



# NEWSTouR





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## ADVOCATING FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM REGIONS

It has been a busy autumn term for NECSTouR. Our advocacy work has picked up speed since the last edition of NEWSTouR. In September I addressed a tourism audience at the European Parliament at the invitation of 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 D3 Hub, Deploytour and most recently FACILTATE. 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 this edition, you will also read about the high-level event on Better Balanced Tourism (BBT) that NECSTouR organised 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. Last month, NECSTouR organised the Knowledge Day 2025 – 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.

Before signing off, I would like to report NECSTouR's recent election as President of the Board of Affiliate Members of UN Tourism. This prestigious post 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 Tourism Strategy. We are looking forward to more good collaboration with our partners in the year ahead.



**Elena Baena**

NECSTouR President



# BETTER BALANCED TOURISM IN EUROPE'S REGIONS

## NECSTOUR ANIMATES EUROPEAN STAKEHOLDERS IN BRUSSELS

"The overall message from participants confirmed that our collective 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." NECSTouR's Better Balanced Tourism event formed part of the European Week of Regions and Cities in October bringing together many high-level EU institutional speakers for a political debate moderated by NECSTouR Executive Vice President Mathieu Cuip from Île-de-France region including:

- European Commission Deputy Director General of DG MOVE Maja Bakran.
- Elena Kountoura MEP, Vice Chair of the Committee on Transport & Tourism (TRAN), & Member of the European Parliament Tourism Task Force (TTF).
- Daniel Attard MEP, Member of the TRAN Committee and rapporteur on the own opinion report on destinations and sustainable tourism
- Nikolina Brnjac MEP, Member of the TRAN Committee and shadow rapporteur on the aforementioned own opinion report.

Following this insightful discussion, NECSTouR members and invitees presented approaches on how they have balanced tourism preceded by a scene-setting keynote from Julie Reimann, OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, on OECD's Tourism Trends and Policies 2026 Report. Case studies included:

- Visit Skåne reported on its "Uncrowded - managing visitor flows" initiative
- Visit Flanders shared its experience of its 'Travel to Tomorrow' destination management model.
- Madrid region presented its Territorial Tourism Governance Model.
- Centre-Val de Loire showcased 'From Spotlight to Constellation: Bourges 2028 as a lever for "Better Balanced Tourism"'.
- Amsterdam discussed its urban tourism policies in the 'Balanced Urban Tourism in practice' initiative.

We look forward to continuing to work with our members and strategic partners to provide solutions to this issue of better balancing tourism in Europe's regions and cities.



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# TOURISM ADVOCACY GROUP

## SHAPING THE NEW EUROPEAN TOURISM STRATEGY

Over the summer, NECSTouR played an active role in ensuring that the perspectives of our member regions are represented in the European Commission's Consultation for a New European Tourism Strategy. From publishing our position paper to providing guidelines developed in collaboration with our members, we ensured that local perspectives will help to shape the new European Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

Our position paper advocated for the need for greater support for local and regional authorities, placing data and digitalisation at the heart of the strategy alongside establishing a dedicated EU budget line for tourism post-2027. Additionally, we also highlighted to the Commission the importance of a network led approach to better achieve the long-term goals of the sector.



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## WORKING WITH THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS



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In July, NECSTouR's Executive Vice President Mathieu Cuij delivered a compelling intervention in response to Commissioner Apostolos Tzitzikostas' speech on the consultation for a new European Sustainable Tourism Strategy. Drawing from our Position Paper, Mathieu highlighted the importance of regional cooperation stating "We must prioritise a networked approach." NECSTouR member region the Balearic Islands led an opinion on sustainable tourism through the NAT Commission.

Regional cooperation platforms like NECSTouR, which brings together 45 European regions have proven their effectiveness." Mathieu also emphasised the need for long-term financial support for the tourism sector, calling for more funding for tourism beyond 2027. Mathieu's intervention successfully highlighted NECSTouR's recommendations at the EU institutional level, providing regional representatives insights into our values to advocate for change.



## NECSTOUR PRESIDENT SPEAKS AT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT EVENT

The event “Establishing Sustainable Tourism Destinations in the European Union” was organised by the European Parliament’s TRAN Committee Vice Chair Mrs Elena Kountoura MEP. Across two panels, the event addressed policies for sustainable and resilient tourism destinations by 2030 and the urgent need for a European Data/Monitoring System to establish sustainable tourism destinations.

NECSTouR President Elena Baena highlighted that regions/DMOs lack much of the essential data needed for measuring tourism sustainability and that even though data exists, it is either too expensive or not easy to use. Elena underlined the important role of NECSTouR’s Tourism of Tomorrow Lab in providing detailed support to regions/DMOs through its dedicated capacity building and support programme working directly with technicians, management and administrative levels within sub-national tourism authorities across Europe. She stated that Europe urgently needs a common monitoring system to measure tourism impacts and inform European-National-Regional-Local policies. Without it, sustainability will stay only on paper.



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NECSTouR’s advocacy for the next MFF continues apace.

## EXCHANGING VIEWS WITH THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



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NECSTouR contributed to an exchange of views organised by the European Parliament’s Committee on Transport and Tourism (TRAN) Tourism Task Force.

The meeting “Beyond Resilience: Leveraging Connectivity, Heritage and Local Excellence to Build Lasting Sustainability” gathered high-level stakeholders from across the European tourism ecosystem to lay the groundwork for the TRAN own-initiative report led by Daniel Attard MEP on “Enhancing connectivity, preserving cultural heritage, and driving local excellence in European tourism: destination management and regional tourism growth.” NECSTouR contributed the regional perspective. “Sustainable Tourism Regions & Improving Stewardship in the Next MFF.”



# KNOWLEDGE DAY IN LANZAROTE

## NECSTOUR INSPIRES CLIMATE ACTION IN LANZAROTE

Our second NECSTOUR Knowledge Day brought members together to reflect on the progress in achieving the goals of the 2030 Pathway Strategy. The day began with two peer-review sessions based on the Climate Action Plans of two NECSTOUR regions. Héctor Fernández Manchado from the Lanzarote Tourism Board showcased Lanzarote's new climate action plan. Mariona Salvatella, from the Catalan Tourism Board, presented how Catalonia is implementing their climate action plan engaging the sector through the LIFE TOUR4CLIMA project. After coffee we were joined by Virginia Fernandez-Trapa from UN Tourism to catch up on developments post COP30 in Belem in interview format by NECSTOUR's Adriana Tramullas.



The morning of the Knowledge Day was rounded off with a discussion on measuring a destination's carbon footprint moderated by our Strategy Director Cristina Nuñez. This panel featured Daniel Iglesias Gonsálvez from NECSTOUR's ToTLab, Teodora Marinska from the European Travel Commission, Liisa Kokkarinen from Visit Finland, Ivar Neelis from Breda University of Applied Sciences and Bart Neuts from Visit Flanders. Participants learned much from the projects, dashboards and research to inspire them in implementing carbon footprint measurement strategies. The message of these sessions was clear, namely that we cannot wait for standards or to have all the data we need to start taking action.

In the afternoon, Patricio Azcárate Díaz de Losada from the Responsible Tourism Institute moderated a panel session on integrating sustainability throughout the entire tourism value chain with valuable perspectives on the implications of sustainability certification from Xavier Font of University of Surrey, Liisa Kokkarinen from Visit Finland and Marta Machado of HOTREC. This was followed by presentations from Daniel Iglesias Gonsálvez, Chief Data Scientist of the Tourism of Tomorrow Lab and Anssi Tarkiainen from Lapland University of Applied Sciences demonstrating how the EU funded DEPLOYTOUR project has unlocked new opportunities for collaboration, innovation and growth for SMEs and DMOs. We finished the day with a sustainable tourism governance session moderated by John Fitzgibbon, Managing Director of NECSTOUR with case studies from Mariano Juan Colomar of Ibiza Island Council, Matty Vincke from Westtoer, Jaume Mata of Visit València, and Ulf Sonntag from Institute for Tourism Research in Northern Europe. These presentations highlighted pertinent sustainable tourism governance models from the island, regional, city and academic perspectives.



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The following day, Cristina moderated the first session of the 30th Anniversary of the World Charter for Sustainable Tourism also taking place in Lanzarote. The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the World Charter for Sustainable Tourism is a timely reminder that the principles agreed upon in 1995, responsibility, community engagement, environmental protection, must remain key pillars in tourism strategies. This session included NECSTOUR members as speakers: Aránzazu Urbina from Madrid Region, Xavier Font Urgell from Catalonia Government, Miguel Ángel Roselló from the Balearic Islands and Héctor Fernández Manchado from the Lanzarote Tourism Board.



# CLIMATE HUB

## ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COMMUNITY

Around 100 participants from across the Mediterranean gathered in Tirana on 1–2 October for the Annual Meeting of the Sustainable Tourism Community organised by the Interreg MED funded Community4Tourism project and hosted by the University of Tirana's Faculty of Economy. The event brought together representatives from governance, thematic, and strategic projects, representatives from the Joint Secretariat, from other Thematic Missions and Associated partners to strengthen collaboration, share results, and prepare for the III MED Sustainable Tourism Convention in Barcelona (June 2026).

Over the last year, 10 new Thematic and two Strategic Projects joined the Community marking an important step toward expanding cooperation and innovation under the Interreg Euro-MED Sustainable Tourism Mission.

Grouped in four thematic clusters – Innovation & Technology Capacities, Circular Economy, Climate Change, and Nature & Biodiversity – the 22 projects took centre stage highlighting how Mediterranean destinations are turning sustainability goals into practical action.



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## LIFE TOUR4CLIMA LAUNCHES

Since our last NEWSTouR, the LIFE TOUR4CLIMA project has kicked off working in partnership with the Catalan Tourism Board, Barcelona Provincial Council, Ferrocarrils de la Generalitat de Catalunya and Eco-union. This project aims to strengthen climate action governance by making Catalonia a pilot region for testing and implementing a comprehensive, climate-resilient governance model for tourism.



The project builds on Catalonia's 2023 Climate Action Plan for the Tourism Sector and aligns with the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism. It promotes a collaborative, cross-sector approach engaging stakeholders at regional, local and European levels.

NECSTouR's role is to scale up and transfer the lessons and best practices developed in the Catalonia pilot to other destinations through the Climate Hub, to foster knowledge exchange, peer learning, and policy innovation across European regions. The Climate Hub will ensure that the experience and lessons from Catalonia inform broader EU-level strategies for climate adaptation and decarbonisation in tourism.



# DATA HUB

## D3HUB – DATA-DRIVEN-DESTINATIONS PROJECT UPDATE

The 40 D3HUB Destinations are coming to the end of the pilot programme specifically designed by the D3HUB Project Partners, fostering knowledge and tools to measure and manage the destinations' challenges when it comes to balancing visitor flows, caring for communities and tourists' needs, addressing climate change and attracting value-driven tourism.

The D3HUB pilots are finalising the elaboration of action plans, allowing them to put learning into action as they complete this pilot exercise, which involved a range of webinars, practical exercises and peer-to-peer exchanges. A set of indicators, previously validated by a sounding board, made by official statistics bodies and experts representing the key public and private European tourism players, is being tested by this group of committed destinations, as part of the service portfolio that the future European Competence Centre to support Destinations in Data Management will be offering. NECSTouR has been contributing with its Tourism of Tomorrow Lab's methodology and expertise in working hand-in-hand with destinations in their data-driven journey, next to our D3HUB partners, and jointly advocating for the future Centre to become a cornerstone of the new European Tourism Strategy.



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## DEPLOYTOUR PROJECT HOLDS KEY EVENT

In November, the EU funded DEPLOYTOUR project hosted its first high-level event in 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.

Looking into the future, the second DEPLOYTOUR Stakeholder Forum will take place online on 10 December. Entitled 'Collaborating for a Secure and Trustworthy Data Ecosystem in European Tourism' this forum aims to identify how the digital transformation can be harnessed to solve key challenges facing the sector. Additionally, it will be demonstrating the value of the European Tourism Data Space of DMOs and providing an overview of Data Space Governance and the roles needed within it to build trust.



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## FACILITATE PROJECT LAUNCHES MORE SUPPORT FOR DATA

The new two year EU funded project FACILITATE will capitalise on existing EU resources and initiatives to develop a community to support DMOs and tourism SMEs across Europe with their data handling capabilities. NECSTouR leads on the engagement Work Package liaising with EU tourism stakeholders. FACILITATE will provide tailored assistance via workshops, publication of educational materials and peer-to-peer learning activities to achieve the following goals:

- Enhance reliance on high-quality data focusing on its generation, collection, use and its reuse.
- Increase capacity of DMOs and tourism SMEs to integrate and implement integrated data-driven solutions.
- Pave the way for the development of new business models in tourism building on digitalisation, data and new technologies.
- Improve DMOs and tourism SMEs' usage of available tools and management strategies to enhance competitiveness and growth.
- Boost quality and efficiency along the tourism value chain.
- Deepen cooperation among existing measures at EU level and increase the awareness of DMOs and tourism SMEs about existing EU programmes on digitalisation.



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## MEMBERS STORIES

### VISIT SOUTH LIMBURG TAKES STEPS TOWARDS ACCESSIBLE CULTURE AND NATURE

The third semester of the Interreg Europe project OpenRegioCulture was completed at the end of September. Visit Zuid-Limburg a partner in this project, is working with eight European regions to improve the accessibility of culture and nature for people with disabilities.



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In recent months, several regional and international meetings have taken place in which knowledge and good examples were shared. For example, a regional co-creation meeting was also organised at Discovery Museum in Kerkrade in South Limburg. Policymakers, tourism entrepreneurs and experts discussed how organisations in South Limburg can improve their accessibility and how Visit Zuid-Limburg can support them in this.

Another development in this project has been the publishing of the interregional Mapping Synthesis Report, which showed the accessibility of cultural and natural sites in eight European regions. The conclusions from this mapping were that there is still a lot to be gained in the field of accessibility, policy and knowledge about accessibility. Going forward, Visit Zuid-Limburg will therefore focus on increasing knowledge and awareness about accessibility among entrepreneurs.



## ANDALUSIA NEXUS

Andalucía Nexus is a regional ecosystem that accelerates the transformation of the tourism sector. Andalucía Nexus is building an open, accessible model that destinations, businesses or professionals can join to innovate, learn and grow. Nexus connects destinations, SMEs, institutions and tech partners to develop shared solutions to real problems based on five components:

- **Nexus Data:** makes data usable for everyone by integrating official statistics, Big Data, mobility information and AI to provide destinations and SMEs insights to support evidence-based decisions.
- **Nexus audience:** Using qualified first-party data to support smarter and responsible marketing campaigns, helping destinations align promotion with sustainability goals.
- **Nexus Future:** Links Andalusia with European initiatives (like D3HUB and the future European Tourism Data Sapce) to strengthen sustainability measurement and international cooperation, here NECSTouR plays a key role.
- **Nexus Lab:** Providing practical guidance through training, mentoring and applied projects to help SMEs and destinations in the digital transition.
- **Nexus Talent:** Improves employability and skills tailored to digital and green transition by connecting workers and tourism companies.



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# ACADEMIC MEMBERS NEWS

## BRINGING ACADEMIC MEMBERS CLOSER TO REGIONS



In September, our Academic Members came together to explore how they could enhance the work of the Climate, Data and Governance hubs. Participants identified common priorities in areas of joint research, EU project participation, policy support and capacity building.

This meeting brought together 13 of our Academic members across 10 countries and provided a strong platform for continued collaboration and for deepening our Academic Members participation in the work of our hubs with regional members and DMOs. The opportunity to listen to the range of expertise of our Academic Members reinforced the important crossover with NECSTouR member regions. If you would like to learn more, please contact us.



# NECSTOUR ON THE ROAD

## NECSTOUR AT THE TOURISM INNOVATION SUMMIT SEVILLE

NECSTouR attended this year's Tourism Innovation Summit (TIS) in Seville, Andalusia participating in a panel hosted by Barry Rogers, Director of Destination Strategy at TOPOSOPHY on "Geopolitics & Travel: How to lead in a fragmented world". Co-panellists included Joshua Ryan-Saha, Director of Traveltech for Scotland and Raquel Capellas, Managing Director at Weber Shandwick Spain.

The session facilitated an interesting debate on the interplay between geopolitics, soft power and tourism. The role of destinations in Europe as ambassadors of Europe's values alongside the need to embed foresight and flexibility based on broader international trends were accentuated by the panel. Key takeaways from this event include the importance of partnership and shared intelligence across borders as key to navigating disruption while building a resilient and value-driven tourism model.



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Next year's TIS takes place in Seville from 6-8 October 2026.

## NECSTOUR ADDRESSES THE GLOBAL ECOTOURISM FORUM IN CATALONIA



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During the Global Ecotourism Forum last October in Món San Benet, Catalonia, NECSTouR shared the NECSTouR 2030 Pathway to an audience of ecotourism professionals. Project Manager Adriana Tramullas De Nys represented the Climate Hub at the roundtable "Inspiring experiences and innovation in ecotourism to address the need for resilience in the face of climate change". Adriana highlighted how structured climate action planning and cooperation through the Climate Hub supports the implementation of climate goals at DMO level using case studies from:

- Normandie Tourisme
- Toerisme Vlaanderen
- VisitScotland

NECSTouR's Strategy Director, Cristina Núñez, highlighted Tourism of Tomorrow Lab's vision in the roundtable "Policies and Development Models for Innovative Digital Ecotourism". Cristina's contribution focused on sharing the experience of NECSTouR Regions in systematically measuring tourism impacts.



## NECSTOUR JOINS THE URBAN MOBILITY DAYS EVENT IN VILNIUS

NECSTOUR joined leading European mobility experts and policymakers to explore ways to integrate visitors' mobility needs into Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs) at the Urban Mobility Days in Vilnius, Lithuania at the end of September. During this event we learnt:

- Door-to-door sustainable mobility solutions are fundamental to destinations' decarbonisation and climate adaptation goals.
- Integrating visitor mobility enhances cities' attractiveness, alleviates seasonal pressures, preserves residents' quality of life, and improves the experience of temporary residents and tourists.
- Connecting and analysing real-time mobility and tourism data is critical to forecasting, monitoring, and influencing travel patterns.
- Smart collaborative governance is essential to overcome institutional silos.
- Joint projects such as accessible travel apps, single e-ticketing systems, integrated mobility-tourism packages, and coordinated campaigns demonstrate how collaboration drives impact.



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# WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

## NECSTOUR INCREASES ITS MEMBERSHIP



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Over the past half year, four new members have joined the NECSTOUR family! From the Netherlands, we would like to welcome Veluwe Arnhem Nijmegen and Merk Friesland. Together with South Limburg and Waterland van Friesland, we are delighted to note that this doubles the participation from Dutch sub-national tourism authorities. We have also received notification from NHL Stenden University in the Netherlands of their associate membership. Hoorah!

Our membership also grew with Ibiza Island Council officially joining NECSTOUR and have also become a ToT Lab Premium Member. Ibiza attended our AGM in Milan in May and participated in our Knowledge Day in Lanzarote last month by sharing their valuable perspectives on managing traffic congestion resulting from seasonal increases in tourism. We look forward to working with all new members, providing a European platform for them, and learning from their perspectives on sustainable tourism.



# WHAT'S COMING UP

## AGM AND DATA SUMMIT

From **10-11 December**, NECSTouR's **Data Summit** taking place in Brussels comprising a hybrid session for all members on the morning of 10 December and dedicated workshops for the Tourism of Tomorrow Lab Premium Members over the remaining day and a half. This final workshop of the year for premium members will be an opportunity for collaborative innovation, focusing on cutting-edge topics in data analysis, artificial intelligence, and sustainable tourism practices alongside exploring new tools and methodologies that are shaping the future of tourism.

We are also excited to announce that our next **Annual General Meeting** will be hosted by **Centre-Val de Loire Region** in **Bourges, France** from **21 to 23 April 2026**. Bourges has been designated the European Capital of Culture in 2028. The free-to-attend AGM event for NECSTouR members will be centred around the theme 'Tourism and Culture: from creation to legacy - building resilient and connected territories'. Registration for members will open in the New Year.




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