



NECSTouR

European Regions for
Competitive and Sustainable Tourism



ACTIVITY REPORT 2025

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INTRODUCTION

The NECSTouR Activity Report 2025 gives you an overview of activities we have completed throughout the year helping to deliver our Pathway to 2030 goals. It provides a snapshot of the work we have undertaken in the network during 2025.



**WE HOPE YOU ENJOY READING
ABOUT OUR WORK IN 2025!**

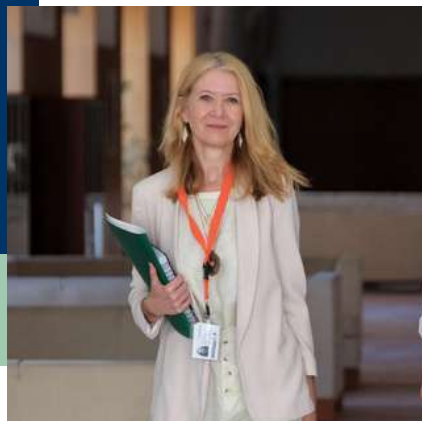


STEERING THE YEAR: A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT ELENA BAENA

2025 was a year of strong performance for NECSTouR. In addition to growing the membership, we were awarded four new EU-funded projects across all areas of our three hubs: Climate, Data, and Governance. Our Tourism Advocacy Group delivered several successful meetings in the Committee of the Regions connecting with member regions and helping to inform our response to the consultation for a new European Tourism Strategy due out in spring 2026. Together with the Lombardy region, our Annual General Meeting in Milan in May was a real highlight of the year bringing together interesting speakers and discussions under the theme “Rethinking Tourism Communication - Storytelling and Conscious Marketing.”

In September, I addressed a tourism audience at the European Parliament invited by Elena Kountoura MEP on the subject of Establishing Sustainable Tourism Destinations in the European Union. It was an opportunity to highlight how NECSTouR is working with its regions to better measure and manage data through its Tourism of Tomorrow Lab and the data projects in which it participates, namely D3HUB, DEPLOYTOUR and most recently FACILITATE. Aligned with these initiatives, we are promoting the creation of a future European Tourism Data Competence Centre as a long-term European instrument to help destinations use data more effectively.

In October, NECSTouR organised a high-level event on Better Balanced Tourism (BBT) as part of the European Week of Regions and Cities, the annual flagship regional policy event in Brussels. BBT brought together MEPs from across the political spectrum and the European Commission as well as regions, cities and tourism stakeholders to discuss this area of growing importance for Europe’s regions and cities. Governance is key to equipping regions with the tools to address intra-regional tourism flows and ensure that everyone benefits from our successful sector. At the end of the year, NECSTouR organised its second Knowledge Day, “DMOs in Action: Sustainable Tourism Governance for Climate Action,” a milestone in NECSTouR’s climate action pathway, held during the Lanzarote 30th Anniversary of the Sustainable Tourism Charter.



I would like to report NECSTouR's recent election as President of the Board of Affiliate Members of UN Tourism. This prestigious position will enable NECSTouR to represent the views of Europe's regions and tourism stakeholders to UN Tourism at an important time, with the advent next year of the European Commission's new Sustainable Tourism Strategy. We are looking forward to more good collaboration with our partners in the year ahead as I pass the presidential baton to Mathieu Cuip from Île-de-France region who becomes NECSTouR President in March 2026.

Elena Baena
NECSTouR President

NECSTOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Elena Baena
 Andalusia
 President



Mathieu Cuip
 Île-de-France
 Executive Vice-President



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Thomas Andersen
 Danish Western Coast Partnership
 Member of the BoD



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 Galicia
 Member of the BoD



Héctor Fernández
 Lanzarote
 Member of the BoD



Paolo Giuntarelli
 Lazio
 Member of the BoD



Manon Luijten
 South Limburg
 Member of the BoD



Lee McDonald
 Visit Scotland
 Member of the BoD



Ivana Alilović
 Zagreb County
 Member of the BoD

NECSTOUR FULL AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERS



2025 IN REVIEW



Launched in Milan, our new Governance Hub hosted its first flagship event 'Better Balanced Tourism in Europe's Regions' during the European Week of Regions & Cities, gathering policymakers and destination managers.



Live from Brussels newsletter: 21 editions completed and two editions of NEWSTouR published bringing the EU tourism agenda to NECSTouR members, sharing opportunities and promoting regional good practices.



NECSTouR elected as President of UN Tourism's Board of Affiliate Members: this global community trusts NECSTouR's capacity to lead its sustainability agenda.



Successful Annual General Meeting in Milan "Rethinking Tourism Communication – Storytelling and Conscious Marketing", gathering members around living labs and open debate inspiring positive change in the sector.



Knowledge Day 2025 in Lanzarote at the core of the 30th Anniversary of the Global Sustainable Tourism Charter, fostering exchanges and accelerating Sustainable Tourism Governance for Climate Action.



NECSTouR Tourism Advocacy Group engaged with the European Committee of the Regions and the co-creation of a joint position paper as a response to the EC consultation for a new European Tourism Strategy.



Four EU projects approved that connect to the NECSTouR 2030 Pathway and hubs, increasing our projects portfolio alongside our expertise in EU programmes: FACILITATE, LIFE TOUR4CLIMA, ReStart and SLOWTOUR.

NECSTOUR AGM 2025

Our Annual General Meeting took place in Milan from 20–22 May 2025 under the theme ‘Rethinking Tourism Communication – Storytelling and Conscious Marketing’. Kindly hosted by the Lombardy Region, it gathered over 100 delegates from 15 countries. A significant feature of our AGM was the official launch of the NECSTouR Governance Hub. The Governance Hub is designed to strengthen leadership, collaboration, and strategic direction for our members with a focus on regenerative destination management and marketing. During these discussions, our members explored its three core pillars: conscious marketing, policy measures, and sustainable development in conjunction with Andreea Staicu, the Head of Tourism at DG MOVE.

The following day featured the Regional Roundtable on Tourism Storytelling, where regions presented new narrative-driven initiatives. Normandy unveiled its creative approach to the 1,000th anniversary of William the Conqueror reframed as “William the Connector.” Kotka-Hamina highlighted Ulko-Tammio, the world’s first phone-free island, promoting true digital detox.



Murcia showcased its Jubilee celebrations in Caravaca de la Cruz, encouraging slow, mindful tourism. Sligo introduced the Ideas Engine, empowering communities and visitors to co-create experiences along the Wild Atlantic Way.

Our AGM in Milan highlighted the importance of storytelling as a powerful tool in shaping sustainable tourism and strengthening regional identity and influence. As Councillor Barbara Mazzali emphasised, “Storytelling, innovative narrative strategies and conscious marketing are becoming essential tools to attract visitors and transform territorial promotion.” Her words underscored the relevance and timely introduction of the Governance Hub and its guiding themes.

NECSTOUR BETTER BALANCED TOURISM EVENT

As highlighted by Ana Moniche on behalf of the NECSTouR Presidency, *“Our goal is not to discourage or reduce tourism but to manage tourism better in smarter, fairer, and more sustainable ways. Tourism must be part of the solution.”* This perspective guided NECSTouR’s work throughout 2025 and reinforced the importance of cross-territorial governance.

In 2025, we continued advocating for a more balanced and resilient model of tourism, emphasising that long-term success requires coordinated action across communities, industry, and all levels of government. The political debate chaired by NECSTouR Executive Vice-President Mathieu Cuip and involving leading MEPs Elena Kountoura, Nikolina Brnjac, Daniel Attard and Maja Bakran, Deputy Director General at DG MOVE of the European Commission at our Better Balanced Tourism Event highlighted the importance of empowering residents to co-design tourism strategies, investing in robust data to inform evidence-based policies. While in turn, strengthening public-private-resident partnerships, and advancing sustainable mobility and climate adaptation solutions.



We believe that these efforts will help to reduce pressure on destinations while improving both resident well-being and visitor experience. Additionally, this event further signified the importance of collaboration between regions as essential to ensure that successful approaches can be shared, adapted, and scaled across Europe.

Through its network and partnerships, NECSTouR continued to provide the platform where this collaboration takes shape, supporting European regions in advancing balanced, sustainable, and future-proof tourism models.

LANZAROTE KNOWLEDGE DAY

European regional tourism leaders gathered in Lanzarote for a two-day programme at the end of November marking two milestones: the 2025 edition of NECSTouR's Knowledge Day, and the 30th anniversary of the World Charter for Sustainable Tourism first signed on the island under the leadership of the Lanzarote authorities. Thirty years on, the island remains a symbol of commitment to responsible tourism, and its partnership with NECSTouR reflects a renewed European resolve to transform destination governance in the face of climate emergency.

The 2025 Knowledge Day theme DMOs in Action: Sustainable Tourism Governance for Climate Action was conceived as a milestone in NECSTouR's climate action pathway. It convened regional tourism leaders, technical experts, and strategic partners to examine how governance frameworks, data systems and climate strategies can be mobilised to accelerate Europe's net-zero transition, in view of the upcoming new European Tourism Strategy due out in April. The Knowledge Day gave members the opportunity to engage directly with strategies that move DMOs from planning to implementation: integrating climate objectives into tourism policies, deploying data to track resource efficiency and visitor flows, and strengthening multi-level governance.



THE TOURISM OF TOMORROW LAB IN 2025

In 2025, ToTLab continued empowering destinations with data literacy for sustainable management through its coaching programme delivered to 11 Premium Members, while ensuring that the whole network pursues the “NECSTouR Data Pathway”.

The programme focused on agreeing a core set of indicators to measure tourism sustainability across European regions, which will be tested in 2026. It included a series of practical webinars focused on using AI for destination management, marketing, analysis and benchmarking, supported by hands-on examples and materials. Additionally, two sessions on the “European Tourism Data Space” were delivered, presenting insights to the whole network. Furthermore, the ToTLab team supported members with indicator development, dashboards and mobility-tracking solutions to better understand tourism impacts. Together, these activities helped regions advance their data-driven decision-making and prepare for future innovation.

The year concluded with its annual Data Summit in Brussels, bringing Premium Members and experts together, demonstrating the value of this platform, offering collaboration and shared learning opportunities, strengthening members’ capacity to manage tourism through evidence-based approaches.



THE CLIMATE HUB IN 2025

In 2025, the Climate Hub focused on creating a common understanding among member regions of the importance of taking climate action in tourism, while providing practical resources and guidance to support implementation. Several capacity building activities were organised over the year to enable members to develop and advance their own climate action plans for tourism. To further facilitate the exchange of practices and experiences, the pilot group *Accelerate and Benchmark your Climate Action journey* (ABC) was launched to provide members with a benchmarking space.

The Climate Hub's work was positioned through participation at multiple external events, and discussions were initiated with members on the impact of EU sustainability legislation. Finally, a major milestone was the approval of NECSTouR's first LIFE project, TOUR4CLIMA, a strategic initiative to drive climate action in the tourism sector and move towards a more resilient, integrated and carbon-neutral model.



THE GOVERNANCE HUB IN 2025

In 2025, the Governance Hub was launched at the AGM in Milan, leading to its first major event, Better Balanced Tourism, held in Brussels in October. The event opened with a political debate featuring representatives from EU institutions, followed by a dedicated Governance Hub session showcasing five regional and city case studies demonstrating practical approaches to balancing tourism demand. The session was framed by a keynote speech from the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities outlining key trends shaping the sector.

The case studies presented during the event included:

- Skåne (Sweden) on balancing visitor flows through the *Uncrowded* digital service and the *Smart Nature* initiative;
- Madrid Region (Spain) on developing a territorial tourism governance model;
- Flanders (Belgium) on its *Flanders Naturally* strategy;
- Centre-Val de Loire (France) on leveraging *Bourges 2028* for better balanced tourism;
- Amsterdam (Netherlands) on operationalising balanced urban tourism in practice.

Together, these contributions illustrated the diversity of governance solutions emerging across Europe and positioned the Governance Hub as a platform for sharing models that help destinations manage tourism more fairly and sustainably.



EU PROJECTS HUB

The Projects Hub brings together the network to share ideas for new projects, exchange intelligence about projects on what works and what doesn't, and provide a partner search forum for new initiatives. We held an online webinar on how to submit an EU funding application and partner search. Two meetings were also held with our academic members to explore collaboration.

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."

Organisation of information sessions

SUPPORTING



Provide NECSTouR's knowledge and experts

Activate the network when building partnerships

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

ONGOING PROJECTS

- D3HUB (2023-26)
- DEPLOYTOUR (2024-27)
- Community 4 Tourism (C4T) (2022-29)
- FACILITATE (2025-2027)
- LIFE TOUR4CLIMA (2025-2028)

D3HUB AND DEPLOYTOUR

In 2025, the 40 D3HUB pilot destinations advanced towards the conclusion of the dedicated pilot programme developed by the project partners. The initiative has provided destinations with the knowledge and tools needed to measure and manage key challenges including: visitor flow balance, community well-being, climate resilience, and value-driven tourism development. Throughout the year, destinations took part in a structured series of webinars, practical exercises, and peer-to-peer exchanges. These activities supported them in drafting their action plans as the pilot programme nears its conclusion. During this process, destinations tested a set of indicators validated by a European sounding board composed of official statistics bodies and tourism experts. The results will feed into the service portfolio of the future European Competence Centre for Destination Data Management.



Throughout 2025, NECSTouR actively contributed through ToTLab, applying its methodology and experience in supporting data-driven destination development. Together with the D3HUB partners, NECSTouR continued to advocate for the forthcoming Competence Centre to become a cornerstone of the new European Tourism Strategy.

In November, the EU-funded DEPLOYTOUR project hosted its first high-level event at the European Committee of the Regions. This event brought together key stakeholders in the European Data Space for Tourism which included EU Member States and EU institutions. The goal of this event was twofold: to promote a shared vision for responsible and multi-level data governance in tourism and to present the progress made on the project's tools, pilots, and recommendations.

COMMUNITY4TOURISM AND TOUR4CLIMA

The Sustainable Tourism Community had a productive year, engaging partners through three targeted training webinars and strengthening cooperation across its network. NECSTouR continued coordinating the MED Cluster on Climate Change Adaptation, advancing work on climate action planning, resilient tourism strategies and ecosystem-based tools. At the annual meeting in Tirana, nearly 100 stakeholders gathered to plan the 2026 Sustainable Tourism Convention and to hear progress updates from the now 22-project community. NECSTouR also contributed to the Mediterranean Multi-Programme Mechanism event in Split, reflecting on sustainable tourism and the green transition across eight Interreg programmes.

In 2025, Community4Tourism delivered three online training sessions on the Blueprint for Tourism Climate Action Plans, supporting destinations in assessing climate risks, setting priorities and implementing actions through KPIs, reporting mechanisms and adaptive management.



The LIFE TOUR4CLIMA project officially kicked off in 2025, marking the start of our partnership with the Catalan Tourism Board, Barcelona Provincial Council and Eco-union. The goal of this project is to position Catalonia as a pilot region for developing and testing a climate-resilient governance model for tourism, building on its 2023 Climate Action Plan and aligned with the Glasgow Declaration. NECSTouR's role is to scale and transfer the insights from this pilot through the Climate Hub, enabling knowledge exchange, peer learning and policy innovation across European destinations and ensuring that Catalonia's experience contributes to wider EU strategies for climate adaptation and decarbonisation in tourism.

OUR NEW EU PROJECTS

The FACILITATE project held its kick-off meeting in Malaga in mid-December. The two-year project will mobilise the tourism community to better understand needs in the area of data management. The project will foster a user ecosystem within the European Tourism Data Space well-versed in its benefits, methodologies, data sets, digital tools, and collaborative stakeholders. Sound, updated and pragmatic guidelines will be designed for the tourism ecosystem, targeting DMOs and SMEs to improve their data management and sharing capabilities while benefiting from the services and tools developed by D3HUB, DEPLOYTOUR and other initiatives.

ReStart seeks to accelerate the shift to regenerative tourism in North-West Europe by tackling unbalanced visitor flows and environmental pressures through practical, solution-driven actions. The project will develop the ReStart Compass, a hands-on framework that helps stakeholders apply, monitor, and scale regenerative practices.



The Compass will be tested through nine pilot projects in Belgium, France, and the Netherlands, supported by a transnational Train-the-Trainer programme designed to build capacity, strengthen businesses and destinations, and embed regenerative tourism into policies and daily practice.

SLOWTOUR addresses the challenges faced by small and medium-sized cities in areas such as socio-economic decline, underused heritage, and limited integration in tourism flows by promoting slow tourism as a driver of urban regeneration, community engagement, and local economic growth. Six pilot actions across four countries will test approaches including heritage-based experiences, walking and cycling routes, food events, and the creative re-use of public spaces. Insights from these pilots will shape a Slow Tourism Playbook, offering a transferable model for other cities and regions in North-West Europe.

NECSTOUR OUT AND ABOUT

AGM IN MILAN



BETTER BALANCED TOURISM IN EUROPE'S REGIONS



LANZAROTE KNOWLEDGE DAY



CONNECTED EVENTS



Global Ecotourism Forum



NAT Commission, European Committee of the Regions



Tourism Innovation Summit



Brussels Delegations meeting, NECSTouR offices



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