p>The stakeholders involved in this analysis are local representatives who are directly engaged in managing tourism in their respective micro-destinations (local tourist board members in collaboration with representatives of the Ecomuseum Mošćenička Draga, local restaurant representatives, organizers of zero waste maritime events and private accommodation providers). These individuals were selected for their roles in overseeing the impact of tourism on local communities and their responsibilities for promoting sustainable tourism practices.</p>
STAKEHOLDER META-ANALYSIS
<p><b>1. What methods do we use to engage with stakeholders?</b></p> <p>The primary method of engagement with stakeholders was through an electronic survey. This allowed tourism boards to reflect on specific challenges and opportunities within their areas. Stakeholders were invited to contribute their insights on the effects of tourism on the environment, economy, and local culture. The open-ended questions encouraged them to express their thoughts on sustainable development and tourism-related challenges.</p> <p><b>2. What methods do we use to gather their input?</b></p> <p>The input was collected via structured surveys, designed to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. The survey included nine open-ended questions covering various aspects of tourism, including its impact on the local community, challenges to sustainability, and the practices implemented to manage tourism sustainably.</p> <p><b>3. What issues came up that you expected?</b></p> <p>Some of the expected issues that arose included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Overcrowding and strain on infrastructure:</b> Many stakeholders highlighted concerns about the high volume of tourists, particularly during peak seasons, which puts a strain on local infrastructure (e.g., water supply, waste management, and transportation).</li> <li><b>Environmental degradation:</b> The tourism boards of Lopar and Punat raised issues of environmental impact, such as pollution and loss of biodiversity, which were anticipated as major concerns.</li> <li><b>Overdevelopment and "apartmentization":</b> Uncontrolled building and conversion of local housing into tourist accommodations were cited as common problems in most destinations.</li> </ul>

#### 4. What issues came up that you didn't expect?

Unexpected issues that emerged included:

- Lack of cohesive strategies: Some tourism boards (e.g., Punat and Matulji) noted that while there are strategic documents in place, there is often a failure to implement these plans effectively. A lack of coordination between stakeholders also emerged as a significant barrier to sustainable tourism.
- Need for greater local engagement: Several tourism boards, including Ičići and Matulji, pointed out the need for better involvement of local communities in the decision-making processes related to tourism development. They expressed concerns that the local population is not always considered when shaping tourism policies.

## Liepāja

DATE AND PLACE
August 28., September 11. Liepāja city council
MODALITY
Individual interview
STAKEHOLDER SELECTION
6 Stakeholders have been identified from : a) National level partner - Investment and Development Agency of Latvia (governmental organization) b) Regional level partner – Kurzeme Tourism association (non-profit organization) c) Local municipality level – Central Administration of Liepaja (city municipality) d) European Capital of Culture in year 2027- Foundation “Liepaja 2027” Non-profit society level – Community of local cultural places “Liepaja Music” (Ltd.) e) Tourism entrepreneur – biggest hotel, 5-star hotel chain “Promenade Hotel” and “Art Hotel Roma”
STAKEHOLDER META-ANALYSIS
<p><b>1. What methods do we use to engage with stakeholders?</b> Regular idea-generating, experience-sharing meetings</p> <p><b>2. What methods do we use to gather their input?</b> Capturing all ideas on the guidelines for a sustainable tourism destination strategy, summarizing what matches between stakeholders and what doesn't and why</p> <p><b>3. What issues came up that you expected?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seasonality is the main challenge, as well as cooperation between entrepreneurs.</li> <li>• Unorganized legislation of apartments, what has been offered to tourists' non-legal ways.</li> </ul> <p><b>4. What issues came up that you didn't expect?</b> There is no way to get to destination in sustainable way, all transportation system aren't climate neutral.</p>
STAKEHOLDER LEAD-IN QUESTIONS (COLLECTION OF STAKEHOLDERS 'REFLECTIONS):
<p>1. What is the best thing about our micro destination?</p> <p>2. How does tourism impact daily life in our micro destination?</p> <p>3. What are some of the challenges that you face in your micro destination?</p> <p>4. Describe a solution to a challenge that you are proud of.</p>

**Karlis Beihmanis, Project manager (climate change and energy efficiency issues), Central Administration of Liepāja.**

1. I appreciate the variety of events and dining options, as well as the peaceful atmosphere without heavy congestion and crowds.
2. The lively environment encourages tourists to engage more and enhances their comfort and enjoyment.
3. I am concerned about the impact of seasonality and the inconvenience of commuting by car.
4. I am excited about the introduction of a bike-sharing service in the city.

**Irita Kaleja, Member of a Board of communities of local cultural places “Liepaja Music”, Ltd.**

1. A sufficiently diverse cultural offer, including both large concert venues and small private venues offering academic, jazz, pop, rock and alternative music. The city boasts colorful and stylistically distinct street art - murals that allow you to walk around and explore the city from different historical and contemporary viewpoints. Of course, the beach, which in the summer season not only captivates you with its beautiful nature, but also allows you to enjoy its various cafés. The city is a close mix of the historic and the modern. Liepaja offers a wide variety of active leisure activities and cultural expressions.
2. It is a definite contribution and growth for the local economy, a driving force for entrepreneurs to develop, introduce new services and offers. The beneficiaries are both local residents and visitors to the city.
3. How to attract and retain tourists to stay in Liepaja in the off-season, for several days. I suppose that each of the entertainment, hospitality, leisure and cultural venues should have information leaflets, where the tourist, the visitor and the local resident of Liepaja can get up-to-date and interesting information. We do not know everything ourselves, so we cannot fully inform the interested public. COOPERATION! That is the key word in everything.
4. The challenge is to offer such a wide and varied programme throughout the year that people want to come to Liepaja again and again and recommend it to those who have not been to Liepaja before. This is not a problem in summer, the challenges arise in autumn, winter and spring. The solution? To bring all tourism operators to the same table, to agree on the creation of tourism packages and their delivery. Yes, there are risks, this may not always be cost-effective in the initial phase, but in the long term it can have a positive impact. Both hospitality and leisure operators need to be able to agree. Each of us has something to contribute, but we have not been united. Perhaps there has not been the will and the need. At the moment, in my view, we are too fragmented, both in culture and in all other areas. And also, to find for each place that is linked to tourism - a special, unique 'raisin' that will surprise, attract and retain the target audience.

**Inese Zidele, General Manager of local boutique 5-star hotel chain “Promenade Hotel” and “Art Hotel Roma”**

1. Tourism product mix: People (who love their city and create opportunities to show it to others), Culture (theatres; concert halls; museums, galleries, creative spaces), sport (all kinds of sport activities), nature (parks, beach, lake, nature house), architecture (city architecture, Carastas, piers, Forts), cuisine (a wide range from simple to gourmet, markets, bazaars), business (existence, accessibility and development of the business environment) - all these complement each other and, through the many connections, can be grouped together for different interests, for leisure, for challenges, for sport and improvement, for knowledge and creativity...
2. Tourism has a positive impact on life in Liepaja. It is important not to upset the balance between tourism development and mass influx - I would like to be able to keep the balance that we are happy to welcome tourists so that their influx does not create a negative experience for local people.
3. The biggest challenge is the winter season - how to attract more tourists in the winter season, Productivity of people working in the tourism sector and their interest to work in the service sector. Unorganised labour legislation.

Every year these nuances of labour legislation have an increasing impact on the company's operations. Unorganised rental of apartments for tourism purposes, which creates unfair competition. The municipality's approach to dealing with various situations, which does not take into account the needs of the tourist enterprises but acts in accordance with its own rules of procedure. Globally, a safe destination, so be it. At the moment, there are some tourists who are afraid to come our way.

4. I think the biggest challenge is the lack of use of infrastructure for tourism. E.g. The airport is there but planes don't fly, the port is there but underdeveloped for passenger needs, the railway is there but traffic is even more scarce.

#### **Inta Soriņa, Chairperson of the Board, Foundation "Liepaja 2027" – European Capital of Culture in year 2027**

1. Quality nature, hospitality and cultural offer at any time of the year.

2. Depending on the season. During summer holidays, the presence of guests is more pronounced in the streets, restaurants, tourist attractions; in other seasons, cultural tourism, corporate segment are more pronounced. With an active hospitality sector, there is a growing opportunity for economic growth, network expansion, workload, development of transport links to other destinations. Tourism can also strengthen the overall brand of the city, which attracts professionals, potential residents, various partners in other industries. The opposite is also true: with the decline in the turnover of people and money, the challenge is in the hospitality, transport connections, etc. sectors.

3. Tax burden (high VAT), labor and human resource shortages, seasonality.

4. The biggest challenges are related to the solutions of national level challenges: transport connectivity, which needs to be addressed at national level - increase railway, air traffic, create connections with Klaipeda, Palanga airport. The same also to strengthen cooperation with the national level marketing campaign implementer - the Investment Development Agency of Latvia, ensuring the inclusion of city information in various marketing activities. Improvement of the tourism sector - solutions for legalization of apartments, reduction of VAT in the catering sector, etc. Of course, internal communication is also important - information flow in the hospitality area, communication with the big event, the event calendar maintainers, etc.

#### **Ingrida Smuskova, Chairperson of the Board, Kurzeme Tourism Association**

1. The city's municipalities and public sector are working to attract people - not only to benefit the residents of Liepaja, but also to attract both Latvian and foreign visitors - both day visitors (to a concert or theatre in the evening) and overnight visitors (theatre in the evening = museum the next morning). And this attraction is both in tourism and investment and vice versa. In other cities, however, this is not really the case in Latvia. Or Liepaja is good at public relations. And of course, there is plenty on offer to take advantage of - both to see and to do, both actively and intellectually. There is sufficient service - both in quantity and quality.

2. In my opinion, positive. And the few events, the calendar times when there might be overtourism - it's only temporary, which also gives an opportunity to entrepreneurs outside the city to make money.

3. I am not a tourism entrepreneur in the city, but I think that in Liepaja as an entrepreneur you shouldn't "cheap out" (which is very good) - you have to be in tune all the time, with good quality, up-to-date offer. Be careful with routine - in tourism it cuts like a sharp knife in business. Today you can be at the top, tomorrow you can be at the bottom.

4. Liepaja as a small tourist destination is on a European scale. In Latvia I would not call it that. The challenge would be to improve transport hubs - to make the airport work more fully as well as the seaport. And then international tourism would be ok.



**Kristine Mickane, Senior project manager, Investment and Development Agency of Latvia**

**1.** Liepaja is a very spacious destination with a very wide and varied tourist offer, starting with the wide beach with all its infrastructure suitable for travelers of different ages and needs, continuing with the most extensive regional cultural offer (theatre, concert hall, galleries, festivals, sport events, etc...)

Liepaja is wonderful because it can offer both short city breaks, with quality gastronomic and cultural offers for short trips of a few days based on event tourism (festivals, concerts, performances, sports events), and long holidays covering the whole region.

**2.** In my view, tourism is currently only having a positive impact, as it has not reached overtourism proportions and has a positive impact on the economy and employment.

**3.** In my opinion, one of the biggest challenges in Liepaja is to balance the occupancy rate throughout the year, as well as to promote diversity in tourism market flows, to reduce the share of Lithuanian tourism. The second is to prevent the region's properties, not only Liepāja's, from being further owned by foreigners who use them for short periods, as summer homes etc., but do not provide a stable and regular economic contribution to the local economy, either in the form of taxes or labor.

**4.** Of course, the main problem of our whole region is the tourist off-season. Surely if there was one easy solution to this, it would already be in place. Understandably, promoting tourism in the off-season, without a winter tourism infrastructure, is not an easy task, and as the only solution I see that Liepaja should purposefully continue on the course it has started, promoting the development of cultural tourism.

## Borgotaro

DATE AND PLACE
25/07/2024, Borgotaro Municipality
MODALITY
on-site
STAKEHOLDER SELECTION
The selection took place in collaboration with the associated partner Municipality of Borgotaro, which selected the subjects it considered most relevant in terms of experience, knowledge of the area and interest in the theme of sustainable tourism development in Borgotaro
STAKEHOLDER META-ANALYSIS
<p><b>1. What methods do we use to engage with stakeholders?</b></p> <p>We involved the stakeholders in specific Focus Groups so to identify the challenges, the opportunities and the dynamics beyond the tourism initiatives held in Borgotaro.</p> <p><b>2. What methods do we use to gather their input?</b></p> <p>During the workshop we encouraged discussion in groups of 5 and using posters and a power point presentation. Participants read the question displayed on the presentation, started a discussion among them while writing the answers on posters, and then a spokesperson makes the final report of what was discussed in the group.</p> <p><b>3. What issues came up that you expected?</b></p> <p>Among the critical aspects anticipated, and later confirmed during the meeting, were those related to transportation, which does little to facilitate travel, and a unity of purpose and teamwork that is still in a very embryonic stage. This second aspect represents a key challenge in our view.</p>

#### 4. What issues came up that you didn't expect?

Among the critical aspects that emerged and were not anticipated was the difficult management not only of the collective but of individual actors during those periods defined as overbooking. Moreover, from the discussion emerged the issue, and the consequent purpose, of transforming a "hit and run" tourism such as that related to mushroom picking, into a stay of at least one night, to activate the whole circuit of hospitality and related tourist services.

### STAKEHOLDER LEAD-IN QUESTIONS (COLLECTION OF STAKEHOLDERS 'REFLECTIONS')

#### 1. What is the best thing about our micro destination?

The services connections in Borgotaro are better than in other towns: in fact, it has a strategic position (i.e. Borgotaro locates at the border of three regions Liguria, Tuscany and Emilia Romagna) with a short distance from the Mediterranean Sea. By being a border area, it receives cultural, historical and culinary influences from three different regions (Liguria, Tuscany and Emilia Romagna). Compared to the neighboring municipalities, the transport system is excellent as Borgotaro is the only one with access to the motorway and enjoys the presence of the railway station. The tourist offer linked to the mountains is open to all categories of tourist, not just to mountain specialists; events are organized throughout the year; Production and sale of PGI products like IGP Mushroom (Borgotaro is the home of the mushroom) attracts tourists from all over Italy during the Borgotaro mushroom fair. It is also a destination for pilgrimages and religious tourism.



#### 2. How does tourism impact daily life in our micro destination?

Positive impact: growth of the territory's wealth (revenue) and increase in jobs, thanks to tourism it has been possible to preserve and enhance Borgotaro's historical and cultural heritage: unexplored buildings have been recovered and reshaped for tourism purposes; it has also been possible to breathe new life into hamlets that were little valorized; stimulus to better preserve and tell the story of Borgotaro's historical and cultural heritage.

Negative impact: increase in atmospheric and environmental pollution, especially during peak tourist periods; hit-and-run tourism (1 day without using local tourism (one day without using local services); robbery tourism: tourists only visit the valley

in search of mushrooms to be picked and taken away without any economic impact on local tourism operators; seasonal tourism, i.e. in summer and during the mushroom season; increased traffic; increased burdens on the municipality, which is forced to offer more services to meet the needs of residents and tourists, but all at the expense of citizens, who see an increase in taxes - e.g. more waste and therefore more operators to pick up waste) disfigurement of the real estate due to the lack of knowledge of the municipality's places, poor territorial promotion through social media, tourism promotion often relies on unlikely influencers who provide potential tourists with the wrong information.



#### 3. What are some of the challenges that you face in your micro destination?

The flow of tourists is only high during the summer and mushroom season: the challenge is to attract tourists for 365 days a year; tour operators do not network and do not collaborate with municipal initiatives; they are poor at welcoming tourists; there is no collaboration

between Borgotaro and other localities in the valley; strategic partnerships with the private sector are lacking; tourist loyalty: the tourist is happy and then returns; an increase in accommodation available to tourists along with tourist activities; Possible solutions identified: to diversify the offer: to promote not only the Borgotaro porcini mushroom, which is harvested in autumn, but also other types of mushrooms that are present in the valley all year round; to shift the focus from mushrooms to other types of elements of tourist interest; to systematize the offer linked to excursions and knowledge of the biodiversity and ecosystem of the valley (creation of an Ecomuseum) that gathers all the tourist information and directs tourists; training of tourist operators: Creation of operational working tables aimed at improving tourism; greater flexibility of operators, increasing the opening hours of restaurants and shops; creation of a valley portal that can collect all the information on places, activities and tourist events in the valley; organization of events not only gastronomic but also of a historical-cultural nature (historical re-enactments) exploiting Borgotaro's medieval heritage.



#### **4. Describe a solution to a challenge that you are proud of.**

Over the last few years, the local administrations of the Taro Valley have strengthened the collaboration between municipalities. This has allowed for better coordination between the organization of the tourism sector and supply: an aspect that should be emphasized and considered as a desirable starting point. Whereas previously local realities tended to work independently, in recent years the trend has been instead to look to the future with an overall view. In 2022, the Valtaro Rock Festival was born in three municipalities, which this year also saw the entry of the municipality of Bardi, which became the TAROCENOROCK festival: the festival featured international guests as part of the Musica in Castello event, which covers much of the Region.



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