



NECSTouR

European Regions for
Competitive and Sustainable Tourism



NECSTouR

Activity **REPORT** 2021



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2021 In Review



"Dear NECSTouR Members,

This year as the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic continued to be seen throughout Europe, we continued to work to support the Tourism sector and its stakeholders and to help empower our member Regions to strive for more positive, sustainable and competitive tourism as we work together to recover from the crisis.

Our General Assembly gathered three times during the year and approved a new model of Governance that will lead the future of our network for the years to come.

Throughout this year, NECSTouR has achieved key objectives in our renewed joint mission:

1. Advocated for channelling the EU Recovery and **broader EU funds** to co-finance a sustainable and resilient tourism recovery.
2. Contributed to the EU Commission's policy report "**Tourism Transition Pathways**".
3. Embedded the **Tourism of Tomorrow Lab** business model into the NECSTouR core activity.
4. **Raised a budget of 3€M** through the European Parliament for the European Commission to invest in destinations' tourism intelligence through capacity building in the field of measurement.
5. Positioned the NECSTouR-ToT Lab in the process of building the **European Tourism Data Space**.
6. Co-created "**Better Places to Live Better Places to Visit**" good practices catalogue.
7. Declared the climate emergency, **signed the Glasgow Declaration "Climate Action in Tourism"** and committed to publish our organisation's climate action plan before the end of 2022.
8. Gathered in **General Assembly face-to-face** for the first time since 2019 in Alpbach, Tirol, ran the elections to the Executive Committee 2021-2024 and delivered our yearly conference.
9. Formalised cooperation with two key players: The **European Travel Commission** and The **Travel Foundation**.
10. Revised the association's **statutes and internal rules**.

This represents the best legacy we can expect for the next years to come, to fully embrace our potential as the network which puts European sustainable tourism policies into action in the territory. "

Manuel Alejandro CARDENETE,
President of NECSTouR, Andalusia Region



Governance

On **22nd September in Alpbach, Tirol**, after a six-year mandate of the Catalonia Presidency, our General Assembly **elected a new Board of Directors**. Andalusia Region was elected to President over the network until March 2023, when leadership will be assumed by Flanders.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2021-2024

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.

02

NEW MEMBERS

In 2021 we welcomed **5 new members** to the NECSTouR network:



14

/20 TOP-EU TOURISM
REGIONS



1

SINGLE VOICE



39

MEMBER REGIONS



Advocacy

NECSTouR ensured the “Tourism” dialogue territory-EU-Industry by maintaining regular contact with the **European Commission DGs GROW, REGIO and REFORM**, which oversee the new instrument **Recovery and Resilience Facility*** within the Next Generation EU package, the European Parliament Tourism and Transport Committee and the European Committee of the Regions.

NECSTouR’s main message has been the urgent need and reasons for making tourism much more accessible in the European funding instruments.

This includes **an exchange of views** with the **Director-General of DG GROW Kerstin Jorna** and newly appointed **Director of Tourism and Proximity Valentina Superti** in Spring 2021.

To this end, we teamed up with the European Tourism Manifesto Alliance and delivered the joint paper *Call for action: Accelerate social and economic recovery by investing in Sustainable Tourism Development*. This called on EU Member States to **make tourism a strategic element** in their national recovery plans and presented a non-exhaustive list of **reforms and investment ideas** related to travel and tourism that would contribute to the drafting of **national recovery and resilience plans**.

NECSTouR has also been mobilising Regions on the urgent need and reasons for including **tourism** in the **national recovery plans, regional operational programmes and Smart Specialisation Strategies** in a way that the tourism-related reforms necessary to deliver the greening and digital

transition are possible. In the framework of the Sustainable Tourism Community project, where NECSTouR leads the capitalisation activities, we recruited the piece of research *“How to use EU funding for sustainable tourism. Handbook for local and regional authorities and tourism stakeholders in the Mediterranean”*. Its **examples and recommendations** will be ready in Autumn 2022 to be capitalised to all European Regions.

To help members in **maximising opportunities** through the ongoing and new transnational programmes, NECSTouR organised a range of informative sessions on: COSME, HORIZON EU and I3 (Interregional Innovation Instrument).

NECSTouR is also **active in the regular meetings** of the informal network *“EU COVID-19 and tourism”* and holds the **vice-chair role** of the **European Tourism Manifesto Alliance**.

OUTCOMES



- **6 Policy papers** released with the European Tourism Manifesto Alliance and/or other strategic EU tourism stakeholder networks.



- **118 Policy briefings** about the European response to stimulate the European recovery were shared among the members via our knowledge hub.



- **Events** organised:
 - 12 February, online - NECSTouR Workshop “Recovery and Resilience Facility and the Cohesion Policy Funds”
 - 25 March, online - NECSTouR Workshop “Horizon Europe Opportunities for Tourism Innovation”

*The Recovery and Resilience Facility is a temporary recovery instrument. It allows the Commission to raise funds to help Member States implement reforms and investments that are in line with the EU’s priorities and that address the challenges identified in country-specific recommendations under the European Semester framework of economic and social policy coordination. It makes €723.8 billion (in current prices) in loans (€385.8 billion) and grants (€338 billion) available for this purpose.



Positioning

NECSTouR raised the voice of Regions in the following key European tourism events:

- **23 February** - NECSTouR spoke at the ETOA the seminar "Towards a sustainable Tourism Recovery"
- **13 April**, Online - Intervention by the Director of NECSTouR at the Workshop "Creating Destinations after a Global Pandemic: The new Competitive Advantage of Remote Areas".
- **5-7 May** - Participation of two members of NECSTouR in "Debate on the Recovery in the Tourism, Hotel and Catering Sector at the EU CoR", in the framework of the CoR 144th plenary session
- **18 May**, Online - Intervention by the President of NECSTouR at the "22nd European Region of Gastronomy Platform - 8th Annual IGCAT Experts Meeting".
- **6 July** - NECSTouR Director moderated one of the sessions in "Smart Specialisation for Blue Economy Workshop"
- **16 September**, Online - President intervention at the A World For Travel - Évora Forum 2021. NECSTouR was Partner of the event.
- **28 September**, Online - NECSTouR President intervention at Innovating Cultural Heritage, A workshop by AER Working Group on Culture and CUBES Project
- **29 September**, Online - NECSTouR Director intervention at the International Seminar on the Post-Covid Scenario.
- **11-14 October**, Online - President Intervention at the Debate "Peripheral island regions' challenges in the post-COVID-19 recovery" in the framework of the European Week of Regions and Cities 2021.
- **20-23 October**, Athens - NECSTouR Vice-President part of the jury for the ECTN Awards 2021 14th Conference for Cultural Tourism in Europe.
- **22 October** - Members presented and President opened the Webinar "Tourism Transition Pathway - the role of regions"
- **16 November**, Online - NECSTouR President intervened at the "European Tourism Forum 2021"

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RAISING THE NECSTOUR VOICE



- This year our common voice was reinforced by **5 new full** members (*see Governance section*)



- We now have **14 NECSTouR member Regions** in the **Top-20 EU Tourism Regions**



- **6383 followers** on social media



- **+5k visits** to our website



- **1460 readers** of our newsletter



Knowledge

NECSTouR members have access to our **regularly updated knowledge hub** where we collect and transfer the Community's **collaborative knowledge** to inspire, learn, share **good practices** and provide **solutions for common challenges**. This knowledge hub includes **briefings, articles, updated content, info sessions**, and **thematic knowledge moments** which help members to shape and implement (recovery) strategies and build project ideas. These thematic exchange moments are on the themes that are of interest to NECSTouR:

- Smart Specialisation Strategies: tourism innovation and digitalisation
- EU tourism policies

In 2021 we organised a range of **thematic knowledge moments**, notably the **NECSTouR Annual General Meeting (AGM)** from 21-24 September in Tirol, Austria, and within this framework the **NECSTouR Thematic Conference "Building a Better Recovery Towards the Tourism of Tomorrow: Public-Private-Citizens Partnerships"**, which took place on 23 September.



OTHER THEMATIC KNOWLEDGE MOMENTS IN 2021 INCLUDE:

- **9-10 February**, Online – NECSTouR members presented Good Practices at the "Star Cities Webinar on River Tourism Governance and Management"
- **2 March**, Online – NECSTouR hosted the Webinar "CHARMING Villages: empowering the rural destinations of Europe"
- **3 June**, Online – NECSTouR introduced and moderated the "EU Green Week Partner Event: Sustainable Tourism solutions to reduce pollution in the Mediterranean area"

OUTCOMES:



- **Support on our knowledge hub** from 29 Academic and Associate members.
- **14 knowledge exchange moments** - conferences, workshops, webinars where we contribute to members capacity building – were organised
- **28 good practices** related to our drivers - "Smart", "Socio Cultural" "Safety", "Skills", "Statistics" – were gathered and shared among the members and the European Tourism institutions and stakeholders.
- **52 newsletters** released with tailored information about inspiration from NECSTouR and its members, the response from the European Institutions and other Tourism stakeholders to stimulate Tourism Recovery, Project opportunities and updates, next steps...



Strategic Actions: Barcelona Declaration



NECSTouR keeps **gathering good practices** in the implementation of the Barcelona Declaration principles via actions through the **knowledge hub** and **thematic exchanges**:

On **1 July 2021** NECSTouR organised an enriching online exchange between members titled Session *"Better Places to Live, Better Places to Visit": From the Declaration to the Action* to discuss how residents are participating in the **tourism policies, initiatives and products/experiences**.

NECSTouR worked in a consortium which submitted the concept of Better Places in reply to the "cluster 2" of the Horizon Europe programme.

EVENTS:

- **20-21 April**, Online - NECSTouR Speaker at the "Star Cities Webinar on Environment & Sustainability".

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Catalogue: Transferring the principles of the "Better Places to Live, Better Places to Visit" Declaration into action

Travel to Tomorrow	Responsible Marketing	Community involvement	Participation process for tourism	Strategic Plan for Sustainable Tourism	Resident involvement	Involving Communities
 <p>"Our starting point for formulating this vision for the future is our belief in the positive power of tourism. We need to strengthen this power to bring balance to destinations in Flanders can flourish."</p> <p>When thinking about the future, a governmental organisation such as VISITFLANDERS doesn't start with a blank slate, but it does take a different attitude. Our future vision of the tourism sector has been developed with an open-minded attitude. It's based on a deep, co-creative process with dozens of participants from the public and private sector, from Flanders and abroad.</p> <p>Here you can find our memorandum Travel to tomorrow: Recommendations for tourism policy 2019-2024</p> <p>Stepping up Sustainability</p>	 <p>Finland is in the process of developing a digital tool for responsible marketing.</p> <p>During covid it was noticed that the tourism companies are actually very much involved in local community activities BUT didn't realize that they can use this in positive marketing. Also the digital marketing of responsible actions on the homepages/social media was mostly lacking. So now we are in the process of developing a tool for stakeholders to evaluate their digital responsible marketing, plan activities to improve it and implement follow the activities.</p> <p>Catalonia National Deal for Responsible Tourism</p>	 <p>Local destination example from Jokkmokk in Swedish Lapland: 1) a smart specialization process, mapping and highlighting potentials (for tourism); a 'road show' dialogue process with 200 entrepreneurs/citizens 2) a specific survey, with completing interviews, directed to local community members only, approx. 150 respondents - focus on perceived 'value' from tourism, challenges for community members side, considerations on tourism growth in the destination, ideas for collaborative processes etc. (VERY positive response!) 3) focusing on regenerative tourism (small-scale, eco-inature - cultural tourism) and on culturally sensitive tourism (no cultural appropriation, i.e. respecting the Sami community)</p> <p>The Galicia Tourism voucher</p>	 <p>The German-speaking Community of Belgium will start in autumn a challenging participation process for the elaboration of our new Regional Development Concept 2024-2040, COMBINED with the elaboration of a mission statement for spatial planning with a focus on building culture. Actions will be developed with stakeholders; the draft will be discussed with the inhabitants in the municipalities. All actions will be assigned the SDGs. Concrete results: Government programme, legislation on spatial planning AND a guiding vision for tourism.</p> <p>Resident's satisfaction</p>	 <p>Andalucía has developed the Regional Strategic Plan for Sustainable Tourism 2021-2027 allocating around 95 million euros to a strategic line which is Management of Global Sustainability for Andalucía with the following specific lines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social, environmental, economic sustainability - Territorial cohesion - Management of more sustainable tourism local space <p>The Barcelona Declaration has been literally introduced in the text to support the behavioral change of the destinations in making more sustainable destinations, communities and businesses.</p> <p>The region has developed a new project "Origins Tourism" which goal is to boost the culture, the artistic and the creative production in rural areas while boost the economic life of those areas.</p>	 <p>The Region of Liguria is involved in two EU projects which focus on the involvement of the residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interreg Maritime: INTENSE: http://interreg-maritime.eu/web/Intense - Interreg Alcotra: MITO https://www.interreg-alcotra.eu/fr/decouvrir-alcotra/les-projets-finances/mito-modeles-integres-pour-le-tourisme-outdoor-dans-le-space <p>Region has developed a Pact for the strategic development of tourism in which park authorities and municipalities can participate. Involves the provision data on events, the local heritage for the MIA Liguria website, membership of Wi-Fi in Liguria, management of tourism information offices.</p>	 <p>Visit Scotland key activity involves communities and ensuring community voices are heard to create Better Places to Live and Visit Scotland.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities and tourism recovery - virtual restart sessions with industry and stakeholders: In April 2021 began a programme of online sessions with local community development groups and other key partners. The purpose is to listen, share, facilitate conversation around the rest of tourism: what kind of tourism we want, don't want, how we recover more responsibly and sustainably, and in a way that prioritises the voice of local communities • Research - launched a survey capture resident / community perspectives on tourism - benefits, impacts, concerns, etc. This will be fed into the strategic delivery across departments • Communications campaign



Strategic Actions: Tourism of Tomorrow Lab



In 2021 partners of the Tourism of Tomorrow Lab project **developed and finalised the business plan** thanks to the technical assistance programme “TAF” granted by the European Commission. It was concluded that the best solution was **to embed the Lab as a department of NECSTouR**.

As Belgian law required a revision of the statutes and internal rules of all non-for-profit organisations based in the country, NECSTouR seized the opportunity to include all the necessary prerogatives to legally host the Tourism of Tomorrow Lab as **part of the network’s activities**. This culminated in the **launch of the Tourism of Tomorrow Lab as the first centre of tourism data excellence**.

TO THIS END:



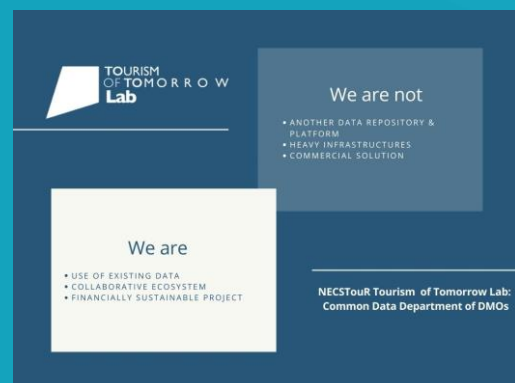
• The **legal and financial** settings were carried out,



• The **7 expected “premium partners”** committed to join the ToT Lab



• The **first data scientist** was recruited



ToT Lab: Freemium-based Services

	Basic (for all the NECSTouR Members)	Premium (ToT Lab Premium Fee)
 Market Trends	✓	✓
 Observatory	✓	✓
 Newsletter	✓	✓
 Workshops		✓
 Consulting Services		✓
 Connect to Lab		✓
	4.000€ (the NECSTouR Membership Fee)	+ 20.000€



Strategic Actions: NECSTouR Climate Action



As part of our recognition for **the urgent need to address climate change**, on 14 July NECSTouR signed up to *"Tourism Declares"*, an initiative that supports tourism destinations, organisations and businesses by **declaring a climate emergency** and taking action to **reduce carbon emissions**.

NECSTouR also became a **launching partner** of the *"Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism"*, a global initiative launched at COP26 to which tourism stakeholders can now become signatories, committing to **cutting tourism emissions by at least half over the next decade and reaching net zero as soon as possible** before 2050.



Additionally in 2021 **we set up a working group** for this strategic action and formed a cooperation with the

Travel Foundation, an independent charity that works with tourism companies and organisations to unlock the positive potential of tourism.



EVENTS:

- **16 June**, Online – NECSTouR organised the Workshop: UNWTO initiatives tackling the "Greening" transition of destinations
- **23 September**, Tirol - NECSTouR Thematic Conference "Building a Better Recovery Towards the Tourism of Tomorrow: Public-Private-Citizens Partnerships"
- **11-14 October**, Online - President Intervention at the Debate "Peripheral island regions' challenges in the post-COVID-19 recovery" in the framework of the European Week of Regions and Cities 2021.
- **4 November**, Online – NECSTouR organised the webinar Catalysing A Decade of Climate Action in Global Travel and Tourism
- **24 November**, Online – The Permanent Secretariat attended the Interreg Europe 2021-2027 Launch Event
- **26 November**, Online – NECSTouR organised the Star Cities European Conference on Sustainable Tourism Management for Riverside Cities



NECSTouR Projects

NECSTouR Project Hub on Tourism provided a range of services (project acquisition and project engineering) offered to our members to apply and manage multiple European projects.

For most of the year, NECSTouR have been working with Spatial Foresight on a **study for DG REGIO on Regional impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on the tourism sector**. This is available.

In the framework of Interreg MED Sustainable Tourism community, NECSTouR has started to produce a **Handbook on how to use EU Recovery Funds and ERDF Regional Funds for the Sustainability of tourism in the Mediterranean**. 2022 will be a crucial year with multiple Interreg programmes releasing calls for the new programming period, following the adoption of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027.

This year, NECSTouR was selected for one project under the European programme for small and medium-sized enterprises (COSME): **Euro-EMOTOUR**. In the same programme, NECSTouR expressed its support to **TOURBIT**, led by Sandra de Puig of the Catalan Tourism Board. The project **DARE**, proposed under HORIZON EUROPE, was not selected but the work done will be used for a new Interreg North-West Europe proposal in 2022.

OUTCOMES



- **4 joint partnerships** were built by NECSTouR and its members in reply to EU funded calls for projects with 2 of these successfully awarded, keeping

the NECSTouR overall success rate at 50 percent in 2021.

- **50 opportunities** in the field of EU Funded projects were shared through our weekly newsletters



PROJECT EVENTS

- **9-10 February**, Online – “Star Cities Webinar on River Tourism Governance and Management” (Interreg Star Cities Project)
- **20-21 April**, Online - “Star Cities Webinar on Environment & Sustainability”
- **9-10 June**, Online - Herit-Data “Innovative solutions to better manage tourism flows impact on cultural and natural heritage sites through technologies and big data” (Interreg Med Herit-Data Project)
- **12 July**, Online, Build Value Through Sustainable Tourism (Interreg Med Sustainable Tourism Community Project)
- **9 December**, Online, Back to Sustainable mobility in times of COVID 19 Strategies for tourist destinations and small islands (Civitas Destinations Project)



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