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European LEADER Congress 2024

From LEADER project to regional policy

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From LEADER Project to Regional Policy:

How can a LEADER project influence regional policy?

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From a project to a policy...

Genesis

- LEADER

Evolution

- Interreg MED 1
- Interreg MED 2

Expansion/ Specialization

- Erasmus +
- Interreg ADRION
- Interreg POCTEFA

Institutionalization

- CLLD/LEADER
- Interreg Euro-MED

Once upon a time...

GENESIS

In 2012-13, several mountainous areas around the Mediterranean Sea with rural characteristics, implementing LEADER programmes and facing common challenges in the field of tourism and environmental protection decided to develop common actions to test new solutions and to become more innovative in their policies.

Thus, they created the idea of the network of **Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains (EMM)**.

GENESIS

Created in October **2013** by actors from around Europe, *meeting* in **Canigó** (France) to share their ambitious network.

This informal network was launched under the initiative of three rural areas from **France, Greece and Bulgaria** working within the framework of local **LEADER** programmes (funded by European Agricultural Fund of Rural Development).



Drivers of Change

- Trend towards **environmentally-friendly tourism** and slow tourism.
- Social **demand** for visiting places differently, far away from crowd and standardized tourism.
- Increasing **pressure** to address and to fight negative consequences of coastal tourism.
- (Public) institutions** investing in and fostering this kind of tourism in the times of enormous challenges of ecological, social and economic nature.
- Local actors** being conscious of the trade-offs of standard tourism and wish alternative ways to develop (quality > quantity).

Once upon a time...

GENESIS

The message in the bottle was written....



Next step...

EVOLUTION

The initial partnership (LAGs and local acting institutions) was tested...

Four of them decided to take the next step-towards strategic interventions. Some withdrawn, some were not willing to apply sustainable solutions....

The partnership was expanded in 2015 with new mountains identified (5 LAGs-Interreg get familiarised with the term LAGs); sharing commons issues in relation to unbalanced tourist flow concentrations and confirming their will to propose a new positioning for their tourism development policy.

In 2015, they applied for an Interreg MED Cooperation Project for the 2016-2019 period.

What was different...

EVOLUTION

Key principles of Interreg MED

In the period 2014-2020, Interreg MED Programme promoted cooperation between a varied typology of actors of thirteen Mediterranean countries. The aim lied in optimizing **existing results** achieved in the previous period as well as facilitating **new cooperation frameworks** for all partners situated in the programme cooperation area.

What was different...

EVOLUTION

Accordingly, Interreg MED Programme established the following key cooperation principles aiming at consolidating the character of projects and their related activities:

- *Thematic concentration*
- *Result-orientation*
- *Transnationality*
- *Territorial relevance*
- *Sustainability*
- *Transferability*
- *Capitalization*

ONE AMBITION

To qualify emblematic Mediterranean mountains
as coastal destinations of excellence

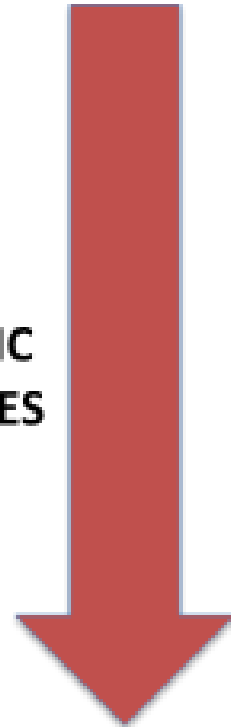
1 / To rebalance tourism flows and their returns
toward a more sustainable and responsible tourism

THREE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

2 / To co-build and experiment a slow tourism offer
located in the hinterland coastal mountainous area

3 / To improve the international recognition
of our singularity

EVOLUTION



The results allured strategic interest

EVOLUTION

In 2021, we were selected to transfer our knowledge within Interreg MED (dedicated call).

The partnership expanded in 2021 with four new mountains identified; to transfer them our output “Transferability guide for the implementation of an eco-itinerary”.

The Interreg MED programme provided the perfect framework for this new shared ambition and the successful outcome of the evaluation gave the opportunity to implement the EMbleMatic PLUS project.

Our core documents became policy instrument creators!!!

What came next?

EXPANSION- SPECIALISATION

The need to specialise:

- objectively
- geographically

led to several projects (labs) focusing in specific areas (i.e. Adriatic-Ionian, Spain-France) or on specific objectives/targets (i.e. youth, individuals of special care)

But all of them under the same EMBLEMATIC umbrella.....

What become a need ...

INSTITUTIONALIZATION

To test the criteria of becoming a member of the network
To test the tools
and more importantly
To create an official legal body...

Our evolution



LEADER: EMM project

2013-2015

- To preserve patrimonial values from endogenous and exogenous threats.
- To share positive experiences and good practices.
- To increase international recognition.

Interreg MED: Emblematic and Emblematic PLUS projects

2016-2019

2021-2022

- To create and test a new and radically different tourism offer based on the assets of the hinterland areas of the selected mountains that will be able to offer a sustainable and responsible tourism alternative to both sun & beach tourism and to the mountain summits.
- To test our transfer guide for the implementation of eco-itinerary for Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains as coastal destinations of excellence.

ERASMUS+: Y4EMM project

2020-2022

- To raise awareness of young people to make them aware of the natural and cultural diversity of their environment;
- To help young people to become drivers of change to better protect their environment and territory nowadays and in the future;

CLLD/LEADER: EMM2 project

2022-2025

- To test the criteria of becoming a member of the network, creating a formal network

IPA ADRION: PROMONT project

2024-2027

- To improve the quality of mountain biodiversity by protecting/preserving the fragile ecosystems of the mountains from the damages and threats of the human pressure, including massive-seasonal tourism

ERASMUS+: Low Carbon Tourism for Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains project

2024-2026

- To train on the green transition of remoted mountainous territories
- To train on carbon calculating



From local context to strategy...

Success is proved by the cooperation's evolution. Starting hesitantly with a small scheme, without knowing each other-but with the right guidance, could evolve to a continuous cooperation laboratory for areas, covering several aspects tourism, youth, entrepreneurship, environment, maximizing the effects at local level.

From local context to strategy...

Confronting cooperation as a short term target and objective is a usual mistake. You will not see the results easily and quickly, but the mid and long term returns are more alluring...

Cooperation could be difficult and sometimes risky to organize, but the returns for each involved area could be of great importance, depending of course on the level of participation and commitment of the local actors.

Map

www.emblematic-med.eu



Conclusions

- The tourism model promoted by EMbleMatiC projects (to visit hinterland areas between busy coastal areas and crowded mountain peaks) provides an alternative tourism product in non-saturated areas (confronting the health crisis) of affordable but quality elements (confronting the economic crisis).
- For the creation of this model the involvement of all stakeholders is a prerequisite; following a both side model, businesses-destination authorities-residents from supply side and visitors from the demand side.

Some final thoughts....

- ✓ Cooperation sometimes require intuition, based on experience and knowledge
- ✓ Cooperation is not about travelling to see, not to be a tourist but more to create and find what is needed for each area
- ✓ Cooperation is about creating bonds, within or outside of projects...



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LEADER logo text

Participation Supported by:

The framework of Measure 19 "Support for local development in the framework of LEADER (CLLD-local development under the leadership of the Community)", Sub-measure 19.4.

With the co-financing of Greece and of the European Union.



THE NETWORK EXPANSION



CHALLENGES FOR A SUSTAINABLE AND RESPONSIBLE OFFER

Apply 30
common
attributes to
each eco-
itinerary of
the Network

IN ORDER
TO

- Balance the tourist flow
- Extend the seasonality
- Increase access and extend stays
- Reduce the environmental impact
- Privilege local resources
- Increase the international visibility
- Preserve and protect the values of the territory
- Share good practices



WE SUFFER FROM A CONCENTRATED AND UNBALANCED TOURIST FLOW

Small island economies heavily rely on international tourism for their **economic growth**, but the **expansion of tourism** has **negative effects and impacts** on people and environment.

The same products available to tourists are available to the locals, with potential congestion and lack of efficiency, so it is important to **manage** the development, to avoid negative both social and environmental **impacts** and **effects**, like congestion, environmental pollution, hostility from residents, damage to the local heritage (monuments) etc.

THE TRANSFERING PROCESS

Functional preparatory webinars have been set up to provide partners with the starting tools for beginning the good practices transferring process.



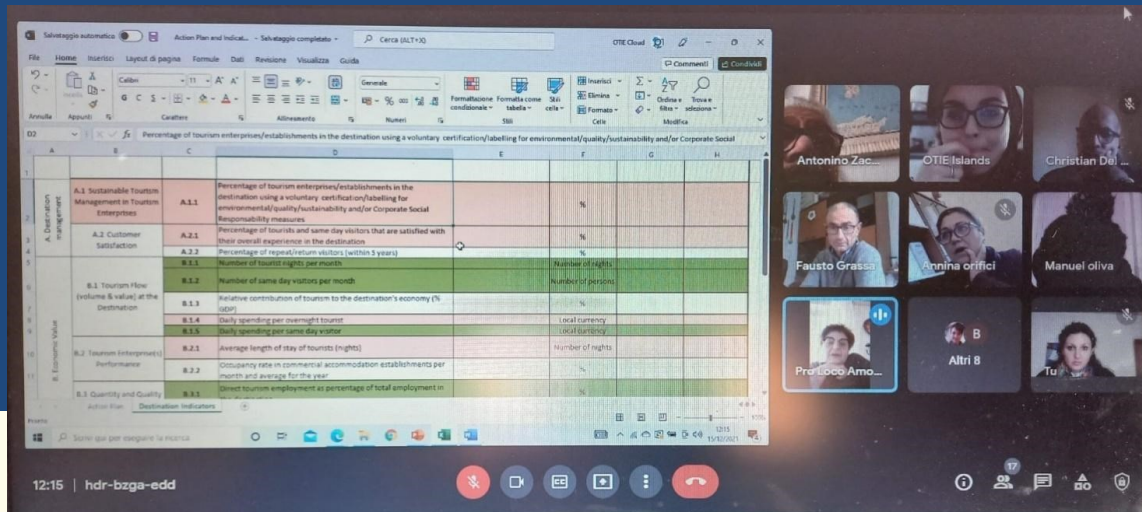
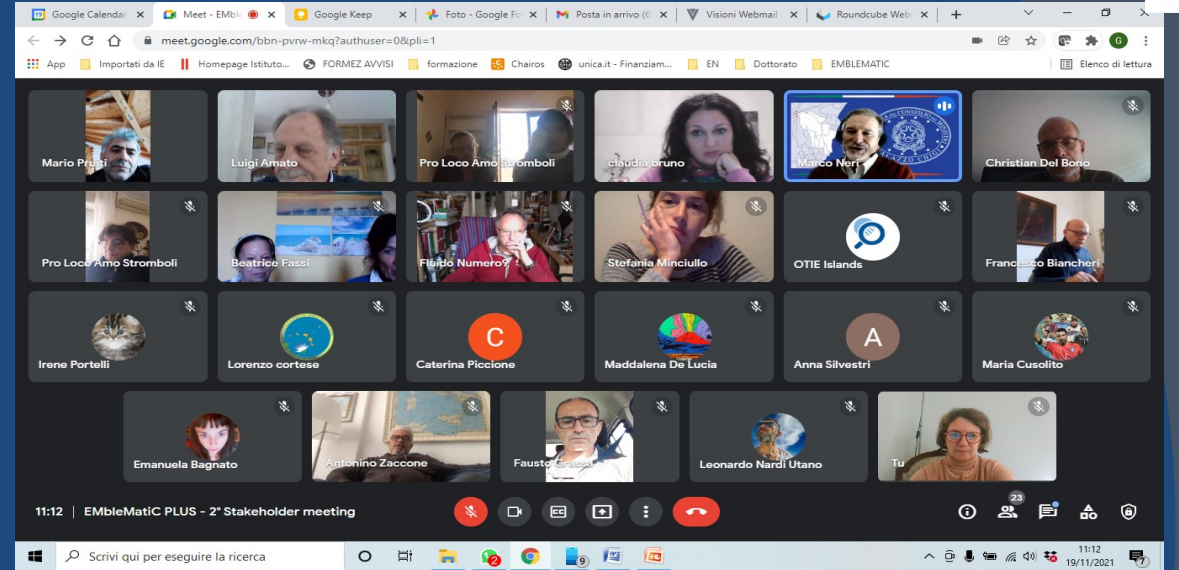
TNM1 CANIGO' - PEDRAFORCA

In October 2021, the first transnational meeting took place in the mountains of Canigo' (France) and Pedraforca (Spain) with the aim of seeing first-hand already existing itineraries that reflected the criteria and attributes required by the project and starting to lay the foundations for the creation of our eco-itinerary.



STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Later on, a series of meetings were organized in each territory with local, public and private actors, to whom the criteria and attributes necessary for the creation of sustainable itineraries were explained. All together we started thinking of some routes that reflected the above mentioned criteria and attributes.



ON SITE ASSESSMENT VISIT STROMBOLI

Once the routes had been created, they were "tested" by the GIVERS partners who were able to verify whether or not the itineraries corresponded to the required sustainability standards on site, and provided feedback on the aspects to be implemented and improved.



FINAL CONFERENCE

In June 2022,
during the final
conference held in
Litochoro
(Greece), all the
countries involved
presented their
itineraries.



NEW STRATEGY: CHANGING VISION

- new ways of interpreting the tourism phenomenon
- travelers are now seeking **more authenticity** and a genuine experience with local communities;
- the present-day tourism industry steers for a customized product and greater participation of the tourist in the design of the activities to be performed in the place of destination;
- **relations** between hosts and guests are part of EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM focused on human relationships rather than on travel industry services;
- tourists are looking for a **human-scale tourism**, clearly based on territorial, cultural and environmental constraints that include travel formats such as rural tourism, cultural tourism, farm tourism, outdoor activity tourism and many new ways.



LOCAL PEOPLE INVOLVEMENT

- People living in small communities, such as islands, are becoming part of the **motivating factors** of travel and the hosting community is more engaged in the travel experience;
- the community participation is crucial. Local population shares and accepts both the benefits and the costs derived from the development of tourism activities in its territory;
- sustainable tourism implies a direct relationship with the territory and it is referred to a “territorial” or “local” tourism, directly related to local “identity”, looking for something that you cannot find or reproduce in other locations. This “**local identity**” is one of the main elements to attract tourist flows.



SHARING EXPERIENCES

Experiential tourism is a tourism of encounter and sharing, where the tourist experience consists of fostering customized contact of tourists with the local hosting community by making tourists participate in the tasks, customs and way of life of the local community.

The aim is discovering a territory and sharing its “**culture**”. Relational tourism implies a direct relationship with the territory.

The reception of tourists (**sociability**) by the hosting community, the care for them and the empathy towards them has an impact on the tourism trend in that place.

This kind of tourism entails that tourist accommodation and restaurant services are mostly performed by **local enterprises**, prevalently family-run enterprises or individual firms, mainly based in the area.



OUTPUT: THE FIRE ROUTES



Three itineraries:

The **green route** is a natural path that crosses the sides of the volcano reaching an altitude of approximately 250 m.

The **brown route** is a tour of the villages including historic places, Aeolian architecture, local handicraft and food and wine tasting.

The **blue route** starts reaching Ginostra by boat. The itinerary follows a circular route offering visitors a great variety of landscapes both natural and cultural, reaching a panoramic point overlooking the Sciara del Fuoco and the active craters of the volcano.

- being a human-scale tourism, travel services **depend** heavily on both the **benefits** offered and also on the **interaction** with the context
- depending on the local culture and customs, Sustainable Tourism needs also **shared infrastructure and equipment**
- Sustainable tourism implies a rather accurate **environmental protection and management**
- the impact of the tourism will directly depend on the **intensity of tourist demand** and the consumption capacity and, indirectly, on the **production structure** of the interested local economy
- understanding the **customer's taste and requirements**, first, and then satisfying them, taking into account the fact that, like any other consumer, the tourist wants to **maximize** his profits or benefits, both in terms of price and general quality of the tourist service



OPPORTUNITIES

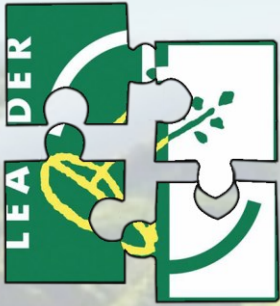
- driving effect of tourism on the local **labor market** through the creation of jobs and employment opportunities
- creation and development of small and medium-sized enterprises
- **local development** based on local resource and business oriented towards a long term growth



CONCLUSIONS

- The advantages of sustainable tourism are linked to less pollution and the preservation of ecosystems, biodiversity and natural resources, as well as respect for local cultures and the support of green, fair and supportive tourism development.
- The creation of nature-positive tourism has to meet the challenges of being able to fulfill a universal right to tourism within environmental and social limits according to principles of social justice and equity.
- The fulfillment of this last challenge will permit a sustainable future for tourists and those whose lives are economically dependent on the sector while ensuring ecosystem and biodiversity conservation, preserving a unique cultural and natural heritage.





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Conversation with the panel and Q&A

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Thank you!

Contact Us

For further information and detail



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