

7 Testing measures for supporting innovative CB tourism products and services based on natural and cultural heritage

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Partner in Charge: Public Institution RERA SD for coordination and development of Split Dalmatia County (PP1)
Partners involved: All partners

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1. Introduction

The project “Smart and Slow Tourism Supporting Adriatic Heritage for Tomorrow”, with the acronym “TAKE IT SLOW”, is a strategic project of the Cross-border Cooperation Program Italy-Croatia 2014- 2020. The project is being conducted by the Dubrovnik-Neretva County (as the lead partner) with the following partners: Public Institution RERA SD for Coordination and Development of Split-Dalmatia County, Public Institution Development Agency of Šibenik-Knin County, University of Zadar, Istria County, Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region, Veneto Region, Emilia-Romagna Region, SVIM - Sviluppo Marche s.r.l., Abruzzo Region, Molise Region, Apulian Public Theatre - Regional Consortium for Arts and Culture, and its associated partner the Puglia Region. The total budget of the project is 3,764,695.71 EUR, of which 85 percent are funds from the European Regional Development Fund. The project is implemented from June 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022. The aim of the project is to manage and promote the Adriatic as a green, smart, sustainable, accessible cross-border tourist destination for slow tourism.

As delivery D.4.1.7., a monitoring system of the strategic framework at the cross-border and regional project levels has been designed. Relevant indicators, starting and planned values, responsible actors and monitoring time dynamics have been defined. Also, the report includes an evaluation methodology and a proposed model for the application of the evaluation conclusions. Within the report, also a form for a monitoring system for the implementation of the strategic framework has been prepared, including indicators for monitoring the implementation of the proposed strategic framework and policy interventions.

This report provides project partners with assistance in and a foundation for the process of defining testing measures for the support of innovative cross-border products and services based on natural and cultural heritage according to the given methodology (D.4.2.3).

Testing measures are one of the mandatory activities of a smart action plan. Based on the proposed methods, professional support in the definition of testing measures for the proposed smart solutions is provided by e-mail, live or online.

2. Strategic framework based on the concept of smart specialization

Within the D.4.1.7. report, an integrated strategic framework based on the concept of smart specialization has been prepared for the establishment, development, management, marketing, and promotion of the Adriatic as a smart, green, sustainable, resilient cross-border tourist destination for slow tourism.

The key objectives of this integrated strategic framework are the development of tourism products based on natural and cultural heritage, and the involvement of actors who contribute to the research, preservation, management, valorization, interpretation, and promotion of natural and cultural heritage and create and market heritage-based products in the cross-border project area.

The developed strategic framework - priorities and measures as well as related policy instruments relevant to its implementation are shown in the table below.

Measure	Related policy instrument
Priority 1. Improvement of research, valorization and interpretation of cultural and natural heritage in the project area	
1.1. Improvement of research	Monitoring and appropriate management
1.2. Strengthening the valorization and interpretation	Site-specific visitor strategies
Priority 2. Sustainable and responsible management of the valuable cultural and natural sites through smart specialisation, protection and sustainable usage of cultural and natural heritage for tourism	
2.1. Diversification of tourism products and services	Revenue management
2.2. Access to finances for new innovative tourism offers	Revenue management
2.3. Training in managerial and entrepreneurial skills in tourism	Revenue management
2.4. Improvement of quality and innovation in the tourism offer	Revenue management
Priority 3. Strengthening the strategic and legislative framework related to tourism	
3.1. Improvement of legislative framework	Collaborative and participatory approaches
3.2. Reduction of slowness and bureaucracy	Collaborative and participatory approaches
3.3. Participatory planning in development of strategic plans and programmes	Policy planning
Priority 4. Networking for sustainable tourism based on cultural and natural resources in the cross-border area	
4.1. Involvement of different stakeholders	Collaborative and participatory approaches

4.2. Strengthening the networking in sustainable tourism	Collaborative and participatory approaches
4.3. Promotion of the cross-border region	Collaborative and participatory approaches

Source: compilation based on the results of D.4.1.7.

3. Overview of cultural and natural heritage sites for the development of smart action plans that will ensure the accessibility of tourism products and services

The table below lists cultural and natural heritage sites for which smart action plans will be prepared. The next steps are also described that will be realized using smart innovations, which will increase the accessibility of the location. Plans largely foresee modern multimedia advancements as well as the use of web applications and tools to increase the accessibility of natural and cultural heritage sites in the cross-border area. In this way, the use of smart solutions would facilitate the preservation, management and usage of heritage which is based on the community's way of life in sustainable tourism products. At the same time, a significant component of new smart solutions allows for the interpretation of the heritage in several languages, which also improves the accessibility and connectivity in the cross-border area.

Responsible partner	Location	Description of main activities to be realized through the Smart action plan
(LP/DNC)	Adaptation of a section of Rector's Palace of Ston for the establishment of an accessible Adriatic heritage interpretation centre	Virtual presentation of the section of the Rector's Palace of Ston accessible online through a web application
(PP1/RERA)	Blaca Hermitage Eco Museum on the island of Brač	Reconstruction of the Blaca Eco Museum to be suitable for visit and future use.
(PP2/SKC)	Open Air Museum in the Šibenik-Knin County on the island of Murter	Multimedia equipment for the Open Air Museum on the Island of Murter
(PP4/IST)	Virtual museum and creative centre House of Castles in Momjan	Equipment and light fixtures, multimedia equipment and smart solutions
(PP6/VEN)	Informative signs along routes with inclusive approach - Venetian villas along the Brenta River from Padua to Venice	Informative signs along routes with inclusive approach – available through web application, online
(PP7/ER)	Walking/cycling interactive guide to accompany tourists along their slow visit	A virtual tool that will allow tourists to learn about and visit places, even from a distance

(PP9/ABR)	Walking/cycling interactive guide to accompany tourists along their slow visit	A web application for all visitors and potential visitors, available on all devices, enabling the spread of the information necessary to enjoy in a better way the different services and features available along the Green Way of Trabocchi Coast
(PP10/MOL)	Slow trail “Cammino delle Sette Chiese”	The Molise Region intends to improve the slow trail of "Cammino delle Sette Chiese" through the search for reflection, encounter, art and conviviality
(PP8/SVIM)	Improved accessibility of the Forest Codex of Camaldoli in the Monastery of Fonte Avellana, Marche Region.	The accessibility of the Codex will be improved through the setting up of an information/training space located in the complex of the Monastery of Fonte Avellana. A digital and immersive “path” animated through technological innovations capable of improving the level and quality of visitors’ interactions with the Codex and its history.

(PP9/ABR)	Improved accessibility of natural and cultural heritage sites in the Abruzzo Region	The accessibility of the Trabocchi Cost's green way will be improved by providing news and information about opportunities and events available along it; a web application will provide tourists and potential tourists with information, digital instruments (GPS data, etc.) to animate their vacation
(PP11/TPP)	Improved accessibility of natural and cultural heritage sites in the Puglia Region	<p>The improvement of accessibility and promotion of the natural and cultural heritage sites of the identified micro-destination will be realized through a web application that will contain the virtual thematic itineraries and the new slow tourism services realized by the Project.</p> <p>The web app will improve the accessibility of the natural and cultural heritage destinations to different target tourists through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - special contents (pictures and videos); - the use of 3 languages; - indication of the accessibility of the sites to the disabled;

		- the use of clear, fluent and easily understandable texts
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The activities envisaged at the locations for which the Action Plans are being developed seek to enable a wider accessibility of the locations using innovation and smart specialization, representing a contribution to sustainable tourism, development of cultural and creative industries, i.e., the sustainable development of local communities at these locations.

Given that the development of action plans is closely linked to the strategic framework for the development of smart specialization and innovation for sustainable tourism based on cultural and natural heritage, it is expected that they will contribute to the achievement of set priorities, i.e. that they will encourage innovation, research and development in tourism, which contributes to sustainable and responsible management of the valuable cultural and natural sites through smart specialization, protection and sustainable usage of cultural and natural heritage for tourism, strengthening the strategic and legislative framework related to tourism and promoting networking for sustainable tourism based on cultural and natural resources in the cross-border area.

During the development of the action plans, their testing is envisaged either through ex-ante evaluation according to the methodology elaborated in D.4.1.7. or as a pilot exercise according to one of the measures through which this testing may be conducted.

4. Proposal of testing measures for the support of innovative cross-border tourism products and services based on natural and cultural heritage

The smart action plans in the previously described sites rely heavily on the preparation and implementation of virtual models to increase the accessibility of natural and cultural heritage in the cross-border area.

In addition to the presentation of existing heritage, the action plans will facilitate the introduction of new smart solutions that will reach visitors, connect tangible and intangible heritage in the cross-border area, enable connection and cooperation, and unify the offer of tourism products and services.

Given the obligation to define testing measures for the support of innovative tourism products and services foreseen by the action plans, two key levels of testing are proposed.

The first level is related to the ex-ante evaluation of the action plans. The methodology of the ex-ante evaluation is elaborated in detail in D.4.1.7. In summary, the ex-ante evaluation is conducted in parallel with the process of preparation of the action plan, answering the questions of "Will we invest financial resources in a way that ensures the achievement of set goals?" and "Is everything planned feasible?"

Common criteria for the ex-ante evaluation are relevance (considers whether the goals and priorities are based on real needs and development potentials), complementarity (the level at which the intervention supports other public policies), coherence (includes the internal and external compatibility of the action plan), usefulness (impact of the action plan in relation to broader socio-economic needs), sustainability (long-term effects and self-sustainability in the future), and equality

(effects are evenly distributed in relation to different stakeholders, regions , gender, etc.).

The table below features additional testing measures for the proposed action plans that can be used to assess the applicability and adaptability as well as effectiveness of the support for innovative cross- border products and services based on natural and cultural heritage.

Testing measure	Desk analysis
Description	<p>This measure envisages the collection and analysis of documents, studies and research that indicate previous good or poor practices in the implementation of similar examples of activities proposed in the action plan. The measure implies the engagement of experts in the relevant field with experience in the topic related to smart innovation in sustainable tourism related to natural and cultural heritage, which increases accessibility.</p> <p>It is important that the hired expert establishes close business cooperation with the developer of the action plan and that he has access to all relevant documentation during its development.</p> <p>The testing was mainly conducted through a comparative analysis of other examples of good practices and through the provided suggestions and recommendations related to previous relevant strategic and planning documents as well as existing research findings.</p>
Actors involved	Researcher, action plan developers, stakeholders of similar examples of

	good practice
Result	Written report with the results of the comparison of the analysis with the conclusions and recommendations for improvements to the content of the action plan.
Implementation risks	<p>Also, good collaboration with experts preparing the plan and the local community is important to enable appropriate comparability with the state of the art related to the action plan.</p> <p>A good knowledge of the research area and the availability of materials are crucial for conducting a desk analysis. Also, a good collaboration with experts preparing the plan and the local community is important to enable appropriate comparability with the state of the art related to the action plan.</p>

Testing measure	On-site visits by various stakeholders and evaluation of the effectiveness of support for innovative cross-border products and services based on natural and cultural heritage
Description	<p>This testing measure envisages the engagement of several external experts who would visit the sites at the end of action plans elaboration and, according to a previously prepared methodological form, each prepare a separate report on the quality of the planned support activities for the innovative cross-border products and services that are based on natural and cultural heritage. The key prerequisite is that the engaged evaluators are interested and experienced in the field being assessed, that they are impartial and that they are potential future users of the content offered.</p> <p>In addition to the implementation risk of this method related to the source of these evaluators, it is also important to carefully design and prepare the evaluation questionnaires that, in addition to an analysis of the situation, will introduce new ideas and suggest improvements to the action plan.</p>
Actors involved	Different stakeholders
Result	Report on the site visit and impressions related to the suitability and usability of the innovative product by each engaged evaluator and a comparative report with recommendations for improvements to the action plan.

Implementation risks	In addition to the implementation risk of this method related to the source of the evaluators, it is also important to carefully design and prepare the evaluation questionnaires that, in addition to an analysis of the situation, will provide an introduction to new ideas and suggest improvements to the action plan. Also, the on-site risk of visiting the site may entail significant transportation and accommodation costs as well as fees for interviewees.
Testing measure	Virtual workshop for testing online applications that increase the accessibility of cultural and natural heritage in the cross-border area
Description	<p>The virtual workshop is a new method of assessing the quality and commitment of action plans to solving the problem of accessibility and sustainable use of cultural and natural heritage for the needs of tourism development in the cross-border area. This method is particularly interesting for testing the development possibilities of web applications for heritage presentation. It facilitates the involvement of a range of different stakeholders (potentially interested visitors) from different parts of the world who can evaluate the proposed measures and involves the use of modern technologies and technological solutions that enable greater availability of natural and cultural heritage and better connectivity, i.e., virtual interaction of the involved stakeholders.</p> <p>The results can be simulations of the implementation of the proposed measures and recommendations for refinements or possible improvements if the need and space for new steps forward arise.</p>
Actors involved	Mobile application experts and tourism professionals, management of cultural and natural heritage sites.
Result	Report with a comparative analysis of the impressions collected according to the previously prepared forms.

Implementation risks	Risks in the implementation of this testing measure may be the absence of appropriate technologies to participate in virtual activities.
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Given that the testing measures will be adapted to the prepared action plans, it is important to emphasize that it is highly recommended to conduct an ex-ante analysis. It can complement some of the three proposed measures and thus strengthen the results of the findings and recommendations for improvements.

5. Report on consultations conducted with project partners during August 2021

In the course of 2021, the proposed testing measures were discussed with three project partners who contributed to the understanding of the task and the definition of testing measures of the action plans contained in this report.

Istria County - exchange of experiences and agreement on the development of the Action Plan and the possibility of the evaluation of the proposed measures.

DUNEA - as lead partner, helped to clarify the definition of the task. It was also clarified that the action plan is conducted as to strengthen the accessibility of cultural and natural heritage for the needs of sustainable tourism, especially in the cross-border area.

RERA - discussion held on testing measures that can be defined and applied for each policy area and on the expected results of the exercise.

University of Zadar – discussion and public presentation of the strategic framework and innovation relevant for smart action plans.