



NECSTouR

European Regions for
Competitive and Sustainable Tourism

ACTIVITY REPORT

2023

Activity report

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2023

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Foreword



Officially designated by the European Commission as the ‘European Year of Skills,’ 2023 has been characterised by the tourism sector’s adaptation to the transforming effects of the COVID-19 outbreak, the energy crisis, and the climate emergency. These three challenges have, once more, underlined the priority of shifting to more sustainable tourism models while, at the same time, upskilling and reskilling the current tourism workforce to restore and realise its full potential. At NECSTouR, we have worked throughout the year to empower destination leaders to deliver sustainability through collective knowledge development, capitalise on our Tourism of Tomorrow Lab and foster interregional collaboration:

- ◊ We kicked off the NECSTouR 2030 Pathway in Paris. Based on the EU Tourism Transition Pathway (TTP), this new strategy will allow the NECSTouR community to set actionable targets to achieve by 2030, focusing on climate action, the systemic measurement of data and regenerative tourism governance.
- ◊ We continued to grow our knowledge and data lab, the Tourism of Tomorrow Lab, incorporating two new premium members and adding value to NECSTouR members through the different consultancy projects and workshops.
- ◊ We launched the Sustainability Task Force as part of NECSTouR’s Climate Action Plan to continue working on our commitment to the Glasgow Declaration.
- ◊ We delivered the final learnings of the project DATES – European Data Space for Tourism.
- ◊ We were awarded the new D3HUB (Data-Driven-Destinations) project to design, test and pave the way for a new self-sustainable European Competence Data Centre.
- ◊ We welcomed 11 new members to the community.

As April marked the beginning of the Visit Flanders presidency, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the former President, now Vice-President of NECSTouR, Yolanda de Aguilar Rosell, Tourism General Secretary from the Andalusia Region, for their work and commitment during their presidency, as well as the rest of the NECSTouR Board of Directors and members for their continued support and assistance in delivering the NECSTouR 2030 Pathway. I am confident we will continue to grow as a community and make good progress in advancing the sustainable future of tourism.



Network

In 2023, we were thrilled to welcome **six new Full Members** and **five new Associated Members**.

NEW FULL MEMBERS



NEW ASSOCIATED MEMBERS



The regions of Tirol, Gabrovo and the municipality of Torroella-l'Estartit, withdraw from the network.



Board of directors

The Board of Directors was elected by the General Assembly in 2022 in Alpbach, Tirol, and, as agreed by the BoD members, the president of NECSTouR Yolanda de Aguilar, Tourism General Secretary from the Andalusia Region, handed over the presidency after one year and a half to Peter De Wilde, CEO of Visit Flanders, in April 2023 to lead the network for the rest of this mandate.



Peter De Wilde
Visit Flanders President



Yolanda de Aguilar
Andalusia Region
Executive Vice-President



Patrick Torrent
Catalonia Region Vice-President

REGIONE
TOSCANA



Leonardo Marras
Tuscany Region Vice-President



Françoise Guaspere
Île-de-France Region
Vice-President



Västra Götaland Region
Member of the BoD



G CONSELLERIA
O TURISME, CULTURA
I ESPORTS
B

AETIB
AGÈNCIA D'ESTRATÈGIA
TURÍSTICA ILLES BALEARS

Pedro Juan Planas
Balearic Islands Region
Member of the BoD



Thomas Andersen
Danish Western Coast
Partnership Member of the
BoD



José Manuel Merelles
Galicia Region Member
of the BoD



Lee McDonald
Visit Scotland Member of
the BoD



Any Niewierrra
Limburg Member of the
BoD

The Team

NECSTouR's Permanent Secretariat is based in Brussels.



Cristina Nuñez Cuesta
Managing Director



Tomaso Comazzi
*Head of Membership
& Finance*



Irene Paolinelli
*Marketing & Communications
Manager*



Oyana Marius
*Policy & Projects
Officer*



Justine Bauters
*Projects & Sustainability
Officer*



Thanks to the generous contribution of our members, the NECSTouR Permanent Secretariat has been reinforced by experts from Visit Flanders and Andalusia. In addition, to fill the Marketing and Communications position, the Catalan Tourist Board seconded Clara Morales Llobet to work full-time with the Permanent Secretariat.



Jan Korthoudt
*Tourism Advisor
Visit Flanders*



Marina Delgado
*Head of Tourism Quality and
Innovation Service Andalucía Region*



CARSA

CARSA
*EU Project Unit
Andalucía*



Nathalie Mertens
*Tourism Advisor
Visit Flanders*



Clara Morales Llobet
*Communications Assistant
Catalan Tourist Board*



The Tourism of Tomorrow Lab Team

The Tourism of Tomorrow Lab department is in charge of acting on the network's commitment to becoming a data-driven organization by supporting regional destination managers in delivering effective decision-making based on the systematic sound measurement of tourism to keep leading the transition to sustainable tourism.



José Luis Córdoba Leiva
Project Manager



Ana Moniche Bermejo
Senior Data Analyst

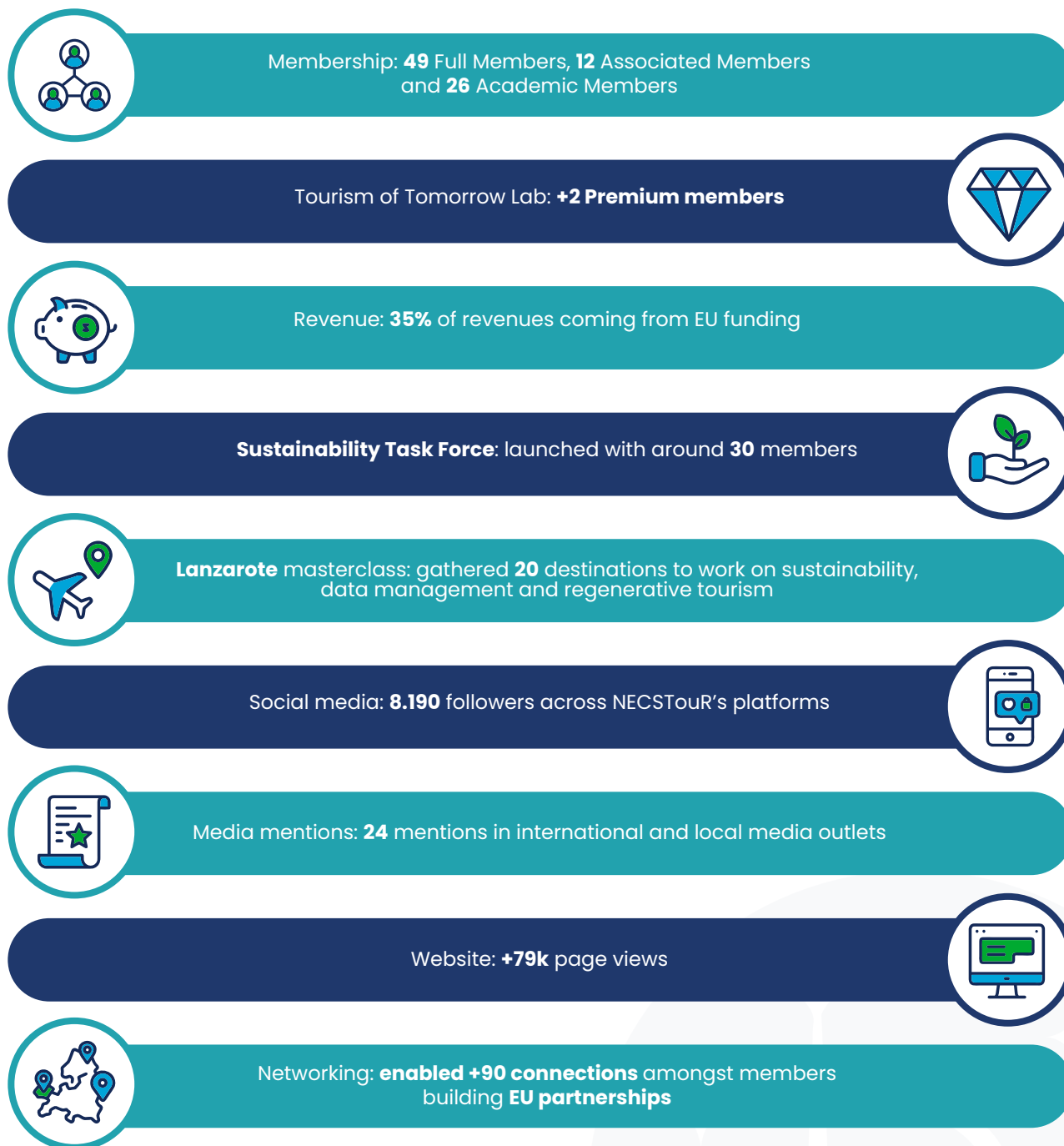


Daniel Iglesias González
Data Scientist



2023 in review

We believe that great achievements can only be made possible as the result of the interaction of the whole team: our members, the Permanent Secretariat, the Tourism of Tomorrow Lab team, our seconded staff, and our experts.



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NECSTouR Pathway 2023

NECSTouR Strategy **11**

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NECSTouR Strategy

NECSTouR has committed to developing a new strategic framework that addresses the current challenges and needs of European regions. The strategy will build upon strong existing components of the current strategy, enriched with the EU Tourism Transition Pathways, the Glasgow Declaration, the Tourism of Tomorrow Lab and recommendations of scientific reports underlining the need for tourism climate action. By doing so, NECSTouR aims to contribute to a higher purpose, ensuring the value, complementarity, and funding of its work. NECSTouR aims to gather the regions' pathways into a collaborative one that represents a unified voice of the network and accelerates delivery.

Because aligning regional and European tourism agendas is the network's priority in our sustainability journey towards 2030, after having submitted the NECSTouR pledge to the **European Tourism Transition Pathway** formally validated by the General Assembly in May 2022, and delivered the promised 12 actions through the annual programme 2022, the network brought its commitment one step further.

Indeed, the General Assembly gathered in June in Paris, under the auspices of the Île-de-France Region, and devoted a range of workshops, led by the NECSTouR partners The Travel Foundation and the University of Surrey, to transform the NECSTouR pledge into targets at the core of the network's new 2030 strategic framework.

The exercise concluded with 10 commitments for both the NECSTouR members and the whole network in the topics: Sustainable mobility; Green transition of tourism companies and SMEs; R&I and pilots on circular and climate-friendly tourism; Collaborative local destination governance; Pact for skills in tourism; Improving statistics and indicators for tourism; Comprehensive tourism strategies development or update; Data-driven tourism services; Support for digitalisation of tourism SMEs and destinations; Tourism services for visitors and residents alike.

Over the summer and fall, the NECSTouR contractor and partner The Travel Foundation carried out a deep consultation exercise, including workshops, focus groups, and desk research, involving all the members. Meanwhile 18 NECSTouR members submitted their pledge, and the network is represented in the European Commission initiative T4T expert groups: Resilience, Skills and Inclusion.

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The Tourism of Tomorrow Lab in 2023

The Tourism of Tomorrow knowledge Lab has been delivering value since its official launch in January 2022 until today thanks to Andalusia's leadership and investment in HR. 2023 highlights are:

1

Loyal Premium: Andalusia, Valencia, Navarra, Catalonia, Basque Country and Lapland.

2

New Premium: Flanders and Emilia Romagna. Several NECSTouR Regions are seriously exploring joining the ToT Lab in 2024.

3

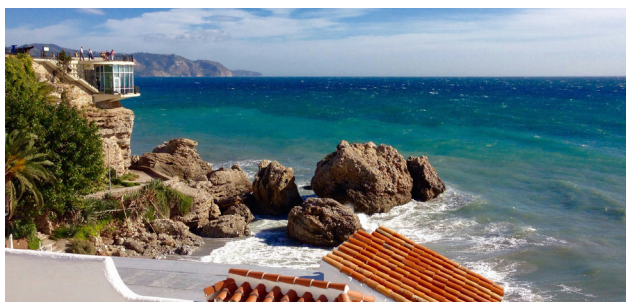
European positioning and successfully delivering the project DATES - European Data Space for Tourism.

4

Project D3HUB won: The European Tourism Data Competence Centre.

5

In transition from personalised DMO's projects to integrated collaborative projects, in synergy with EU projects and involving broadly the network.





CONSULTANCY PROJECTS 2023

- **TSI:** first integrated project involving several ToT Lab premium members (Navarra, Catalonia, Valencia and Andalusia) to develop a methodology to create a framework of sustainable indicators at a regional level to measure and benchmark between ToT Lab regions. It will be incorporated in the future in different initiatives like the ToT Lab, D3HUB or the ETDS deployment.
- **USE OF NON-OFFICIAL DATA SOURCES TO MEASURE AND ANALYSE SUSTAINABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY:** study the sustainability measures implemented by accommodations in destinations in OTAS (Booking.com) for the Basque Country region and Visit Flanders, the tourism activities offered in online platforms (Viator.com, Booking.com, Getyourguide.com) for Catalonia.
- **REUSE OF DESTINATION INTERNAL AND TRANSNATIONAL DATA SOURCES:** using already existing data to manage the tourist flows in natural protected areas in Navarra by gathering and analyzing information about reservations. The project is highly scalable and transferable.
- **TOURDATA X WITHIN THE GAIAX PROJECT INITIATIVE IN SPAIN:** a collaborative project led by Andalusia to create a Lighthouse project.
- **DESTINATION'S DIGITAL TWIN:** this Emilia-Romagna project aims at identifying, selecting and analysing the most relevant data sources to model a destination so that different forecasts can be done

EVENTS AND POSITIONING

■ **SHORT-TERM RENTALS:** The Missing Puzzle Piece For Sustainable Tourism

- ◇ The NECSTouR and AirDNA organised webinar shed light on the short-term rentals phenomenon by looking at the evolution and characteristics of short-term rental inventory through the occupancy rates, revenue, average stay duration, and a range of other trends through comparative analysis across regions to provide a roadmap to best practices and strategies for promoting social, economic, and environmental sustainability within the market and the wider scope of the tourism industry.

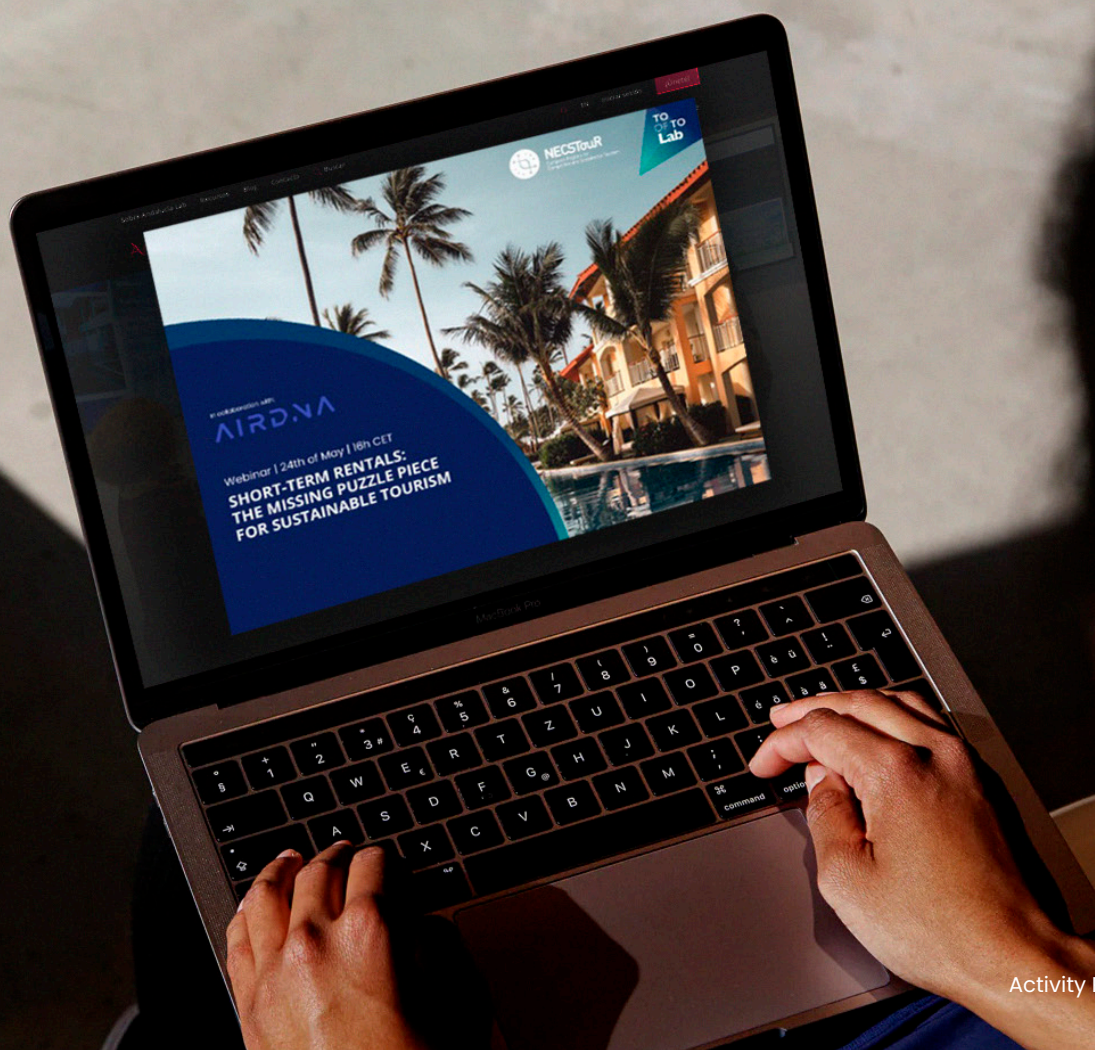
■ **MYT SUMMIT:** Talent and data in tourism: Present the insights and results of Valencia 2022 project on “How to attract tech talent to the tourism sector”

■ **AIR PROJECT:** Invited to participate in a dissemination event and pPresent the insights and results of Navarra’s project on “optimization of tourist flows in protected areas: Urederra use case”

■ **PROJECT LEADS:** Share the ToT Lab knowledge about the supply and demand for Advanced Digital Skills focused on the tourism sector in the context of the LEADS CSA project

■ **DATES WORKSHOP**

■ **TOURISM INNOVATION SUMMIT 2023 SEVILLE:** ToTLab participated in different events and presentations held during the TIS 2023.



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Empowering Destinations' Leaders in Delivering Sustainability

Capacity Building and Capitalising Good Practices **16**

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EU Projects HUB **20**

Capacity building and capitalising good practices

This was the knowledge programme of 2023 in the year of skills consisting of workshops in the following areas:



SUSTAINABILITY



DATA MANAGEMENT



REGENERATIVE TOURISM

The journey kicks off in Lanzarote with a partnership of excellence.

20 Destinations from all over Europe teaming up to reduce seasonality and accelerate climate action in tourism, with experts from ToT Lab, Travel Foundation, University of Surrey, Breda University of Applied Sciences, Travel Tomorrow, in the unique Lanzarote, a destination which has sustainability in its DNA. We are grateful to the Turismo de Lanzarote for offering this unique learning experience and knowledge shared....



What we have learnt:

- HOW TO **DESIGN** SUSTAINABLE TOURISM **EXPERIENCES** TO REDUCE YOUR **SEASONALITY**
- BENCHMARK FROM **SPEL-TURISMO LANZAROTE BEST PRACTICES**
- HOW TO USE **SUSTAINABILITY DATA** TO INFORM POLICY DECISIONS
- HOW TO DESIGN A PLAN COMPLIANT WITH THE **FIT FOR 55 STRATEGY**
- STRATEGIES TO **DECARBONISE TOURISM**
- BENCHMARK WITH PEERS ON **CLIMATE ACTION IN TOURISM**
- HOW TO **FUND** TOURISM CLIMATE ACTION

Insightful workshops with members, guest destinations and knowledgeable speakers full of networking moments and good practice sharing.

 Place: **Brussels office and online**

 Date: **4 May**

 Topic: **Sustainability**

THEMATIC WORKSHOPS

Scaling out Regenerative Tou

Speakers:

Vincent Nijs, Chief Strategist at Visit Flanders // **Mary Rose Stafford**, Head of School – Business, Computing & Humanities at Munster Technological University, Cork // **Petra Stušek**, CEO at Ljubljana Tourism and President of the Board at City Destinations Alliance // **Anya Niewierra**, Director of Visit South-Limburg // **Sandra de Puig**, EU Projects Manager at the Catalan Tourist Board // **Cristina Núñez**, Managing Director at NECSTouR

The European Climate Pact: Policies, Actions, and Funding Instruments to Decarbonize the Tourism Activity

Speakers:

Cristina Núñez, Managing Director at NECSTouR // **Laura Maanavilja**, Deputy Head of Unit, CLIMA.E2 – Communication, Civil Society Relations & Climate Pact, European Commission // **Dr Paul Peeters**, Breda University of Applied Sciences // **Elke Dens**, The Travel Foundation // **Lee McDonald**, International Partnership Manager at Visit Scotland // **Ms Morena Diazzi**, General Director on Knowledge Economy, Employment and Enterprises, Emilia Romagna Region



THEMATIC WORKSHOPS

- Scaling-out **Regenerative Tourism** Governance
- The EU Climate Agenda: ways to **Decarbonise** Tourism Activity

THURSDAY 4 MAY
14H00 - 17H00 CET
BRUSSELS OFFICE | ONLINE



NECSTouR
European Regions for
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Place: **Paris**

Date: **6 June**

Topic: **Sustainability transition**

Envisioning Tourism in 2030: The NECSTouR 2030 Pathway

Speakers:

Dr Elke Dens, The Travel Foundation // **Ms Alicia Fajardo**, The Travel Foundation // **Dr Xavier Font**, Surrey University // **Dr Anna Torres**, Surrey University



Place: **Paris**

Date: **6 June**

Topic: **Data management**

Systematic Measurement for a sound tourism governance: How do we use data for managing and marketing more sustainable?

SESSION 1: "Tools to advance neutrality goals in destinations: a Carbon Footprint Calculator"

Speakers:

Dr Xavier Font, Surrey University & **Dr Anna Torres**, Surrey University

SESSION 2: "Common methodologies: the NECSTouR Climate Action Hub, Sustainability Events Policy & common events measurement tool for the network"

Speakers:

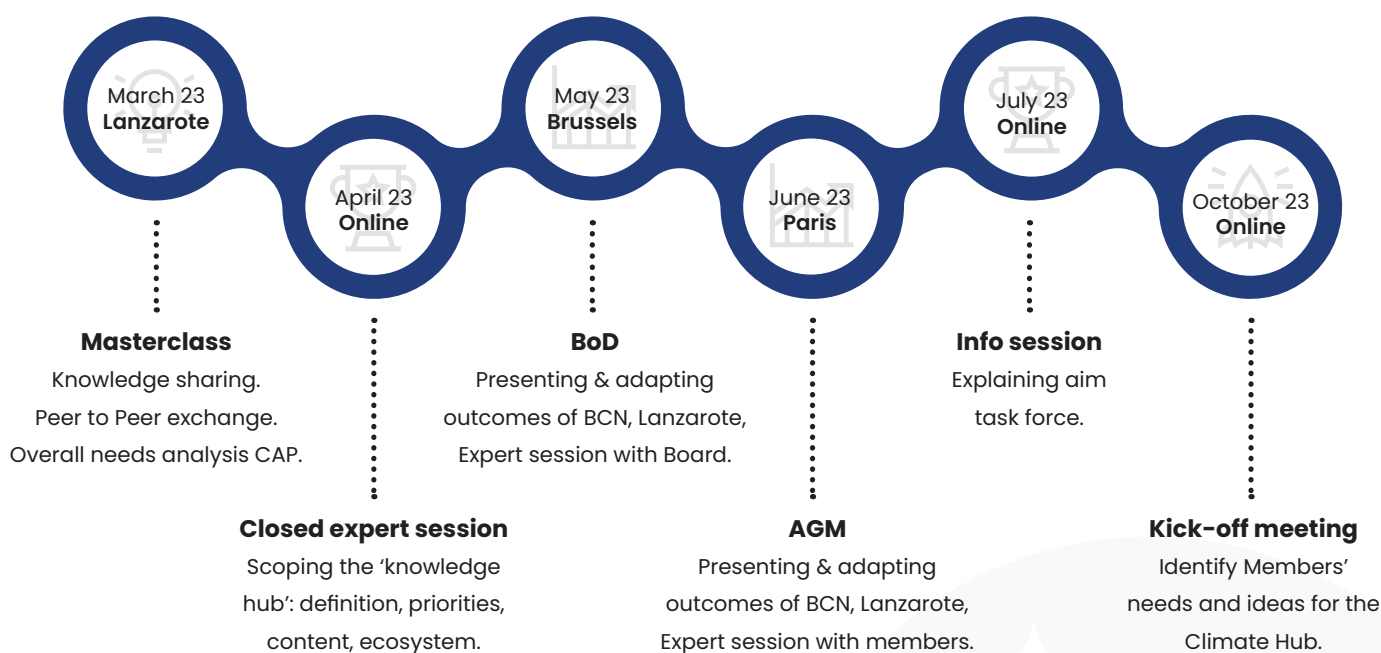
The Tourism of Tomorrow Lab team (**Daniel Iglesias**, **Ana Moniche** and **José Luis Córdoba**), **Dr Elke Dens**, The Travel Foundation & **Ms Alicia Fajardo**, The Travel Foundation

The NECSTouR Climate Action Plan and the Sustainability Task Force

NECSTouR declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. Subsequently, with full support from its members, NECSTouR signed the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism. With the support of its standing partner, the Travel Foundation, we developed our Climate Action Plan (CAP), which was published in 2022. The overall aim of our plan is to support and accelerate climate action by European Regional Destinations thanks to three objectives.

1. Support members to deliver climate action and develop Climate Action Plans and promote members' good practice.
2. Raise awareness within members on the relevance of EU Transition Pathway for Tourism and provide information and guidance to support its implementation.
3. Enable NECSTouR to measure, reduce, and mitigate organisational emissions.

Between January and June, we organised various prioritisation exercises with the members, which led to the conclusion that our focus is to urgently develop a knowledge-sharing platform that we will call the **Climate Hub**.



To involve the members and co-create the Climate Hub, we decided to create a task force to bring together more brilliant minds and ensure the Climate Hub is developed according to members' needs. Over the summer, we managed to gather 23 destinations and 7 academics to form the **Sustainability Task Force**.

After a range of meetings and exchanges with the Sustainability Task Force, our findings show that the Climate Hub could be an adaptive online space where you can find actionable information, guidelines, and roadmaps on how to take climate action on your destination. It may also be a place where you can interact with your peers from other destinations and discuss various methods of climate action.

EU Projects HUB



2023 marked the kick-off of the C4T project, which will support the mainstream of the Interreg EuroMED projects results on Sustainable Tourism for the next 6 years. It will allow the projects to turn into practices and public policies to improve governance at a transnational level in the Mediterranean and beyond.

The Travel Foundation began developing the “Blueprint for DMOs and Regional Authorities to Develop Climate Action Plans”, under the supervision of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) and NECSTour.



In 2023, the COSME Project, aimed at guiding SMEs through the digital transition, launched a call to provide 100 SMEs free training on the application of the available digital tools to make them more profitable and competitive.

Thanks to the NECSTour members' dissemination, 37 out of the 100 SMEs belong to the network's regions: **Andalusia** (3), **Canary Islands** (15), **Catalonia** (2), **Emilia-Romagna** (1), **Lapland** (6), **Liguria** (4), **Lombardy** (1), **Piedmont** (1), **Tuscany** (2) and **Valencia** (1).



In 2023, we delivered the final conference in Brussels, where the project's learnings were shared, and the roadmap towards the European Tourism Data Space was presented and discussed with the main European tourism data players: data sets, their use, ownership and governance where brainstormed, setting the basis for a new European project, which will deploy the Tourism Data Space in 2024.



The Project D3HUB Data-Driven-Destinations was approved and kicked off in 2023.

The project aims to create a self-sustainable European Tourism Data Competence Centre to support tourism destinations develop their green and digital transition

EU Projects HUB

NECSTOUR'S PROJECTS HUB:

Monitoring

Monitoring funding opportunities for sustainable tourism

.....
Contacting Managing Authorities



Communicating

Helpful information on funding opportunities: open calls, info sessions, events and tools to reply through our "Live from Brussels."

.....
Organization of info sessions



Supporting

Provide NECSTour's knowledge and experts

.....
Activate the network when building partnerships

.....
Organize info sessions on "EU programs for Sustainable Tourism Projects": analysis of the call for proposals, strategic advice and tips on winning projects.



As part of the Projects Hub, we organised 2 Info Sessions in 2023.

4

Enablers

Communication Activities **23**

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Communication Activities

In 2023 NECSTouR underwent a rebranding process, which led to a new logo and a new visual identity.

We also launched the bi-weekly members' newsletter "Live from Brussels," which provides up-to-date information on the network's news.



NECSTouR
European Regions for
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SOCIAL MEDIA

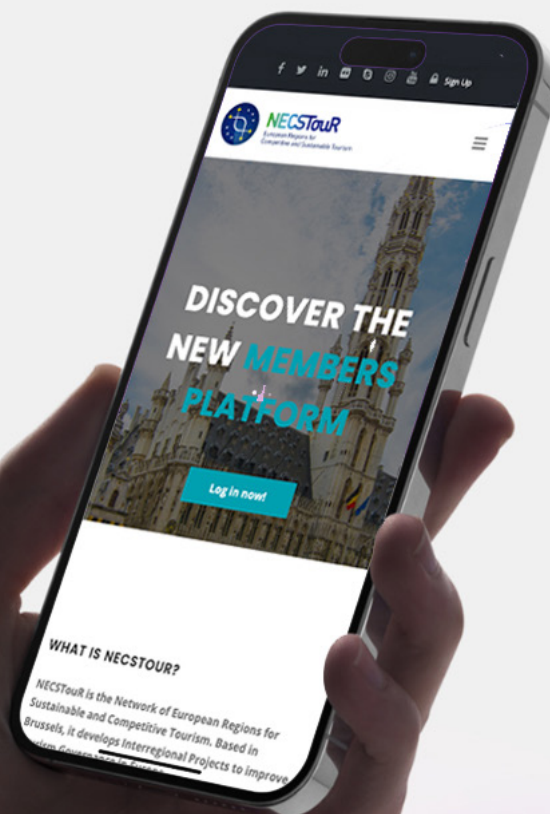
- Twitter 3,066 followers; Engagement rate 3.5%
- LinkedIn 3,218 followers (+39% growth compared to 2022); Engagement rate 9.5%

WEBSITE

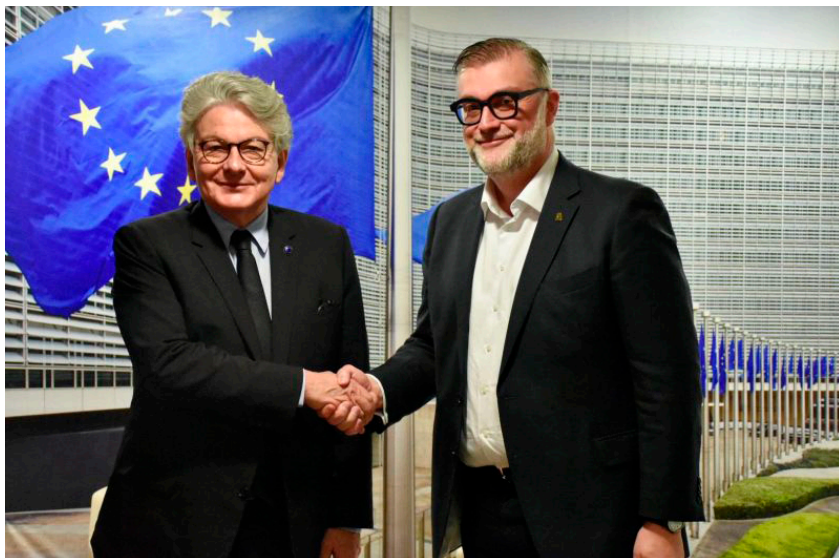
- 79k views in 2023
- 25k users in 2023, 16k of these were new users
- 24 Media Mentions in 2023 (International and local media outlets)
- Euronews, Travel Tomorrow, Travel Daily News International, Expreso, intoscana.it, elchaplon, euradio.fr

2 MEDIA PARTNERSHIPS

- Travel Tomorrow and Travel Daily News International



Strategic International Partnerships



Commissioner Breton and our President, Peter De Wilde, May, Brussels

*EUROPEAN TOURISM DATA SPACE
HIGH-LEVEL EVENT: 25-26 September,
Brussels, ToT Lab participated as
speakers*



Strategic International Partnerships



President De Wilde speaks at Destination Europe Summit organized by the European Travel Commission, 27 June Brussels.



Gatherings of the European Tourism Manifesto Alliance: Brussels 30 May, 17 October, 9 November (ETC)



President De Wilde meets the Assembly of European Regions, June, Barcelona

Networking

4 MAY



Thematic Workshops Empowering Destinations Delivering Sustainability

19 SEPTEMBER



The Travel Foundation 20 Year Anniversary: Brussels

9 OCTOBER



UNWTO (Glasgow Declaration) In Conversation with NECSTour: Accelerating Climate Action through Regional Collaboration: Online

6-7 JUNE



Annual General Meeting: Paris

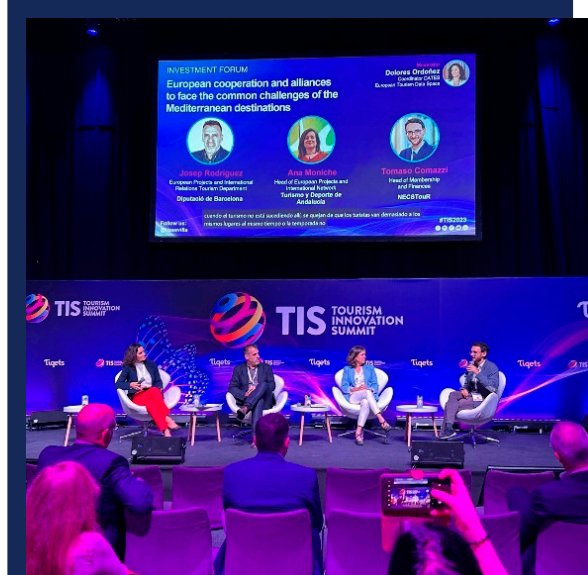
4-6 OCTOBER



Urban Mobility Days: Seville

Networking

18-20 OCTOBER

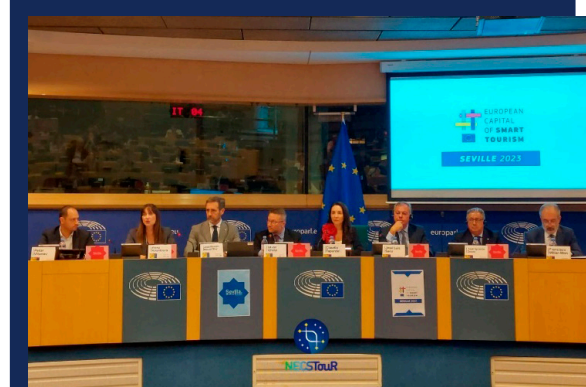


Tourism Innovation Summit: Seville (NECSTouR Regions participated)

22-23 NOVEMBER



9-12 OCTOBER



European Week of Regions and Cities: Brussels (NECSTouR Regions participated)

21-22 NOVEMBER



Tourism Innovation Summit: Seville (NECSTouR Regions participated)

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