



NEWSTouR





NEWSTouR



In this edition...

Introduction from NECSTouR's new President	<u>03</u>
Annual General Meeting in Bourges	
Tourism and Culture: from creation, to legacy-building resilient and connected territories	<u>04</u>
Towards a new European Tourism Strategy	
High-level strategic dialogue with Commissioner Tzitzikostas	<u>05</u>
Tourism Advocacy Group meeting	<u>05</u>
Climate Hub	
NECSTouR becomes a European Climate Pact Partner	<u>06</u>
Community4Tourism	<u>06</u>
LIFE TOUR4CLIMA	<u>07</u>
Data Hub	
NECSTouR regions lead the future of data-driven tourism governance	<u>07</u>
D3HUB project	<u>08</u>
DEPLOYTOUR project	<u>08</u>
FACILTATE project	<u>09</u>
Governance Hub	
Governance Hub moves forward	<u>09</u>
Sustainable destination development and conscious marketing	<u>10</u>
New projects	
ReStart project	<u>10</u>
SLOWTOUR project	<u>11</u>
Member stories	
Post-industrial tourism	<u>11</u>
Barcelona Provincial Council signs up to the Glasgow Declaration	<u>12</u>
Measuring sustainable tourism	<u>12</u>
Sustainable marketing in Catalan wine tourism	<u>13</u>
NECSTouR on the road	
NECSTouR at FITUR 2026	<u>13</u>
What's coming up?	
NECSTouR Summit in Kotka-Hamina	<u>14</u>



AN INTRODUCTION FROM NECSTOUR'S PRESIDENT

NECSTouR continued its advocacy campaign during 2026 with a number of high level engagements with the EU institutions. In January, we attended European Tourism Day and followed this up the next day with a meeting of our Tourism Advocacy Group at the Committee of the Regions in the presence of Daniel Attard MEP. I am pleased to note that Mr Attard's report on Europe's first sustainable tourism strategy, a decisive step towards a more ambitious, balanced, and resilient tourism model across the EU, was adopted by the European Parliament last month. We await with great interest the publication of the European Commission's European Tourism Strategy in the autumn.

In March, I attended a high-level dialogue with Transport and Tourism Commissioner Tzitzikostas and in the presence of peers from cities and regions. It was an opportunity to profile NECSTouR's priorities: I highlighted the need to address issues like short term rentals, unbalanced tourism, climate action and the great importance to territorial economies of tourism. Our AGM in Bourges, in April, provided an important opportunity to reaffirm these priorities in the presence of Mona Bjorklund, Director at DG MOVE of the European Commission.

The role of regions is vital here in a fragmented sector that crosses many policy portfolios – transport, environment, skills, culture and heritage, entrepreneurship and SMEs, data and digital etc. Greater support for governance is extremely important and urgent. Better coordination is needed at the heart of this new strategy and regions can play a key role here. We need better data for policy making – a European Data Competence Centre building on the role of our D3Hub project, and more investment in tourism for resources, infrastructure, mobility initiatives and for cooperation and administration of the growing tourism sector. Of course, both local and long distance mobility remain key enablers of sustainable tourism, supporting both accessibility, territorial cohesion across the EU while contributing to the sector's green transition.

The next Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-34 offers a significant opportunity to cement Europe's position at the forefront of the global tourism industry while addressing emerging and existential challenges that must not be swept aside. I hope you enjoy reading this edition of NEWSTouR and we look forward to continued collaboration through the rest of this year.

Mathieu Cuip
President of NECSTouR



Mathieu Cuip
NECSTouR President



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING IN BOURGES

TOURISM AND CULTURE: FROM CREATION TO LEGACY BUILDING RESILIENT AND CONNECTED TERRITORIES

The NECSTouR Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2026 in Bourges brought together European regions, destination management organisations, universities, EU institutions and tourism stakeholders. Kindly hosted by the Centre-Val de Loire Region in Bourges, the AGM reaffirmed a clear message: regions must be central actors in designing and delivering Europe's tourism transition. As newly elected President, Mathieu Cuip underlined "the European Tourism strategy needs to be practical, rooted in territories, giving regions a role and a real seat at the table".

Over three days, more than 100 participants from 31 regions and 6 universities and research institutes demonstrated how territorial knowledge, experience and regional governance models can drive a more sustainable, resilient and competitive tourism ecosystem. Through workshops, thematic networking sessions, high-level policy debates and panel discussions, members advanced the objectives of the NECSTouR 2030 Pathway, showing how regional action contributes directly to EU level ambitions.

A major focus of the AGM was the Thematic Conference "Tourism and Culture: from creation to legacy – building resilient and connected territories," moderated by President Mathieu Cuip and Mona Bjorklund, Director of Policy Coordination at DG MOVE. The debate brought together regional representatives and stakeholders to discuss the forthcoming European Tourism Strategy and the essential role of regions in its implementation.

Framed by Bourges' impressive preparations for its role as European Capital of Culture 2028, our flagship event also highlighted how culture, tourism and territorial development can jointly create lasting value. Regional representatives and stakeholders illustrated how cultural programming can foster sustainable tourism models, strengthen community engagement and leave an enduring legacy.

The three days in Bourges showed how their territorial expertise, data capabilities, governance approaches and cultural assets translate into concrete progress on the ground, forming a solid foundation for tourism models that deliver benefits for both residents and visitors.



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TOWARDS A NEW EUROPEAN TOURISM STRATEGY

HIGH-LEVEL STRATEGIC DIALOGUE WITH COMMISSIONER TZITZIKOSTAS

At a High-Level Strategic Dialogue on Sustainable Tourism in March, NECSTouR President Mathieu Cuip urged a shift towards better tourism that supports communities rather than overwhelms them. Addressing European leaders and stakeholders, including the Commissioner for Sustainable Transport and Tourism Apostolos Tzitzikostas, he outlined three priorities for the upcoming EU Strategy.

First, destinations must move from promotion to proactive management, organising tourism flows across seasons, places, and transport modes to protect liveability. Second, tourism policy must break out of silos and align with mobility, housing, environmental, and spatial planning. Third, targeted investment in infrastructure, skills, and digital tools is essential to enable real transformation.

President Cuip also stressed stronger regional and cross-municipal cooperation, noting that tourism flows transcend administrative borders. Concluding, he called for an EU Strategy that supports regions, respects subsidiarity, and equips local authorities with the tools to deliver sustainable, community-centred tourism.



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TOURISM ADVOCACY GROUP MEETING

In January, NECSTouR's Tourism Advocacy Group meeting, chaired by NECSTouR President and CoR Member Mathieu Cuip, provided a post-European Tourism Day platform to reflect with members of the Committee of the Regions and the European Parliament.

Daniel Attard MEP addressed the group, sharing insights from his report on connectivity, cultural heritage, and destination management, opening a debate on how EU legislation can better support regional tourism for both DMOs and citizens. Representatives from NECSTouR member regions, the Balearic Islands and Galicia, stressed the need for the forthcoming EU Tourism Strategy to include practical tools for regions, align tourism with community wellbeing, and support skills development.

By engaging directly with EU policymakers and aligning with the European Commission's priorities, NECSTouR demonstrated its role as an important partner in advancing a sustainable and competitive tourism future for Europe.



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CLIMATE HUB

NECSTOUR BECOMES A EUROPEAN CLIMATE PACT PARTNER

NECSTouR is proud to have become a Partner of the European Climate Pact and to be the first tourism network to join the initiative, highlighting the central role of tourism in delivering effective climate action across Europe.

As an active member of this community, NECSTouR recently participated in the Pact’s annual event, “Together in Action 2026”, contributing to discussions on how different sectors can strengthen climate engagement. We further reinforced this commitment by hosting our Climate Workshop “Tourism and Climate Adaptation - Why and Where to Start” during our 2026 Annual General Meeting as a Satellite Event, strengthening the connection between regional tourism action and the broader EU climate agenda.

Joining the Pact opens new opportunities for our members to collaborate, share best practices, and amplify their impact across Europe, enabling the Climate Hub to continue playing a central role in bridging European policy with regional implementation. Looking ahead, a wide range of activities aligned with the Pact are planned in the coming months, further strengthening our impact.



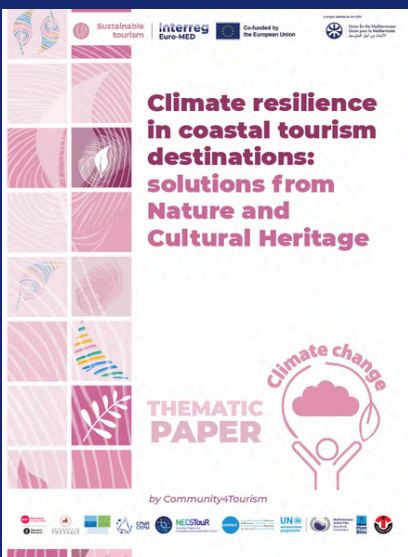
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COMMUNITY4TOURISM PROJECT

Community4Tourism (C4T) reaches its midpoint after 3.5 years of implementation, marked by the III MED Sustainable Tourism Convention in Barcelona on 18-19 June. This flagship event will explore the “Tourism Transition in the Mediterranean” through strategic debates, high-level policy keynotes and roundtables focused on practical solutions.

It will also mark the culmination of the past semester’s work, with the launch of a thematic paper entitled “Climate Resilience in Coastal Tourism Destinations: Solutions from Nature and Cultural Heritage”. The paper is a key output of the MED Cluster on Climate Change Adaptation, coordinated by NECSTouR and Plan Bleu.

In view of the imminent EU’s revised climate adaptation strategy , this C4T event is a pivotal moment to showcase the many initiatives strengthening tourism resilience across the Mediterranean.



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LIFE TOUR4CLIMA PROJECT

Following the institutional kick-off in Barcelona in January 2026, the LIFE TOUR4CLIMA project has entered its full implementation phase. Partners are advancing key activities to strengthen climate action in Catalonia and beyond. Notably, Barcelona Provincial Council has signed the Glasgow Declaration and will begin developing a Climate Action Plan for the tourism sector as part of the project (see page 12).

Project partner Eco-union has conducted a benchmarking study across several Climate Hub members to assess how climate action is embedded in regional tourism strategies. Building on these findings, an upcoming publication will present a set of governance criteria to support regional authorities in driving effective climate action in tourism.

In parallel, NECSTouR will host a webinar to further enrich this process through peer exchange. The session will feature case studies from Catalonia, Scotland, and Andalusia, showcasing successful examples of public cooperation that strengthen climate action at destination level.



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DATA HUB

NECSTOUR REGIONS LEAD THE FUTURE OF DATA-DRIVEN TOURISM GOVERNANCE



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NECSTouR's Tourism of Tomorrow Lab (ToT Lab) Data Summit brought together our members in person in Málaga, Andalusia, for a two-day workshop in March dedicated to sustainable tourism indicators and the practical use of artificial intelligence in destination management. Hosted at the Turismo Andaluz headquarters, the Summit counted on the participation of leading actors and institutions working at the intersection of tourism, data and statistics, including representatives from DG MOVE, UN Tourism, Eurostat, the JRC and Spain's National Statistics Institute.

The first day focused on aligning the work carried out within ToT Lab on a common set of sustainable tourism indicators with existing international frameworks, helping ensure methodological consistency and policy relevance. The second day explored how AI can support Destination Management Organisations through concrete examples linked to marketing, data analysis and operational decision-making. A key highlight was the presentation of the Nexus initiative, led by Andalusia, as a strategic framework for innovation and sustainability.

D3HUB PROJECT

The EU funded Data Driven Destinations Project (D3HUB) is entering its final phase of with a strong focus on defining the services that the future European Data Competence Centre will provide to support destinations in their data-driven transition. Following the completion of the pilot phase, the participating destinations met in Brussels in January for a dedicated exchange of experiences and peer-learning session.

This meeting provided an opportunity to share lessons learned, discuss common challenges and identify practical ways to move forward. Since then, the project has continued to provide tailored support to destinations as they implement their action plans, ensuring that the outcomes of the pilot phase are translated into concrete steps and long-term value. In parallel, D3HUB has further strengthened its capacity-building activities through the D3HUB Academy, offering new webinars and learning opportunities for tourism stakeholders.

Together, these activities are helping shape a future Competence Centre that responds to destinations' needs and provides practical tools, guidance and expertise for better tourism data management and decision-making. A final partners' meeting was held in Kiel, Germany in May. The project will hold its final conference on 24 September in Mallorca, Spain.



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DEPLOYTOUR PROJECT



During 2026, the EU funded DEPLOYTOUR project has reached several important milestones as it enters its second year of implementation. A major step forward has been the drafting of a rulebook, which will define the rules and governance framework for the future European Tourism Data Space. This work is essential to ensure that tourism stakeholders can share and use data in a trusted, interoperable and value-driven environment.

At the same time, the project pilots have continued to advance, validating concrete use cases that demonstrate the potential of the Data Space for destinations and tourism businesses. NECSTouR has been directly involved in Pilot 2, "Resilience and Competitiveness in Mature Destinations", and Pilot 5, "Empowering SMEs in Tourism". These pilots are particularly relevant for the NECSTouR ToTLab community, as they are led respectively by the Andalusian Tourism Board and Lapland University of Applied Sciences, both active members of the network.

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FACILITATE PROJECT

The FACILITATE project officially kicked off in December 2025 in Málaga, bringing together partners from across Europe to set the direction for this new initiative supporting destinations and tourism SMEs.

FACILITATE is an EU-funded project designed to strengthen data-driven, digital and sustainable practices across the tourism sector. By capitalising on existing EU initiatives, it will build a European community and provide practical support through guidelines, training, and peer-learning activities, helping stakeholders better collect, manage and use data for informed decision-making.

As part of its first phase, the project has now launched a Stakeholder & Needs Assessment Survey, inviting DMOs, SMEs and tourism actors to share their priorities and challenges. The results will directly shape the project's tools, capacity-building activities and long-term community.



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GOVERNANCE HUB

GOVERNANCE HUB MOVES FORWARD



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In April, we moved forward together in defining the Governance Hub programme. Designed as a space for peer-to-peer exchange, the Hub brings together regional leaders, policymakers, and destination managers to share best practices, align strategies, and co-create solutions for better destination governance.

The launch of the two Governance Hub's Working Groups marked an important step in strengthening NECSTouR's support to its members: Conscious Marketing and Destinations Development.

The Governance Hub is gaining momentum, creating stronger structures for co-creation, contributions to the EU Tourism Strategy and broader advocacy, and leadership within the network, and reinforcing the capacity of regions to steer the transformation of tourism in Europe.



SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT AND CONSCIOUS MARKETING

In April, the Governance Hub's Conscious Marketing and Destinations Development Working Groups met to equip members with the tools to lead the transition towards more conscious and value-driven tourism.

The Conscious Marketing Working Group enables marketing specialists from across the network to exchange knowledge, explore new approaches, and collectively rethink how destinations are promoted. Specifically, the Working Group drills down into how to integrate sustainability into marketing strategies, identifying responsible traveller segments, leveraging data and AI to better align tourism promotion with community values and environmental goals.

The Destinations Development Group gathers senior officials from NECSTouR member DMOs involved in destination management, sustainability strategies and territorial development to promote sustainable, balanced and resilient tourism models. The group supports NECSTouR members to implement effective governance models at the regional level by learning from each other and helping to align policies, stakeholders, instruments and long-term objectives.



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NEW PROJECTS

RESTART PROJECT

Since our last edition of NEWSTouR we are proud to announce that the ReStart Project has officially launched.

Co-funded by the Interreg North-West Europe programme, the ReStart project aims to accelerate the transition towards sustainable and regenerative tourism. At the heart of the project is the development of the Compass Guide, a practical tool designed to help public authorities create and implement balanced tourism strategies.

The project will support businesses, regions, and municipalities to embed regenerative tourism into policies and practices, empowering tourism authorities and stakeholders in their transition towards a more resilient and inclusive tourism sector.

Led by Visit Flanders (Belgium), the ReStart project brings together nine partners from Belgium, the Netherlands, France, and Germany. NECSTouR is pleased to be a partner of this project, contributing to the development and dissemination of regenerative tourism approaches that will inspire destinations and regions across Europe.



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SLOWTOUR PROJECT

The Interreg North-West Europe project SLOWTOUR kicked off in January 2026. SLOWTOUR aims to unlock the potential of cities with rich industrial heritage by promoting sustainable, slow and inclusive tourism approaches in areas that have struggled to revitalise and reuse assets following their de-industrialisation.

Led by City of Roubaix (France), the project involves eight partners from Ireland, France, Belgium, and Germany. Together, they will support industrial heritage cities in reimagining tourism through slow, inclusive, and place-based approaches that stimulate local economic development, strengthen citizen engagement, and enhance the overall attractiveness of those cities.

SLOWTOUR will develop principles, tools and practices that will be tested within the partners' cities, enabling municipalities, regions, and tourism stakeholders across Europe to replicate and adapt these approaches. Our role is to promote and disseminate the successes of our partners in their pilot projects and in turn, showcase these unique destinations to a pan-European audience.



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MEMBER STORIES

POST-INDUSTRIAL TOURISM

The Lodzkie Region is renowned for its rich history linked to the development of the textile industry, which shaped its identity. Today, it boasts unique tourism potential, wisely managed and opening the gates of the past to visitors. Lodzkie Region is one of the most important centres of post-industrial tourism in Poland.

As a post-industrial region, Lodzkie provides a fascinating journey through time, where the 19th-century red of factory bricks meets modern design, art, and entertainment. The capital of the region, Łódź, once called the "Polish Manchester," has undergone an extraordinary metamorphosis, transforming run-down factory grounds into vibrant cultural centres, luxury lofts, hotels, and offices. Traces of the industrial revolution can be found in many corners of the region, these traces form the basis of thematic tourist trails and individual attractions available to tourists.

Drawing on tradition and history, Lodzkie Region is shaping post-industrial tourism in harmony with the sustainable development of the region.



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MEMBER STORIES

BARCELONA PROVINCIAL COUNCIL SIGNS UP TO THE GLASGOW DECLARATION

On 26 March, Barcelona Provincial Council (DIBA) approved its adhesion to the Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism, joining an international community committed to halving emissions from the tourism sector by 2030 and achieve climate neutrality by 2050.

To meet these objectives, the Barcelona Provincial Council's Climate Action Plan (CAP) will help calculate the carbon footprint of the tourism sector in Barcelona's counties. This will help define monitoring indicators, identify training actions and pilot projects to improve climate action in tourism in the province.

The CAP will be deployed through the Life TOUR4CLIMA project, co-financed by the European LIFE programme. The goal of the project is to promote the transition of the Catalan tourism sector towards climate neutrality and share good practices with other European partners.

Barcelona Provincial Council has been part of the initiative since last January and heads a working group that coordinates actions at local, provincial and regional level



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MEASURING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM



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Visit Zuid-Limburg, together with the Parkstad Limburg City Region and European partners, are taking new steps towards future-proofing tourism with the Interreg funded project Tourism4SDG where it has focused on answering one central question: how can data help us make decisions about the tourist-recreational development of the region?

Part of the Tourism4SDG project included study visits to Riga and Sigulda (Latvia), the Duero region and Valladolid (Spain) and Coimbra (Portugal). The insights gained are now being translated into practice in Parkstad, with a first step being the pilot with Resono data in the Heidenatuurpark.

This method makes it possible to map visitor numbers and flow, providing valuable insights into the use of the area. It also supports the ambitions of the destination marketing plan 'This is Parkstad', which works on a sustainable and attractive region for residents and visitors. By connecting data and policy, Visit Zuid-Limburg and the Parkstad Limburg City Region are jointly committed to future-proofing tourist-recreational development.



SUSTAINABLE MARKETING IN CATALAN WINE TOURISM

What happens when a sector does more than it communicates on sustainability? This is the key finding of the Wine Travel Observer 2025, the annual research of the Escola d'Enoturisme de Catalunya (EEC), and it is reshaping perspectives on sustainable tourism in Catalonia's wine regions.

Across the sector, practices are strong: 91% of wineries implement climate adaptation measures such as drought-resistant practices and efficient irrigation; 87% of restaurants feature mostly local wines; 85% manage waste selectively; and 66–83% rely exclusively on local suppliers. These are not marginal efforts, but widespread behaviours aligned with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Most businesses fail to communicate these actions, missing an opportunity to build trust, differentiation, and loyalty among increasingly conscious travellers. EEC supports wineries in turning real practices into clear marketing narratives, based on coherence, transparency, and participation, ensuring sustainability becomes a decisive reason to visit.



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NECSTOUR ON THE ROAD

NECSTOUR AT FITUR 2026

In January, NECSTouR recorded a major new development when former President Elena Baena chaired the 63rd Meeting of the UN Tourism Affiliate Members Board during FITUR in Madrid. This marked the beginning of the 2026–2029 mandate and strengthened NECSTouR's role as a key bridge between regions, international organisations and the private sector. Discussions were held on the 2026–2027 Programme of Work including the new "Affiliate Members-driven services" framework.

The Board Meeting brought together stakeholders from across the global Affiliate Members community, underlining the value of inclusive, multi-level tourism governance. By chairing the Board, NECSTouR positioned regional perspectives at the heart of global tourism discussions. This prestigious role will create new opportunities for members to engage in UN Tourism initiatives, contribute to knowledge tools, anticipate policy trends and increase their international visibility.



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WHAT'S COMING UP

NECSTOUR SUMMIT IN KOTKA-HAMINA

Join us on 21–23 October 2026 in Kotka-Hamina for the next major NECSTouR gathering, a three-day Summit dedicated to exploring how authenticity, happiness and sustainability can guide the evolution of Europe's destinations. The Summit will bring together regional leaders, destination managers, policymakers and tourism innovators to examine how territories can strengthen resilience and deliver long-term value for communities.

The programme will feature hands-on workshops on sustainable mobility and climate action planning, heritage tourism, and the Baltic perspective on regenerative tourism. Participants will also take part in our EU Projects Exhibition, a unique platform to showcase initiatives, exchange methodologies and build new partnerships shaping the tourism of tomorrow.

Kotka-Hamina will offer members a unique space to reflect, exchange and co-create solutions for the future of European tourism. We look forward to welcoming our community to Finland for an inspiring Summit.



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CONTACT INFORMATION



NECSTouR Executive Team
Grasmarkt 61
1000 Brussels
Belgium



communication@necstour.eu



[LinkedIn](#)



+32 2 721 72 93



The next edition of NEWSTouR will be out in December 2026. Members are requested to forward any articles for consideration by 19 November to Joseph Park, NEWSTouR Editor: communication@necstour.eu