



RESTART MED! REvitalization of Sustainable Tourism Across Regions in The MEDiterranean

Final Evaluation Report

September 2023

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RESTART MED! – REvitalization of Sustainable Tourism Across Regions in The MEDiterranean

Final Evaluation Report

September 2023



RESTART MED!

This report was produced by the research centre ARCO (Action Research for CO-development) c/o PIN S.c.r.l.
– Prato, Italy.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project:	RESTART MED! - REvitalization of Sustainable Tourism Across Regions in The MEDiterranean
Reference N°:	C_A.1.3_0054
Countries:	Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Spain, Tunisia
Donor:	ENI CBC MED 2014/2020, European Union
Leader:	CISP – Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli
Partners:	Cambra de Comerç de Barcelona, Catalan Tourist Board, American University of Beirut, Jordan University of Science and Technology, WWF North Africa
Evaluator:	ARCO – Action Research for Co-Development

FOCUS:

RESTART MED! – REvitalization of Sustainable Tourism Across Regions in The MEDiterranean – is a capitalisation project funded by ENI CBC MED under the thematic objective: A.1 Business and SMEs development and the priority A.1.3 Sustainable tourism. The project was implemented between 01-09-2021 and 30-09-2023, with a total budget of 1.1 million euros. RESTART MED! has been implemented in five countries (Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Spain, Tunisia) by a partnership lead by CISP – Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli - and composed by Barcelona Official Chamber of Commerce (Spain), Catalan Tourist Board (Spain), American University of Beirut (Lebanon), Jordan University of Science and Technology (Jordan), World Wild Funds Mediterranean North Africa (Tunisia). The capitalisation project is based on the collaboration among the 4 standard projects on sustainable tourism within the ENI CBC MED programme 2014-2020, namely: CROSSDEV lead by CISP, MEDUSA lead by CBB, MED GAIMS lead by AUB and MED PEARLS lead by CTB. RESTART MED! is aimed at revitalizing the tourism economy after the COVID-19 pandemic, by building on and learning from previous experiences and practices, using this moment to boost sustainability together with the economic recovery of this key industry. The project supported tourism providers to work alongside public and civil society stakeholders for a better and resilient recovery, by creating more sustainable policies and products.

The research centre **ARCO (Action Research for CO-Development)** c/o PIN S.c.r.l is in charge of the external Final Evaluation of the RESTART MED! project. The Final Evaluation covers the period up to September 2023.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS:

The general objective of the Final evaluation is to understand the main results achieved by the project in first phase of its implementation. To investigate the degree of success of the project, the evaluators followed the OECD-DAC criteria (OECD, 2021), hence assessing:

- **Relevance:** the extent to which the Project design and objectives respond to the needs of the target groups of beneficiaries and to the priorities of the local/global partners and institutions involved, and whether they continue to do so if circumstances change;
- **Coherence:** the extent to which the Project activities are consistent with one another and coherent to the priorities and policies identified by the ENI CBC MED capitalization Programme [internal coherence], and the extent to which the Project is complementary and co-ordinated with the capitalized projects and other actors' interventions in the sector of sustainable tourism implemented in the Project's countries and sites [external coherence];

- **Effectiveness:** the extent to which the Project achieved, or is expected to achieve, its outputs, results and objectives as defined in its Logical Framework, including any differential results across groups, with a specific attention to gender differences and vulnerable groups. This will also include the analysis of the main enabling factors and challenges encountered during implementation and the evaluation of the corrective measure taken;
- **Efficiency:** the extent to which the Project delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way, by making optimal use of the available financial and human resources;
- **Impact:** the extent to which the Project generated, or is expected to generate, significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, medium to long-term effects on the target beneficiaries and on the context of intervention;
- **Sustainability:** the extent to which the net benefits of the Project continue, or are likely to continue, in the long term after its completion.

EVALUATION FINDINGS:

The triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative analysis of collected data throughout the evaluation along with the desk analysis of project documentation has allowed to assess the project according to the OECD DAC criteria (OECD, 2021). The table below showcases the main evaluation results, while a detailed, country-specific assessment is provided in Section 4.

RELEVANCE

The concept of **capitalisation** seems to be not entirely clear within the programme and there was a lack of clear direction and support from the Managing Authority in defining what was meant by capitalisation and in supporting the funded projects in this process. In the first few months, due to this ambiguity, the RESTART MED! partners had discussions about the exact meaning of capitalisation, an issue similar to what happened in other ENI CBC MED capitalisation projects. Essentially, RESTART MED! has mostly interpreted capitalisation in terms of communication and promotion, taking advantage of the network of contacts by standard projects to disseminate the main results and increase their impact. It was difficult to address capitalisation on the issue of sustainable tourism between countries on different sides of the Mediterranean, considering the differences between the countries involved in terms of policies, governance and context (e.g. political, social, economic). While tourism started to gradually recover at the global level after easing the Covid-19 restrictions in 2021, the sector is still facing evolving challenges and risks around the world. RESTART MED! provided an **opportunity to strengthen** activities already implemented and results achieved on the four different ENI CBC MED standard projects on sustainable tourism. Capitalisation not only linked to the promotion and visibility of activities done in the past, but also allowed to move next steps and to have clear ideas for the next projects. The project made it possible to touch on local issues and implement activities that would not have been possible with standard projects due to budget and time constraints. The work carried out in terms of policy review in the different target territories by the local partners has been relevant, as well as the participative activities such as workshops and focus groups in each territory that allowed numerous actors, also from different sectors, to get to know each other and network. The support given to stakeholders and service providers through subgrants for promotion and visibility has also been very relevant for the supported organisations and demonstrated to be one of the most effective and concrete activity in involving local stakeholders. In terms of networking, of great importance have been the opportunities created by the three Sustainable Tourism Summits organised.

COHERENCE

RESTART MED! acted in coherence with the ENI CBC MED standard projects on sustainable tourism which it aimed to capitalise on, CROSSDEV lead by CISP, MEDUSA lead by CBB, MED GAIMS lead by AUB and MED PEARLS lead by CTB. The RESTART MED! partners were not requested to develop new sustainable tourism products, but to capitalise on the ones developed by the four standard projects, focusing on their promotion and visibility and on the creation of networks at national and international level that could support the growth of sustainable tourism. ENI CBC MED capitalization projects were also requested to use and building on results from other projects from ENI, but also from INTERREG MED, COSME, EMFF, EASME programmes. The capitalisation of some initiatives was sometimes challenging, as it wasn't easy to reach the project contact persons because the projects ended years ago and activities to maintain the results over the years were lacking or because the projects' outputs and outcomes were very specific and difficult to capitalise within RESTART MED!.

EFFECTIVENESS

The **expected result indicator** is the increased diversification of tourism offer through the promotion of local and territorial assets/drivers especially in off season periods. In terms of new sustainable touristic products, the project target was achieved as a result of networking, dissemination & communication, training and subgranting activities. More than 260 persons from public authorities and non-profit organisations such as Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) participated in the training workshops. As far as the achievement of **output indicators** is concerned, the Project partners achieved all the expected targets, with one exception. The number of subgrants achieved is lower than the expected target because in Sicily, Italy, the local partner preferred to award a single sub-grant for visibility initiatives of a larger amount. On the other hand, some project targets were exceeded thanks to the work carried out by the partners. The project was effective in achieving the three specific objectives it had set itself, achieving good results overall but especially at the level of individual territories. Concerning training, the project developed a manual that encompasses good practices and illustrates how training on sustainable tourism practices should be addressed. Capacity building activities were carried out in each country, both with actors already involved in standard projects and with new ones, tailoring the training to local contexts after a brief analysis of learning needs. Finally, the online training course "Sustainable Tourism planning & management" was developed and uploaded on the medsustainabletourism.net platform. 17 subgrants were activated and completed in all countries. The subgrants made it possible to create sustainable tourism initiatives and to give promotion and visibility to organisations, experiences and tourism products. RESTART MED! created the Med Sustainable Tourism web site as a tool for project partners and stakeholders to capitalise on existing networks by connecting them, and to include more actors involved in the tourism sector in the MED area. A strong contribution to the networking was also given by the international Sustainable Tourism Summit and by the thematic and policy-related focus groups at national level organized by the project consortium. A first analysis of data from projects to be capitalised was made, with owners and experts of the outputs. Secondly, a policy review was conducted in each country by the local project partner. The result of this process was the elaboration for each target territory of technical reports with policy review of the legislative framework related to tourism, with a focus on sustainable tourism, and policy recommendations documents. The RESTART MED! communication was effective focused on engaging relevant target groups (policy makers and public national and local institutions, private economic operators and civil society), in addition to developing stakeholders' networks, raising awareness and disseminating project results.

EFFICIENCY

As a general premise, the planned activities were carried out with a limited budget and time compared to standard projects, mostly focusing on aspects related to promotion and visibility. RESTART MED! was efficient when considering the relationship between the budget resources / time available and the activities carried out, and all partners implemented the project activities as planned. Many results were achieved also by leveraging on the outcomes of standard projects (as expected in capitalisation projects), which made it possible to be efficient and productive. In terms of expenditure, there were some challenges faced by partners at an early stage, due to the simultaneity with standard projects to which some human resources were assigned and due to delays in receiving feedback from the managing authority. Thanks to the approved major amendment, it was possible to use the remaining resources in the last six months of the project to add new activities and enhance other actions that were already planned, with a focus on the cross-border dimension. Being the standard projects still active during the implementation of the capitalisation actions, all members of the project teams were readily available. Conversely, getting in touch with the contact persons of already concluded projects turned out to be more complicated. In terms of partnerships, RESTART MED! was somehow challenging to manage, as there are many differences both in terms of the mandates of the actors involved and in terms of policies on sustainable tourism between the various target areas. Anyway, each partner brought its own set of skills and expertise to the project, and the ability to manage the activities in their respective local contexts was demonstrated by all the actors involved. CISP managed the project by striving for the greatest possible impact in each country. In order to do this, each partner was given the opportunity to implement the activities as they deemed appropriate. On the other hand, having preferred a shared / horizontal management in the decision-making caused some difficulties, especially in the initial phase when it was necessary to define what capitalisation meant in the project.

IMPACT

When analysing the impact of the project on **enhancement of the value of pre-existing tourist products/services**, the focus goes to capacity building and subgrants to private actors. A total of 17 subgrantees were awarded by the project partners, some of which had already been beneficiaries of subgrants and capacity building in previous standard projects. Since the activities of the sub-grants were concluded in the second half of the second year, the exact impact in terms of increased visitors given by the improvement in terms of promotion and visibility is currently complicated to establish, but it can certainly be said that the beneficiaries' potential to attract visitors has greatly improved. Furthermore, the positive impact of the networking moments between the subgrantees at the Summits, which contributed to the exchange of experiences and good practices, should be

emphasised. The project also aimed at **strengthening the network and platform around sustainable tourism practices and products**. The Med Sustainable Tourism platform was developed as a working tool for the partners, for the RESTART MED! network and for other stakeholders that may be interested in sustainable tourism. The Med Sustainable Tourism platform was mainly aimed at mapping not only what was done by the ENI CBC MED projects, but also by other projects and initiatives on sustainable tourism. The platform was useful not only to the general public, but also for networking and maintaining relations between partners and actors. Along with the platform, and probably more than the platform itself, the events and activities organised locally (workshops and focus groups) and internationally (Sustainable Tourism Summits) had a positive impact on the creation and development of a network of actors around the project. These activities represented a fundamental opportunity for the partners and all the actors involved, from national institutions to private sector actors, civil society and finally the beneficiaries of the subgrants, to become part of a community of practices that aims to promote sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean. The networking events organised through RESTART MED! allowed the exchange of practices and knowledge and the creation of partnerships within each target country and especially between different Mediterranean countries. Finally, the project tried to **increase awareness and capacity of public authorities & policy makers to adopt policies for local tourism/economic development**. RESTART MED! promoted and encouraged a dialogue on policies, even though the project was aware of the huge differences across the countries involved, that made it complicated to carry out a single advocacy action towards public institutions. For instance, it was decided to develop several policy review reports for each target territory. Although the project did not lead to the adoption of policies on sustainable tourism and economic development, participatory processes involving various actors were undertaken in each territory. These processes, together with the elaboration of policy reviews at the national level, can be considered a fundamental first step towards achieving real change at the regulatory level. The project's **communication** achieved a good impact, to the extent that RESTART MED! is the second most followed project among the ENI CBC MED capitalisation projects, testifying to the good work done.

SUSTAINABILITY

RESTART MED! covered the hosting costs of the **Med Sustainable Tourism platform** for a couple of years, but no agreement was reached between the partners as to which organisation would be responsible for the future management of the platform. Given the current situation, it is plausible that the platform will remain static in the years to come and will continue to be a showcase of good practices and experiences on sustainable tourism, with a database and online training on demand, but without the need for a real animation in the future, including the addition of materials and news. Each ENI CBC MED projects on sustainable tourism developed a website/platform, and the main concern is related to the sustainability of these tools, that must be somehow financially sustainable for the responsible organisation. **Sustainability of the network** of actors that has been created around RESTART MED! will depend not only on the Med Sustainable Tourism platform, but also on the Med Sustainable Tourism LinkedIn group that has been created by the project. Furthermore, given the positive experience of the project and the good relationship between the partners and the private stakeholders involved, future collaborations based on new projects and initiatives may arise. In order to **foster collaborations between private stakeholders**, first and foremost sub-grantees, it is recommended that online initiatives be organised the RESTART MED! partners periodically to follow up on the process started thanks to the capitalisation project. As far as support for private actors is concerned, both capacity building activities and subgrants for promotion and visibility activities ensure a certain level of sustainability and will have a positive impact on beneficiaries and local communities especially in the months to come. The partners' careful selection of beneficiaries ensures that they will be able to continue developing their sustainable tourism products in the future. With regard to the activities directed at **public authorities and policy makers**, the RESTART MED! project, thanks to the activities carried out by the partners in their respective contexts, has laid the foundations of a process that may lead in the future to the adoption of policies aimed at supporting sustainable tourism and thus economic development in the target countries. In order for the awareness-raising process carried out with the public actors thanks to the events organised to lead to such medium to long term results, it will however be necessary to continue with the process undertaken in the territories, involving private and public actors in further moments of sharing and confrontation, in order to maintain the focus on the theme. In this sense, the commitment and willingness of the project partners to continue to play a central role in order to prevent the results achieved from being lost.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

CAPITALISATION AT ENI CBC MED PROGRAMME LEVEL

- RESTART MED!'s approach to capitalisation allowed its partners to be efficient and productive, but the advice for the future is to define more clearly what capitalisation means at the programme level. It is

possible to provide multiple options yet have a few guidelines to facilitate the work of Lead Beneficiaries and their partners.

- Increased support from the programme to capitalisation projects, as well as stronger leadership in carrying out the advocacy function on policy-making (e.g., through a common platform, policy briefings, etc. at national level and with the European Commission) may be required.
- It is useful to maintain an overlap between standard and capitalisation projects, but it would be beneficial to have more time - at least 6 months - devoted to capitalisation after the conclusion of standard projects, thus having the opportunity to better capitalise and consolidate the final results and outputs.

SUPPORTING ECONOMIC RECOVERY

- More fundings dedicated to subgrants could have enhanced the impact on private sector stakeholders, allowing to increase the amount of grants to the selected subgrantees or even to support a higher number of worthy initiatives and experiences, in line with the thematic objective and priority (A.1 Business and SMEs development in the sustainable tourism sector).
- It is suggested also to focus on subgrants and capacity building support to beneficiaries since the early beginning of project activities. This includes building on their engagement, and according to their needs, develop the roadmap with the target local communities, giving more opportunities for subgrantees from different Mediterranean countries to meet, network and create collaborations between themselves.
- Subgrants proved to be significant in terms of impact, but ways must be found to reduce administrative / management burden for beneficiary companies (especially in comparison with the limited amount of the received sub-grant) as they are usually of limited dimensions and lack the required competence.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY

- It is suggested to consider the opportunity for platforms which mostly directed for use by the community of practice to be hosted on the domain of the ENI CBC MED programme. This would help solve the problem of their financial sustainability and future management of platforms, which may become static but continue to exist as knowledge tools and repository of experiences. Any platform should be kept alive as part of ENI CBC MED sustainability strategy, being an issue that concerns not only the sustainability of individual projects but of the entire programme.
- It is suggested for ENI CBC MED to include in the call for projects the requirement to explain the way to make the platform and the websites produced sustainable even after the end of the projects.
- It is important to keep on involving local communities and local stakeholders in participatory activities, organising moments of discussion and co-creation between different types of actors allowing the exchange of perspectives and knowledge.

SUPPORTING SUSTAINABILITY

- Capitalisation projects should be able simultaneously to adapt to local contexts but also to suggest shared strategies among Mediterranean countries.
- As the project's community of practice developed tools, such as the checklist to analyse sustainability and policies of local authorities, these should have been tested not only in one country, but at least piloted in all other partner countries as well. Capitalising and consolidating the product by testing it in other contexts would have increased the impact of the project.
- It is also suggested to ensure and enable a greater involvement of associate partners for institutional and policy continuity in all countries.

1 INTRODUCTION

RESTART MED! – REvitalization of Sustainable Tourism Across Regions in The MEDiterranean – is a capitalisation project funded by ENI CBC MED under the thematic objective: A.1 Business and SMEs development and the priority A.1.3 Sustainable tourism. The project was implemented between 01-09-2021 and 30-09-2023, with a total budget of 1.1 million euros.

RESTART MED! has been implemented in five countries (Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Spain, Tunisia) by a partnership lead by CISP – Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli - and composed by Barcelona Official Chamber of Commerce (Spain), Catalan Tourist Board (Spain), American University of Beirut (Lebanon), Jordan University of Science and Technology (Jordan), World Wild Funds Mediterranean North Africa (Tunisia).

The capitalisation project is based on the collaboration among the 4 standard projects on sustainable tourism within the ENI CBC MED programme 2014-2020, namely: CROSSDEV lead by CISP, MEDUSA lead by CBB, MED GAIMS lead by AUB and MED PEARLS lead by CTB.

RESTART MED! is aimed at revitalizing the tourism economy after the COVID-19 pandemic, by building on and learning from previous experiences and practices, using this moment to boost sustainability together with the economic recovery of this key industry. The project supported tourism providers to work alongside public and civil society stakeholders for a better and resilient recovery, by creating more sustainable policies and products.

The research centre [ARCO \(Action Research for CO-development\)](#) c/o PIN S.c.r.l is in charge of the external Final Evaluation of the project. The Final external Evaluation was conducted between April and September 2023, and included a field visit during the 2nd RESTART MED! Summit in Tunisia.

This Final evaluation report is structured as follows: **Section 2** describes the project intervention, including its Theory of Change; **Section 3** introduces the evaluation framework proposed by the research centre ARCO c/o PIN S.c.r.l.; **Section 4** presents the evaluation findings; finally, **Section 5** closes with the main conclusions and recommendations.

2 RESTART MED! PROJECT

2.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVENTION

CISP, in partnership with Barcelona Official Chamber of Commerce (CBB), Catalan Tourist Board (CTB), American University of Beirut (AUB), Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST), World Wild Funds Mediterranean North Africa (Tunisia), implemented the ENI CBC MED Capitalisation project RESTART MED! – REvitalization of Sustainable Tourism Across Regions in The MEDiterranean.

RESTART MED! is based on the collaboration among the 4 standard projects on sustainable tourism within the ENI CBC MED programme 2014-2020, namely: CROSSDEV lead by CISP, MEDUSA lead by CBB, MED GAIMS lead by AUB and MED PEARLS lead by CTB, which joined forces to contribute to the capitalization process launched by the ENI CBC Med programme strengthening economic and social development in the Mediterranean, disseminating and scaling up successful sustainable tourism practices and resources thus supporting recovery and building a community of tourism opportunities.

The RESTART MED! project aims at contributing to the economic and social development in Mediterranean, strengthening, disseminating, and scaling up successful sustainable tourism practices & resources, in post-COVID-19 era.

In particular, the project aims at:

- **SUPPORTING ECONOMIC RECOVERY:** use results & successful practices of sustainable tourism projects for transfer and further exploitation in a “from pandemic shock to recovery” perspective, supporting resilience and local jobs in the tourism sector with cross-border knowledge and instruments.
- **BUILDING A COMMUNITY:** build on existing platforms & communities to spread knowledge, skills, benefits of tourism projects to a wider community, adding value through a cross-border, collaborative MED destination approach, under a common brand, which combines sustainability and economic opportunities.
- **SUPPORTING SUSTAINABILITY:** increase awareness and capacity at public authorities & policy makers for mainstreaming of environmental, socioeconomic, cultural sustainable good practices and results into policies for local tourism/economic development.

The ENI CBC MED capitalization vision and approach indicates as:

➤ key drivers of capitalization processes mainly:

- **RESULTS:** Make results and knowledge available across the Mediterranean area
- **SYNERGIES:** Build effective and tangible synergies with other Mediterranean initiatives
- **VISIBILITY:** Increase the visibility of the Programme with policy-makers and other stakeholders
- **POLICY IMPACT:** Support evidence-based policy development

➤ objectives of capitalization:

- Reinforcement of networks
- Transfer and exploitation of results
- Strategic dissemination and awareness of public authorities and policy makers

The RESTART MED! capitalisation approach foresees:

- Using and building on results from ENI CBC MED programme but also from INTERREG MED COSME EMFF EASME programmes

- Reinforcing networking in Sustainable Tourism among SME, institutions and people
- Boosting environmental, socio-economic and cultural sustainability in tourism and increasing awareness
- Promoting mainstreaming of sustainable tourism concepts into policies
- Supporting the tourism industry and local communities for economic and social recovery

The following Table presents the project consortium, composed by the Lead Beneficiary, five Project Partners and seven Associate Partners.

Table 1 – Project consortium

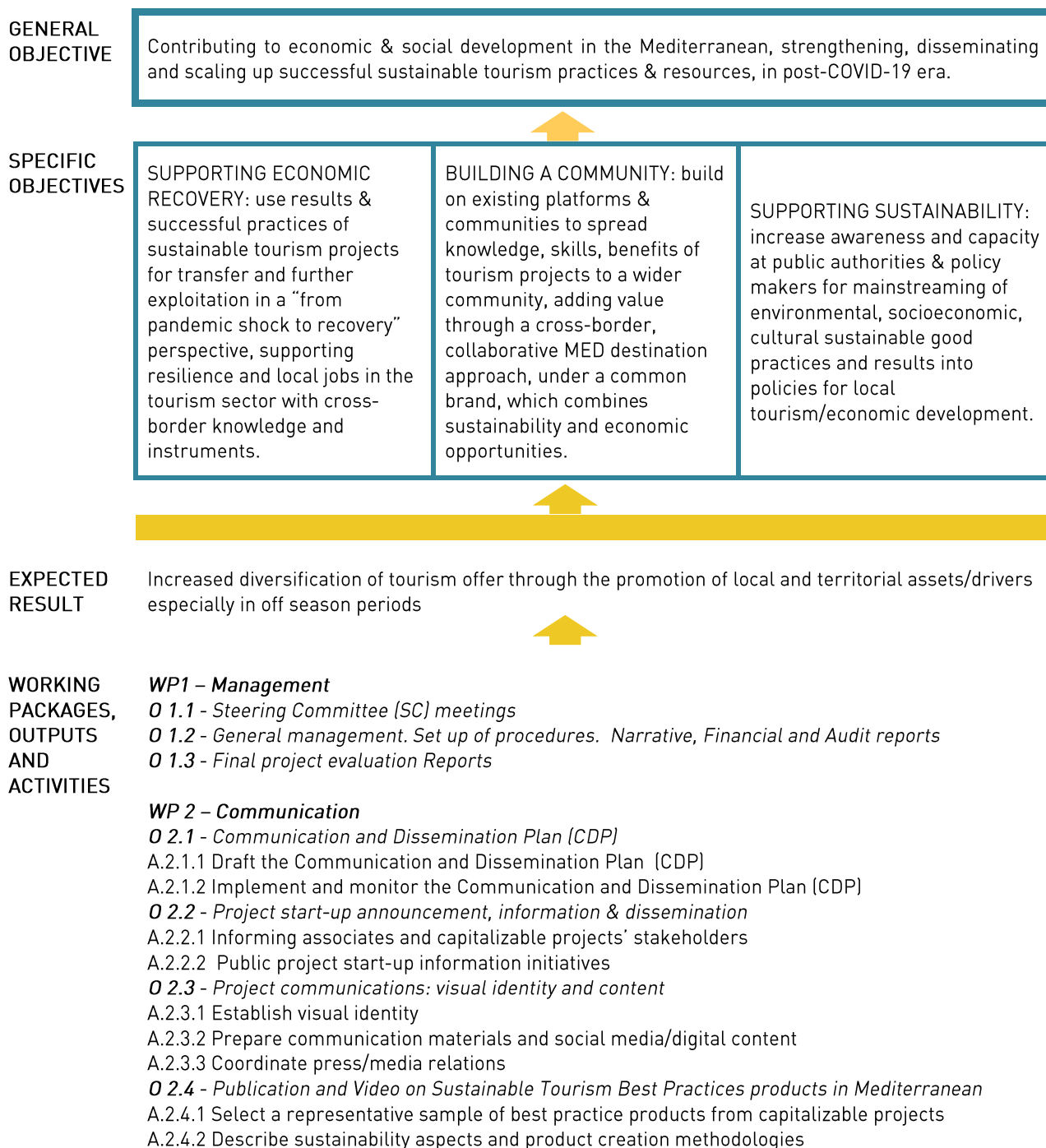
ROLE	NAME OF THE ORGANISATION	COUNTRY
Lead beneficiary	CISP – Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP)	Italy
Project partner	PP1 Barcelona Official Chamber of Commerce (BCC)	Spain
Project partner	PP2 Catalan Tourist Board (CTB)	Spain
Project partner	PP3 American University of Beirut (AUB)	Lebanon
Project partner	PP4 Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST)	Jordan
Project partner	PP5 World Wild Funds Mediterranean North Africa (WWF-NA)	Tunisia
Associate partner	Barcelona Provincial Council - Diputacio de Barcelona (DIBA)	Spain
Associate partner	Association of the Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASCAME)	Spain
Associate partner	Ministry of Tourism	Lebanon
Associate partner	Tunisian National Tourism Office - ONTT	Tunisia
Associate partner	Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo - MIBACT - Segretariato Generale	Italy
Associate partner	Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	Jordan
Associate partner	International Social Tourism Organisation (ISTO)	Other

Source: Authors' elaboration

2.2 PROJECT THEORY OF CHANGE

The Theory of Change (ToC) is a useful tool to present the project in terms of results, showing activities, outputs, expected results, specific objectives and general objectives in a schematic way, allowing to visualise from which activities a change is expected to be generated. The ToC thus describes what a given project does and how its intervention is supposed to lead to the desired long-term change by breaking down the whole process. The ToC allows a reverse reasoning: first, the general objectives, i.e. the long-term changes, are identified; then, the conditions for their realisation (specific objectives) are highlighted; finally, these are broken down into the measurable short-term changes that are achieved (expected results) through the attainment of outputs and activities. The ToC was elaborated by ARCO according to the project documentation.

Table 2 – RESTART MED! Theory of Change



- A.2.4.3 Publication and Video on Sustainable Tourism Best Practices products in Mediterranean
- O 2.5 - Brand communication**
- A.2.5.1 Consolidate/articulate the brand name for sustainable tourism
- A.2.5.2 Support platform communications

WP 3 - Transfer & exploitation: activities with/for private actors

O 3.1 - Training of tourism service providers on Sustainability and Promotion

- A.3.1.1 Select trainees and trainers
- A.3.1.2 Prepare course materials and guidelines
- A.3.1.3 Implement sustainability training courses
- A.3.1.4 Provide online access to course

O 3.2 - Product competition (subgrants for visibility initiatives)

- A.3.2.1 Launch call for projects
- A.3.2.2 Verify primary criteria (sustainability)
- A.3.2.3 Verify secondary criteria (business)
- A.3.2.4 Assess visibility project proposal and shortlist winning products
- A.3.2.5 Monitor development of visibility initiatives funded by subgrants
- A.3.2.6 Endorse the products by public and civil society stakeholders

WP 4 - Reinforcement of networks: bringing together private and public actors.

O 4.1 - Network strategy for sustainable tourism community

- A.4.1.1 Assess needs of private & public stakeholders
- A.4.1.2 Review existing platforms and communities, identify linkage and useable elements
- A.4.1.3 Detail technical requirements for RESTART MED! platform structure, desired functionality.
- A.4.1.4 Define platform governance structure, mission statement and business model

O 4.2 - Community-building initiatives for reinforcing/enlarging sustainable tourism stakeholder networks

- A.4.2.1 Host thematic focus groups for public & private stakeholders (knowledge sharing & management)
- A.4.2.2 Involve civil society (in 4.2.1 focus groups)
- A.4.2.3 Host Tourism Summit 1 in Italy: public launch of RESTART MED! community and platform
- A.4.2.4 Implement expansion campaign
- A.4.2.5 Final Tourism Summit 2, Lebanon. Presentation project results, community/platform handover

O 4.3 - Online sustainable tourism community platform

- A.4.3.1 Develop platform infrastructure
- A.4.3.2 Establish linking mechanisms with existing platforms
- A.4.3.3 Acquire members
- A.4.3.4 Populate the platform and launch beta version

WP 5 - Awareness and dissemination: activities with/for public stakeholders

O 5.1 - Awareness increase of policy makers/ public authorities on sustainable tourism challenges

- A.5.1.1 Understand the data: document-based research & discussions with Best Practices for policies
- A.5.1.2 Draft sustainability challenges and methods for promotion in tourism product creation
- A.5.1.3 Draft guidelines to address and mainstream sustainability challenges in tourism policies

O 5.2 - Policy reviews for the mainstreaming of sustainability in tourism

- A.5.2.1 Select and invite local, regional, national tourism offices/boards/ministries
- A.5.2.2 Present policy guidelines (sustainability challenges) and RESTART MED! community (platform)
- A.5.2.3 Review policies in individual workshops/meetings with Public Authorities
- A.5.2.4 Signature and dissemination of reviewed acts, political commitments, recommendations.

RA1

Source: Authors' elaboration

3 EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

3.1 PURPOSES AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The main purpose of the Final Evaluation is to assess how effectively the project reached its targets and objectives, to analyse the change triggered by the Project on its beneficiaries and in the target communities, to provide recommendations for future actions in the sector of sustainable tourism and local development, and to highlight lessons learned and good practices as basis for decision making processes for scaling up, replication, diffusion and continuation of the actions supported through the Project.

This Evaluation contributes to three overall objectives:

1. Learning. The Evaluation supports project partners in learning from the RESTART MED! experience in order to be able to improve their ongoing and future interventions in this field and support institutional learning.
2. Empowerment. By involving local partners, Project staff and Project beneficiaries and stakeholders in every step of the study, the Evaluation triggers a capacity-building process that intends empowering them in the long term.
3. Accountability. The Evaluation contributes to account to donors and beneficiaries on the use of funds.

3.2 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The overall Evaluation process is **results utilization-focused**, an approach that implies a **participatory and interactive evaluation** involving Project partners, Associated partner, beneficiaries (subgrantees), and other relevant stakeholders at local and country levels. Due to the cross-border design of RESTART MED!, the Evaluation considers two levels of analysis, the country-level and the “aggregate” level.

The evaluation methodology is composed of **four main strands of analysis**:

- Assessment of the alignment between the RESTART MED! Project and the ENI CBC MED Capitalization process’s vision and approach, and evaluation of the completeness and adherence to reality of the Project’s Theory of Change.
- Analysis of the compliance of RESTART MED! to the following OECD-DAC criteria (OECD, 2019), by country and at the aggregate level:
 - RELEVANCE (i.e., the extent to which the Project design and objectives respond to the needs of the target groups of beneficiaries and to the priorities of the local/global partners and institutions involved, and whether they continue to do so if circumstances change).
 - COHERENCE (i.e., the extent to which the Project activities are consistent with one another and coherent to the priorities and policies identified by the ENI CBC MED capitalization Programme [internal coherence], and the extent to which the Project is complementary and co-ordinated with the capitalized projects and other actors’ interventions in the sector of sustainable tourism implemented in the Project’s countries and sites [external coherence]).
 - EFFECTIVENESS (i.e., the extent to which the Project achieved, or is expected to achieve, its outputs, results and objectives as defined in its Logical Framework, including any differential results across groups, with a specific attention to gender differences and vulnerable groups. This will also include the analysis of the main enabling factors and challenges encountered during implementation and the evaluation of the corrective measure taken).

- EFFICIENCY (i.e., the extent to which the Project delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way, by making optimal use of the available financial and human resources).
- SUSTAINABILITY (i.e., the extent to which the net benefits of the Project continue, or are likely to continue, in the long term after its completion).
- IMPACT (i.e., the extent to which the Project generated, or is expected to generate, significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, medium to long-term effects on the target beneficiaries and on the context of intervention).
- Analysis of the added value provided by the cross-border dimension of the Project, in terms of its contribution to the exchange of experiences, methods, among countries in the Mediterranean area as well as cooperation cross border opportunities, of networking among (public & private) stakeholders from different countries, with common interests and needs in improving sustainable tourism practices for local development and mainstreaming sustainability challenges in tourism policies in the Mediterranean area.
- In addition, the evaluation will assess the performance of the Project with regard to the following specific aspects of interest:
 - VISIBILITY (i.e., to which extent the Project contributes to promoting ENI CBC MED Programme visibility and comply with the ENI CBC MED Visibility Guidelines).
 - CAPACITY BUILDING (i.e., to which extent the Project activities contributed to enhance strategical and operational capacities of Project partners, target groups and other involved stakeholders as developmental actors).
 - AWARENESS RAISING on sustainability pillars: environmental, socioeconomic and sociocultural sustainability.
 - CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES such as gender, youth involvement, environmental impact, disability (i.e., the extent to which they have been taken into consideration by the Project strategy and practice).

In particular, concerning the OECD-DAC criteria, the Final Evaluation addresses the following questions:

Relevance

- Which was the relevance of project activities for beneficiaries, stakeholders and local communities?
- Which was the relevance of capitalisation projects as conceived within the ENI CBC MED programme?

Coherence

- Was the capitalisation project coherent with the standard project?
- Was the RESTART MED! Project aligned with ENI CBC MED Capitalization process's vision and approach?

Effectiveness:

- To what extent were the project expected results achieved?
- What are the major factors/constraints influencing the achievement of the expected results?

Efficiency:

- Did the intervention deliver its results in a cost-effective and timely way?
- Was partners' expertise conformed to project needs and objectives?
- How well the intervention was managed?
- Did internal governance guarantee inclusiveness of decision-making processes?

Impact

- What are the main outcomes the project contributed to?
- What was the impact of capacity building to private sector stakeholders?
- What was the impact of subgrants for visibility initiatives?
- What was the impact of awareness and dissemination activities?
- What was the impact in terms of networking between private and public actors?
- What is RESTART MED! impact in terms of CROSS BORDER exchange of experiences and methods and in terms of cooperation and networking?
- How did the intervention cause higher-level effects (such as changes in norms or systems)?

Sustainability

- What has been done to ensure that the benefits generated by the project continue in the medium-long run?
- Do the relevant target groups (such as subgrantees) have capacity and commitment to leverage the benefits of the project over time?
- What additional support or resources may be needed to sustain the outcomes from this project, and what obstacles exist in this regard?
- What were the major factors which influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the project?

The **Final Evaluation** assesses the progress of the Project's actions and their consistency with what was expected and provides the main lessons learned.

The Final Evaluation involved all target countries and capitalized projects, applying a mixed online-offline data collection approach, designed to ensure the highest possible level of comparability between results at national level.

3.3 EVALUATION TOOLS

In line with the methodology, the evaluator has developed a set of data collection tools necessary to evaluate the project outcomes in the Final Evaluation report.

The tools are presented in the following Table.

Table 3 – Data collection tools, Final evaluation

METHOD	TOOL	TARGET GROUP
Secondary data analysis	DESK REVIEW of Project's documentation, reports and other relevant M&E data.	//
	DESK RESEARCH of relevant national and regional statistics and literature to improve the understanding of the Project background and context in each target countries.	//

Key informant interviews	<p>SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS, to gain a better understanding of the context of intervention, the changes undergoing in the countries, the programme outcomes, the main challenges faced, the positive and negative dynamics, the lessons learnt, and the best practices.</p> <p>(Conducted either online or in person)</p>	<p>Semi-structured interviews with the Lead Partner's Project staff</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews with representatives of the Project Partners</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews with representatives of the Associated Partners</p> <p>Semi-structured individual interviews with project beneficiaries (subgrantees)</p>
Field visit	<p>To participate in one of the three summits organised by the Project partners, to see the places affected and the changes brought about by the project, and to share informal talks with stakeholders and beneficiaries from the local communities.</p>	//

Source: Authors' elaboration

4 EVALUATION FINDINGS

4.1 ACHIEVEMENT OF INDICATORS AND TARGETS

This section showcases the evaluation findings, in the first place, by presenting the project's achievements with respect to its target indicators as defined in the project Logical Framework (Paragraph 4.1).

The analysis of OCSA DAC criteria (OECD, 2021) in the different contexts of intervention follows in Paragraph 4.2.

Table 4 - Achievement of project expected results

PRIORITY	PROJECT EXPECTED RESULTS	EXPECTED RESULT INDICATORS	PROJECT TARGET VALUES	PROJECT VALUES ACHIEVED	ACHIEVED %
A.1.3	1.3.2 - Increased diversification of tourism offer through the promotion of local and territorial assets / drivers especially in off season periods	1.3.2.B - Number of new sustainable touristic products in off season periods created in specific niches with a cross-border dimension (i.e. eco-tourism, adventure tourism, medical tourism, wine and food tourism, historic, cultural and religious tourism etc.) and co-designed with local communities (bottom up approach)	5	5	100%
A.1.3	1.3.2 - Increased diversification of tourism offer through the promotion of local and territorial assets / drivers especially in off season periods	1.3.2.C - Number of persons actively and directly involved in project implementation having gained improved tourism management skills / profiles (particularly those in the area of Eco-tourism, Destination Management, Marketing, etc.)	20	260 +	>100%

Source: Authors' elaboration based on data provided by CISP (September 2023)

Table 5 – Achievement of project outputs

PROJECT OUTPUTS	WP	INDICATORS	PROJECT TARGET VALUES	ACHIEVED VALUES	ACHIEVED %
0.3.1 Training of tourism service providers on Sustainability and Promotion	WP3	1.3.1.1.a Number of enterprises substantially and actively involved in the project	40	170	>100%
0.3.2 Product competition (subgrants for visibility initiatives)	WP3	1.3.1.2.c Number of visibility/marketing initiatives to attract tourists in the targeted area	20	18*	90%
0.3.2 Product competition (subgrants for visibility initiatives)	WP3	1.3.2.3.d Number of private actors substantially and actively involved in new touristic initiatives	20	17	85%
0.5.1 Awareness increase of policy-makers on sustainable tourism challenges, and 0.5.2 Policy reviews for the mainstreaming of sustainability in tourism	WP5	1.3.2.4.e Number of action plans adopted by local authorities based on participatory activities	10	17	>100%
0.4.1 Network strategy and 0.4.3 Community-building events (Tourism Summits)	WP4	1.3.2.5.f Number of cross-border agreements of competent bodies to promote low season networks of destinations and/or number of low season initiatives offered in the participating countries	3	4	>100%
0.4.3 Community-building initiatives for reinforcing/enlarging sustainable tourism stakeholder networks	WP4	1.3.2.6.g Number of enterprises participating in cross border business events	30	46 +	>100%
03.1 Training of tourism service providers on Sustainability and Promotion and 0.4.3 Community-building events	WP3	1.3.2.6.h Number of enterprises and local community entities participating in training and awareness raising events	50	287 +	>100%

Source: Authors' elaboration based on data provided by CISP (September 2023)

*This number is equivalent to the number of subgrant outputs, 17, plus the online platform developed under Output 4.2, for a total of 18 visibility initiatives. The partnership agreed on a more effective focus for the platform (not on public authority support but on the sustainable tourism network as a whole and its shared principles and examples), which meant that the output was re-classified as a visibility initiative, rather than a signed agreement. The number of subgrants achieved is lower than the expected target because in Sicily, Italy, the local partner preferred to award a single sub-grant for visibility initiatives of a larger amount because the applicant was able to cover the entire geographic area than the three sub-grants envisaged at the project design stage. Furthermore, each of the subgrantees generally had at least 1 close territorial collaboration with a local private actor, some of which were co-applicants.

4.2 OECD-DAC CRITERIA ANALYSIS

The evaluation followed OECD DAC (OECD, 2021) evaluation criteria in the different contexts of intervention, therefore assessing the following dimensions:

- **RELEVANCE:** the extent to which the Project design and objectives respond to the needs of the target groups of beneficiaries and to the priorities of the local/global partners and institutions involved, and whether they continue to do so if circumstances change.
- **COHERENCE:** the extent to which the Project activities are consistent with one another and coherent to the priorities and policies identified by the ENI CBC MED capitalization Programme [internal coherence], and the extent to which the Project is complementary and co-ordinated with the capitalized projects and other actors' interventions in the sector of sustainable tourism implemented in the Project's countries and sites [external coherence].
- **EFFECTIVENESS:** the extent to which the Project achieved, or is expected to achieve, its outputs, results and objectives as defined in its Logical Framework, including any differential results across groups, with a specific attention to gender differences and vulnerable groups. This will also include the analysis of the main enabling factors and challenges encountered during implementation and the evaluation of the corrective measure taken.
- **EFFICIENCY:** the extent to which the Project delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way, by making optimal use of the available financial and human resources.
- **SUSTAINABILITY:** the extent to which the net benefits of the Project continue, or are likely to continue, in the long term after its completion.
- **IMPACT:** the extent to which the Project generated, or is expected to generate, significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, medium to long-term effects on the target beneficiaries and on the context of intervention.

4.2.1 RELEVANCE

RELEVANCE: GLOBAL OVERVIEW

RELEVANCE OF CAPITALISATION PROJECTS IN THE ENI CBC MED PROGRAMME

The concept of capitalisation seems to be not entirely clear within the programme. Indeed, in the transition between ENPI, ENI CBC MED and the future NEXT MED there have been and will be changes regarding this phase. In the first ENPI, there was no ad hoc call for capitalisation projects, but each project had to include a dedicated WP in order to capitalise the main results; in ENI CBC MED, there was a capitalisation call for which the lead beneficiaries of standard projects could participate; in the next NEXT MED, based on preliminary information it seems that resources will be provided for the most successful standard projects. From this it can be deduced that an internal process within the managing authority is underway to understand the ways and means to capitalise.

In the first few months, due to this ambiguity, the RESTART MED! partners had discussions about the exact meaning of capitalisation, an issue similar to what happened in other ENI CBC MED capitalisation projects. Essentially, RESTART MED! has mostly interpreted capitalisation in terms of communication and promotion, taking advantage of the network of contacts by standard projects to disseminate the main results and increase their impact.

It is not easy to address capitalisation on the issue of sustainable tourism between countries on different sides of the Mediterranean, considering the differences between the countries involved in terms of policies, governance and context (e.g. political, social, economic). Problems and obstacles are different, as well as strengths and opportunities. So, although it has been a relevant process, it has been complicated to generalise capitalisation on the theme of sustainable tourism. For example, a product such as training must be adapted according to the context, thus leading RESTART MED! to capitalise on a previous experience by reshaping it according to the subjects to be trained. RESTART MED!, like other capitalisation projects, must be the first step in a broader capitalisation process. Having a country like Lebanon along with regions like Sicily and Catalonia makes it complicated to align and make univocal proposals. However, the project was relevant as it allowed each area to reflect on policies by involving local and national institutional actors.

The idea of ENI CBC MED's capitalisation projects was positive, but the purpose with which they were promoted was not clear. This meant that the capitalisation projects were not uniform in the type of activities but followed the ideas and priorities of their partners. There was a lack of clear direction and support from the Managing Authority in defining what was meant by capitalisation and in supporting the funded projects in this process. The Managing Authority needed to actively support this process, whereas, in this capitalisation phase, the responsibility fell on the lead beneficiaries. To consolidate results, the role of the Managing Authority should perhaps have been more central. In other words, without a strong single direction by the Managing Authority, discussing capitalisation at international level is very difficult, as each single capitalisation project may not manage to impact on tourism policies, although succeeding in certain cases to involve not only the territorial, but also the national level.

Last, it was challenging for the partners to work synergistically by capitalising simultaneously on the four different ENI CBC MED standard projects on sustainable tourism along with other projects. As a starting point, activities on which a common capitalisation could be made were identified based on concrete outputs and outcomes of all previous and ongoing projects. Anyway, the other projects on sustainable tourism that RESTART MED! had set out to capitalise on sometimes presented challenges, as it was difficult to internalise on projects that the partners had not directly mastered and whose activities had been definitively concluded a longer time ago.

RELEVANCE TO THE CONTEXT AND TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES

While tourism started to gradually recover at the global level after easing the Covid-19 restrictions in 2021, the sector is still facing evolving challenges and risks around the world, especially in terms of 1) the increasing prices of oil and gas, 2) the Ukraine war impacts on the global economy and food supply chains, 3) and climate change and environmental issues.

RESTART MED! provided an opportunity to strengthen activities already implemented and results achieved on the four different ENI CBC MED standard projects on sustainable tourism. The Call for Capitalisation Projects also required capitalising on past projects on the same theme, something ambitious and difficult to achieve with the available budget. RESTART MED! focused mainly on the beneficiaries and target territories of the four standard projects, while still striving to capitalise on previous experiences and initiatives on sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean. The project has therefore been relevant in producing knowledge and in extending the impact and sustainability of the standard projects.

Capitalisation not only linked to the promotion and visibility of activities done in the past, but also allowed to move next steps and to have clear ideas for the next projects. RESTART MED! made it possible to touch on local issues and implement activities that would not have been possible with standard projects due to budget and time constraints. This was done by the project partners, each with a different approach and therefore with an interpretation of capitalisation declined with respect to context and mission/objectives of the organisation,

also due to the lack of clear guidelines by the ENI CBC MED programme (see next section). All in all, the partners' continuity in their approach allowed the project to be relevant to the local contexts and to the beneficiaries, private stakeholders and institutions.

The work carried out in terms of policy review in the different target territories by the local partners has been relevant, as well as the participative activities such as workshops and focus groups in each territory that allowed numerous actors, also from different sectors, to get to know each other and network. The support given to stakeholders and service providers through subgrants for promotion and visibility has also been very relevant for the supported organisations and demonstrated to be one of the most effective and concrete activity in involving local stakeholders. At the level of knowledge and skills development, the sharing of good practices and the development of a training manual were envisaged. In terms of networking, of great importance have been the opportunities created at the three Sustainable Tourism Summits organised by the project, where the partners not only tried to involve the target communities of the standard projects, but also those of other countries involved in the projects to be capitalised.

RELEVANCE: COUNTRY OVERVIEW

	INSIGHTS
ITALY (SICILY)	RESTART MED! enabled the implementation of networking activities in the area, giving visibility and promoting communication, aspects not fully covered by CROSSDEV. Similarly, a subgrant was provided to a local service provider that was responsible for networking and increasing visibility to the Via Selinuntina area.
LEBANON	Lebanon lacks policies on sustainable tourism at national level, so it is relevant what RESTART MED! did, starting a process by means of the policy review and the participatory activities with several local stakeholders, to develop policies and to move towards a more sustainable tourism involving local communities. The activities and the awareness campaign should shed the lights on the need to adopt changes in the policies on sustainability and tourism in the partner countries. Finally, though the subgrants awarded the project supported service providers and the local communities in promoting themselves and increasing their visibility.
JORDAN	The project has been relevant for Jordan local community, meetings involving not only public and private actors but also association and community-based organizations have been organized in several parts of Jordan. JUST tried to involve in the whole process of review and proposal of strategies and policies related to tourism several local communities' actors.
SPAIN (CATALONIA)	RESTART MED! had two Catalan partners in the consortium, Barcelona Chamber of Commerce as lead beneficiary of MEDUSA and Catalan Tourist Board as lead beneficiary of MED PEARLS. The project allowed both partners to capitalise on what was being implemented in their standard projects. This was possible through the use of additional tools such as subgrants for promotion and visibility and through networking activities involving local public and private actors and civil society. Within the framework of RESTART MED!, a checklist to analyse sustainability and policies of local authorities was also developed and piloted in 6 districts.
TUNISIA	In Tunisia sustainable tourism is a topic transversal to several ministries, and the ministries are still in the process of understanding how to approach sustainable tourism. The policy review analysis allowed to involve many local stakeholders and helped in concretize the process and in increase networking. RESTART MED! was relevant for WWF NA as partner, as their objective is to preserve environment also by promoting sustainable tourism. The Summit in Tunis was focused on environmental sustainability of the tourism sector.

4.2.2 COHERENCE

RESTART MED! acted in coherence with the ENI CBC MED standard projects on sustainable tourism which it aimed to capitalise on, CROSSDEV lead by CISP, MEDUSA lead by CBB, MED GAIMS lead by AUB and MED PEARLS lead by CTB. The RESTART MED! partners were not requested to develop new sustainable tourism products, but to capitalise on the ones developed by the four standard projects, focusing on their promotion and visibility and on the creation of networks at national and international level that could support the growth of sustainable tourism.

In terms of coherence, the involvement as an associate partner of the Diputacion de Barcelona - departamento de turismo, already a partner of MEDUSA and MED PEARLS for its experience in capitalisation, should be highlighted. In fact, the partner was the leader between 2016 and 2020 of the Sustainable Tourism Community Project of the Interreg MED programme, with the aim of bringing together the 30 projects on sustainable tourism of the Northern Mediterranean community, capitalising and coordinating them, disseminating their results and building a community. The Diputación de Barcelona was therefore able to contribute its expertise in the initial phase of the project and was interested in following up the project as Interreg MED also required looking at the southern shore of the Mediterranean.

The table below shows the main synergies between RESTART MED! and the ENI CBC MED 2014-2020 Standard Projects on sustainable tourism capitalised:

Project	Involved countries	Synergies
CROSSDEV - Cultural Routes for Sustainable Social and economic Development in Mediterra	Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine	Selection of the main geographic area to focus RESTART MED! capitalization efforts on in Italy (Sicilia, Via Selinunta) is based on the knowledge of stakeholders from the CrossDev project. The CrossDev website " Hidden Mediterranean" has been connected with the RESTART MED! platform med sustainable tourism.net and its experiential tourism best practices used for its contents.
MED GAIMS - GAMification for Memorable tourist experiences	Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Spain	MEDGAIMS has been leveraged for contacts with stakeholders in Lebanon and Jordan, where both RESTART MED! partners are also partners in MEDGAIMS. The medgaims.com website has been connected with the RESTART MED! platform med sustainable tourism.net and Spanish, Lebanese and Italian partner games are also present in the best practices database of available on this platform
MEDUSA - Development and Promotion of Mediterranean Sustainable Adventure Tourism	Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Spain, Tunisia	The areas in which MEDUSA is active were defined as the geographic area where RESTART MED! capitalisation activities in Spain will be focused. MEDUSA results were integrated in training sessions in Tunisia held in May 2022. The MEDUSA website (Mediterranean Adventures) has been connected with the RESTART MED! platform med sustainable tourism.net and its best practices are present in the contents of the platform's information related to adventure tourism.
MED PEARLS - The Mediterranean as an innovative, integral and unique destination for Slow Tourism initiatives	Egypt, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Palestine, Spain	The Med Pearls platform (breathingland.com) has been connected with the RESTART MED! platform med sustainable tourism.net and its best practices are represented in the contents of the section on slow tourism.

ENI CBC MED capitalization projects were also requested to using and building on results from other projects from ENI, but also from INTERREG MED, COSME, EMFF, EASME programmes. Three ENI projects have cooperated with RESTART MED! - FishMedNet, MedArtSal and CoEvolve4BG – whose representatives were

invited to attend and speak at project conferences and events (mainly the Sustainable Tourism summit in Tunisia and Lebanon), in order to present their results and messages to a larger audience.

RESTART MED! partners also tried to capitalize on other initiatives of the other programmes, such as:

- BleuTourMed - Maritime and Coastal Sustainable Tourism in the Mediterranean - Community building, Communication and Capitalisation Interreg MED Sustainable Tourism Horizontal Project
- MEET - Mediterranean Experience of Eco-Tourism - ENPI CBC MED 2007-2013 – Strategic Project
- WildSea Europe: “A Discovery Journey of Europe’s Marine Biodiversity through Water Sports and Coastal Trails” - COSME
- CAST - Creative Accelerators for Sustainable Tourism - COSME
- International Augmented Med (I AM) - ENPI CBC Med 2007-2013
- DestiMED - Mediterranean Ecotourism Destination - Interreg Mediterranean Sustainable Tourism Modular Project
- EMbleMatIC - Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains as Coastal destinations of excellence - Interreg Med – Modular Project (Study Project + Pilot Project) - 2016-2019
- MEDFEST - MED Culinary heritage experiences: how to create sustainable tourist destinations - Interreg Med – Modular Project
- TOURISMED - Fishing Tourism for a Sustainable tourism development in the Mediterranean area - Programme: Interreg Med – Modular Project
- Blue Roses -Blue Robotics for Sustainable Eco-friendly Services for innovative marinas & leisure boats - EMFF/ESIF Call: Blue Economy Call 2018/ Blue Labs: innovative solutions for maritime challenges
- Clusteract - Aggregation and Collaboration Tools to Enhance Cluster Network in the Maritime Sector of the Med Area - EMFF
- Art Reefs - Innovative Tools for coastal tourism – EMFF.

The capitalisation process in the above listed initiatives was sometimes challenging, as it wasn’t easy to reach the project contact persons because the projects ended years ago and activities to maintain the results over the years were lacking or because the projects’ outputs and outcomes were very specific and difficult to capitalise within RESTART MED!.

4.2.3 EFFECTIVENESS

EFFECTIVENESS: GLOBAL OVERVIEW

Overall, collected data from project staff, partners and stakeholders / beneficiaries point out to the following main issues:

EXPECTED RESULTS ACHIEVED

The expected result indicator is the increased diversification of tourism offer through the promotion of local and territorial assets/drivers especially in off season periods.

In terms of new sustainable touristic products, the project target was achieved as a result of networking, dissemination & communication, training and subgranting activities. Five statements on new product development have been filled and signed by tourism service providers, especially those who participated in

one or more RESTART MED! activities. The statements confirmed that new touristic product was inspired, improved, developed thanks to the project.

More than 260 persons from public authorities and non-profit organisations such as Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) participated in WP3 training workshops held in year 1 of RESTART MED!.

OUTPUTS ACHIEVED

As far as the achievement of output indicators is concerned, the Project partners achieved all the expected targets, with one exception. The number of subgrants achieved is lower than the expected target because in Sicily, Italy, the local partner preferred to award a single sub-grant for visibility initiatives of a larger amount because the applicant was able to cover the entire geographic area than the three sub-grants envisaged at the project design stage. Furthermore, each of the subgrantees generally had at least one close territorial collaboration with a local private actor, some of which were co-applicants.

On the other hand, some project targets were exceeded thanks to the work carried out by the partners. Indeed, the project was able to engage 170 private participants in WP3 training workshops, held in each of the 5 countries, to involve over 100 private stakeholders in one of the 3 Sustainable Tourism Summits organised, reaching in total over 260 private companies or private CSOs.

Furthermore, 17 policy reviews have been carried out in WP5, through a series of focus groups in all territories involved. The strategy/review/conclusions documents drafted afterward constitute the action plans adopted by local authorities based on participatory activities. Finally, 3 manifesto/conclusions reports from Tourism Summits and the Networking Strategy Document have been developed and adopted by the RESTART MED! network.

The RESTART MED! project was effective in achieving the three specific objectives it had set itself, achieving good results overall but especially at the level of individual territories.

SUPPORTING ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Capitalisation in WP 3 "Transfer & exploitation - activities with/for private actors" relates to the enhancement of the value of pre-existing tourist products/services. WP3 transferred knowledge on ways of integrating sustainability concerns in various tourism segments and gave subgrants to private actors in the five countries involved in order to increase their skills and to promote their sustainable tourist products.

Concerning training, the project developed a manual that encompasses good practices and illustrates how training on sustainable tourism practices should be addressed. Capacity building activities were carried out in each country, both with actors already involved in standard projects and with new ones, tailoring the training to local contexts after a brief analysis of learning needs. Finally, the online training course "Sustainable Tourism planning & management" was developed and uploaded on the medsustainabletourism.net platform, with professional support by Omar Sakr, senior lecturer in Sustainable Tourism and Hospitality Management at Notre Dame University.

17 subgrants were activated and completed in all countries. In Sicily, it was decided to finance a single larger proposal with greater geographical coverage (instead of three smaller subgrants initially planned), while in the other places several smaller subgrants were awarded, with the main objective of giving sustainability to sustainable tourism products created in the four standards. The subgrants made it possible to create sustainable tourism initiatives and to give promotion and visibility to organisations, experiences and tourism products. The response by economic stakeholders to the call for subgrants was not excessive but definitely

sufficient and of good quality. The subgrants represented an important component, capable of linking the project to experiences from local communities.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY

Under the “WP4 Reinforcement of networks - bringing together private and public actors”, RESTART MED! aimed at strengthening the network and platform around sustainable tourism practices and products. The RESTART MED! Networking Strategy document was elaborated by the project partners.

RESTART MED! created the Med Sustainable Tourism (<https://medsustainabletourism.net/>) web site as a tool for project partners and stakeholders to capitalise on existing networks by connecting them, and to include more actors involved in the tourism sector in the MED area. The platform collects all the activities and destinations promoted by the 4 standard projects on sustainable tourism, CROSSDEV, MEDUSA, MED GAIMS, MED PEARLS. The platform provides access to: the standard projects’ websites and platforms, a database of examples of sustainable tourism practices/products around the mediterranean area, a library of useful resources, a video that presents the importance of sustainable tourism and good practices to achieve it, a LinkedIn group where community members are encouraged to discuss, and the above mentioned online training course “Sustainable Tourism planning & management”. The platform succeeded in providing a database of sustainable tourism products developed within ENI CBC MED, becoming a gateway to other initiatives and a library of all the main materials developed.

A strong contribution to the networking was also given by the international Sustainable Tourism Summit and by the thematic and policy-related focus groups at national level organized by the project consortium. All target groups - private stakeholders - tourism service providers; public stakeholders - destination managers, local, regional, national authorities; civil society organisations - were involved in these activities, generally in a participatory approach bringing all target groups together in discussions. The Summits organised by the Project are the following:

- first Tourism Summit, held in Palermo, Sicily on September 27th 2022 (World Tourism Day), with a focus on policy.
- Tourism Summit in Tunisia (Tunis) for June 5th and 6th, with a focus on environmental sustainability and in particular climate change resilience (June 5th is World Environment Day). This Summit was not scheduled in the original project proposal but has been added in a Major Amendment procedure, made possible thanks to the motivation and efforts of all partners, especially the initiative-takers at PP5 - WWF Tunisia.
- Third and final Tourism Summit, in Lebanon, with a focus on the business perspective on sustainable tourism and on problems and potential in terms of socio-economic sustainability for the tourism sector, with the participation of the subgrantees.

Summits were an interesting opportunity, representing for private actors that received a subgrants the opportunity to travel and meet other Mediterranean experiences, a positive experience. The first Summit was more directed at local actors and project partners, while in the remaining ones the participants were more diversified. Among the aspects to be noted is that in Tunisia the agenda was very packed, somewhat limiting networking opportunities between actors, while the third summit in Lebanon provided more time for exchange between actors and between subgrantees themselves. Summit activities were linked to focus groups held in each country, involving different categories of actors, with the aim of debating sustainable tourism in the different contexts and identifying the next steps in terms of policy. The activities carried out made it possible to create a network of contacts, people and organisations, interested in the topics touched upon by the RESTART MED! project.

SUPPORTING SUSTAINABILITY

“WP 5 Awareness and dissemination - activities with/for public stakeholders activities” aimed at increase awareness and capacity of public authorities & policy makers to adopt policies for local tourism/economic development. A first analysis of data from projects to be capitalised was made, with owners and experts of the outputs. Secondly, a policy review was conducted in each country by the local project partner, by means of thematic and policy-related focus groups organized at national level. A manual for focus groups had been prepared by WP5 coordinator JUST and an online meeting of the policy experts and sustainable tourism experts of the 5 countries was held before implementing the focus groups in each country in early 2023.

The result of this process was the elaboration for each target territory of technical reports with policy review of the legislative framework related to tourism, with a focus on sustainable tourism, and policy recommendations documents. The partners used methods and tools in their respective territories to be as effective as possible, first of all identifying the specific needs of each territorial context. Given these premises, the resulting outputs differed from one another. For example, in Sicily, three technical reports from focus group sessions conducted in different parts of the region and a report summarising the results were developed, strongly linked to and focused on the Sicilian territory. The Catalan tourist board developed a checklist to analyse sustainability and policies of local authorities which was piloted in a number of districts in Catalonia. In Lebanon, where there is no national policy on sustainable tourism, the policy paper focused on what should be done.

VISIBILITY - WP2 Communication

The objective of the Communication WP was to ensure effective external communication as a means to achieving change and resilience in the sustainable tourism sector and successful dissemination of capitalizable projects' progress and results. The WP was led by the Barcelona Chamber of Commerce in cooperation with the lead beneficiary's communication manager. Several activities were implemented: social media accounts were opened and animated regularly; a LinkedIn group was added; the logo was developed and used for the online platform and community under the brand Med Sustainable Tourism; sustainable tourism best practices were collected and entered in the database, accessible through an interactive map, and further promoted in a video. The communication focused on engaging relevant target groups (policy makers and public national and local institutions, private economic operators and civil society), in addition to developing stakeholders' networks, raising awareness and disseminating project results.

CHALLENGES

- Difficulty in bringing together actors and countries from different sides of the Mediterranean around the topic of sustainable tourism, given the differences present in terms of context, policy, etc. Given these differences, the path to finding more common elements on which to capitalise would have required more time and resources.
- If the capitalisation goal had been clear to the partners from the beginning, the project could have been more effective, especially in the initial stages. The decision as to the exact focus to be given to capitalisation required discussion between the partners, which, although productive, proved time-consuming also due to the lack of support from the Managing Authority and delayed the start of implementation.
- Capitalisation project RESTART MED! due to the extensions of the standard projects took place almost at the same time as these, whereas it would have been useful to have a longer implementation period after their conclusion.

- A main challenge is to encourage and enable tourism stakeholders to collaborate internationally. Private actors in sustainable tourism are small actors with a local focus, and they often lacked time, financial or human resources to engage internationally.
- The limited subgrant size is often not considered in proportion to the application and reporting requirements.

EFFECTIVENESS: COUNTRY OVERVIEW

INSIGHTS	
<p>ITALY (SICILY)</p>	<p>As far as Sicily is concerned, there was continuity in the activities, and the RESTART MED! presence was particularly relevant to give substance to what had been carried out within the standard CROSSDEV project. RESTART MED! continued to count on the support of the European Cultural Routes, especially Iter Vitis, and of the municipalities in the target area. Local stakeholders, both institutional and non-institutional, showed awareness of the presence in the area of the Via Selinuntina of the two projects - RESTART MED! and CROSSDEV - and the activities promoted by them, emphasising their satisfaction with the thematic and action continuity of the two initiatives.</p> <p>The project focused on providing expertise on specific topics to local stakeholders in the private tourism sector through one-to-one tutoring. Between April and August 2022, the RESTART MED! Project carried out three training sessions specifically designed for the island's tour operators, organised by the project leader, CISP. Numerous operators, especially from the area of the Via Selinuntina, were trained on topics that they themselves had indicated as priorities for their business activities, including marketing and social media marketing and online commerce through tourist agencies and booking sites. Operators were offered concrete support for social media marketing and business positioning, follow-up and mentoring.</p> <p>In Sicily, a single subgrant of 15,000 euro was given to a local service provider - DMC and tour operator Emotional Sicily - which systemised what emerged from CROSSDEV and the other sustainable tourism projects involved in RESTART MED! at regional level. The sub grantee had already been a beneficiary of the standard MED PEARLS project, and in RESTART MED! focused on a communication campaign aimed at mapping and promoting the stakeholders of the Via Selinuntina area of the CROSSDEV project.</p> <p>The first Sustainable Tourism Summit took place in Palermo on 27 September 2022, on World Tourism Day, and brought together partners and participants from the five project countries. Among the key messages that emerged: creating awareness on climate justice in Mediterranean countries, mitigating socio-cultural impacts by strengthening local communities, enhancing the common Mediterranean identity to protect cultural heritage.</p>
<p>LEBANON</p>	<p>In Lebanon tourism recovery is slow and uneven due to the economic downfall and financial crisis, the devaluation of the currency, and the political instability. The past crises have weakened the performance of the tourism and hospitality sector and led to the full or partial closure of many businesses in the conventional tourism market, and to the loss of specialized and qualified labour. Anyway, the negative economic situation, that is somehow becoming normalised, did not impact particularly the effectiveness of the project. The local partner AUB was able to stick to the original plan and to implement all the expected activities.</p> <p>RESTART MED! implemented several activities at national level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and promotion: 3 training days done for public institutions (ministries) and private tourism services operators, but also for people with academic backgrounds from universities and other institutions. The trainings took place at AUB in Beirut at the Nature Conservation Center, related to sustainable tourism. The training material were developed by AUB and by the Catalan Tourism Board. • Beneficiaries from other ENI CBC MED standard projects were involved thanks to meetings in person and online and encouraged to submit to the new subgrants process. Several applications to the subgrants were received (11), and AUB awarded 3 subgrantees based on strict criteria. Despite having selected only 3 subgrantees, the grants awarded was between 3.000 and 4.000 euro each, and the available time to use the fundings was short (4-5 months). For this motivation, the criteria for the selection

	<p>were: being already well structured and legally registered; having already sustainable tourism activities ongoing, as the amount of money and time was not sufficient to implement new activities; being connected to the local communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three in-person focus groups were carried out at the beginning of 2023 by AUB, to assess and monitor sustainability for tourism policies. The focus groups were attended by several stakeholders of the tourism sectors, as each session was tailored for specific audience: session 1 for academic, public sector and capitalised projects; session 2 for private sectors, civil society, donors; session 3 for municipalities, nature reserve, tourism destinations and attractions. The focus groups helped AUB in developing the technical report. • The Lebanese Tourism Summit was organised at the beginning of September 2023. The first day, that counted 60 participants, was open to representatives of public partners, EU delegation, Italian embassy, subgrantees, ENI CBC MED program, local governments, and all kind of tourism stakeholders in Lebanon. The main focus was to let local communities talk and share experiences on sustainable tourism, with subgrantees from other countries also take part to the event. The second day allowed project partners and subgrantees to visit different sustainable experiences supported by RESTART MED! in Lebanon and to exchange practices. • The partner AUB was responsible for the development of the website www.medsustainabletourism.com, than contains an online training course on sustainability, a database of sustainable tourism practices in the Mediterranean.
<p>JORDAN</p>	<p>The intervention achieved its objectives and expected results in Jordan, allowing to approach a lot of people and stakeholders from local communities working in the tourism sectors and to start talking with them about long term strategies and policies that can positively affect sustainable tourism. The main obstacle is that in Jordan there are a lot of archaeological and cultural sites. The duration of RESTART MED! was limited to be widely effective at country level. Having more time would have helped to involve more type of tourism stakeholders in Jordan.</p> <p>RESTART MED! capitalised the previous 4 standard projects of ENI CBC MED, but also other project from the previous call ENPI. JUST tried to show how the outcomes can be generalised and capitalised and how to applicate the results in Jordan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JUST reviewed the documents about tourism policies and strategies in Jordan, the first one in 1994 to 2023, highlighting when they started thinking of sustainable tourism. First strategy focused on increasing the number of tourists, then they started thinking about sustainable tourism and how to distribute tourists in Jordan. • JUST organised several participatory activities in different areas of Jordan, such as thematic and policy focus group in Jerash, Amman, Aqaba, Asloan and other areas. The 10 focus groups were participated by private and public sectors stakeholders, academics, NGOs etc. Participants discussed the main outputs of previous projects on sustainable tourism and how to translate them in policies and strategies for Jordan. Around 10 meetings were organised to discuss with the stakeholders their focus and opinion concerning sustainable tourism and what they think the government should do to implement sustainable tourism initiatives in Jordan. • Trainings on different topics were organised for several categories of stakeholders, mainly focused on strategies and policy making. • 4 subgrants were awarded in Jordan, addressing different topic related to visibility and sustainability in the tourism sector. The beneficiaries developed videos on how to promote gastronomy to visitors, on how hotels can practice sustainability for housekeeping and water management, on how to promote traditional handicrafts and a training guide to train women on the elaboration of traditional handicrafts.
<p>SPAIN (CATALONIA)</p>	<p>The activities promoted by RESTART MED! in Catalonia were effective in achieving the desired objectives and results and in engaging a significant number of actors. On the negative side, it would have been useful to have had more time and resources to improve further in terms of effectiveness, especially with regard to certain activities, involving a larger number of actors - particularly from civil society - and going into more detail. The two local partners shared the activities, with the Barcelona Chamber of Commerce responsible for WP2 on communication at a global level and the subgrant activity at a local level, and the Catalan Tourism Board responsible for the elaboration and application of the checklists for the sustainability of local authorities and the development of the thematic focus groups belonging to WP4. Both partners benefited from what had been done in the standard projects MEDUSA and MED PEARLS, both in terms of</p>

networking and in terms of visibility and promotion. Many of the actors involved in RESTART MED! had already been involved in activities of the previous standard projects, thus increasing the effectiveness of the project. Below are the details of the activities implemented by each partner.

Catalan Tourism Board

- A guide for trainers in sustainable tourism sector was elaborated.
- Training with 104 people were carried out, online and in person. Good opportunity to train tourism stakeholders, in particular private actors, but also public ones.
- Focus group were carried out with civil society and public and private stakeholders. In terms of networking, the greatest difficulties have been encountered in involving civil society in the focus groups implemented at local level (WP4). These difficulties arise from systemic problems, because of an often-complicated relationship between the tourism sector and local communities, but thanks to the activities of RESTART MED!, progress has been made. The focus groups allowed to discuss topics such as tourism decline and the problems of tourism on the commercial and social side.
- Checklist to analyse sustainability and policies in the Mediterranean was developed and applied, with focus on the Catalan area. Meetings were carried out with six counties to analyse their local policies, with useful feedback on the 4 spheres: environmental, governance, socio-cultural, economic.

Barcelona Chamber of Commerce

- The 5 subgrants granted for visibility initiatives have been one of the main activities, with five private sector stakeholders supported by the BCC: Turismo Vivencial, Riu a l'Ebre, Envall Cooperativa, La Manreana and Gymkana Turística.
- Being the partner responsible for WP2 on communication, support was given for the organisation of the three Tourism Summits implemented by the project.

TUNISIA

Thanks to the work carried out by WWF NA, RESTART MED! was effective in achieving its objective in Tunisia. The following activities were implemented:

- Selection of target areas, they added a new territory.
- Training organised and provided to local stakeholders.
- Subgrants to service providers in the tourism sector.
- Networking activities, among which the second Tourism Summit in Tunis.
- Drafting of the report on policy review in Tunisia.

The project faced some difficulties and problems. On one side, it wasn't easy to involve different stakeholders and coordinate activities with all of them. On the other side, in Tunisia there is no legal framework to implement project activities for start-up and private sectors in a clear and legal way, and this represented a limit for the subgrants in the sustainable tourism sector. Thanks to the activities implemented by MEDUSA and RESTART MED! project, the public stakeholders were available to support the private sectors to work in a more legal way. The strong engagement of public stakeholders was one of the key positive factors to implement activities.

Thanks to the relationship that WWF NA built with public administration in years of projects and activities, local authorities were available to support the RESTART MED! activities, allowing to achieve better results in the sustainable tourism sector.

4.2.4 EFFICIENCY

As a general premise, the planned activities were carried out with a limited budget and time compared to standard projects, mostly focusing on aspects related to promotion and visibility. RESTART MED! was efficient when considering the relationship between the budget resources / time available and the activities carried out, and all partners implemented the project activities as planned. Many results were achieved also by leveraging on the outcomes of standard projects (as expected in capitalisation projects), which made it possible to be efficient and productive.

In terms of expenditure, there were some challenges faced by partners at an early stage, due to the simultaneity with standard projects to which some human resources were assigned and due to delays in receiving feedback from the managing authority. Thanks to the approved major amendment, it was possible to use the remaining resources in the last six months of the project to add new activities and enhance other actions that were already planned, with a focus on the cross-border dimension. For instance: the international Tourism Summit in Tunisia was added as an activity in the major amendment, subgrantees were involved in-person in the final Summit in Lebanon, the online training course available on the medsustainabletourism.net platform was upgraded with professional support, and large-scale dissemination events were organized in Jordan.

There are advantages and disadvantages in having standard and capitalisation projects at the same time. Being the standard projects still active during the implementation of the capitalisation actions, all members of the project teams were readily available. Conversely, getting in touch with the contact persons of already concluded projects turned out to be more complicated. For this reason, it could have been useful to have more months for the implementation of the capitalization project after the end of the standard projects, to increase the impact and to be able to capitalise on the final results and outputs of standard projects. In other words, there was not enough time to reflect on what went well in standard projects and where to focus the capitalisation. The capitalisation project was not properly a second phase of the standard ones, but rather a complementary project that allowed to increase their impact.

In terms of partnerships, RESTART MED! was somehow challenging to manage, as there are many differences between the mandates of the actors involved. This aspect represents in itself an added value but also a possible obstacle to creating collaborations and synergies on the cross-border component. Another diversity was given by the existence of different policies on sustainable tourism between the various countries involved and by the territorial dimension taken into consideration (regional level in Italy, Sicily, and Spain, Catalonia; national level in Lebanon, Tunisia and Jordan). Anyway, each partner brought its own set of skills and expertise to the project, and the ability to manage the activities in their respective local contexts was demonstrated by all the actors involved.

CISP managed the project by striving for the greatest possible impact in each country. In order to do this, each partner was given the opportunity to implement the activities as they deemed appropriate, also in view of their respective experience in standard projects and expertise, without imposing a top-down common line by the Lead Beneficiary. On the other hand, having preferred a shared / horizontal management in the decision-making caused some difficulties, especially in the initial phase when it was necessary to define what capitalisation meant in the RESTART MED! project. Indeed, the discussion between the partners took longer than expected, slowing down the implementation of the activities.

Given the type of partners involved, the project management proved to be professional and appropriate, with the Lead Beneficiary acting as the only intermediary with the ENI CBC MED managing authority. In order to monitor the progress of the project in the countries and to support partners in case of need, bi-weekly meetings were held with the entire partnership, being very effective in terms of project management.

4.2.5 IMPACT

IMPACT: GLOBAL OVERVIEW

The global impact of the project is assessed by specific objective, with a specific focus on visibility.

SUPPORTING ECONOMIC RECOVERY

When analysing the impact of the project on enhancement of the value of pre-existing tourist products/services, the focus goes to capacity building and subgrants to private actors.

A total of 17 subgrants were given by the project partners, 1 in Italy (Sicily), 5 in Spain (Catalonia), 4 in Tunisia, 4 in Jordan, 3 in Lebanon. To be considered the differences assessing the impact in the amount of subgrants and the number of subgrants given by the partners in each context. Some of the subgrantees had already been beneficiaries of subgrants and capacity building in previous standard projects. While in the previous standard projects the support had been for the actual development of the tourism product, with RESTART MED! the beneficiaries focused on the promotion and visibility component, with very good results. Since the activities of the sub-grants were concluded in the second half of the second year, the exact impact in terms of increased visitors given by the improvement in terms of promotion and visibility is currently complicated to establish, but it can certainly be said that the beneficiaries' potential to attract visitors has greatly improved. Moreover, especially in cases where the subgrant received by RESTART MED! followed a previous subgrant, the impact was certainly of a high level also thanks to the prolonged accompaniment by the project partners' staff. In the case of new beneficiaries not involved in standard projects, slightly different activities were promoted, especially in Jordan, where for example Petra National Trust carried out training for women in Wadi Rum and produced videos and materials to promote the production of local handicrafts. Again, in terms of immediate impact, the activities carried out were able to impact the beneficiaries and the tourism sector in terms of increased skills and increased awareness of the issues addressed. Finally, the positive impact of the networking moments between the subgrantees at the Summits, which contributed to the exchange of experiences and good practices, should be emphasised.

The following box shows the case histories of the subgrantees interviewed by ARCO during the final evaluation, providing details of the type of activities in which the beneficiary organisations were involved and the impact of these activities.

CASE HISTORY – PROJECT SUBGRANTEES	
Climb'IN – Nelson Rojas Saez	TUNISIA
<p>Climb'IN is a start-up that runs a climbing wall in an indoor gym near Tunis and organises outdoor climbing activities at Djebel Ressas with people who come to climb, including visitors from abroad.</p> <p>They received a subgrant of about 5,000 euro from the RESTART MED! project through WWF NA, using the funds mainly for visibility and promotion by making small promotional videos. The action supported by the RESTART MED grant and a visibility action around three small videos which aim to make known the variety of mountain activities around Tunis, but also to highlight the existing synergies between the different local actors, as well as the need to preserve this environment. The production and then distribution of films, through their enhancement of the tangible and intangible heritage of the mountains and the commitment of local actors for its preservation, encourages sustainable tourism and contributes to raising awareness among different audiences (Tunisians and foreigners) about the preservation of the environment and local history.</p> <p>Projects like RESTART MED! are useful for start-ups or newly established companies, but the important thing is that subgrantees are structured enough to manage the funds, without destabilising the internal balance and preventing organisations from becoming dependent on this type of support. Thanks to RESTART MED! they also received support and training in grant management.</p> <p>Prior to RESTART they had also received support from the MEDUSA project through subgrants, directed towards the adventure tourism component. With these funds they had mostly purchased rental equipment to take visitors climbing. Having received funds first from MEDUSA for material, then from RESTART for promotion and visibility, Climb'IN was able to improve, providing a better service and promoting it. As a start-up they hope to support in strengthening the local economy through products developed and implemented in a sustainable way.</p>	
IDWEY – Idwey Khouloud Kaabi	TUNISIA

IDWEY (meaning adventure in Amazigh) is a social startup that works on the promotion of natural and cultural heritage. IDWEY manages a web platform that allows travelers or locals to live outdoor experiences within the framework of regional and responsible tourism. The purpose of IDWEY is to share information on regional tourism websites, to exchange of experience between users and to allow travelers to connect with local tourist service providers, such as local guides, regional ecotourism providers and local artisans.

IDWEY was founded by four young people in 2019, just before Covid. In the first two years they were practically unable to implement much of what they hoped to do with tourists and visitors, but they were able to carefully develop their products, which they are now offering and publicising. In previous years, they received support and collaborated with other partners. IDWEY was supported by the "Promotion of Sustainable Tourism" project, a joint action of the European Union as part of the "Tounes Wijhetouna" programme and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), carried out by GIZ in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism. This initiative has enabled IDWEY to map the trails in the area in which it operates.

With the support of RESTART MED! and WWF NA they were able to develop and promote a specific experiential activity for visitors in Oudhna, a less-known area and archeological site, despite being close to Tunis. They developed a treasure game for visitors, with banners with QR code and augmented reality of the persona in Oudhna and in the forest. With the application the visitors can play to a game that asked information about Oudhna and plants and trees in the forest, to link all the circuit. In order to be environmentally sustainable, the game packaging is recyclable and be used by other other groups to play. IDWEY created a sustainable tourism product including the experience in Oudhna archeological site and in the nearby forest, and a visit to Elixir BIO, a women association partner of IDWEY, that offer to visitors breakfast and activities such as gastronomy workshop. This tourist products allowed to promote local agricultural and handicrafts products made by woman, supporting the local community.

Cezar's Projects	LEBANON
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Cezar's Projects is a youthful rural development initiative that works as a social enterprise since 2017. The enterprise is developing standard rural –tourism operations and coordinating rural initiatives, to meet sustainability through retaining local talents, creating innovation in sustainable tourism, and generating new sources of income. Cezar's Projects acts as a facilitator for developing sustainable initiatives in Chouf villages and managing different local experiences and facilities, creating around 74 direct job opportunities and positively impacting the local community. The agritourism Farmville Barouk they managed is located in Barouk El Chouf- Mount Lebanon, 50 minutes from Beirut nearby the Cedar Forest reserve. Among the initiatives promoted, agriculture, transformation with their kitchen, visit for school students from the surrounding areas and from Beirut, leisure and sport activities (tours, yoga, etc.).

In the last few years, they received support from different initiatives and organizations, such as the project MEDUSA and USAID. With the MEDUSA sub-grant, Cezar's Projects added and Adventure Tourism activity for they visitor, by introducing paragliding to the Chouf area, in addition to training the locals to become qualified pilots in order to create job opportunities in the region.

Thanks to RESTART MED!, they were awarded with a grant of around 4000 euros to improve visibility and promotion, that allowed to implement three main activities: Road signs, website that includes all project and activities by Cezar, with the creation of a unique brand of each project, and a tourism initiative around an experience with a local woman.

Cezar's project staff has also been involved in different RESTART MED! events and activities at local and international level. They were invited to the Tourism Summit in Tunisia and during the summit in Lebanon they have been visited by project partners and other international stakeholders, having the opportunity to improve their network. AUB organised in Lebanon a technical focus group with actors of the sustainable tourism sector, where they discussed about a national strategy for sustainable tourism in Lebanon, that is lacking at this moment.

The support received by RESTART MED! is relevant for organisation as Cezar, the project activities represented an opportunity to share challenges and best practices. The activities implemented with RESTART MED! will remain in the future, and both road signs and the website will be useful in the years to come. In the future to improve the tourist and socio-economic development of their communities it would be necessary to create a national strategy to support rural tourism in Lebanon, to receive more technical support in terms of marketing and to improve their international network in order to receive more international visitors.

Boukra NGO - Raquel Ramadan	LEBANON
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Boukra is a young, women-led NGO operating in the field of Heritage & Sustainability. We created and run Beit Jeddé, a sustainable tourism project in the village of Mtein (located in the Matn district of Lebanon). Beit Jeddé is a multifaceted project that includes a guesthouse, a community center, a local producers support initiative as well as heritage awareness activities, aimed both at locals and visitors.

The grant received from RESTART MED! was mainly directed to the promotion of the village and the guesthouse. Their project under RESTART MED! is the creation of the website about the village and the guesthouse (www.sustainablemtein.com) and the production and promotion of an interactive "Sustainability Map" of Mtein, that will

increase its visibility among local and international tourists. They also developed three short videos of important landmarks in the area. In the long term, increased visitor flows will benefit the local community and encourage the development of local sustainability initiatives, as well as the preservation of Mtein's rich cultural heritage.

Furthermore, within RESTART MED! they took part to AUB's workshop on about sustainable tourism, an interesting opportunity that gave them a clear idea of what is sustainable tourism and what it is needed to do at local and national level. They met other people and stakeholders in the workshop, and they have the opportunity to know other experiences. They participated to the third Summit in Lebanon, where the second day they presented their experiences to other partners and stakeholder, both national and international, and to the second Summit in Tunis.

This kind of project allowed businesses to reflect on what they did and on what it needs to be done. Nice opportunity to brainstorm with the support of AUB. The Summits were interesting for subgrantee, they meet other people from which they can learn, but it could be more useful if everyone can give their opinion, with more time to free debating and networking. RESTART MED! is providing valuable training on sustainable tourism that will help spread knowledge and good practices among actors of the tourism sector. By funding selected subgrantees, the project in Lebanon helped to shed light on lesser-known places and hopefully reattract tourists to the country. Local producers and artisans, local guides, and the local hospitality sector will all benefit from increased visibility and an increased number of visitors, which will allow them to develop their activities and increase their revenues. The project also has the potential to encourage future projects such as small business creation by villagers (shops, services, etc.).

In the future it would be important to maintain the network between the stakeholders, organising networking and capacity building activities, even online, but often projects and grants are punctual support with no continuation. It could be useful to have the opportunity to continue what was started thanks to RESTART MED!.

Emotional Sicily, Tour operator and DMC	ITALY, SICILY
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Emotional Sicily was created with the objective of telling the story of Sicily through the promotion of itineraries, mostly targeting the foreign market as customers interested in slow tourism. The itineraries are created each time according to the customer's interests, trying to go beyond the classic tourist destinations, visiting less popular locations and focusing on the contact with the local community. Seasonal adjustment is also one of the objectives, with a focus on spring and autumn.

Emotional Sicily participated in the MED PEARLS project, focusing on the Etna and Alcantara Valley area, where they designed 10 slow tourism itineraries. and from there came into contact with RESTART MED!. Thanks to the sub-grant of 15000 euro received from RESTART MED!, they developed a communication campaign with the aim of giving visibility to sustainable tourism products in the area of the Via Selinuntina. They sought to create connections with local people who might be interested in being partners, and from there they devised itinerary proposals. The communication campaign, titled "To the Southwest: People, nature, and culture of Belice Valley", was launched in May and will be disseminated until December 2023. They produced various audio-visual materials and focused on accurate copywriting to address different target audiences through various channels while maintaining consistency and coherence. Additionally, they created a short documentary where local partners and community members share their personal stories and their relationship with the area. In addition to this, they informed their partners to whom they offer itineraries that there was a new destination promoted by them, being DMC of new itineraries in the area. Thanks to the subgrant, the website www.sustainablesicily.com was also created, with the aim of using it as a portal for sustainability-related projects in Sicily.

Furthermore, as Emotional Sicily, they participated in a summit in Lebanon, an interesting and well-structured event, which gave a broad view of sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean, allowing networking with colleagues from other countries, and exchanging practices.

Speaking of impact, they sought to really connect these local stakeholders, also thanks to the good level of involvement and interest of local authorities such as Castelvetrano, Sambuca di Sicilia and Gibellina. The project had important spin-offs, and may have them also in the future. Many local public and private actors were already aware of CROSSDEV, testifying to the good progress made in Sicily. Continuity with CROSSDEV meant that there was a strong interest from the municipalities in the area from the very beginning. The communication campaign will continue until the end of 2023, then as Emotional Sicily they will meet with all local actors to understand how to proceed in the future. It would be interesting in this sense, on the one hand, to reproduce dynamics similar to the ones of RESTART MED! in adjacent areas to that of the Via Selinuntina, aggregating new municipalities, and on the other hand, to strengthen dialogue and networking between Mediterranean stakeholders in order to create itineraries that cross several countries.

La Manreana	SPAIN, CATALONIA
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La Manreana is a family park that, through activities and attractions, wants to make families, and especially children, aware of the effort farmers make to produce food and raise awareness about the importance of this millenary trade. It is also a farm school with both farm animals and wild animals where children come for excursions of 1-2 days, there is

<p>a capacity of 130 places for sleeping. There is a shop for family visits on weekends and holidays and they organise different kinds of leisure activities.</p> <p>The main objective of the activities implemented with RESTART MED! is to achieve and explain to visitors the sustainability of their facilities. For this reason, they focused on activities for families, which they started in 2019 and are still developing. The aim was to increase the visibility of the Manreana and facilitate the purchase of the products offered, thanks to the new website (https://www.lamanreana.com) and thanks to the work on social networks.</p> <p>In the RESTART MED! framework, they participated in several meetings with CCB, and received support thanks to the tutor and to the whatsapp group with the other subgrantees. A member of La Manreana also participated in the final Summit in Lebanon.</p> <p>They value positively the help of RESTART MED! and the collaboration of the local partner, as it is very important to support small businesses that are not used to receive this kind of help.</p>	
Turismo Vivencial, Antonio Martin and Guadalupe Fili	SPAIN, CATALONIA
<p>Turismo Vivencial is an organisation specialised in creating experiences across Spain and Portugal. They received a subgrant from the standard project MED GAIMS, managed by AUB, and they applied also for the subgrant within RESTART MED!.</p> <p>Turismo Vivencial with the RESTART MED! grant wanted to promote the initiative Agency of Secrets (https://www.agencyofsecrets.com/en/), an innovative tool that enable tourists to experience the city of Vilanova I la Geltrù (Barcelona) through 10 digital and virtual reality games developed thanks to MED GAIMS. With the grant from RESTART MED! the following activities were carried out: promotion of the Agency of Secrets initiative, pilot test of the games with local elderly people, marketing activity with travel agencies and tour operators.</p> <p>The representatives of Turismo Vivencial participated in the final Summit in Lebanon, where they got to know other actors and other initiatives implemented by ENI CBC MED in other Mediterranean countries.</p> <p>The global vision of the RESTART MED! Project is very interesting, an opportunity to get to know other organisations and other experiences. Between the two projects ENI CBC MED they met with about 20 different companies, a network with a lot of potential, but which also asked for a lot of work. RESTART MED! has also been an opportunity to further value the results of the previous MED GAIMS project, with a positive impact in terms of sustainability.</p> <p>The grant process was managed by the Barcelona Chamber of Commerce, with the administrative part being quite complicated due to a very heavy administrative workload considering the amount of 4,500 euros. It would be important to have more opportunities for dialogue between businesses and project beneficiaries in the future. In the Lebanese Summit in which they participated there were many interesting activities, but it would have been useful to have more time available for networking between the companies supported by the project in order to identify possible collaborations.</p>	
Petra National Trust, Huda Amareen	JORDAN
<p>Petra National Trust promotes best practices in cultural and natural heritage preservation and management in Jordan, the region, and beyond. Established in 1989, Petra National Trust is a Jordanian, non-governmental, non-profit organization. It is Jordan's oldest national organization for cultural heritage preservation. Initially focused on preserving the values and significance of the UNESCO World Heritage site of Petra, today PNT's work covers cultural, archaeological and World Heritage sites in Jordan and the region. Petra National Trust responds to the urgent need to protect, preserve, and conserve the archaeological and cultural heritage of Jordan and the region and plays a significant role in international advocacy for cultural heritage. Petra National Trust has also educational programmes for children and women to preserve the cultural heritage in local communities around Jordan.</p> <p>Within RESTART MED! a workshop was developed and implemented, with the aim to introduce women to sculpting, carving, shaping, colouring and creating artwork related to their environment, nature, Nabataean art and architecture as well as Bedouin life and tradition, as part of cultural heritage. The training targeted females who are interested and have basic skills in producing pottery products and build their capacities to enable them to produce authentic and high-quality handmade products inspired by their cultural and natural heritage, which can contribute to generate a more sustained source of income.</p> <p>Petra National Trust has conducted a sculpting workshop for 18 female participants (age 18-40), from five villages in Wadi Rum (Rum, Al-Disa , Al-Twessa, Mnisheer, Al-taweel , and Al-gall). The objective was to build capacities of women who are representative for one of the local community associations. The program included three-days training with both theoretical and practical sessions.</p> <p>RESTART MED! represented a good opportunity to support women in Wadi Rum, to train them in producing handicrafts products linked to the cultural heritage of their own local communities.</p>	

<p>During the implementation they had some issues, as more support was needed from JUST in order to meet what was required in terms of administrative reports. The WhatsApp group they had with other beneficiaries was not sufficient, as some key information was lacking. Next time, before the implementation, it could be necessary to train the selected organisations on administrative issues.</p>	
<p>ADADK, Bayan Al-Abdullat</p>	<p>JORDAN</p>
<p>ADADK develops water technology that provide simple tools to empower every one of us to take action to protect our homes, our communities and our planet. In particular, they created a system based on wireless sensors and augmented reality network designed to detect visible and invisible water leaks earlier. The company received support by USAID and UNDP in the past, and were selected as one of the best international startups.</p> <p>RESTART MED! activities relevant to be supported and to increase environmental sustainability in the tourism sector, increasing awareness of service providers and of tourists about water leaks. The amount of grant was limited, 4 thousand euros, but they were able to develop several activities: development of software and hardware technology, increased accuracy for water leaks, increased the awareness for the hotel owners, for their tourists and for the technical person on how to use this kind of technology.</p> <p>As part of RESTART MED! they were also invited to the final Summit in Lebanon and to a training organised by JUST, but as the information arrived too late they did not have time to participate.</p> <p>In the future they hope to increase the awareness of policy makers, to be able to scale up, to find more grants to produce more technologies and to lend more people access to fresh and safe water.</p>	

BUILDING A COMMUNITY

The project aimed at strengthening the network and platform around sustainable tourism practices and products. The Med Sustainable Tourism platform was developed as a working tool for the partners, for the network created around RESTART MED! and for other organisations that may be interested in sustainable tourism. The platform is also useful for learning about experiences related to the four standard projects and more, thanks to the database that was created with a mapping of the initiatives implemented and supported in the Mediterranean. The Database of Mediterranean Sustainable Tourism Products, although not exhaustive, is a tool made available to partners and beneficiaries with the aim of giving visibility to products developed. The main project results and outputs and an online training have also been uploaded onto the platform. The platform created thanks to RESTART MED! is therefore a working tool that was created mainly for the partners and for the community created around the project, which will remain available in the years to come.

The project partners found it difficult to make a unanimous decision on the functioning and use of the Med Sustainable Tourism platform after the conclusion of the activities. As it was not possible to identify a partner interested in taking the platform forward in a dynamic manner, e.g. by adding material and updating the information on it, it seems that the platform developed will in future have the main role of acting as a linking portal to the outputs of the four capitalized ENI CBC MED projects.

Several platforms were created by the ENI CBC MED projects capitalised on sustainable tourism, and thus the Med Sustainable Tourism platform was mainly aimed at mapping not only what was done by the ENI CBC MED projects, but also by other projects and initiatives on sustainable tourism. The platform was useful not only to the general public, but also for networking and maintaining relations between partners and actors.

The platform developed is interesting and the potential impact can be good for stakeholders, service providers in the tourism sector and public institutions. The main problem is that each ENI CBC MED project developed its own platform, the risk is to duplicate something. For example, there was a lot of interest towards the database especially in Lebanon, because it enabled a mapping of sustainable tourism initiatives that was missing at national level and created an additional networking opportunity. In Sicily, on the other hand, the database did not lead to anything new because mapping at the local level was already done on the Hidden Mediterranean Platform developed by CROSSDEV. The fact that each standard ENI CBC MED project on tourism had to develop its own platform created a certain amount of confusion for the actors and stakeholders

involved who were asked to sign up, and who did not exactly understand the difference between the platforms developed in terms of their objectives.

Along with the platform, and probably more than the platform itself, the events and activities organised locally (workshops and focus groups) and internationally (Sustainable Tourism Summits) had a positive impact on the creation and development of a network of actors around the RESTART MED! project.

These activities represented a fundamental opportunity for the partners and all the actors involved, from national institutions to private sector actors, civil society and finally the beneficiaries of the subgrants, to become part of a community of practices that aims to promote sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean. The networking events organised through RESTART MED! allowed the exchange of practices and knowledge and the creation of partnerships within each target country and especially between different Mediterranean countries.

SUPPORTING SUSTAINABILITY

The project during the two years of its implementation also tried to increase awareness and capacity of public authorities & policy makers to adopt policies for local tourism/economic development.

The project's contribution in terms of policy development was good, if only because it brought public authorities together and made them reflect on the current norms and framework in each country and at the international level. RESTART MED! promoted and encouraged a dialogue on policies, even though the project was aware of the huge differences across the countries involved (Italy, Spain, Tunisia, Lebanon, Jordan). These differences made it complicated for the project to carry out a single advocacy action towards public institutions in all the countries, and it was decided to develop several policy review reports for each target territory. All countries produced a document analysing the legislative policy framework related to tourism, with a focus on sustainable tourism.

The starting conditions of certain countries limited the impact: for example, in Tunisia, the dialogue between national and local levels on the regulation of sustainable tourism was almost absent, while in Lebanon, there was a lack of a regulatory framework defining tourism at the national level, so RESTART MED! developed proposals to define a framework from the local context. The lack of leadership in terms of advocacy on the part of the Managing Authority, both vis-à-vis the individual countries and the European donor, together with the limited time available to the partners to impact on national policies, further limited the possibility of causing higher-level effects.

On the other hand, interest was shown in the issues touched upon by RESTART MED! by public stakeholders, as seen by the participation of ministers and high-level institutions in the Summits organised. Although the project did not lead to the adoption of policies on sustainable tourism and economic development, participatory processes involving various actors were undertaken in each territory. These processes, together with the elaboration of policy reviews at the national level, can be considered a fundamental first step towards achieving real change at the regulatory level.

VISIBILITY

The ENI CBC MED programme required addressing a wide audience, not just tourism experts, so the communication provided simple content to report on the results achieved and the impact of the activities carried out. The communication focused on the idea of having a project that unites different shores and countries of the Mediterranean, on a topic of interest such as tourism. The work carried out through the subgrants was the most communicated by the project, as it led to pragmatic results that were easily comprehensible to the public. The work done on sustainable tourism policies, which may be of interest to

institutions and actors involved in the tourism sector, is not as interesting to a general public, so it was not more widely communicated through the available channels. The visibility and promotion of the project, in addition to the website and social channels, was supported by the three Summits organised, which were attended by ministers and other relevant public institutions at national and international level, as well as a network of actors and stakeholders related to sustainable tourism.

The project's communication was effective and achieved a good impact, to the extent that RESTART MED! is the second most followed project among the ENI CBC MED capitalisation projects, testifying to the good work done. Instead, the Med Sustainable Tourism platform is the central tool for promoting the work carried out with institutions and other actors in the tourism sector starting from the final project phase, when it was finalised and its promotion began.

Enabling factors for project impact:

- Diverse partnership, with actors with different characteristics and competences but with wide experience in the management of similar projects, also given the simultaneous participation in ENI CBC MED standard projects.
- The opportunity given to each partner to tailor the intervention to the local implementation context, selecting the best way to achieve the results, allowed to increase the impact in the target areas.
- The decision to actively involve different actors belonging to local communities through training sessions, focus groups and sub-grants allowed to have a concrete impact in terms of networking, capacity building and promotion and visibility of tourism products.

Disabling factors for project impact:

- Difficulties faced by partners in actively involving some of the projects to be capitalised outside the ENI CBC MED programme.
- Delay in notifying associated partners and local stakeholders, primarily subgrantees, of some activities organised by the project at international level - especially the last Tourism Summit in Lebanon - and at local level - such as trainings and workshops - made it difficult for some to participate, thus negatively affecting the networking opportunity.
- The positive impact of the networking activities between stakeholders and beneficiaries of RESTART MED! in the different countries could have been even greater with more time available, enabling the creation of collaborations between actors.
- Greater leadership by the ENI CBC MED programme in terms of advocacy with public institutions would have allowed for a greater impact both at national level with governments and at international level, primarily with the European donor.
- Some of the tools developed within the project, such as the checklist to analyse sustainability and policies of local authorities, could have been applied as pilots also in other contexts, so as to be tested with a larger number of local authorities.

IMPACT: COUNTRY OVERVIEW

	INSIGHTS
ITALY (SICILY)	The choice of awarding a single subgrant of 15000 euro instead of 3 subgrants proved to be appropriate, also thanks to the careful selection of the organisation Emotional Sicily, already known to the project partners since it was a beneficiary of one of ENI CBC MED's previous standard projects on sustainable tourism. The impact of the subgrant was positive not only in terms of the promotion and visibility of the Via Selinuntina area - already a target area of the CROSSDEV project - thanks to

the creation of a promotional video as part of the communication campaign, titled "To the Southwest: People, nature, and culture of Belice Valley" and the website www.sustainable Sicily.com, with the aim of using it as a portal for sustainability-related projects in Sicily. The subgrant also made it possible to connect various private and public stakeholders in the area, who were already aware of the previous ENI CBC MED projects thanks to the valuable work carried out. The impact of what has been done thanks to the subgrant will also be medium to long term on the local tourism industry and the administration dedicated to tourism in Sicily.

Similarly, the thematic focus groups held, focusing on the challenges of sustainability in tourism policies in Sicily, and the first Sustainable Tourism Summit organised by RESTART MED! in Sicily proved to be of impact. The focus groups and Summit were attended by numerous local public and private stakeholders and provided a valuable opportunity for participants to meet and discuss. Three technical reports were produced from three focus group sessions carried out in three different parts of Sicily, and a summary report of the results, very much focused on the Sicilian territory.

RESTART MED! represented a valuable opportunity for the 3 subgrantees selected out of the 11 that applied, because of the limited amount of money available. The 3 subgrantees supported are very active and engaged with local communities: a youthful rural development initiative that works as a social enterprise developing standard rural –tourism operations and coordinating rural initiatives; a tour operator that organizes tours in deprived area of Lebanon near to the border with Syria; a small local NGO that manage a guesthouse in a mountain area and organize tours for visitors. The subgrantees were requested to improve their communication, visibility and promotion, especially their website and social media management. The results were satisfactory, but as AUB they would have preferred to be available to give larger subgrants and to support subgrantees to implement new activities of sustainable tourism connected with their areas and local communities. More fundings could have increased the impact on private sector stakeholders, supporting more small businesses. It is not a fault of the project, but of the call for capitalisation. Maybe in the proposals it could have been necessary to allocate more funds for subgrants. All in all, the impact of the subgrants for visibility and promotion and of capacity building to private sector stakeholders was good, as will be the impact on the local communities to which the beneficiaries belong.

LEBANON

Workshops, trainings and focus groups on sustainable tourism were organised by AUB in Lebanon, succeeding in involving every stakeholder in the sustainable tourism sector, from public, to private, to NGOs and academics. Thanks to the AUB network, many different people from different sectors were invited and participated to the activities implemented. Participants were trained and increased their capacities, being also able to network among themselves. Workshops and focus groups had a positive impact in terms of networking between stakeholders.

Regarding higher-level effects, the project had an effect at local level, but more needs to be done at national level in Lebanon in terms of policies and legal framework concerning the regulation and promotion of sustainable tourism initiatives. It is very challenging to make changes in Lebanon, not because the project is falling short, but because a lot of time is required. Lebanon as a country did not have a government and a president in the last couple of years, so it is obviously difficult to have an impact in terms of policies. The impact on Lebanese sustainable tourism community of the capitalisation project RESTART MED! and of the standard ENI CBC MED projects is evident, but to formalize and institutionalise will take more time.

The 4 selected subgrantees focused on solutions for increase the impact and sustainability of the tourism sector in the local communities. The 4 subgrants implemented different kinds of activities: how to reduce water waste in the tourism sector (with a focus on hotel industry), how to make tourism sector such as tourism accommodation and travel agencies more aware about environmental sustainability, how to promote local food products, how to promote the production of traditional handicrafts by woman in rural local communities (producing training materials and videos on how to produce the handicrafts). All the subgrants had a good impact on beneficiaries, giving them an opportunity to develop new/different activities, despite the limited amount of money available.

JORDAN

The project had a good impact in terms of networking at several level thanks to participatory activities, that brought together different stakeholders. Even the subgrantees expand their network thanks to the project, knowing other experiences and businesses both in Jordan and from other Mediterranean countries. The focus groups and thematic workshops were organised in different Jordan areas, trying to better understand each context and the emerging needs and allowing participants to debate and reflect of the future of sustainable tourism in each local context.

RESTART MED! had some impact in terms of higher-level effects, an impact that hopefully will increase in the future, thanks to the policy review report developed. The project allowed to introduce the concept of rural tourism and digitalisation in the tourism sector, supporting their development.

SPAIN (CATALONIA)

In order to impact the private sector, it is useful to have the opportunity to give grants directly to local companies. The project has supported five small local businesses with subgrants of up to 5,000 euros. As the activities in Catalonia are directed towards the promotion and visibility of tourism products already developed and supported by previous ENI CBC MED standard projects, the immediate impact has been positive and it is hoped that the future impact will be even greater. The amount allocated to subgrants within RESTART MED! was limited, so the impact achieved is commensurate with the funds. It was important to bring the subgrantees to the final Summit in Lebanon, as it was an opportunity for them to get to know different contexts and stakeholders of the tourism sector, to discuss and exchange experiences and practices.

One of the main impacts was in terms of vertical networking within the countries and horizontal networking across the different countries involved. The sustainable tourism topic has proved to be a great opportunity for networking in Catalonia, allowing the transfer of ideas and practices and the creation of collective knowledge. The activities organised in Catalonia had strong impact, with a lot of participation, and the partners were positively surprised by the interest of the public.

In terms of policy analysis, the work done in Catalonia with the elaboration of the checklist by the Catalan Tourism Board and its application with six local entities resulted in a clear positive impact, giving the opportunity to initiate a process that CTB will continue with the local entities also after the end of the project. Finally, RESTART MED! allowed to strengthen networking at the level of Catalonia between partners and associate partner: ASCAME, Chamber of Commerce, Diputació de Barcelona, Catalan Tourism Board.

TUNISIA

The WWF chose to have very strict criteria in the selection of subgrantee beneficiaries, also based on the previous experience of the MEDUSA Project, where they faced some problems in the subgrants' management due to a less careful selection. Once the criteria were identified and the call for subgrantees opened, 10 proposals arrived from start-ups and other local organisations. It was planned to give 5 sub-grants of EUR 5,000, for a total of EUR 25,000, but only 4 met all the criteria. Having selected only 4 subgrantees, WWF asked the 4 selected beneficiaries if they were willing and interested in having additional budget, as long as they submitted additional documentation justifying the requested additional budget with new activities and expenses. The reports produced and the justifications to increase the budget were sent for approval, but this process took additional time, leaving the sub grantees only 4 months in total to spend the money received, carry out all the activities and produce the final reports. These 4 months were further complicated by the context, as the month of Ramadan overlapped, causing them to proceed slowly. Despite this additional challenge, the beneficiaries managed to conclude the activities and spend the money on time, also thanks to WWF's support during the entire process with regard to subgrants management and reporting, resulting in a positive impact in terms of capacity building. The 4 selected subgrantees are local organisations with strong links to their communities. Thanks to the subgrantees, new or existing tourism products supported by ENI CBC MED standard projects were developed and promoted, with a positive impact not only on the specific organisation, but more generally for the local communities. The promotional activities allowed to make the subgrantees known by a wider audience, but also benefitted other people and small businesses of their local communities. Important for people to be able to implement and develop their activities, to help their territories to become more developed. This will also have an impact on youth, allowing them to have socio-economic opportunities and remain in their villages without having to migrate.

The networking events both at Tunisian level and at international level represented one of the main impacts of the RESTART MED! project. The activities involved different kind of actors, public and private. The subgrantees were in Lebanon for the final summit and they bring back a lot of ideas to improve their businesses.

Finally, concerning the impact on policies on sustainable tourism at national level, RESTART MED! allowed to initiate a process in Tunisia, reuniting and involving ministries and public institutions on several occasions, drafting the policy review report and formulating some possible proposals. In order to cause a real change in policies, more years and resources will be needed, but the project impact is nevertheless valuable.

4.2.6 SUSTAINABILITY

SUSTAINABILITY: GLOBAL OVERVIEW

The Med Sustainable Tourism platform was created as a working tool by the partners with the aim of being a showcase of good practices and tools, and within it there are useful documents and links to other links of possible interest, such as the platforms elaborated by the 4 capitalised ENI CBC MED standard projects. RESTART MED! covered the hosting costs for a couple of years, but no agreement was reached between the partners as to which organisation would be responsible for the future management of the platform. Given the current situation, it is plausible that the platform will remain static in the years to come and will continue to be a showcase of good practices and experiences on sustainable tourism, with a database and online training on demand, but without the need for a real animation in the future, including the addition of materials and news.

Other options were explored by the project partners, but did not lead to alternative solutions:

- The platform remains a showcase of good practices, with the possibility for partners who wish to do so to continue sharing materials and news on promoted activities. To do this, an agreement between all is needed to make the transition from AUB, responsible for the platform during the project, to all partners.
- To understand whether DIBA, which is coordinating an Interreg MED capitalisation project on sustainable tourism with a view to the northern shore of the Mediterranean, might be interested in integrating the contents of Med Sustainable Tourism into its platform and finding a way of linking them, so as to also have a window on the southern shore of the Mediterranean.
- In Lebanon, a network of local NGOs seems to be interested in taking over the management of the database of sustainable tourism initiatives on the platform, as it is a tool that is lacking at national level. The option of taking over the entire platform to promote sustainable tourism in Lebanon and other countries has also been mooted.

Each ENI CBC MED projects on sustainable tourism developed a website/platform, but the main concern is related to the sustainability of these tools, that must be somehow financially sustainable for the responsible organisation. In this sense, more leadership is needed from the ENI CBC MED programme regarding sustainability strategies concerning these tools. Alternatively, there is a real risk that the websites and platforms will live and be updated for the designated time (one or two years), but then be forgotten. This may cause a loss of the knowledge produced and the community of practice that has been created thanks to EU funding.

Sustainability of the network of actors that has been created around RESTART MED! will depend not only on the Med Sustainable Tourism platform, but also on the Med Sustainable Tourism LinkedIn group that has been created by the project. Furthermore, given the positive experience of the project and the good relationship between the partners and the private stakeholders involved, future collaborations based on new projects and initiatives may arise. In order to foster collaborations between private stakeholders, first and foremost sub-grantees, it is recommended that online initiatives be organised the RESTART MED! partners periodically to follow up on the process started thanks to the capitalisation project.

As far as support for private actors is concerned, both capacity building activities and subgrants for promotion and visibility activities ensure a certain level of sustainability and will have a positive impact on beneficiaries and local communities especially in the months to come. The partners' careful selection of beneficiaries ensures that they will be able to continue developing their sustainable tourism products in the future.

With regard to the activities directed at public authorities and policy makers, the RESTART MED! project, thanks to the activities carried out by the partners in their respective contexts, has laid the foundations of a process that may lead in the future to the adoption of policies aimed at supporting sustainable tourism and thus economic development in the target countries. In order for the awareness-raising process carried out with the public actors thanks to the events organised to lead to such medium to long term results, it will however be necessary to continue with the process undertaken in the territories, involving private and public actors in further moments of sharing and confrontation, in order to maintain the focus on the theme. In this sense, the commitment and willingness of the project partners to continue to play a central role in order to prevent the results achieved from being lost.

SUSTAINABILITY: COUNTRY OVERVIEW

	INSIGHTS
ITALY (SICILY)	The only subgrant awarded by the project in Sicily allowed the construction of a communication campaign and a website for the promotion of the Via Selinuntina and the Belice Valley, areas already targeted by the standard CROSSDEV project. Having acted in full continuity with the standard project made it possible to further strengthen the network of private and public actors in the area, giving hope for future developments. The 3 technical reports elaborated on the basis of the focus groups and the summary report of the results are tools that may have future impacts on the Sicilian territory.
LEBANON	RESTART MED! contributed to start a process in Lebanon, but in order to create policy changes more will be needed by all the stakeholders involved in the project, from the project partner AUB to the public and private actors of the tourism sector. The project allowed to have better sustainable tourism products in Lebanon and to increase their visibility and promotion.
JORDAN	What has been done thanks to RESTART MED! in Jordan will be useful in the future, as the project introduced or strengthened at national level different topics related to sustainable tourism, such as community-based tourism, rural tourism, and digitalisation of the tourism sector. Concerning community-based tourism, what was done by CROSSDEV has been capitalised thanks to RESTART MED!, with the methodology created that has been presented and applied in different areas. The project was able to raise awareness among local communities and stakeholders at local and national level about the importance of cultural and socio-economic impact and sustainability of the tourism sector. The network created thanks to RESTART MED! will be sustainable, as JUST will maintain the relations with some of the stakeholders involved both at country level and at international level, trying to improve the connections mainly with Lebanese stakeholders.
SPAIN (CATALONIA)	The local partners are interested in continuing to collaborate with some of the organisations with which they entered into contact thanks to focus groups and thematic workshops, particularly from civil society and linked to the local community. The checklist developed by the project to analyse sustainability and policies of local authorities has been positively received by the local authorities themselves, and the Catalan Tourist Board is willing to continue applying it in other contexts. CTB has also produced an important document with guidelines on sustainability, which may be useful in the future.
TUNISIA	The engagement of local communities' stakeholders and of local and national public authorities in different RESTART MED! activities is an aspect that will help in terms of sustainability. WWF NA will continue to work in the topic of sustainable tourism and will continue to support, monitor and promote subgrantees. Subgrantees will be able to develop more and grow in the years to come. Having resources and time it could be interesting to organise more meetings – even if virtual - between subgrantees to exchange practices and ideas both at national and international level.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the main conclusions from the project evaluation both at general level and per specific objective, providing recommendations for future similar actions in the sector of sustainable tourism.

<p>Capitalisation at ENI CBC MED programme level</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The idea of foreseeing capitalisation projects by ENI CBC MED is indeed positive, but, being the first time such projects were promoted, it was not clear what they were being fostered for. As there was not enough experience in this regard, the partners of RESTART MED! did not know exactly what they were expected to achieve over the course of the project. This resulted in the ENI CBC MED capitalisation projects not being consistent in the type of activities promoted. Guidance and support from the Managing Authority in the capitalisation phase and in fulfilling the advocacy role at the European level was limited. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ RESTART MED!'s approach to capitalisation allowed its partners to be efficient and productive, but the advice for the future is to define more clearly what capitalisation means at the programme level. It is possible to provide multiple options yet have a few guidelines to facilitate the work of Lead Beneficiaries and their partners. ○ Increased support from the programme to capitalisation projects, as well as stronger leadership in carrying out the advocacy function on policy-making (e.g., through a common platform, policy briefings, etc. at national level and with the European Commission) may be required. • In terms of the timing of ENI CBC MED capitalisation projects, the overlap with standard projects has brought advantages but also caused some difficulties. Having an overlap between standard projects to be capitalised and capitalisation projects made the circulation of information easier, ensuring a full knowledge of what was done. On the other hand, it could have been useful to have some more time for the successful implementation of the capitalisation project. Longer time would have allowed to learn from and to capitalise on the final outputs and results of the standard projects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is useful to maintain an overlap between standard and capitalisation projects, but it would be beneficial to have more time - at least 6 months - devoted to capitalisation after the conclusion of standard projects, thus having the opportunity to better capitalise and consolidate the final results and outputs.
<p>SUPPORTING ECONOMIC RECOVERY Use results & successful practices of sustainable tourism projects for transfer and further</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sub-grants and capacity building support to private actors had a positive impact on stakeholders to improve visibility and promotion of their sustainable tourism products, as well as on the local communities to which the beneficiaries belong to. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More fundings dedicated to subgrants could have enhanced the impact on private sector stakeholders, allowing to increase the amount of grants to the selected subgrantees or even to support a higher number of worthy

<p>exploitation in a “from pandemic shock to recovery” perspective, supporting resilience and local jobs in the tourism sector with cross-border knowledge and instruments.</p>	<p>initiatives and experiences, in line with the thematic objective and priority (A.1 Business and SMEs development in the sustainable tourism sector).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is suggested also to focus on subgrants and capacity building support to beneficiaries since the early beginning of project activities. This includes building on their engagement, and according to their needs, develop the roadmap with the target local communities, giving more opportunities for subgrantees from different Mediterranean countries to meet, network and create collaborations between themselves. ○ Subgrants proved to be significant in terms of impact, but ways must be found to reduce administrative / management burden for beneficiary companies (especially in comparison with the limited amount of the received sub-grant) as they are usually of limited dimensions and lack the required competence.
<p>BUILDING A COMMUNITY</p> <p>Build on existing platforms & communities to spread knowledge, skills, benefits of tourism projects to a wider community, adding value through a cross-border, collaborative MED destination approach, under a common brand, which combines sustainability and economic opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Med Sustainable Tourism platform developed by RESTART MED! has been a useful tool for work between partners during project implementation and for strengthening the community of practice. On the other hand, it plays a minor role towards the wider public and the final users of tourism products, for whom the platforms developed by the standard projects serve a greater role. From the RESTART MED! and capitalised projects' experiences, concerns emerge regarding the financial and management sustainability of platforms and the visibility they can achieve. A risk linked to sustainability of project results is to lose the knowledge of what have been produced in the past, and that ENI CBC MED or other EU funded projects will in the future produce / replicate the same outputs and results (e.g., by creating similar and overlapping platforms), with unnecessary public spending. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is suggested to consider the opportunity for platforms which mostly directed for use by the community of practice to be hosted on the domain of the ENI CBC MED programme. This would help solve the problem of their financial sustainability and future management of platforms, which may become static but continue to exist as knowledge tools and repository of experiences. Any platform should be kept alive as part of ENI CBC MED sustainability strategy, being an issue that concerns not only the sustainability of individual projects but of the entire programme. ○ It is suggested for ENI CBC MED to include in the call for projects the requirement to explain the way to make the platform and the websites produced sustainable even after the end of the projects. ● Thematic focus groups and workshops at national level represented a positive experience in RESTART MED!, as it is important to involve different levels of stakeholders, from local communities' actors to national public ones. Moreover, meeting and engaging with people and local communities is fundamental for full ownership and sustainability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is important to keep on involving local communities and local stakeholders in participatory activities, organising moments of discussion and co-creation between different types of actors allowing the exchange of perspectives and knowledge.

<p>SUPPORTING SUSTAINABILITY</p> <p>Increase awareness and capacity at public authorities & policy makers for mainstreaming of environmental, socioeconomic, cultural sustainable good practices and results into policies for local tourism/economic development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of policy, two years is a very short time to create and implement relevant policy and institutional reforms on sustainable tourism. Nevertheless, in the experience of RESTART MED! policy reviews and actions to increase awareness and build strategies have been useful to start a process of change at national and/or local level. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Capitalisation projects should be able simultaneously to adapt to local contexts but also to suggest shared strategies among Mediterranean countries. ○ As the project's community of practice developed tools, such as the checklist to analyse sustainability and policies of local authorities, these should have been tested not only in one country, but at least piloted in all other partner countries as well. Capitalising and consolidating the product by testing it in other contexts would have increased the impact of the project. ○ It is also suggested to ensure and enable a greater involvement of associate partners for institutional and policy continuity in all countries.
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ANNEX 1 – LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

The following representatives of project partners have been interviewed online / in person by means of individual or collective interviews:

Table 6 – Project partners interviewed

Organization	Role	Country	Interviewee(s)	Contacts
Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP)	Lead Partner	Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deborah Rezzoagli, project coordinator - Gianluca Falcitelli, Director Geographical Area Middle East & Mediterranean - Annalisa Marocchi, communication officer - Emanuela Panke, CISP Tourism Expert - Sara Canobbi, finance manager - Lianne Ceelen, Expert for support to Project Management, Monitoring & Administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - rezzoagli@cisp-ngo.org - falcitelli@cisp-ngo.org - annalisa.marocchi@cisp-ngo.org - canobbi@cisp-ngo.org - emanuelapanke@gmail.com - lianne@eu-consultancy.com
Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST)	Project Partner	Jordan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ahmed Freewan, project manager - Mr. Ayman Harb, JUST Tourism Expert 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - aafreewan@just.edu.jo - a.harb@ju.edu.jo
American University of Beirut (AUB)	Project Partner	Lebanon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Daniel Asmar, project manager - Dana Sobh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - da20@aub.edu.lb - ds76@aub.edu.lb
Barcelona Official Chamber of Commerce	Project Partner	Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Albert Rodríguez de Gea, Project manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - arodriguez@cambrabcn.cat
Catalan Tourist Board	Project Partner	Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cristina Bajet Mestre, project manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cristinabajet@gencat.cat
WWF Mediterranean North Africa	Project Partner	Tunisia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Imen Khemiri, project manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ikhemiri@wwfna.org
Association of the Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASCAME)	Associate partner	Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diana Truyol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dtruyol@ascame.org
Diputació de Barcelona (DIBA)	Associate partner	Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Calvo veja, georgina - Rodriguez Lopez, Jose Francisco 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - calvovg@diba.cat - rodriguezlj@diba.cat

Source: Authors' elaboration

Finally, the following beneficiaries have been interviewed online / in person:

Table 7 – Beneficiaries interviewed

Country	Role	Stakeholder	Name and surname
Italy	Subgrantee	Emotional Sicily	Manila Di Maira
Lebanon	Subgrantee	Cezar's project	Carmen Boudargham, Luna
Lebanon	Subgrantee	Boukra NGO	Raquel Ramadan
Jordan	Subgrantee	Petra National Trust	Huda Amareen
Jordan	Subgrantee	ADADK	Bayan Al-Abdullat
Spain	Subgrantee	Turismo Vivencial	Guadalupe Fili, Antonio Martin
Spain	Subgrantee	La Manreana	Jaume Graus
Tunisia	Subgrantee	Climb'IN	Nelson Rojas Saez
Tunisia	Subgrantee	IDWEY	Khouloud Kaabi

Source: Authors' elaboration

ANNEX 2 – EVALUATION TOOLS

Key informant interview structure – project partners

RELEVANCE

- 1.1 Relevance of promoted activities for beneficiaries, stakeholders and local communities
- 1.2 Relevance of capitalisation projects as conceived within the ENI CBC MED programme

COHERENCE

- 2.1 Coherence with the standard project
- 2.2 alignment between the RESTART MED! Project and the ENI CBC MED Capitalization process's vision and approach

EFFECTIVENESS

- 3.1 To what extent did the intervention achieve its objectives and expected results?
- 3.2 What are the major positive factors/constraints influencing the achievement of the expected results?

EFFICIENCY:

- 4.1 How well human and financial resources were allocated
- 4.2 How well the intervention was managed

IMPACT

- 5.1 What was the impact of capacity building to private sector stakeholders?

What was the impact of subgrants for visibility initiatives?

5.2 What was the impact of awareness and dissemination activities?

5.3 What was the impact in terms of networking between private and public actors?

5.4 What is RESTART MED! impact in terms of CROSS BORDER exchange of experiences and methods and in terms of cooperation and networking?

5.5 How did the intervention cause higher-level effects (such as changes in norms or systems)?

SUSTAINABILITY

6.1 What has been done to ensure that the benefits generated by the project continue in the medium-long run?

6.2 Do the relevant target groups (such as subgrantees supported) have capacity and commitment to leverage the benefits of the project over time?

4.3 What additional support or resources may be needed to sustain the outcomes from this project, and what obstacles exist in this regard?

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Which are the main lessons learned and recommendations for future similar initiatives?

Key informant interview structure – project beneficiaries

1. Which RESTART MED! project activities have you been involved in?
2. How has RESTART MED! subgrants supported your organisation?
3. How relevant do you think the RESTART MED! project activities are?
4. Do you think that the results achieved by the project will continue beyond its end?
5. What else could be done in the future to improve the tourist and socio-economic development of your area/community?



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