



CROSSDEV

Cultural Routes for Sustainable Social and economic Development in the Mediterranean

Final Evaluation Report

August 2023



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CROSSDEV - Cultural Routes for Sustainable Social and economic Development in the Mediterranean

Final Evaluation Report

August 2023



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:	CROSSDEV - Cultural Routes for Sustainable Social and economic Development in the Mediterranean
Countries:	Italy, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine
Donor:	ENI CBC MED 2014/2020, European Union
Thematic Obj.	A.1 – Business and SMEs development (Promote economic and Social Development)
Priority:	A.1.3 – Encourage sustainable tourism initiatives and actions
Leader:	CISP – Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli
Partners:	CoopCulture and Ministry of Culture (Italy), Jordan University of Science and Technology and The Royal Marine Conservation Society of Jordan (Jordan), Association for the Protection of Jabal Moussa (Lebanon), Palestinian Heritage Trail (Palestine)
Evaluator:	ARCO – Action Research for Co-Development

FOCUS:

The **CROSSDEV** project – **Cultural Routes for Sustainable Social and Economic Development in the Mediterranean** – is funded by the ENI CBC MED Programme of the European Commission within the thematic objective A.1 – Business and SMEs development and the priority A.1.3 – Encourage sustainable tourism initiatives and actions.

The project was initially expected to be implemented between 01-09-2019 and 31-08-2022. The Project requested and received from the Managing Authority two extensions, which resulted in the project's conclusion finally postponed to 31 August 2023. Considering the extensions, the project had a total duration of 48 months. The main objective of the project is to contribute to the economic and social development in the Mediterranean region, strengthening and enhancing sustainable tourism practices, emphasizing common heritages and resources in less known tourism destinations. The project is implemented in four countries (Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine) by a consortium led by CISP – Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli - and composed by the following partners: CoopCulture and Ministry of Culture (Italy), Jordan University of Science and Technology and The Royal Marine Conservation Society of Jordan (Jordan), Association for the Protection of Jabal Moussa (Lebanon), Palestinian Heritage Trail (Palestine).

The five targeted less-known tourist destinations are:

- Italy: Sicily, communities in the areas along the Via Selinuntina, neighborhoods of Sambuca di Sicilia and Menfi (Province of Agrigento);
- Jordan: communities around less known historical and cultural sites in Aqaba area (Southern Jordan) AND archaeological site of Umm Qais (Northern Jordan);
- Lebanon: villages in the area of Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve, Mount Lebanon;
- Palestine: communities along the Masar Ibrahim Al Khalil trail, West Bank.

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

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY:

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 in the Final Evaluation report:

- **Effectiveness:** *The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups;*
- **Efficiency:** *The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way;*
- **Impact:** *The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects;*
- **Sustainability:** *The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.*

Furthermore, the results utilization-focused evaluation pursues the following objectives:

- To assess the alignment between the Project's design and the objectives/priorities of ENI CBC MED;
- To analyse the added value provided by the CROSS-BORDER DIMENSION of the Project;
- To analyse the performance of the Project with regard to the following specific aspects of interest: VISIBILITY; CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES such as gender, youth involvement, environmental impact, disability; CAPACITY BUILDING; AWARENESS RAISING on sustainable tourism concept, cultural heritage valorisation and conservation, sustainable tourism and socio-economic development links.

The evaluation is based on the following methodological components:

- The analysis of the results achievement accordingly with results and outputs indicators, as proposed in the project Logical Framework, combined with the desk analysis of the project documents, and the information collected during the activities;
- Conceptual content analysis of the interviews and of the results collected through the questionnaire, taking into consideration the perceptions of beneficiaries, stakeholders and project partners, as well including them directly and actively in the evaluation activities.

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.

EFFECTIVENESS

The project met and exceeded the set targets regarding result and output indicators. The partners involved effectively implemented awareness raising and capacity building activities and managed to find the right ways to engage public and private stakeholders and local communities. In addition, numerous beneficiaries and subgrantees were supported by the project. The results were achieved despite several external obstacles the project faced, both at the overall level, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, and at the individual country level, for example, the political and economic crisis in Lebanon and the political environment in Palestine. The partnership was one of the key aspects to ensure effectiveness. The choice of partners with strong local roots, who already knew the local stakeholders and communities, facilitated their active involvement in project activities. The community-based tourism approach was applied in the different territories, by partners with different expertise and experience. The commitment of the partners was strong from the start and grew with the implementation of the project. In terms of effectiveness, much has been achieved by the project, enrichment of knowledge, skills, development and systemisation of good practices, exchange of approaches, but also infrastructural interventions.

EFFICIENCY

The management and governance structure of the project was well organised, with continuous and active involvement of all Project Partners, who have always proved to be collaborative and to hold the necessary skills to implement the activities and to carry out the administrative and reporting tasks. Each partner provided a team of at least three persons - project manager, communication officer, financial officer -, allowing to have a good level of efficiency and minimising the risk of

miscommunication between partners. The way CROSSDEV was managed – both thanks to the Lead Beneficiary and thanks to a smooth and fruitful collaboration with the Joint Technical Secretariat and with the programme Managing Authority – allowed each partner to develop and implement different kind of activities in the targeted destinations, based on the specific expertise of each partner and on the specific needs of each destination, and to make the necessary operational adjustments.

IMPACT

In CROSSDEV, sustainable tourism has been used as a key to peoples' development, linking to cross-cutting issues such as environmental protection, training for youth and students, creation of employment opportunities in areas in need, and socio-occupational inclusion of women. Women and youth are often the main targets of the activities implemented by CROSSDEV in the target territories, and they benefited extensively from the project. These benefits have occurred both in terms of raising awareness of tourism and sustainability issues through extensive involvement of students at different levels, including university students, and in terms of capacity building and financial support to selected subgrantees, with women being the primary target. Thanks to the variety of activities planned, CROSSDEV enabled the destinations involved to valorise their cultural heritage by involving local communities and to be promoted internationally. In addition, the presence of partners from different countries allowed the exchange of experiences and best practices, but also enabled some of the challenges that emerged to be addressed collectively. CROSSDEV has led local communities to increase their sense of ownership towards their territories and their cultural and environmental heritage. It has also enabled the creation, or strengthening where already present, of local stakeholder networks around issues of cultural heritage protection and valorisation, stimulating a positive change of mindset and increasing social cohesion within local communities. Several capacity building activities has been organised by each partner at local level for different types of stakeholders and about different topics, based on the needs of the local community. Thanks to the training received, the beneficiaries were able to increase their skills on a variety of topics, from social media management to gastronomy and food security, thus managing overall to increase and improve the offer of services for visitors and their ability to receive guests. Furthermore, subgrants were given to small business /service providers in Lebanon and Jordan, and to small business/service providers and to Local Authorities in Palestine to improve sustainable tourism offer and to increase attractiveness of the destinations. Overall, the impact of the subgrants has been positive not only on the direct beneficiaries, but also on the local communities. The subgrants led to a change of mindset in several cases, and enabled beneficiaries to improve their businesses and acquire management skills and abilities, with the support of local partners. Despite the limited amount of money and time available, and despite the challenging external context, the subgrants contributed to an improvement over the starting conditions. Finally, the visibility strategy made it possible to have an impact on the ability of the destinations involved to promote themselves through quality materials and allowed the partnership to have at its disposal a tool such as the Hidden Mediterranean platform, the impact of which became evident in the concluding months of the project, and which has further broad potential. The actions promoted and the results achieved by the project were widely disseminated through communication on the project website and through participation in numerous initiatives.

SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of the tourism products developed is guaranteed by the fact that the partners involved have in their mission the promotion of the territories in which they are rooted. One of the main factors contributing to the sustainability of the results achieved is the involvement of local and national institutional authorities in decision-making processes and/or in socialising the results achieved. In terms of soft empowerment, the beneficiaries are left with the knowledge and skills transferred through the capacity building carried out in the target areas by the local partners. Through the know-how acquired, in fact, numerous service providers were able to increase the quality of services offered to visitors, and others will be able to do so in the years to come. The partners themselves have increased their competences through the experience gained during the years of CROSSDEV implementation. In fact, within CROSSDEV, a methodology was developed and promoted that the partners will be able to reuse in the future, and materials and guidelines were elaborated in various areas (institutional involvement, communication strategies) that will remain available to the organisations involved. Regarding the sustainability of the results achieved through the subgrants, as they are closely related to the ability of the target destinations to attract more visitors, the role played by the international context and that of individual countries must be considered. Fam trip, site inspections and test of the itineraries developed were organised in the various destinations with local and international tour operators, leading to the creation of tourist packages. Although the impact and sustainability of some actions, first and foremost the Hidden Mediterranean platform that allows for the advertising of an elaborate tourism product, will be fully understood after the end of the project, CROSSDEV has created a network that can remain and grow, leading to a growth of the community created around the Hidden Mediterranean concept.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the main lessons learned from the project and the recommendations for future initiatives in the sector of sustainable tourism and local development. Together, they can represent the basis for decision making processes for scaling up, replication, diffusion and continuation of the actions supported through the Project.

CROSSDEV APPROACH TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The strategical developmental approach of CISP - community and rights based approach addressing roots of the inequalities -, integrated with the experience and concept of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, allowed the development of the CROSSDEV project idea to promote territorial and community development in the most disadvantaged areas, through the creation of sustainable tourism products from the valorisation of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of each territory. CROSSDEV acted in an integrated manner by implementing numerous activities in a synergetic manner for the benefit of the five target destinations and their respective local communities: awareness raising on the valorisation of cultural heritage, capacity building, financial support to subgrantees, networking with local and national institutions, marketing and promotion of the sustainable tourism products created. The project promoted a community-based tourism approach that aimed to work with local communities for local communities, tailoring activities and strategies according to need and potential. CROSSDEV showed how, in order to have a positive impact on territories with differences, it is necessary to use in a flexible way the approach, adapting it to each context. Furthermore, the importance of involving local communities as much as possible from the beginning of the process should be emphasised. The engagement of local communities - service providers, institutions, women, youth, leaders - enabled the project to have an even greater impact. Local communities will help sharing the knowledge and making the results achieved more sustainable.

Recommendations for future initiatives:

- To design future sustainable tourism strategies, processes and interventions grounded on a community-based approach, because there is no sustainable tourism without community engagement and ownership.
- To start from aspirations and needs of local communities, engaging with a variety of local stakeholders (such as local authorities, private sector organisations, service providers, community-based and civil society organisations, academia, etc.) since the very early stage of any initiative.

CROSSDEV APPROACH WITH PROJECT PARTNERS

The partners involved in the project, although different in terms of legal form, NGOs, universities, associations, were selected because they were well rooted in the territory and/or had the necessary skills to succeed in establishing themselves as actors capable of contributing to the development of destinations for the benefit of local communities. All partners also confirmed their common desire to involve local communities throughout the entire process. The methodology of community-based tourism applied represented a learning opportunity for the project partners. The CROSSDEV partnership took advantage of the diversity in terms of areas and know-how, creating a very cohesive network around the concept of Hidden Mediterranean and providing a strong added value to the project. CROSSDEV, thanks to the collaboration established, led to the personal and professional growth of the partners, providing opportunities to share experiences and know-how with others involved. The frequency of interactions was continuous, first online during the Covid-19 period and then online and in-person at project events. CISP's work in managing the consortium proved to be successful: on the one hand, it was left to the individual partners to identify the main needs of the communities and to decide on specific activities for greater impact, shaping the overall model on each of the five destinations; on the other hand, CISP continuously supported the partners, both for implementation, management and administrative issues.

Recommendations for future initiatives:

- To select partners rooted in their areas, with expertise, experience and the willingness to continue or to establish long-lasting relations with local communities and stakeholders (rather than only spot for the project intervention)
- To include in the partnership different actors, both in terms of types of organizations and of countries and areas of origin, with a cross-border exchange perspective.

- To combine strong and frequent coordination of efforts among partners with high flexibility concerning the necessary actions and activities, according to local contexts and needs

SUBGRANTS

The subgrants awarded by the partners in three of the five CROSSDEV target destinations were one of the most positive outputs of the project. In fact, they provided selected service providers and Local Authorities with financial resources to put into practice what the project intended to promote, increasing attractiveness through improved service and promoting sustainable tourism and development practices that can improve the socio-economic opportunities of local communities. Despite the differences between the subgrantees, the differences between the amount of subgrants, and the different destinations and local communities to which the subgrantees belong, the support given through the subgrants led in all cases to positive results. The subgrants provided a strong signal of project commitment, triggering an intangible change in the local communities. Subgrants were received very positively by the local communities and represented an opportunity for growth and empowerment for both the beneficiaries themselves and the project partners, as they were required to produce a significant amount of reporting and accountability. Finally, subgrants are a key component in terms of visibility in local communities and target destinations for the ENI CBC MED programme and for the European Union as a donor. Subgrants, in fact, together with capacity-building and awareness-raising activities, gave local communities concrete support.

Recommendations for future initiatives:

- To include concrete actions to financially support local communities' stakeholders, in order to make capacities on sustainable tourism operational in disadvantaged areas and further increase the empowerment of tourism service providers in line with sustainable tourism principles.
- To adopt robust and transparent criteria to identify beneficiaries of subgrants, keeping into account their existing capacities, their willingness to improve following the sustainable tourism principles and to continue their activities in the future.
- To reduce the administrative burden on subgrantees according to the amount received.

DIVERSITY AS ADDED VALUE

The five target destinations show numerous differences from each other, and some of them cannot be properly defined less-known destinations, such as Aqaba in Jordan and the area of the Via Selinuntina in Sicily. These two destinations are indeed popular as tourist destinations in the peak season, but for their coastline rather than reasons strictly related to their local cultural heritage as for the rest of CROSSDEV destinations. However, even in these two destinations the project focused on enhancing the local cultural heritage, identifying historical and archaeological sites less known to visitors and locals, and identifying sustainable tourism products capable of attracting visitors beyond the peak tourist season. In addition, the theme of sustainable tourism and the enhancement of cultural heritage was linked to cross-cutting themes depending on the know-how and expertise of the partners and on the needs of the destinations. For example, in Aqaba and Umm Qais, the local partners implemented numerous activities aimed at raising awareness of environmental sustainability, directed mainly at young students. Therefore, although not all destinations involved by CROSSDEV appear to be less-known, culture has been used as lever for the development of sustainable tourism and diversification of tourism offers, focusing on tangible and intangible heritages and thanks to the support of local communities. All in all, the cultural itineraries promoted by CROSSDEV differ from each other in terms of cultural heritage but are linked by the fact that each of them represents the thread of connection between the strengths of their territories. The diversity of the destinations and of the partners responsible for implementation in each destination represents an added value of the project, which made it possible to create opportunities for exchanging experiences and comparing practices for promoting the territories among partners and destinations in different contexts and with different levels of tourist development.

Recommendations for future initiatives:

- To base cross-border exchange and networking on a strong common element (e.g. cultural heritage valorisation and promotion), involving stakeholders from different contexts and with different experiences on sustainable tourism in order to enrich peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

CROSSDEV M&E SYSTEM

The result and output indicators of the CROSSDEV project were selected from those set out in the M&E Plan for the ENI CBC MED Programme 2014-20, which also specified how target values were to be calculated. As it was necessary to stick to this system, some project outputs were calculated using the same indicators, and setting the same targets, leading to some overlapping across them. Furthermore, as the calculation method was established in the M&E Plan, CROSSDEV met and exceeded most of the indicators, in some cases significantly. Space for improvement can be identified concerning the rationales and methods for setting similar target values in the future.

With regard to CROSSDEV's internal monitoring, each partner was responsible for identifying the sources and calculating the achievement of the indicators in their respective areas and then reporting to the Lead Beneficiary. Although the monitoring process was carried out effectively, it was done with a variable temporary frequency. Despite being obviously demanding for partners in terms of human resources, it would have been advisable to have a greater frequency and timing of monitoring data to be able to envisage corrective actions, if necessary. Furthermore, it might have been advisable to provide for greater consistency among the partners regarding the sources used to calculate the achievement of certain result and output indicators, primarily regarding the attractiveness of the destinations, calculated on the basis of the increase in visitor days. In this regard, CROSSDEV's M&E activity could have been better exploited as an opportunity to discuss among partners and identify the best sources and methods of data collection to verify the attainment of certain indicators, and then to contribute to the ENI CBC MED programme.

Recommendations for future initiatives:

- To adopt a robust internal M&E system ensuring frequency, timing, and consistency on data and information across all partners, especially in cross-border initiatives.

1 INTRODUCTION

The **CROSSDEV** project – **Cultural Routes for Sustainable Social and economic Development in the Mediterranean** – is funded by the ENI CBC MED Programme of the European Commission within the thematic objective A.1 – Business and SMEs development and the priority A.1.3 – Encourage sustainable tourism initiatives and actions.

The main objective of the project is to contribute to the economic (business & SMEs) and social development in the Mediterranean region, strengthening and enhancing sustainable tourism practices, emphasizing common heritages and resources.

The project was initially expected to be implemented between 01-09-2019 and 31-08-2022. The Project requested and received from the ENI CBC MED Managing Authority two extensions, which resulted in the project's conclusion finally postponed to 31 August 2023. Considering the extensions, the project had a total duration of 48 months.

CROSSDEV has been implemented in four countries (**Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine**) by a partnership lead by **CISP** – Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli - and composed by **CoopCulture** and **Ministry of Culture** (Italy), **Jordan University of Science and Technology** and **The Royal Marine Conservation Society of Jordan** (Jordan), **Association for the Protection of Jabal Moussa** (Lebanon), **Palestinian Heritage Trail** (Palestine).

The research centre [ARCO \(Action Research for CO-development\)](#) c/o PIN S.c.r.l is in charge of the external Mid-Term and Final Evaluation of CROSSDEV. The Final external Evaluation was conducted between March and July 2023, as it included field visits to 3 of the 4 countries where the project was implemented - Italy, Lebanon and Jordan - during the closing events organised by the partners in each country.

The overall external evaluation aims at assessing:

- the Project alignment to ENI CBC MED objectives and priorities;
- the Project compliance to the OECD-DAC criteria of development evaluation (OECD, 2021), namely its relevance, internal/external coherence, effectiveness, efficiency (including quality of management structure), sustainability and impact;
- the Project's cross border added value and multiplier effects.

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 lessons learned.

2 CROSSDEV PROJECT

2.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVENTION

The project aims at contributing to the economic and social development in Mediterranean, strengthening and enhancing sustainable tourism practices, emphasizing common heritages and resources.

In particular, the project aims at:

1. Increasing the attractiveness of less known touristic destinations in Mediterranean areas. Expected improvements are foreseen in terms of economic, income generating and job opportunities as well as social inclusion. Moreover, cross border synergies and collaborations are envisaged to reinforce attractiveness of selected destinations.
2. Diversifying the tourism offer with niche territorial assets, by developing and marketing new Sustainable Tourist Products through a cross border perspective, in order to widen to the maximum extent the economic benefits for local communities.

The CROSSDEV project involves four Mediterranean countries – Italy, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine – and targets the following less-known tourist destinations:

- Italy: Sicily, communities in the areas along the Via Selinuntina, neighborhoods of Sambuca di Sicilia and Menfi (Province of Agrigento);
- Jordan: communities around less known historical and cultural sites in Aqaba area (Southern Jordan) AND archaeological site of Umm Qais (Northern Jordan);
- Lebanon: villages in the area of Jabal Moussa Biosphere Reserve, Mount Lebanon;
- Palestine: communities along the Masar Ibrahim Al Khalil trail, West Bank.

Figure 1 – Targeted destinations



Source: CROSSDEV project

In line with the thematic objective A.1 – Business and SMEs development and the priority A.1.3 – Encourage sustainable tourism initiatives and actions. of the ENI CBC MED 2014-20 programme, the CROSSDEV project was designed to contribute to the socio-economic development and stability of the Mediterranean region, with the aim to generate employment and improve the socio-economic conditions of the communities, focusing on sustainable tourism and leveraging on tangible and intangible resources. Five less known tourism destinations – with depressed socio-economic conditions but with strong tourism potential – have been identified in 4 countries of the Mediterranean area. The objective of the project is to enhance the potential of these destinations by increasing their attractiveness and contributing to generate economic activities in the tourism sector. The project has chosen to select destinations outside the traditional tourism routes, even if in well-known areas such as Sicily in Italy and Aqaba in Jordan, trying to create flywheel mechanisms between standard mass and sustainable tourism. The relevance of the project improved following the COVID-19 pandemic. The tourism sector has been strongly impacted, and it has become more urgent and relevant to promote sustainable tourism initiatives to help communities recover, especially in less known destinations.

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

Table 1 – Project consortium

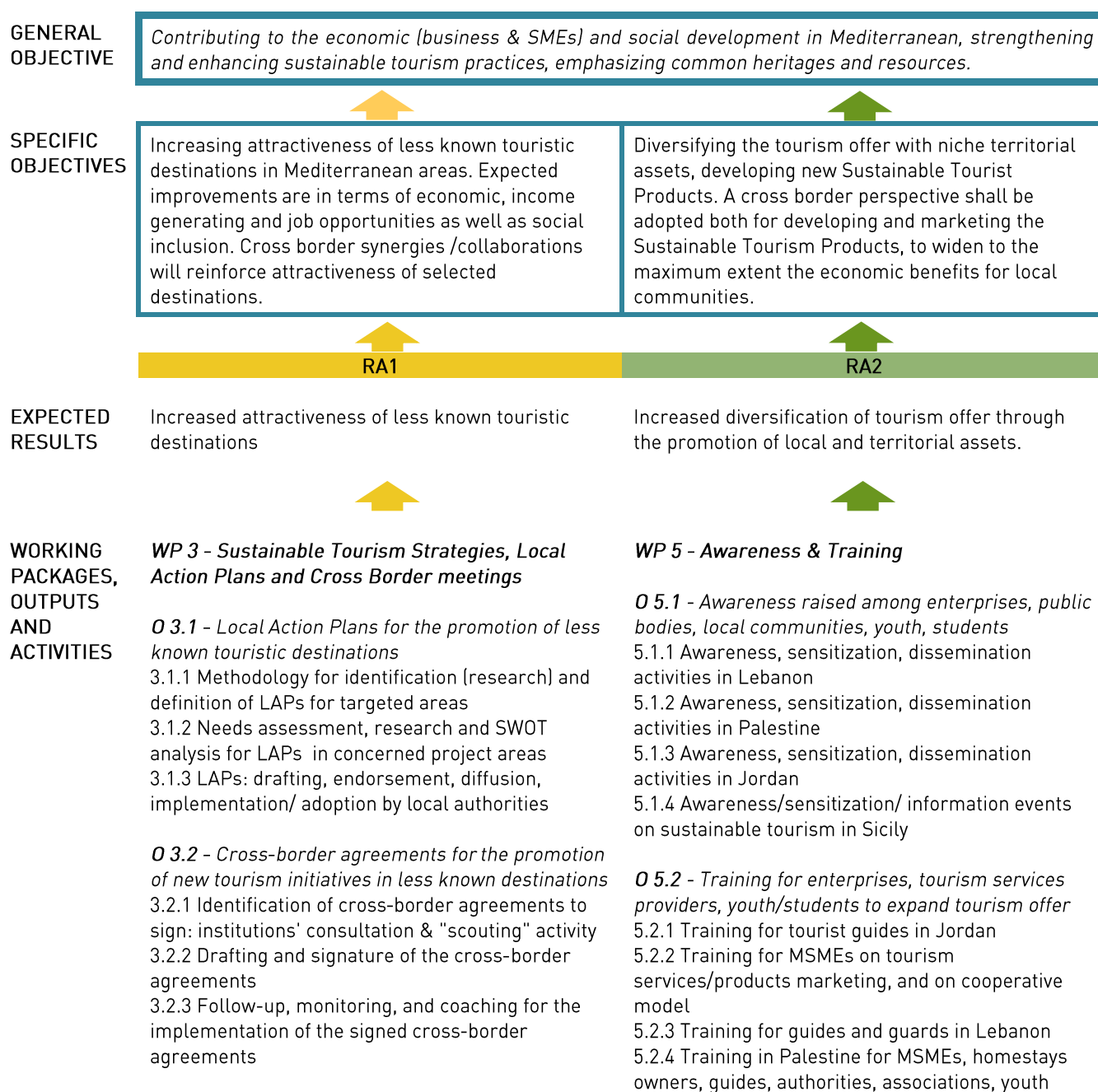
ROLE	NAME OF THE ORGANISATION	COUNTRY
Lead beneficiary	Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP)	Italy
Project partner	CoopCulture	Italy
Project partner	Ministry of Culture (MiC)	Italy
Project partner	Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST)	Jordan
Project partner	The Royal Marine Conservation Society of Jordan (JREDS)	Jordan
Project partner	Association for the Protection of Jabal Moussa (APJM)	Lebanon
Project partner	Palestinian Heritage Trail (PHT)	Palestine
Associate partner	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, State of Palestine	Palestine
Associate partner	Ministry of Tourism, Lebanese Republic	Lebanon
Associate partner	Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA)	Jordan
Associate partner	International Social Tourism Organisation (ISTO)	Other
Associate partner	Regione Sicilia, Soprintendenza del Mare, Dipartimento e Assessorato regionale beni culturali e identità siciliana	Italy
Associate partner	Institute of Hotel Management and Tourism, Bethlehem University	Palestine
Associate partner	Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna (Center for Advanced Studies in Tourism - CAST, Rimini Campus)	Italy

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 – CROSSDEV Theory of Change



WP 4 – Increasing attractiveness of less known destinations

O 4.1 – Quality Support services to local communities, MSMEs, services providers in less known destinations

4.1.1 Support services (Subgrants) for economic actors / tourism-linked service providers in Aqaba, Jordan

4.1.2 Quality support services for MSMEs in Sicily: skills enhancement and training

4.1.3 Quality support services for MSMEs in Palestine: skills enhancement and training

4.1.4 Subgrants for economic actors / service providers along the PH trail, Palestine

4.1.5 Quality support services for MSMEs in Jabal Moussa, Lebanon

4.1.6 Quality support services for MSMEs in Umm Qais, Northern Jordan: skills enhancement and training

O 4.2 – Cultural and historical sites improved in selected less known touristic destinations

4.2.1 Cultural sites improvement in Sicily

4.2.2 Improvement of cultural sites in Palestine: new segments & services in PH trail, Palestine

4.2.3 Cultural and historical sites improvement in less known destinations in Aqaba area, Jordan

4.2.4 Historical and Cultural sites improvement in Jabal Moussa, Lebanon

O 4.3 – Increased visibility of selected less known touristic destinations

4.3.1 Visibility marketing initiatives in Palestine

4.3.2 Visibility and marketing actions in Sicily

4.3.3 Visibility and marketing actions in Lebanon

4.3.4 Visibility marketing initiatives in Jordan, Aqaba & Umm Qais

WP 6 – Sustainable Tourist Products and digital territorial ICT platform

6.1 – Digital Territorial ICT platform Art Planner developed to promote sustainable tourism initiatives

6.1.1 Identification and training of Art Planner experts in concerned Cultural Routes & project areas

6.1.2 Territorial analysis and relational maps of local stakeholders

6.1.3 Development of databases of tangible /intangible heritage to be included in Art Planner platform

6.1.4 Handbook/ guidelines for Art Planner management and updating

O 6.2 – New Sustainable Touristic Products

6.2.1 Creation of new Sustainable Tourism Products in each project country

6.2.2 Marketing and sales activities of the new Sustainable Tourist Products

O 6.3 – Cross-border business events to promote new Sustainable Tourism Products and enterprises networking

6.3.1 Organization of cross-border business events in Sicily and in Lebanon

WP1 – Management

O 1.1 - Steering Committee (SC) & Inter-Partner Management Committee (IPSC) meetings

O 1.2 - General management. Set up of procedures. Operation Plans. Activities, Financial and Audit reports

O 1.3 - Mid-term and Final project evaluation Reports

WP 2 – Communication

O 2.1 - Communication and Capitalization plan

O 2.2 - Information to public audience about the CROSSDEV project and ENI CBC MED Programme

O 2.3 - Cross-border capitalization event

O 2.4 - Handbook & Video: CROSSDEV project, Cultural Routes and sustainable tourism for local development

RA1

RA2

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.

The external Evaluation aims at assessing:

- The Project alignment to ENI CBC MED objectives and priorities;
- The Project compliance to the OECD-DAC criteria of development evaluation (OECD, 2021)
- The Project's cross border added value and multiplier effects.

This Mid-Term Evaluation report focused on the following OECD-DAC evaluation criteria: **relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency.**

The Final Evaluation focuses instead on the following criteria:

- **Effectiveness:** *The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups;*
- **Efficiency:** *The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way;*
- **Impact:** *The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects;*
- **Sustainability:** *The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.*

In particular, for each project component, this Final Evaluation addresses the following questions:

Effectiveness:

- To what extent were the project expected results achieved (or are likely to be achieved)?
- To which extent the Project activities contributed to enhance strategical and operational capacities of Project partners and other involved stakeholders as developmental actors?
- To which extent the project activities contributed to raise awareness on sustainable tourism concept, cultural heritage valorisation and conservation, sustainable tourism and socio-economic development links?
- 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?
- Is current management and governance structure of the project fully functional to reach the project's objectives or is there a need to make operational adjustments?
- 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 tourist sector operators and support to subgrantees?
- What was the impact in terms of increased attractiveness of less known touristic destinations, in particular thanks to the new sustainable touristic off-season products?
- What is CROSSDEV 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)?
- Is the intervention leading to other changes, including “scalable” or “replicable” results?

Sustainability

- What has been done to ensure that the benefits generated by the project continue in the medium-long run?
- To what extent the benefits of the project will continue after donor funding ceased?
- Do the relevant target groups (such as subgrantees of the less-known destinations supported) 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?

This Evaluation contributes to three overall objectives:

1. Learning. The Evaluation supports project partners in learning from the CROSSDEV 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, beneficiaries (tourism-related stakeholders, institutions, economic actors, youth, women and communities living in and around the cultural routes and sites targeted by the project), and other relevant stakeholders at local and country levels. Due to the cross-border design of CROSSDEV, the Evaluation considers two levels of analysis, the country-level and the “aggregate” level.

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

- Assessment of the **alignment between the Project’s design and the objectives/priorities of ENI CBC MED**, and evaluation of the completeness and adherence to reality of the Project’s Theory of Change.
- Analysis of the **compliance of CROSSDEV to the OECD-DAC criteria** (OECD, 2021), by country and at the aggregate level.
- Analysis of the **added value provided by the CROSS-BORDER DIMENSION of the Project**, in terms of its contribution to the exchange of experiences and methods among countries in the Mediterranean

area, as well as increased opportunities for cross-border cooperation, agreements/networking among (public & private) stakeholders from different countries, with common interests and needs in improving sustainable tourism practices for local development.

- 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).
 - 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).
 - CAPACITY BUILDING (i.e., to which extent the Project activities contributed to enhance strategical and operational capacities of Project partners and other involved stakeholders as developmental actors).
 - AWARENESS RAISING on sustainable tourism concept, cultural heritage valorisation and conservation, sustainable tourism and socio-economic development links.

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 four target countries, applying a mixed online-offline data collection approach, designed to ensure the highest possible level of comparability between results at national level. Indeed, consistent with the restrictions preventing movement between some of the countries involved in the project and the budget available for the Final evaluation, ARCO evaluators conducted field visits in three out of the four countries, Italy, Lebanon and Jordan, visiting four of the five less-known destinations supported by CROSSDEV. The data collection in the fourth country, Palestine, has been conducted online. The evaluators also met with the APJM staff, the Palestinian project partner, during the steering committee of December 2022 and the final project event of May 2023 in Lebanon.

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, as well as evaluations reports of other Sustainable Tourism ENI CBC MED Projects (MEDGAIMS, MEDUSA, Med Pearls) with a similar focus.	//
	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 (via Zoom) or in person)</p>	<p>Semi-structured group interview with the Lead Partner's Project management</p> <p>Semi-structured individual interviews with representatives of the Project Partners</p> <p>Semi-structured individual interviews with Associate Partners, local stakeholders, key informants</p> <p>Semi-structured individual interviews with project beneficiaries (subgrantees and tourism service providers involved in project activities)</p>
Evaluation workshop	<p>COLLECTIVE EVALUATION WORKSHOPS with representatives of the Project Partners during the CROSSDEV Steering Committee in Rome and during the Steering Committee held in Lebanon as side meeting within the project final closing event, to discuss thanks to the SWOT and CAME analysis the main results achieved and the future strategies.</p>	Representatives of the Project Partners
Field visit	<p>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. The field visits also allowed the evaluator to participate to the national closing events in Italy and Jordan and to project closing event in Lebanon.</p>	//

Source: Authors' elaboration

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The answer to the evaluation questions was derived by triangulating the data from the different evaluation tools used.

In particular:

1. Desk analysis of project documents: Project reports, monitoring progress reports, indicator matrices, etc. were analysed and the results used to determine the progress of the project with respect to the achievement of targets and result and output indicators. Furthermore, a content analysis were made on project website and social networks.
2. Conceptual content analysis of the interviews and the questionnaire (Carter, Ritchie, and Sainsbury, 2009): The content of interviews and questionnaire was analysed to understand the presence and occurrence of certain words, topics or concepts.

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 SINCE THE BEGINNING OF IMPLEMENTATION	ACHIEVED %
A.1.3	1.3.1 - Increased attractiveness of less known touristic destinations	1.3.1.A - Increased domestic and international tourist flows visiting the targeted area (visitor days)	48.000	45.620	95%
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	31 new sustainable touristic products created. 3 in Jabal Moussa (Lebanon), 1 in Palestine, 8 in Aqaba (Jordan), 9 in Umm Qais (Jordan), 10 in Sicily (Italy)	>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.)	25	639	>100%

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

Table 5 – Achievement of project outputs

PROJECT OUTPUTS	WP	INDICATORS	PROJECT TARGET VALUES	ACHIEVED VALUES SINCE THE BEGINNING OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	ACHIEVED %
3.1 - Local Action Plans for the promotion of less known touristic destinations	WP3	1.3.2.4.e - Number of action plans adopted by local authorities based on participatory activities	5	5 action plans	100%
3.2 - Cross-border agreements for the promotion of new tourism initiatives in less known destinations	WP3	1.3.2.5.f - Number of cross-border agreements signed by competent bodies to promote low season networks of destinations and / or number of low-season initiatives offered in the participating countries	3	3 cross-border agreements	100%
4.1 - Quality Support services to local communities, MSMEs, services providers in less known destinations	WP4	1.3.1.1.a - Number of enterprises substantially and actively involved in CBC-MED projects	20	185 enterprises	>100%
4.2 - Cultural and historical sites improved in selected less known touristic destinations	WP4	1.3.1.1.b - Number of improved cultural and historical sites as a direct consequence of programme support	8	23 improved cultural and historical sites	>100%
4.3 - Increased visibility of selected less known touristic destinations	WP4	1.3.1.2.c - Number of visibility/marketing initiatives to attract tourists in the targeted area	40	88 visibility/marketing initiatives	>100%
5.1 - Awareness raised among enterprises, public bodies, local communities, youth, students	WP5	1.3.2.6.h - Number of enterprises and local community entities participating in training and awareness raising events	30	256 enterprises/local actors	>100%
5.2 - Training for enterprises, tourism services providers, youth/students to expand tourism offer	WP5	1.3.2.6.h - Number of enterprises and local community entities participating in training and awareness raising events	30	239 enterprises/local actors	>100%
6.1 - Digital Territorial ICT platform Art Planner developed to promote sustainable tourism initiatives	WP6	1.3.2.3.d - Number of private actors substantially and actively involved in new touristic initiatives	15	153 private actors	>100%
6.2 - New Sustainable Touristic Products	WP6	1.3.2.3.d - Number of private actors substantially and actively involved in new touristic initiatives	15	151 private actors	>100%
6.3 - Cross-border business events to promote new Sustainable Tourism Products and enterprises networking	WP6	1.3.2.6.g - Number of enterprises participating in cross-border business events	30	216 enterprises	>100%

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

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:

- **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.

The criteria of Relevance and Coherence has been assessed in the previous mid-term evaluation report.

4.2.1 EFFECTIVENESS

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. To what extent were the project expected results achieved (or are likely to be achieved)?
2. To which extent the Project activities contributed to enhance strategical and operational capacities of Project partners and other involved stakeholders as developmental actors?
3. To which extent the project activities contributed to raise awareness on sustainable tourism concept, cultural heritage valorisation and conservation, sustainable tourism and socio-economic development links?
4. What are the major factors/constraints influencing the achievement of the expected results?

EFFECTIVENESS: GLOBAL OVERVIEW

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

CHALLENGES

COVID-19 emergency strongly affected the project implementation in the first two years of implementation, particularly regarding awareness and training activities due to restrictions to internal and international mobility and impossibility to held meetings and/or implement activities that request participation of several persons. At the same time, the pandemic made it possible to enhance the work on each area, giving partners more time to devote to their communities and stakeholders more time to devote to the project's activities, such as trainings and webinars.

In two of the four countries involved, the national context certainly hindered the effectiveness of the project, although the expected results have been achieved. In Lebanon, the project developed in the midst of several crises at the national level, starting in October 2019, which had strong consequences on the socio-economic fabric of the country. Palestine is a country situated in a very complicated and evolving geopolitical context. Talking about tourism in countries subject to frequent crises and conflicts and with people who suffer rights violations or severe lack of opportunities is an aspect that contributes to breaking patterns, and especially if this is done in unfamiliar destinations it can lead to a break of isolation of remote communities.

EXPECTED RESULTS ACHIEVED

The expected results indicators are the following:

- Increased domestic and international tourist flows visiting the targeted area in terms of visitor days;
- Number of new Sustainable Touristic Products in off season periods created in specific niches with a cross-border dimension and co-designed with local communities;
- Number of persons actively and directly involved in project implementation having gained improved tourism management skills / profiles.

As for the number of visitor days, increasing the tourist attractiveness of the destinations is a key aspect on which the partners have been working since the beginning of the project, both at the overall level and at the local level. This difficulty arises primarily from the fact that in the first two years of the project, due to the pandemic and the restrictions imposed by national governments on domestic and international mobility, it was not possible to expect increased domestic and international tourist flows visiting the targeted area. The pandemic also made it even more difficult to compute baseline values in the target destinations, for which no data collection system was foreseen. Since 2022, visitor flows have returned to normal, without any restrictions. The following methods has been used to compute the target value achieved in terms of visitor days since the beginning of the project implementation:

- In Sicily, municipal data on tourist flows were used, considering the Municipalities and areas in which the project had the greatest effect;
- In Lebanon, the entrance tickets to the Jabal Moussa reserve were used to calculate the indicator, tickets managed directly by the local partner APJM
- In Jordan, data provided by ASEZA on visitors was used for Aqaba, while for Umm Qais, the official data on visits to the archaeological site were used for the count
- In Palestine: more difficult to have robust data, official documentation and external sources available were used to assess tourist flows (origin, duration of stay, site attractiveness, tourist interests, requirements accommodation, catering, transportation, guides).

Despite the aforementioned difficulties, the visitor days target was achieved at the overall project level.

Concerning the new Sustainable Touristic Products (environmentally sustainable tourism activities in off season period), 31 have been developed by CROSSDEV partners. In Lebanon 2 packages for visitors developed, the Adonis Route (5-day package) and a couple of 2-day packages (or sub-packages) targeting soft adventure travelers. In Palestine the focus has been on the segment between Beit Mersim and Battir. In Aqaba, Jordan, 8 experiences have been developed and promoted: Aqaba Dog Shelter Cleaning Experience, Aqabas HooH Sweet Making Experience, Bottled_Sand_Art_Experience, Diving Experience Red Sea Dive Center, Diving_Experience_Aqaba International Dive Center, Henna and Kohl Drawings Experience, Mosaic Experience, Sayadieh Making Experience. In Umm Qais, Jordan, 8 tourist itineraries has been developed and one exhibition place for association of handcraft producers (22 women) has been supported. Finally, in Sicily 10 less-known destinations promoted and products created with the aim to lengthen the season, none of them focused on seaside tourism, but instead on food and wine, adventure, nature and experiences with locals.

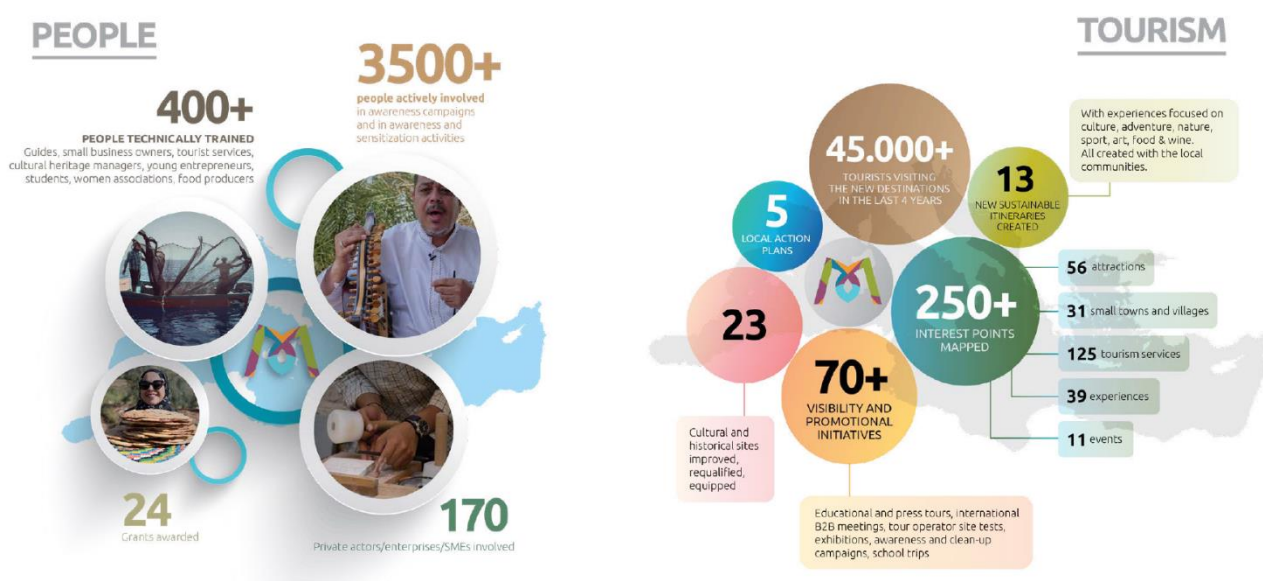
Regarding the trained persons that with project support were able to improve their tourism management skills/profiles, both target groups and direct beneficiaries of support of any kind have been considered (including all forms of non-financial support such as guidance, training, workshops, consultancy, etc.). The partners organised different types of training in their respective territories, aimed at different target groups, including service providers, guides, young people. This made it possible to reach 430 people in the field of creative industries and cultural heritage, without taking into account all the students who participated in the various initiatives. The reason of the higher number of trained persons is due to the organisation of more training modules carried out in small groups and the capillary information within the community about the training provision.

CROSSDEV managed to meet and exceed numerous targets, both with regard to result indicators and output indicators. As several indicators had already been exceeded after the first couple of years of project implementation, the ENI CBC MED managing authority requested the partnership and the lead beneficiary to offer a more detailed explanation after the reporting period that ended in November 2021.

OUTPUTS ACHIEVED

As far as the achievement of output indicators is concerned, the Project partners achieved all the expected targets, also thanks to constant consultation and collaboration among all and targeted technical assistance addressing specific needs.

Figure 2 – Main results and outputs



Source: CROSSDEV project

General information for each WP is provided here, while additional information on activities in each country is provided in the following section “Effectiveness: country overview”.

WP 2 – Communication

In terms of communication, CROSSDEV has proven to have been effective both internationally and in individual countries, promoting the activities implemented and the results achieved through various digital channels and producing numerous communication materials. Communication has been a useful tool to support the

implementation strategy and to describe the process that has been put in place, including through the project website. Among the communication campaigns promoted, the "magical mystery tour", promoted by APJM in Lebanon, "the best-recycled handicraft" competition or "Ramadan campaign" carried out by JREDS in Jordan, "Baladna Ahla" the environmental and heritage protection campaign organized by PHT colleagues, in Palestine.

The promotion campaign included the publication of the platform www.hiddenmediterranean.net, of the film I am the Mediterranean and of the video pills on each destination. Furthermore, several B2Bs with the participation of dozens of European tour operators and site inspections have been organised by each partner. The publication of the book "Culture, History, Environment and People To Expand Sustainable Tourism In Italy, Jordan, Lebanon And Palestine - The Work and Impact of the CROSSDEV Project", produced by CROSSDEV with the support of all Project Partners, further help in showing and explaining in detail the results reached by the project.

WP 3 - Sustainable Tourism Strategies, Local Action Plans and Cross Border meetings

- 5 actions plan based on participatory activities adopted by local authorities
- 3 cross-border agreements signed by competent bodies to promote low season networks of destinations and / or number of low-season initiatives offered in the participating countries

Covid-19 was an obstacle but did not prevent cross-border agreements and the exchange of experience and knowledge. During the pandemic, numerous meetings were organized online to enable capacity and skills strengthening of project partners. In addition, the project partners themselves, as well as the associate partners, organized numerous activities involving various stakeholders. The online mode, although limiting, made it possible to involve stakeholders that would have been difficult to engage in presence. With the exception of the last year and a half of the project, there were not too many opportunities to have in-person meetings at an international level, but the effectiveness of the activities implemented was very good.

The Italian Ministry of Culture, responsible for the WP3, supported partners in each area in developing local action plans elaborated through an analysis of the specificities, from the point of view of the tourist offer and the available cultural and natural resources. Good practices were shared on how to identify sustainable tourism strategies with a bottom-up approach and partners were supported in identifying the most appropriate ways to involve local communities when working around the concept of cultural routes as a tourism product.

In the early phase of the project, guidelines were produced by the Ministry to propose cultural routes as tourism products, while in the second phase coordination dynamics were supported at the local level. In the third cross-border agreement, solutions were identified to involve new cultural routes, and a service charter was developed in which common principles were identified among the partners to ensure the sustainability of the initiative in the territories. Finally, the Ministry of Culture promoted initiatives to share common values and recognize the cultural heritage as a tool for promoting Mediterranean tourist destinations and strengthening cooperation between countries to exchange knowledge and good practices, while promoting quality tourism services and sustainability principles in cultural tourism.

WP 4 - Increasing attractiveness of less known destinations

- Around 150 enterprises substantially and actively involved in CBC-MED projects
- 71 visibility/marketing initiatives to attract tourists in the targeted area
- 23 improved cultural and historical sites

The improvement of cultural/historical sites, currently in degraded conditions, to enhance their attractiveness, included different activities depending on the site supported. At each site, important results were achieved, testifying to the effectiveness of the work carried out by the partners and local stakeholders involved. For example, in Jabal Moussa, archaeological excavations were carried out at several sites; in Palestine, local

authorities upgraded some spaces; and in Aqaba, among other sites, the Byzantine church and the ancient city of Aqaba were upgraded and now included in a city itinerary that did not exist before. Activities to improve historical and cultural sites have also proved to be an effective lever for activating and engaging the local community and institutions, as well as attracting new visitors particularly locals.

Site	Improved cultural and historical sites
Italy – Via Selinuntina	Interpretation center of Palazzo Pignatelli (Menfi)
	Library of Sustainable Tourism and Cultural Routes of Palazzo Panitteri (Sambuca di Sicilia)
Lebanon – Jabal Moussa	Qornet al Deir
	Broqta
	Roman Stairs
Jordan – Aqaba	Byzantine Church
	Islamic City of Ayla
	Aqaba’s Marine Reserve Beaches
	Tell Al Kaleifa
	Aqaba Castle
	Cedar Pride Shipwreck
	Underwater Military Museum
Jordan – Umm Qais	Gadara Archeological Site
	Yarmouk Forest Reserve
	Al-Hamma Hot Spring
	Rural landscape
Palestine – Palestinian Heritage Trail	Beit Mersim – Battir trail
	Husan – Battir trail
	Ain Jama Romanian pool (Battir)
	Ain Hawia Spring (Hussan)
	Maqam Abu Ubaidah Amer Ibn Al-Jarrah (Surif)
	Wadi al Qaf (Tarquimiya Forest Park)
	Jaba Park (Jaba)

The partners organised theoretical and practical training sessions aimed at empowering locals and giving them the right abilities to welcome future tourists and create the most suitable and appealing tourism experience. Training topics were also designed to help them improve their administrative and marketing skills in a scientific and practical way. Subgrants were granted to 19 service providers (11 in Palestine, 6 in Lebanon, 2 in Jordan), that thanks to the support received were able to improve their businesses. Furthermore, 5 subgrants were granted in Palestina to Local Authorities to improve the tourism offer in their areas.

WP 5 - Awareness & Training

- More than 200 enterprises and local community entities participating in training and awareness raising events

Despite the first year and a half of project implementation, during which due to the pandemic most of the awareness and training activities moved online or targeted only small groups, the partners have been able to involve and reach high numbers of local communities' stakeholders. The project partners developed numerous awareness and education products and activities in all destinations, such as eco schools, fam trips, etc. These activities attracted the interest of many different stakeholders, both public and private, who were sensitised and educated on sustainable tourism issues.

WP 6 - Sustainable Tourist Products and digital territorial ICT platform

- 185 private actors substantially and actively involved in new touristic initiatives
- 150 enterprises participating in cross-border business events (thematic seminars, trade shows, business fairs, business fora etc.) with the aim of increasing tourism in the low season in the participating countries.

CROSSDEV targeted specific areas and sites not widely known and not valorized. 31 new sustainable touristic products were created by the project, 3 in Jabal Moussa (Lebanon), 1 in Palestine, 8 in Aqaba (Jordan), 9 in Umm Qais (Jordan), 10 in Sicily (Italy). As part of CROSSDEV, a promotion strategy for the destinations involved was developed, including the organization of seminars with European and international tour operators to assess the quality of services offered and itineraries.

The Hidden Mediterranean platform was created with the aim of promoting the destinations, suggested itineraries and actors involved. The creation of the platform involved a process that took time and commitment from the entire partnership. The partner CoopCulture was the lead partner for this activity. The main obstacles faced included CoopCulture's being unable to conduct initial site inspections due to the pandemic, an activity that would have simplified the work on content, and some delays in receiving materials for the platform from partners. The process of creating and adding materials to the platform, however, resulted in an excellent outcome, in part due to the reference partner's revision of the materials to make them uniform. Coopculture also developed and provided the partners with guidelines and suggestions to keep in mind related to the platform, such as some editorial standards to follow.

MAJOR FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE EXPECTED RESULTS

The partnership was the key aspect to ensure effectiveness. The choice of partners with strong local roots, who already knew the local stakeholders and communities, facilitated their active involvement in project activities. APJM in Jabal Moussa involved over 300 village families in the initial assessment phase and PHT in Palestine did the same in the communities targeted. JUST also achieved this by embedding itself on the ground and connecting with local communities, despite the fact that the organisation was not based in Umm Qais, but in Irbid, located half an hour away. CISP was able to achieve the same result in Sicily, also thanks to the presence of ITER VITIS and Phoenicians' Route, getting in touch with institutions and other local actors from the very beginning.

The community-based tourism approach was applied in the different territories, by partners with different expertise and experience. JREDS in Aqaba focused on environmental awareness raising campaigns (clean up of sites of special cultural and environmental value), which were part of the awareness raising activities but also included training for young people. JUST applied a long-term development strategy, identifying developers, people in the community who could be a driving force. Among these were the women involved in the training with whom a territorial network of small handicrafts has been developed, and who, thanks to the project, now run an exhibition space where they sell the products they have developed to visitors to the archaeological site of Umm Qais. JUST has also developed numerous itineraries, registered a territorial brand

and developed different types of activities to engage visitors. Despite being a university, it has been able to build a very close and deep-rooted link with the territory.

The commitment of the partners was strong from the start, and grew in parallel with the implementation of the project. In terms of effectiveness, much has been achieved by the project, enrichment of knowledge, skills, systemisation of good practices, exchange of approaches, but also infrastructural interventions.

EFFECTIVENESS: COUNTRY OVERVIEW

INSIGHTS

ITALY – VIA SELINUNTINA, SICILY

The decision of involving two cultural routes such as ITER VITIS and Phoenicians' Route – both based in Sicily – proved to be effective and allowed numerous stakeholders in Sicily to be reached. The area targeted by the project, the Via Selinuntina, includes several municipalities (Castelvetrano, Menfi, Sambuca di Sicilia, Gibellina, Montevago and Santa Margherita Belice). ITER VITIS focused its activities mainly on Sambuca, while Phoenicians' Route mainly focused on Menfi. More sporadic relations were established with the other municipalities in the area, but several private stakeholders were deeply involved.

A great deal of work was done in Sicily during the pandemic, as the partners were able to involve several local stakeholders. Many activities were carried out during the two years of the pandemic, when the tourism sector was stopped, which made it possible to reach a large number of operators in the area and to create networks of relations.

Among the main outputs reached:

- 60 enterprises involved in promotion and training activities
- More than 200 students participating in promotion and awareness activities
- More than 20 tour operators visiting along the Via Selinuntina
- 2 cultural sites upgraded and improved

CROSSDEV in Sicily has done a lot in terms of visibility and networking. In terms of promotion and visibility, more activities were carried out than initially planned, with the Via Selinuntina being promoted at numerous fairs and events in Italy and abroad. Virtual B2Bs were organised with tour operators, and CROSSDEV supported through ITER VITIS the organisation of a visit for 10 American and Canadian tour operators, which included the Via Selinuntina. In addition, places and service providers supported by CROSSDEV were included by tour operators in the 'Borghi d'Italia Tour Network' and 'The Winerist'. CROSSDEV in Sicily, having a limited budget, did not provide subgrants for local beneficiaries. However, local beneficiaries benefited from the progress in terms of promotion, having been included in the Hidden Mediterranean platform.

Private stakeholders were very interested in events and initiatives with bloggers and tour operators, while it was more difficult to involve them in training activities. Trainings were appreciated and participated in if they were very practical, so one-to-one tutorials were organised as part of the project. Smaller companies appear to be more open and willing to promote the area and to be involved in networks that bring people to visit areas in off-season periods and to stay a little longer, visiting not only museums. The actors involved themselves have become promoters of lesser-known places of interest.

CROSSDEV in Sicily contributed to the improvement of two cultural and historical sites. The Library of Sustainable Tourism and Cultural Routes of Palazzo Panitteri (Sambuca di Sicilia) was opened at the end of September 2022, and is already being used as a library and coworking space. In addition, various courses and initiatives and participatory activities of the RESTART MED! capitalisation project have been organised within it. The space is within a municipality building, which is partly managed by ITER VITIS. It is open on certain days and times set by the municipality, but apart from specific initiatives, there are few visitors outside the summer. The project contributed to the creation of the Interpretation Centre within the Palazzo Pignatelli in the Municipality of Menfi. The exhibition rooms of Palazzo Pignatelli can be visited, accompanied by guides. In the palace there are archaeological finds and the museum of the sea, as well as the malacological exhibition that was donated to the municipality. The municipality itself has invested in Palazzo Pignatelli to make it an attraction for Menfi. In addition, as part of the project, seminars

were organised in the municipality, allowing Menfi to make itself known, promoting and enhancing lesser-known aspects, and to have exchanges with international players.

Due to the negative national and international context (socio-economic crisis, pandemic), it was very useful for APJM to be partner of an international project such as CROSSDEV and to receive financial support. In terms of implementation, the local partner is extremely satisfied of the results reached. CROSSDEV gave APJM the opportunity to update a survey in the geographical area to the villages closest to the reserve. The last survey was made 12 years ago, and the new one allowed APJM to understand how the opinion of the local communities about Jabal Moussa has changed. APJM organised the survey in the first half of the project, and they reached 141 households out of 164. APJM also used a participatory approach with local communities, with service providers and different stakeholders. The approach used in the development of the Local Action Plans was innovative for APJM and very effective, as they were able to involve actively in a participative way the local communities before developing the plan. APJM is now using the approach of the LAP in order to review the management plan for the Jabal Moussa reserve.

CROSSDEV has been effective both in terms of internal capacity building within APJM and capacity building to beneficiaries and stakeholders. APJM was able to acquire knowledge in terms of administrative management and the staff decided to change and improve the organisation structure thanks to CROSSDEV, as it is the biggest international project they have been involved in. Among the training to guides and guesthouse owners: gastronomy, food safety, social media marketing.

In terms of communication and awareness raising, the survey was important to realise that people around the reserve are more interested in environmental protection. APJM developed a book within CROSSDEV to sensitise mainly young students but also teachers and their families on cultural heritage valorisation in Jabal Moussa. The book was presented in the schools around Jabal Moussa, with a customised presentation for different years of age, and distributed for free to the schools of the local communities. Furthermore, videos with cultural heritage experts were created and publicised them through social media in order to make aware the local communities.

The construction of a new visitor center for the Jabal Moussa reserve is one of the main outputs by CROSSDEV, despite all the difficulties faced and thanks to the flexibility of the project. Furthermore, also thanks to CROSSDEV the collaboration with the municipality improved, and now APJM has a space for a tourism office in the municipal center. CROSSDEV helped APJM in being seen as a relevant association for the area. APJM also developed the Adonis Route, that has been registered as a trademark and is today recognised at national level, thanks to the improved relationship with the government and the ministry.

Jabal Moussa joined the Phoenicians' Route and was the first member from Lebanon to join Iter Vitis in April 2022. APJM also received the Best Archaeological Site Iter Vitis Award 2022, also thanks to the support of archaeological research linked to wine heritage in the Biosphere Reserve within the CROSSDEV project.

The methodology used by JUST in Umm Qais is elaborated within CROSSDEV and includes both a bottom-up and a top-down approach and several and continuous interactions with local people and stakeholder. The methodology proved to be effective in engaging local communities and in reaching the expected results and outputs.

The main outputs achieved are:

- 40 visibility materials created
- 10 agreements signed
- 8 designed products and 4 itinerary packages: cultural route, eco&adventure route, agrotourism route, health&spa
- 25 stakeholders and 450 students trained
- 15 Awareness campaign organised
- 35 Travel agencies and tour operators visited Umm Qais

Capacity building based on a survey on what stakeholder needs in the tourism industry, they designed the training programme based on their real needs. Capacity building was able to help in developing skills and in creating job opportunities. The stakeholders involved in trainings and technical assistance are now more aware of the role that local community plays in developing strategies for sustainable tourism. Awareness raising activities were organised for school and

LEBANON – JABAL MOUSSA

JORDAN – UMM QAIS

universities students, and 250 students visited Umm Qais and received information about environment and cultural heritage valorisation. Awareness raising activities were also organised with local stakeholders and guides.

JUST contributed to the establishment of the Umm Qais Women's Association, that brings together all women working in the tourist sector in Umm Qais and improving the level of services provided to tourists. In collaboration with the Department of Antiquities, the Association has been given a space to exhibit its artisanal products and services directly to tourists.

JORDAN - AQABA

The project was able to involve lot of different stakeholders of different type from Aqaba local communities. 450 students of primary and secondary schools (12-17 years old) have been involved in eco-tour and in clean-up campaign in the less-known cultural sites of Aqaba included in CROSSDEV. This activity has been effective in make students aware both in terms of environmental protection and of cultural heritage valorisation.

Target values for visitors to Aqaba's cultural sites - Byzantine Church, the Islamic Ayla City, the Aqaba Castle, ect. - in the last couple of years increased: the daily average of visitors increased from 450 to 750 from 2021 to 2022. In 2023 the number increased even more. Visitors came to Aqaba mainly for the sea relax and water activities, but also visited the cultural sites promoted by CROSSDEV. The awareness about Aqaba's cultural heritage increased both for local and for visitors. JREDS organised the social media Ramadan Competitions, participated by more than 3500 people, uploading each day information about the sites and about the CROSSDEV project.

2 subgrants were given in Aqaba by JREDS: Johud Al Ayadi and Aqabawi

- JOHUD Al Ayadi shop was established in 2015 it's one of Princess Basma Community Development Center Aqaba program who aim to empower women economically and help them to access the tourism market especially home based businesses done by local women in Aqaba Governorate in basic and the south area of Jordan in general. Johud Al Ayadi implemented the idea of link the handicrafts made with history of each crafts. They made an exhibition at the end of the subgrants, 150 people attended the exhibition, saw the handicrafts and read the history about the pieces. Every pieces have a CROSSDEV logo, effective for the visibility of the project in Aqaba.
- Aqabawi (Art and Heritage Studio) helped at his location, that attract many people especially at the weekend, around 1000 people. Many people know about Aqabawi studio and visited their studio. When visitors came to Mustapha he told them about CROSSDEV, about the experience. Mustapha focus on tourist experiences. Thanks to the subgrants they improved the experience for visitors, sands bottle, mosaic, painting, swing. Both for locals and for visitors, national and international.

JREDS also engaged other small tourism business owners in Aqaba, such as the House of Roses, a small women center recognised as a formal association that gathers handicrafts products from several small producers in Aqaba and in the rest of Jordan, giving them the opportunity to show and sell their products to visitors.

PALESTINE - PALESTINIAN HERITAGE TRAIL

The CROSSDEV project extended the PHT from Beit Mersim to Battir. The new segment of the trail crosses 16 villages and about 60 km of route. The main objective in Palestine was to extend the community-based tourism (CBT) approach to the 16 marginalized communities of the new segment. First of all, the CBT concept was presented and shared with municipalities and village councils, as well as a number of stakeholders and identified cultural heritage leaders. PHT also conducted a need assessment, based on which a comprehensive community-based tourism action plan was developed. In order to engage even more the local communities, PHT helped the 16 communities in creating "Local Tourism Committees" (LTCs), involving representatives from each local authority, service providers and other main stakeholders and CBOs, such as women's centres, youth centres and active individuals. Each LTC elected a representative to become a member of the "Cluster Tourism Committee" (CTC).

PHT organised many capacity building and awareness raising activities, involving both local and national authorities in the process. The activities implemented were effective and allowed to achieve the objective and results expected. Stakeholders from local communities were given knowledge and capacities to respect the environment and cultural heritage, while trying to create socio-economic opportunities thanks to the tourist sectors. 237 people were part of 11 training sessions and workshop organised by the project in Palestine. 11 service providers and 5 Local Authorities received a subgrant from CROSSDEV. 29 service providers, more than the 11 originally

expected, established new services in sustainable tourism, all of them were involved in the capacity building programme.

The educational campaign “beautiful country” was organised by PHT to build awareness on the communities on the importance of taking care of cultural and environmental heritage and included cleaning up campaign of the historical sites. The campaign was very participated and supported by the Local Tourism Committee and a promotional spot was developed and showed to government authorities and communities. Promotional activities (such as visits with guides, tour operators and influencers) have been organised by PHT and CISP to promote the new segment and different promotional materials have been developed, such as the Brochure Map and the Service Providers Brochure. A closing promotional event took place in August 2023.

4.2.2 EFFICIENCY

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. Did the intervention deliver its results in a cost-effective and timely way?
2. Was partners' expertise conformed to project needs and objectives?
3. Is current management and governance structure of the project fully functional to reach the project's objectives or is there a need to make operational adjustments?
4. Did internal governance guarantee inclusiveness of decision-making processes?

EFFICIENCY: GLOBAL OVERVIEW

The management and governance structure of the project was well organised, with continuous and active involvement of all Project Partners, who have always proved to be collaborative and to hold the necessary skills to implement the activities and to carry out the administrative and reporting tasks. Each partner provided a team of at least 3 persons, project manager, communication officer, financial officer. As a matter of fact, all partners involved many more people on the different project components and activities, selecting them according to the required skills. This investment in terms of human resources involved in the project allowed for a good level of efficiency, minimising the risk of miscommunication between partners, even on specific aspects.

Coordination between CISP as Lead Beneficiary and each Project Partner was effective, positively impacting on the exchange of knowledge and good organisational and management practices. In the second part of the project implementation, the partners were able to meet in person on several occasions, improving dialogue and communication among them. All the project Partners are satisfied by the coordination and management, highlighting the relevance of having frequent meetings to discuss and to update the 6-months workplan of each partner. The way CROSSDEV was managed allowed each partner to develop and implement different kind of activities in the targeted destinations, based on the specific expertise of each partner and on the specific needs of each destination, and to make the necessary operational adjustments.

During implementation, the project was entitled to three minor amendments and one major amendment (involving a change of more than 20% in budget items or a request for an extension). The resource allocation was based on expenditure forecasts made before the start of the project, in January 2018. The project was able to adapt the initial financial planning in a timely manner, taking into account the changing conditions of the general context (e.g. pandemic) and specific to the countries in which it operated. For this reason, two minor amendments were required in the first couple of years of implementation for small budget variations,

which nevertheless had a major impact on the successful implementation of the project. The third addendum to the grant contract was signed in April 2023 and extended the Project's implementation period to 48 months.

Regarding the Project activities, the subgrant component required a major commitment from the entire partnership. The ENI CBC MED programme required the subgrantees to be treated as partners in terms of accountability and expenditure, and this has led to changes and delays with respect to the activity plan initially conceived by the partners. The work of revising the documents produced in the management of the subgrantees was extensive. The subgrants required considerable administration and coordination efforts, but at the same time were able to increase the project impact on local communities. Finally, the project partners acquired expertise on the management of subgrants, thanks to the mentoring of the Lead Beneficiary, expertise that can be used in future projects.

EFFICIENCY: COUNTRY OVERVIEW

	INSIGHTS
ITALY – VIA SELINUNTINA, SICILY	CISP relied on the advice of several local stakeholders well rooted in the Sicilian territory, including: the Phoenicians' Route (with whom it signed a consultancy contract for the organisation of events, training courses, seminars, etc.) and ITERVITIS, which supported the project's activities in various ways at no cost to the project. It also fostered the active involvement of other local actors, such as the professional hotel institute of Castelvetrano "IPSEOA Virgilio Titone". The project implemented the activities in Sicily efficiently, achieving the desired results within the planned timeframe.
LEBANON – JABAL MOUSSA	The local partner APJM received an increase of the project budget twice. APJM was able to increase the staff thanks to CROSSDEV, and this allow to be efficient and effective in the implementation of the activities, as 6 people were working mainly on the project. APJM relied for most of the activities on its own human resources, and only when needed relied on well-known stakeholders in the area. Also, thanks to the support of CISP, APJM was able to deal with administrative and reporting tasks. The flexible approach of CROSSDEV was very efficient in APJM opinion, as it helped in being able to build the Jabal Moussa visitor center and in changing during the implementation some activities, such as the research that allow to develop the new archaeological site.
JORDAN – UMM QAIS	CROSSDEV has been cost effective regarding the implementation in Umm Qais, Jordan. JUST, the local partner, was able to develop and implement even more activities that what was originally planned, obtaining better results with the financial resources available. Thanks to the flexibility in selecting the activities and in managing the resources available, JUST was able to involve several stakeholders at different levels, local community, development actors, schools and universities. The CROSSDEV consortium was very positive following the opinion of the project manager, and the management plan was well-designed, with several meetings. The continuous coordination and the huge amount of meetings with the Lead Beneficiary and with all the project partners allowed to establish strong relationships within the consortium.
JORDAN - AQABA	The financial resources have been used in an efficient way in Aqaba by the local partner JREDS. In terms of coordination at local level, JREDS established a coordination system with frequent meetings with the two associate partners, ASEZA and the Department of Antiquities. The two associated partners were very involved in CROSSDEV, and JREDS asked for every step their approval. At general level, the intervention was well managed, and the coordination with CISP and the other partners has been easy thanks to the virtual and in-person meetings and thanks to the steering committees.
PALESTINE - PALESTINIAN HERITAGE TRAIL	The resources available were used in a cost-effective way by the local partner PHT, that was able to start developing the community-based tourism in the 16 target communities. The project was well managed and coordinated by CISP. Having lot of meetings helped in building relations among partners.

4.2.3 IMPACT

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. What are the main outcomes the project contributed to?
2. What was the impact of capacity building to tourist sector operators and support to subgrantees?
3. What was the impact in terms of increased attractiveness of less known touristic destinations, in particular thanks to the new sustainable touristic off-season products?
4. What is CROSSDEV impact in terms of CROSS BORDER exchange of experiences and methods and in terms of cooperation and networking?
5. How did the intervention cause higher-level effects (such as changes in norms or systems)?
6. Is the intervention leading to other changes, including “scalable” or “replicable” results?

IMPACT: GLOBAL OVERVIEW

The model developed by CROSSDEV is inspired by the strategical developmental approach of CISP (community and rights-based approach addressing roots of the inequalities). Furthermore, the CROSSDEV model is also inspired by the concept of the Council of Europe's cultural routes, which originates from mapping sites and experiences through community engagement, both in less-known destinations and in already known tourist destinations (such as Sicily and Aqaba), focusing on specific sites and places to be enhanced. In CROSSDEV, sustainable tourism has been used as a key to peoples' development, linking to cross-cutting issues such as the environment, waste management, training for youth and students, creation of employment opportunities in areas in need, and socio-occupational inclusion of women. Women and youth were the main targets of the activities implemented by CROSSDEV in the target territories, and they benefited extensively from the project. These benefits have occurred both in terms of raising awareness of tourism and sustainability issues through extensive involvement of students at different levels, including university students, and in terms of training and financial support through subgrants, with women being the primary target.

Sustainable tourism is a much-discussed topic, and in CROSSDEV has provided an opportunity to train, network, and build relationships among Mediterranean countries. Thanks to the variety of activities planned, CROSSDEV enabled the destinations involved to valorise their cultural heritage by involving local communities and to be promoted internationally. In addition, the presence of partners from different countries allowed the exchange of experiences and best practices, but also enabled some of the challenges that emerged to be addressed collectively.

CROSSDEV, thanks to the activities carried out in the different destinations, has led local communities to increase their sense of ownership towards their territories and their cultural and environmental heritage. It has also enabled the creation, or strengthening where already present, of local stakeholder networks around issues of cultural heritage protection and valorisation, stimulating a positive change of mindset and increasing social cohesion within local communities. This has happened, for example, in Umm Qais, where thanks to CROSSDEV a process of social change was initiated in a remote and rural area of Jordan by engaging in dialogue with institutions and stakeholders and facilitating the creation of a women's association in Umm Qais, which has since become recognized as a registered activity. This process should not be taken for granted considering the area in which it took place, and it has enabled the women involved in the association to strengthen and empower themselves.

VISIBILITY

As part of CROSSDEV, an extensive and structured promotion strategy for the destinations involved was developed, including the organization of seminars with European and international tour operators to assess the quality of services offered and itineraries. The actions promoted and the results achieved by the project were widely disseminated through communication on the project website and through participation in numerous initiatives. Numerous promotional videos were also created as part of the project, both at the overall level (including the I am Mediterranean video) and at the country level, and various types of information materials were produced and printed. Lastly, the Hidden Mediterranean platform was developed with the aim of further promoting the destinations, the suggested itineraries and the stakeholders involved. The strategy in place made it possible to have an impact on the ability of the destinations involved to promote themselves through quality materials and allowed the partnership to have at its disposal a tool such as the platform, the impact of which became evident in the concluding months of the project, and which has further broad potential.

All actions included in the communication and promotional strategy developed by the project and individual partners referred to the source of the financial resources, displaying the logos of the ENI CBC MED programme alongside the project name and referring to the donor European Union. The impact in terms of visibility was therefore positive and broad for both donor and program, also thanks to the organization of CROSSDEV closing events in all countries, attended by numerous stakeholders, from representatives of ministerial institutions to beneficiaries of the activities. The work done in terms of visibility was valued by the managing authority of ENI CBC MED, which invited the CROSSDEV partnership to present the results achieved and the methodology used at several events at the international level, such as the "faces and places of the Mediterranean" fair held in Valencia and the event on sustainable tourism organized in Florence in May 2023 by the ENI CBC MED and INTERREG programs.

CROSS-BORDER NETWORKING

The networking was challenging, as the project was implemented during difficult time. After the kick off meeting, the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a couple of years of online activities between the partners, limiting the cross-border networking. The partners were able to work together even in online mode, and from 2021 several in-person meetings were organised, impacting in a positive way the relationship between the partner and the creation of the cross-border network. At the same way, the CROSSDEV consortium tried to involve in cross-border exchanges also the project beneficiaries and stakeholders, such as subgrantees and service providers, and other stakeholders. This networking activity between beneficiaries and stakeholders of different countries was limited because of Covid-19 and because of other challenges due to the external context. Despite these challenges, CROSSDEV made it possible to create a network not only of organisations, but also of people, that are now reunited under the Hidden Mediterranean network.

The ENI CBC MED programme was crucial in the development of the network as it required partnerships between different countries with the aim of creating an area of socio-economic prosperity and growth in the Mediterranean, leaving no one behind and creating rights for all. The three cross-border agreements developed and adopted by the partners during the project, as well as the organized events attended by the entire consortium, are evidence of the project's impact on networking among different Mediterranean countries. The digital platform Hidden Mediterranean is a networking and a cooperative tool that is further positively impacting the relationship between partners, that are promoting a common identity. The cross-border dimension turned out to be a huge added value for CROSSDEV, especially since the network was created between countries that presented great differences and difficulties due to their respective economic and political contexts.

CAPACITY-BUILDING

At the partnership level, thanks to the exchanges that took place within the network, CROSSDEV had a strong impact in terms of developing expertise and skills. In fact, since the partnership is made up of very diverse subjects, the project led to the professional growth of the members of the partner organisations and made it possible to increase and consolidate skills useful for future initiatives. In terms of capacity building, CROSSDEV developed several materials and guidelines that were shared among the partners and others, which will allow the project to continue to increase its impact even after the conclusion of its activities, if they are used appropriately.

Several capacity building activities has been organised by each partner at local level for different types of stakeholders and about different topics, based on the needs of the local community. Thanks to the training received, the beneficiaries were able to increase their skills on a variety of topics, from social media management to gastronomy and food security, thus managing overall to increase and improve the offer of services for visitors and their ability to receive guests. Finally, capacity-building activities represented an opportunity to stimulate networking activities among the actors involved, sometimes leading to the creation of local networks, and to put the concept of community-based tourism into practice.

CASE HISTORY – PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

- **Mrs. Roula Souaid (beneficiary, around 40 years old) – Jabal Moussa, Lebanon**

17 years ago, she started working in the kitchen managed by APJM in the village of Yahchouch, in which she worked in the transformation of some local products. She is still working there for some month at year, as the APJM kitchen is only active from June to September. Within CROSSDEV, she participated in 5 training organized by APJM on different topics, both theoretical and practical lessons. Also, thanks to the training of food management, she became responsible for APJM kitchen, and she has a couple of people from the village working with her. She also started working at the APJM nursery in Yahchouch, as she gained new competences and experience thanks to CROSSDEV. The job at the nursery and the one at the kitchen are two seasonal jobs, so she is managing keep on working on both. She is satisfied with the training received, the project was a big opportunity in terms of the knowledge and the capacity than she developed now.

- **Mrs. Elsy Nader (beneficiary, 29 years old) – Jabal Moussa, Lebanon**

She is the daughter of Mrs. Hoda, one of the subgrantees, and she received training as guide by APJM on different topics: plants, biodiversity, fauna and flora, social media communication and archaeology. She started in 2017 as a guide, but there wasn't a school of guide, so she became officially a guide in 2019. Now, also thanks to the last training received with CROSSDEV, her knowledge improved a lot. The project CROSSDEV has an important impact for APJM as an organization and for its members, as they learned a lot through the training organized.

- **Ahmad Alomari, Philodemus – Umm Qais, Jordan**

He was both a beneficiary and a consultant for CROSSDEV. He participated in some of the trainings offered by the project, but he also was hired to train guides and for supporting in the creation of the new itineraries in Umm Qais. Furthermore, he was strongly involved by JUST in networking with other local stakeholders. The trainings from CROSSDEV were good for him and for improving the service he is giving to visitors, especially the one on marketing and social media. He also considers very relevant and impactful to have the Hidden Mediterranean platform to link visitors to service providers and small businesses in the sustainable tourism sector. He is satisfied of JUST approach in Umm Qais, thanks to the project they organized a lot of activities and they brought to Umm Qais guides and tour operators, national and international.

- **Al Yarmouk ladies association handicrafts – Umm Qais, Jordan**

With the support of JUST university, CROSSDEV allowed the women to become a registered association. They also received training on marketing and social media, they now have a website, but they are still not using it to sell their products. 10 women are now members of the Al Yarmouk associations, doing different activities, mainly handicrafts,

but also gastronomy. Since 2020 they can use a space in the archaeological site of Umm Qais to sell their products to visitors, and sometimes as a laboratory. The association could use more support and training in the future, but the main problem is related to the limited and discontinued number of visitors to the archaeological sites and mainly to their shops. Visitors go to the archaeological site mainly in spring season and in autumn, but in summer season they are only some locals that go to visit the site during the evening. To grow as an association and to improve their socio-economic opportunities, they would need more visitors to come and visit Umm Qais.

- **Al Hara Al Fouqa gallery – Umm Qais, Jordan**

She started producing their own handicrafts in 2019. The training by CROSSDEV was useful as a refreshment, but as she studied at university, she had already good knowledge in finance and marketing. Anyway, the training was useful. The place in the archaeological site that she's using as shop and sometimes laboratory since 2022 is very nice and gave her opportunity to sell some products in high season, but in summer is hot and the number of visitors is low. In her shops she does not only sell her handicrafts products, but also some products produced by other people and friends from Umm Qais. She also received support from another university, outside CROSSDEV, especially technical trainings concerning new possible techniques to use for her handicrafts.

- **Valentina, Villa Giadel – Via Selinuntina, Italy**

She started the activity of Villa Giadel, a hotel located in the municipality of Menfi, in 2018. She actively participates in the Tourism Council of Menfi and the local promotion association Visit Menfi. Since entering the tourism sector, she began interacting with local stakeholders who are committed to promoting sustainable tourism. CROSSDEV seeks to create a network of actors and areas, learning from other cultural itineraries and creating exchanges of best practices. In Sicily, the main objective is to deseasonalise flows, creating steady jobs and extending the season for as many months as possible. As a service provider of the Via Selinuntina area, she participated in a number of initiatives and trainings implemented within CROSSDEV. Since March 2023, it has also been in charge of managing the Hidden Mediterranean platform with regard to the Via Selinuntina, as it had shown interest in developing a similar initiative with the Municipality of Menfi. She was trained by CROSSDEV to take care of the platform, renewing and updating the content, while at the same time seeking to expand the network of actors involved in the offer. It hopes that Hidden Mediterranean will establish itself in the years to come as an international network of people, actors and places, and that on a local level it will enable a detailed mapping of the cultural and tourist offer of the Via Selinuntina.

SUBGRANTS

When analysing the impact of subgrants on the beneficiaries, it is necessary to consider the differences between the actors supported in different contexts: from guesthouses in rural areas to organisations supporting the job inclusion of women, some already well structured, others at the beginning of a process to provide services to visitors in a sustainable tourism perspective. In Palestine, 5 subgrants have also been granted to Local Authorities to implement sustainable tourism offer in their areas. Differences also exist between the contexts themselves: in Palestine, along the new trail segment developed and promoted by the CROSSDEV project, the 11 service providers that received the subgrants belong to marginalised communities that are approaching the concept of sustainable tourism for the first time, in a complicated socio-economic and political context; in Lebanon, the subgrantees belong to village communities in rural areas near the Jabal Moussa reserve, and, although limited in number, have already had first approaches with international visitors; Aqaba is a different context, with a strong presence of national and international tourism in the high season, and with a much higher cost of living. Also, to be considered are the differences in the amount of subgrants and the number of subgrants given by the partners who had planned this component, from 6 in Lebanon by APJM, to 11 to service providers in Palestine by PHT and 5 to Local Authorities by CISP Palestine, to 2 in Aqaba by JREDS. In Palestine, each subgrantee had an average amount of €3,000, in Jordan, Aqaba, the two subgrantees received over €15,000.

Despite the above-mentioned differences, there are some common strengths among all the subgrantees, primarily the strong ties with the local community and the willingness and ability to organise activities (albeit of different types) in collaboration with other actors in the area.

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CROSSDEV was an added value, the resources helped them in designing new experiences and products for visitors in a difficult period such as Covid, in which they have difficulties in finding the resources they needed.

Subgrantee - Aqabawhi Studio, Jordan

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Starting from many distinct context conditions and characteristics of the beneficiaries, and with the amounts of subgrants also being different, the target the project partners set themselves in terms of impact was indeed diverse, as were the results achieved. Where the starting conditions were more fragile, as in Palestine, the subgrants had a positive impact as they enabled the beneficiaries to undertake a process that could lead to the development of community-based tourism in marginalised areas. When the starting conditions were more consolidated, as in the case of Aqaba, subgrants made it possible to support the organisations in their activities during the difficult period caused by Covid-19, on the one hand by allowing the Johud Al Ayadi centre to train and support 50 women, and on the other hand by supporting Aqabawi Studio in the design of new handicrafts and in the production and purchase of equipment. Thanks to CROSSDEV, relationships were also established in a number of cases between the subgrantees themselves and with other project beneficiaries.

Overall, the impact of the subgrants has been positive not only on the direct beneficiaries, but also on the local communities. Having received subgrants led to a change of mindset in several cases, and enabled beneficiaries to acquire management skills and abilities, with the support of local partners. Beneficiaries often contributed their own resources for additional work, showing interest and engagement. Although in certain situations the subgrants were not sufficient to reach the ideal situation, mainly due to the amount of money and time available but also due to contextual situations unrelated to the project, in all cases they contributed to an improvement over the starting conditions, also thanks to the opportunity for the beneficiaries to receive trainings. The feedback from tour operators who visited some of the guesthouses benefiting from the subgrants in Palestine was positive, testifying to the good work done, of course taking into consideration the context in which the guesthouses are located. In cases where weaknesses relating to sub-grantees persist, these may be limited or overcome thanks to the support of local partners, the improvement of socio-economic conditions resulting from the investment made and from the promotion of destinations, and thanks to future support, financial and non, that beneficiaries may seek.

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CROSSDEV helps the locals, being an opportunity to enhance visitors' experiences but also giving them socio-economic opportunities and allowing them to remain in their villages to work in the tourist sector.

Subgrantee – Rita Keirouz's guesthouse, Lebanon

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CASE HISTORY – PROJECT SUBGRANTEES

- **Mrs. Rita Keyrouz, Rita Keirouz's guesthouse - Lebanon**

She lives in one of the villages around Jabal Moussa. Thanks to CROSSDEV she was able to make some works in her guesthouse to enhance the tourist experience, the subgrants in fact allowed to build a new bathroom and a bedroom for visitors. The project gave her an opportunity to make her activity better than before. She knows other subgrantees, her neighbour has a bakery, and she was also supported by CROSSDEV. Another guesthouse owner that she knew from another village was supported by the project. CROSSDEV allowed the subgrantees to know each other. CROSSDEV helps the locals, being an opportunity to enhance visitors' experiences but also giving them socio-economic opportunities and allowing them to remain in their villages to work in the tourist sector. In the future, she would like to keep on making her guesthouse better by means of similar initiatives and other opportunities, as she is very satisfied with the support received.

- **Mrs. Lara Abou Mraus, Lara's Guesthouse - Lebanon**

She speaks a little English and French, her daughter helps her with international visitors. Thanks to CROSSDEV she was able to improve three apartments of her guesthouse, with new beds, wardrobes, refrigerator/washing machine. In the apartment it is possible to see how the project CROSSDEV helped her in improve the offer to visitors. She contributed herself by financing some other small works in the three apartments (e.g. painting). She also received training from APJM thanks to CROSSDEV, on social media managing and on food quality. As the guesthouse is near to the archaeological site awarded by ITER VITIS cultural route, she hosted in her guesthouse the archaeologists that worked on the site and stayed for 3 months. She hopes to receive more visitors thanks to the work done with the subgrants and thanks to the promotion done by APJM and by the project. She is in the list of APJM guesthouses and in the Hidden Mediterranean platform.

- **Mrs. Hoda Nader, Hoda's Guesthouse - Lebanon**

She started her guesthouse in 2009, and since then she received several visitors, both Lebanese living in the country, Lebanese living outside Lebanon and some international visitors. She was able to renovate her guesthouse thanks to the funding received by CROSSDEV, mainly the terrace where she welcomes her guests with a new floor and a pergola. As subgrantee, she contributed herself with some other renovations. When she started her guesthouse, she did not receive any training, she learnt by herself how to manage it. Now within CROSSDEV she received training on food safety and hospitality by APJM. It was very interesting and useful, she gained knowledge and skills. She felt that the visitors now are more satisfied of the service and of the view from the terrace, and she is receiving a higher number of people. Visitors can book by phone directly calling the guesthouse or calling APJM. The relationship with the Jabal Moussa reserve and APJM is very important for promoting the guesthouse and for bringing new visitors.

She is satisfied with the support received and she loves to improve the service to her guests, telling them about the Jabal Moussa reserve and the support received by the CROSSDEV project. The project directly helped her, but indirectly can also help other people from the local communities living in the surrounding villages, as visitors can buy local products and stay in B&B. In her village there aren't other services for tourists, but she buys local food to prepare food for her guests.

- **Ms. Aya Al Kurdi, manager of Princess Basma Center for Development Johud Al Ayadi – Aqaba, Jordan**

As organization they work on women' capacity development, training them and helping to start their business. In Aqaba they collaborate with JREDS, organizing different kind of trainings for women to empower them and to help them in terms of capacity building. The organisation has in Aqaba city center a space to show to visitors the products to give the women an opportunity to sell them, increasing their income and giving socio-economic opportunities for the women themselves and their families.

Thanks to CROSSDEV the Joohud al Ayadi center organized 3 different trainings for women. More than 50 women took part to the 3 trainings, and some of them participated in the final CROSSDEV event in Amman. The activity was very impactful for the women, they were supported until they became able to start their business. All the 50 women trained are now displaying their products in the space owned by the organisation. Of the women trained in 2020 thanks to CROSSDEV, 20 are still working on their businesses. Usually, after 5 years from the training, around 35-40% of the women trained are able to keep going with their business autonomously.

- **Mr. Mustafa Al Ajlouni, Aqabawhi Studio – Aqaba, Jordan**

The start-up started in 2017 and focused on tourist experiences. In the first period 2018-20, they had around 3.000 visitors, then during Covid19 they worked a lot to establish their networks of local actors and they needed to find a new place in which organize the different local handicrafts activities. Aqabawhi studio works not only with tourists, but also with locals, especially during the low season, involving students and youths. In the last couple of years, they expanded themselves, reaching 15000 visitors in 2023. In the place where they had their laboratory for handicrafts, Ayla Marine, they had also around 25 kiosks for local producers, that affect the business in a positive way. They also have a quality gift shop promoting Aqaba products.

With CROSSDEV Aqabawhi improved some visitors' experiences and started new ones. New products were designed and produced, a new sewing machine were bought for the workshop and made available for local women. CROSSDEV was an added value, particularly in a difficult period such as Covid, and the support received helped Aqabawhi Studio in having the resources they needed. CROSSDEV also helped them in terms of visibility, even thanks to the platform created by the project they hope to increase the visibility of Aqabawhi.

- **Bashar Farashat, Guesthouse Beit Oulla Women Club – Palestine**

All CROSSDEV activities were vital from the beginning as also thanks to the project now they have a guesthouse. They benefit from preparing the price offers and the financial report and from dealing with contractors and suppliers. The project was very important especially to active the community tourism, because Beit Oulla city did not have any hostels or homestays for visitors before CROSSDEV. The project will encourage the visitors to visit and sleep in Beit Oulla and this will benefit the local community by purchasing from the local shops and benefit the economic situation of the city.

Enabling factors for project effectiveness and impact:

- The presence of partners from various countries and the exchange of practices and knowledge that has been established is one of the factors that has enabled CROSSDEV to have the impact it has achieved. Diversity of experiences and competences among partners has resulted in a peer-to-peer mutual exchange to valorise cultural heritage and to promote sustainable Tourism.
- CROSSDEV was inspired by the experiences of the cultural routes of the Council of Europe and supported by two of them ITER VITIS and the Phoenician Route, which played a key role in the design of the project and contributed examples and practices to the valorisation of the five destinations involved.
- Design of the project took into consideration the needs of the project partners with a bottom-up approach. Community-based tourism approach was applied to the different territories, giving flexibility to the partners regarding the activities implemented. Flexibility of the project allowed the ideas and skills from different partners to be realized, allowing for a greater impact on the territories, given the different socio-economic contexts.
- Partnership building, both in the selection of partners and associate partners, contributed positively to the impact of the project. Partners deeply rooted and well established in the respective countries and local communities, or who were able to integrate from the beginning in the correct way, involving different stakeholders and identifying the actors able to play the role of liaison and towing (developer) within the respective communities.
- Very strong partner commitment, willingness to learn and discuss, and full willingness to continuously improve. Enthusiasm that has been growing from the beginning as knowledge has grown among the partners.
- Involve local communities as the main actors to promote sustainable tourism products. Create networks within local communities, involving different types of actors, and begin engagement at an early stage. Broad partnerships at local level, including different kinds of actors and experts supporting in the technical aspects and many people of the tourism sector.

- Focus on communication and promotion is a new aspect for some partners.

Disabling factors for project effectiveness and impact:

- Contextual factors that affected the implementation of the project, external issues such as the pandemic caused some delays, but at the same time were an enabling factor because they found out that some activities can be done online. The pandemic also allowed partners to enhance the work on each country, allowing more time for partners to focus on the community and for stakeholders to devote themselves to the project's promoted activities, trainings and webinars.
- CROSSDEV worked on sustainable tourism also in countries subject to crises and conflicts, a situation that caused operational and financial difficulties for local partners at certain stages. In Lebanon, the project took place during the political and financial crisis, starting in October 2019 and still ongoing today. As for Palestine, the geopolitical context has been constantly evolving and episodes of tension and confrontation have been occurring in recent years.
- In some destinations targeted by CROSSDEV, the role of seasonality continues to have a major impact on visitor numbers. Despite the efforts of partners and local stakeholders to promote activities and initiatives also out of season, it remains complicated to attract visitors, primarily international, but also national, during certain periods.
- Limited international mobility of project stakeholders has been a main issue during the implementation, in the first phase because of Covid-19 restrictions, and then because of the challenge to receive VISA to visit other countries. Learning by visiting would have been important to exchange good practices among stakeholders in the tourist sector.
- Limited involvement of some of the associate partners, despite others were involved actively and positively at country level.

IMPACT: COUNTRY OVERVIEW

	INSIGHTS
<p>ITALY – VIA SELINUNTINA, SICILY</p>	<p>The CROSSDEV project has been playing a key role in Sicily, where it is a priority to find ways of promoting and valorising sites located in inner areas, such as the Via Selinuntina, which are less known than the coastal areas, especially during off-season periods. Thanks to the Via Selinuntina brand valorised and promoted by CROSSDEV, also through the Hidden Mediterranean platform developed as part of the project, a path has been set in motion in Sicily that is going in the hoped-for direction, achieving the first fundamental and impactful results.</p> <p>The Via Selinuntina is one of Sicily's most ancient arteries. CROSSDEV enabled a process that will lead to a 'à la carte', motivational tourism, in which the visitor can find everything within the area of the Via Selinuntina that is related to sustainable tourism. In the Via Selinuntina there are significant tourist attractors, such as the Selinunte Archaeological Park, but CROSSDEV, working with the local community, allowed it to undertake a process of valorising even the less important attractors. The Region of Sicily was involved in the CROSSDEV project and is aware of the model promoted, and has declared its interest in including the methodology promoted by CROSSDEV in future projects.</p> <p>In terms of impact, the project succeeded in creating a network of relevant stakeholders. the trainings carried out in Sicily during the pandemic led to the creation of strong synergies between participants, both private and public actors. In addition, the project allowed some less known sites to promote themselves with tour operators and tourism bloggers, with a potential impact both on the increased capacity to dialogue with these types of actors and on the possible increase in visitors that these actors could bring.</p>

	<p>There are some structural obstacles in Sicily that limit the presence of out-of-season visitors to less known inner areas. The main one is related to the weakness of the public transport network in Sicily, which represents a strong limitation for visitors who are not willing to hire a vehicle privately. While not being able to impact on this aspect, the project has contributed to the creation of synergies between operators to ensure that solutions are sought to facilitate the movement of visitors outside the peak season.</p>
<p>LEBANON – JABAL MOUSSA</p>	<p>APJM was able to fully include CROSSDEV in the main topics usually addressed. Project activities allowed APJM to embrace several people and to let them contribute to the preservation and valorisation of Jabal Moussa’s environmental and cultural heritage in different aspects. Thanks to CROSSDEV, APJM entered in contact with many experts with which they are still working and increased the relations with national and local public institutions, even ministries, that now are more aware of the importance of Jabal Moussa.</p> <p>One of the major impact of CROSSDEV in Lebanon is that enabled people from local communities to valorise themselves and their skills. This happened both with the women managing the guesthouses awarded with the subgrants, and with other local stakeholders, such as the hat producer and the singers, that thanks to CROSSDEV became a tourist experience. Thanks to the creation of the Adonis Route, that has been registered as a trademark and is today recognised at national level, people from the local communities understood that they belong to a cultural Route, and that by means of their activities they contribute to valorise it.</p> <p>At the same time, the subgrants were very impactful, both for APJM that learned a lot on the implementation of the subgrant process, and for the subgrantees. 6 subgrants were given by APJM, 2 bakeries, 2 B&B and 2 guesthouses. The subgrantees were empowered by receiving the financial support and by being engaged in such a process, and they decided to contribute with their own money to increase the impact of the support received. The impact of the subgrants are: the improvement of the services the subgrantees are able to give to visitors; the engagement of the subgrants in the project activities, even with international partners and actors; the creation of a network of stakeholders willing to continue to work with APJM; the improvement of socio-economic opportunities for local communities; the visibility given by subgrantees to CROSSDEV, ENI CBC MED and the donor European Union.</p> <p>Another CROSSDEV impact is given by the increased visibility of Jabal Moussa in Lebanon, as APJM was asked to present the LAP experience and stories in several cases, but also at regional level, to present the results and outputs. When they won the ITER VITIS awards for best archaeological site in 2022, Jabal Moussa reserve was promoted on national TVs. In terms of social media visibility, the followers on Instagram increased from 4 thousand to 7.5 thousand in 2 years, also thanks to the training on digital marketing with a social media expert that APJM got from CROSSDEV. Of the CROSSDEV, the Lebanese Ministry of Tourism asked to APJM to promote the Jabal Moussa reserve in the international airport of Beirut, and the Ministry showed interest in support APJM in increase the promotion of the reserve.</p> <p>Jabal Moussa will be known among the cultural routes thanks to the CROSSDEV project, people now are inviting APJM to present the reserve, they are a bit more known than before at the Mediterranean level. Jabal Moussa reached the international audience thanks to ITER VITIS and the Phoenician Route, and this happened thanks to CROSSDEV, so this is a relevant impact of the project. Maybe the project fell short in terms of bringing visibility to the cultural routes, they received it as Jabal Moussa thanks to ITER VITIS and Phoenician Route, but it happened less for the other destinations.</p> <p>APJM social media is mainly national oriented, so the impact they have in promoting the other four destinations involved in CROSSDEV is limited. The Hidden Mediterranean platform is the main tool in terms of promotion at international level, and APJM started to see the potential impact, receiving requests from other countries, but they hope that more impact in terms of visibility and number of visitors will arrive after the end of the project.</p>
<p>JORDAN – UMM QAIS</p>	<p>CROSSDEV enabled JUST to create a very close and deep-rooted connection with local stakeholders. JUST managed to build a local network among the stakeholders in Umm Qais, with a potential impact for years to come. This is one of the main achievements, as before CROSSDEV it was difficult for local stakeholders (guesthouses, service providers, tour operators) to have good relations and collaborate when needed. The Umm Qais stakeholder network is the first step in a process of implementing sustainable tourism in the area and promoting and enhancing the local cultural and environmental heritage.</p>

	<p>JUST has developed numerous tourism products in Umm Qais, registered the territorial brand and developed different types of activities to engage visitors. Together with the Jordan Department of Antiquities, JUST is promoting Umm Qais to become one of the best sites to visit in Jordan. The materials created within CROSSDEV were used in terms promotion and marketing to award Umm Qais. As a consequence, the representatives of the Jordan tourism office and of guide associations are visiting Umm Qais and especially the new sustainable tourist products developed by CROSSDEV.</p> <p>The Hidden Mediterranean platform promote Umm Qais not as a single destination, but together with the other sites supported by CROSSDEV, thus promoting the entire Mediterranean region and cooperation between countries. There is hope that the platform and the promotion at national level and by the local stakeholders themselves, will allow Umm Qais to further increase the number of visitors but above all to have visitors stay for more than one day. The Umm Qais archaeological sites reached around 35 thousand visitors per year, but less than one percent of visitors remains in Umm Qais overnight. The main constraining factor in this respect is the limited availability of accommodation for visitors that the local community of Umm Qais can currently offer.</p> <p>Lastly, CROSSDEV helped to bring about a change of mentality in Umm Qais. Indeed, the women involved in CROSSDEV by JUST have come together in a registered association and started selling their handicrafts to locals and visitors. Prior to the project, what they produced as individuals was mostly given as gifts to friends and family members. Now, also thanks to CROSSDEV's impulse and JUST's support, the women have their own sales space at the archaeological site and have developed an entrepreneurial attitude, with a positive impact on their socio-economic conditions.</p>
<p>JORDAN - AQABA</p>	<p>The objective of JREDS for the 6 sites improved by CROSSDEV in Aqaba was not only to increase the number of visitors, but make people – both locals and visitors – aware on how to preserve and valorise the cultural and environmental heritage. CROSSDEV was able to increase awareness of cultural heritage sites in Aqaba, organizing activities and events and inviting many people and students from schools and universities and the media. The locals are now more informed about the cultural and historical sites of Aqaba, and on the importance of preserve the local heritage. Furthermore, there are more visitors to the sites supported by CROSSDEV if compared with the pre-project situation. The increase is given by international visitors, mainly from the EU, thanks to the promotion and visibility given by JREDS and CROSSDEV. As declared by the Antiquities Directorate in Aqaba, in 2023 there were 15.000 visitors monthly to the cultural sites, huge increase from 2020 and 2021. The visitors thanks to the project now find in the sites more information about the history of Aqaba and can decide to visit the sites without a guide, as the information are available in English and Arabic.</p> <p>In terms of networking at local level, the relationship with the associated partners and other stakeholders from public and private sectors became stronger thanks to the CROSSDEV experience. The project allowed JREDS to create strong link with the local community, that was involved in all kinds of activities, from capacity building to clean ups campaigns. Strong links were also created with the EU delegation to Jordan. The final event of July 2023 has been the main activity organised in collaboration with JUST. The stakeholders from Umm Qais and from Aqaba knew each other and they started to build relationship among them, especially related to handicrafts.</p>
<p>PALESTINE - PALESTINIAN HERITAGE TRAIL</p>	<p>CROSSDEV allowed to develop the new segment of the Palestinian Heritage Trail from Beit Mersim to Battir, with GPS, maps and trail notes. At the same time, thanks to CROSSDEV service providers of the 16 marginalised communities involved in project activities are more ready to support visitors and the local communities are now aware of the relevance of sustainable tourism and CBT. The project has given to the municipalities involved an opportunity to valorise cultural heritage and to promote tourism, leading to an increase in people's interest in their own lands. Local communities thanks to CROSSDEV started establishing tourism initiatives despite the restrictions of the Israeli occupation authorities.</p> <p>The impact of the subgrants is positive because, with a limited amount of money – 3.000 euros -, PHT and the beneficiaries were able to start improving the sustainable tourism sectors in the local communities. The communities supported are marginalised, not used to host foreign visitors, and CROSSDEV was an opportunity to start changing the mindset, creating women centres and starting small business in the villages. Subgrants were impactful in terms of creation of job opportunities, but in order to enhance the quality of the service to reach international standards, more support will be needed. The subgrantees were also trained, and they participate in</p>

elaborating the local action plan to enhance community-based tourism. Capacity building activities were organised for all stakeholders, not only for the 11 subgrantees, to have a wider impact on local communities. Service providers were supported to increase hospitality, and they already received positive feedbacks from visitors. These activities also allowed the stakeholders to stay together, to start networking among themselves. Capacity building, financial support, networks of connections are all relevant aspects for service providers in the tourism sector that allow the project to have a relevant impact in Palestine. The impact of capacity building is relevant, but more activities should be organized in the future to further improve the capacities of local service providers.

CROSSDEV produced also higher-level effects in Palestine, leading not only to the creation of the local action plan on tourism in the 16 communities supported, but also to the bigger local plan that put together all the 16 communities. Furthermore, local tourism committees have been established and will keep on working at local level. The networking activity started within and between the different communities brought to joint action, innovative ideas, and created an opportunity to think about new projects.

5 years ago, hiking trails were not known among Palestinians, now along the PHT there are national visitors visiting the local communities to know their cultural heritage. In order to have a higher impact, it will be necessary to have more international visitors, as they bring more money and visibility to local communities. Thanks to CROSSDEV visibility and the promotional strategy, tour operators and journalists are start asking more information around the new segment of the trail. As CROSSDEV, they were supposed to participate to international fairs and to have more promotional activities at international level. This impact was limited by the political situation in Palestine and by the Covid 19 pandemic. Hidden Mediterranean platform can be an opportunity to further promote the new segment of the PHT to international visitors and to keep collaborating among partners, especially from neighbour countries such as Jordan and Palestine.

CROSSDEV allowed to create new job opportunities and to build new competences at PHT. PHT gained capacities on how to manage subgrants and now they are using these capacities in a new project with the World Bank, selecting 50 subgrantees to be supported along the whole trail.

4.2.4 SUSTAINABILITY

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. What has been done to ensure that the benefits generated by the project continue in the medium-long run?
2. To what extent the benefits of the project will continue after donor funding ceased?
3. Do the relevant target groups (such as subgrantees of the less-known destinations supported) have capacity and commitment to leverage the benefits of the project over time?
4. What additional support or resources may be needed to sustain the outcomes from this project, and what obstacles exist in this regard?
5. What were the major factors which influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the project?

SUSTAINABILITY: GLOBAL OVERVIEW

The sustainability of the tourism products developed is guaranteed by the fact that the partners involved have in their mission the promotion of the territories in which they are rooted. No new activities were created from scratch, but rather, thanks to the flexibility of the project, the pathways already taken by the partners were pursued and partners were supported in the implementation of activities.

One of the main factors contributing to the sustainability of the results achieved is the involvement of local and national institutional authorities in decision-making processes and/or in socialising the results achieved. The institutions involved have shown a strong interest in the approach developed by CROSSDEV and applied in the five destinations and are aware of the results achieved through the work of the partnership. The relations established in the target areas between partners and institutional actors may lead to further future collaborations.

In terms of soft empowerment, the beneficiaries are left with the knowledge and skills transferred through the capacity building carried out in the target areas by the local partners. Through the know-how acquired, in fact, numerous service providers were able to increase the quality of services offered to visitors, and others will be able to do so in the years to come. The partners themselves have increased their competences through the experience gained during the years of CROSSDEV implementation, both thanks to the coaching they received from the Lead Beneficiary and the support they received from the other partners. In fact, within CROSSDEV, a methodology was developed and promoted that the partners will be able to reuse in the future, and materials and guidelines were elaborated in various areas (institutional involvement, communication strategies) that will remain available to the organisations involved. The skills acquired by the partners and other actors thanks to CROSSDEV may lead to new collaborations and projects, also thanks to the mentality created of exchanging experiences, acquiring further knowledge and networking.

Regarding the sustainability of the results achieved through the subgrants, as they are closely related to the ability of the target destinations to attract more visitors, the role played by the international context and that of individual countries must be considered. In Palestine, it is important to consider the context of tension and how much it affects the number of international visitors, and the consequent need to support tourist flows with investments at the national level. APJM gave subgrants to women who had small businesses in the villages around the Jabal Moussa Reserve, but to fully understand sustainability it will be necessary to see the numbers of national and international visitors. Visitor flows will also increase due to the impact of the platform if it is used properly, but they also depend on the international and national context.

Furthermore, again for the sake of sustainability, visits were organised in the various destinations with local and international tour operators, which have already led to the creation of tourist packages in certain cases. For example, with regard to the Via Selinuntina, there are already tour packages promoted by tour operators such as Winerist and Borghi d'Italia that include the sites and beneficiaries supported by CROSSDEV in Sicily. The tour operators also made suggestions and technical notes in order to improve the proposals on the Hidden Mediterranean platform, and in any case many of them said that it is possible to overcome these minor issues related to some of the sites included in CROSSDEV's destinations.

Although the impact and sustainability of some actions, first and foremost the Hidden Mediterranean platform that allows for the advertising of an elaborate tourism product, will be fully understood after the end of the project, CROSSDEV has created a network that can remain and grow, leading to a growth of the community created around the Hidden Mediterranean concept.

Within ENI CBC MED, the CROSSDEV project was involved in a larger capitalisation project, RESTART MED!, together with the other 3 standard projects funded by the programme in the field of sustainable tourism.

HIDDEN MEDITERRANEAN PLATFORM

After the project's conclusion, the accountability of the Hidden Mediterranean platform shifted to the local partners, while CROSSDEV communication and social passed to the Lead Beneficiary CISP. Tourism promotion of the destinations will take place through the developed editorial plan and promotion of the platform. The developed editorial plan includes publishing social media posts every 5 weeks and periodically reviewing what has been published in the platform to have updated content. It also includes uploading new content, with one

upload per month for each destination. The editorial plan was developed to be usable even after the end of the project, providing a light workload for the partners. have chosen a way for it to be as light as possible. Each partner will have to manage the platform page for their destination and identify the appropriate criteria and ways to add new actors for each destination. Partners have been required to identify people available to keep working on the platform, mainly concerning the addition of new material. Until 2025 platform is hosted by CoopCulture server and until 2026 secured coverage on the domain. CoopCulture is also committed to provide technical support when needed and hosting service. CROSSDEV has thus ensured coverage of expenses for the platform in the near future as well.

In the last Cross Border Agreement signed by the partners in 2023, it was confirmed that the consortium will continue to pursue the goals of CROSSDEV, maintain the Hidden Mediterranean platform as a networking and promotion tool, and expand the platform to new actors and destinations. To do so, the partners pledge to promote Hidden Mediterranean through its channels and on all occasions internationally and to expand the platform to other relevant actors in the tourism value chain. All the steps related to visibility were approved by the managing authority of ENI CBC MED, which recognized the important achievements of CROSSDEV and the validity of the Hidden Mediterranean platform. Platform, as well as its potential in the future in terms of development of local territories and communities.

The main obstacle to the Hidden Mediterranean platform sustainability is that some partners may find it difficult to identify the required resources. Until now, the platform has been a project-funded activity, with dedicated resources, while a phase opens up in which there will be no project that secures funding. The possibility of constituting an entity representing Hidden Mediterranean, with the goal of having a partner take over the platform in turn, has been discussed, or funding will need to be found to support this transition phase. Otherwise, there is a risk that the platform will remain a tool with great untapped potential. The platform will not be able to function independently of the commitment of partners, as it is necessary for the partners themselves to be responsive to the requests coming from visitors. Anyway, the fact that the partnership has been addressing this issue for several months is a positive aspect that underscores goodwill.

Additional activities or resources may be needed in the future to sustain the outcomes:

- Technical training to local stakeholders, starting from the institutions, creating an educational and training programme that goes from improve the knowledge of foreign languages to waste management.
- Having more time, in-depth marketing strategies for the itineraries could have been achieved, although this was not the aim of CROSSDEV. What is needed is the management and promotion of destinations, done in technical terms and functional to the market, with an eye on the target visitors it is intended to reach.
- Ad hoc legislative framework to be created, which is difficult because every country is different, and every context within countries is different. A legislative top-down intervention to support community-based tourism (CBT) would have increased the sustainability of initiatives promoted locally.
- The most impacted from the intervention are the closest to the site. Enlarge the work trying to have more beneficiaries, being more open towards increasing the target area of intervention and the number of beneficiaries.

SUSTAINABILITY: COUNTRY OVERVIEW

	INSIGHTS
<p>ITALY – VIA SELINUNTINA, SICILY</p>	<p>As it was the intention of the Municipality of Menfi and the local Tourism Council to have a website specifically intended to promote slow, sustainable and off-season tourism, the Hidden Mediterranean platform created by CROSSDEV was embraced with enthusiasm by local stakeholders. The responsibility for the future management of the platform for the Via Selinuntina has been given to a beneficiary of the project, with whom handover has already taken place, who has received training and support from CISP to acquire all the necessary skills. Indeed, the fact that the platform encountered strong interest from the municipality and other stakeholders can be considered a positive factor in terms of territorial ownership and future sustainability.</p> <p>The Hidden Mediterranean Platform is one of the tools developed by CROSSDEV that can contribute to the sustainability of the results achieved and indeed to increasing the impact of the project in Sicily. This, coupled with the transfer of knowledge to local actors through capacity building activities and networking between stakeholders, allows the project to ensure a certain sustainability at the local level.</p> <p>Phoenicians' Route and Iter Vitis are actors that will continue to operate in the area even after the end of the project. In terms of sustainability, there is interest and willingness on the part of the Region of Sicily to repropose the CROSSDEV model. Through Phoenicians' Route and Iter Vitis, actors that will remain permanently in the area, there will be the opportunity to participate in future calls for tenders, also involving other less visited inland areas of Sicily. One of the main results obtained in Sicily was the creation of a network between territorial actors, and thanks to the presence of the two Council of Europe cultural routes, which will remain in the area, there will be the opportunity to give continuity to these relations.</p>
<p>LEBANON – JABAL MOUSSA</p>	<p>APJM will continue to make activities and the results will be sustained, with some of the outputs that will be valorised even more after the project, for example the newly built visitors' center. The same will happen for the subgrantees, that now are able to provide better services and will attract more visitors. The strong linkages between APJM and local communities will play a key role in order to make CROSSDEV results sustainable. To strengthen the outcomes, APJM will keep on maintaining the relationship and expertise of the ecotourism sector for stakeholder, guesthouses, guards, guides.</p> <p>Promote among international visitors to increase the economic value to allow local communities to improve their activities. It is necessary to bring visitors to make local communities (not only direct beneficiaries of the activities) aware of the economic impact of the project. In order to do so, APJM needs to find innovative ways to keep on promoting Jabal Moussa and to create linkages between the subgrantees and the other activities to the trails. For the sake of sustainability and future impact, the Hidden Mediterranean platform must be further strengthened and promoted to make Jabal Moussa Reserve known to international visitors. The financial context in Lebanon could limit the presence of international visitors even after the project. APJM will keep on working with tour operators, increasing connections with other sites in Lebanon.</p> <p>Thanks to the change made by CROSSDEV, both in terms of service improvement and in terms of capacity building of local stakeholder, APJM is more comfortable in sending visitors to beneficiaries and subgrantees. The subgrantees were motivated, contributing themselves with minor investments to improve their businesses and showing willingness to collaborate, an important aspect in terms of sustainability. Furthermore, APJM will be able to follow up with the subgrantees independently thanks to the expertise and know-how acquired.</p>
<p>JORDAN – UMM QAIS</p>	<p>The work carried out with the local community, in terms of the stakeholder network that was created and the capacity building of the beneficiaries, but also in terms of supporting the creation of the formal Al Yarmouk women's association, has led to results that will endure after the projects' conclusion. The project has led to a change in the mindset of local stakeholders, who have realised how essential it is to collaborate in order to make the achievements sustainable and to find new future initiatives that can support Umm Qais.</p> <p>There are a number of factors that will have a major influence on the sustainability and future impact on the local community of Umm Qais, primarily the future promotion of the destination and the resulting ability to attract more visitors, both local and international, for more days and outside the peak tourist season. The registered trademark Umm Qais, developed by JUST as part of the project, will continue to be used in the future to promote the destination. JUST has engaged</p>

in dialogue with national institutions to ensure that Umm Qais is recognised as a good practice to be promoted and will continue its work with guides and tour operators. The collaboration created with JREDS may also contribute to the promotion of Umm Qais and the handicraft products of some of the beneficiaries.

The Hidden Mediterranean platform will further enable Umm Qais to be known by more international visitors, and to this end a positive aspect is each partner can maintain active the platform in the future thanks to the knowledge acquired. However, it will be important to ensure a shared commitment of the entire consortium in this regard.

JORDAN - AQABA

One of the main elements of sustainability with regard to the implementation of CROSSDEV in Aqaba is the ability to raise the awareness of the local population on the importance of enhancing their cultural heritage and the need to promote tourism with a view to sustainability, with specific attention to the environmental sphere. The project worked in this direction primarily with students from schools and universities. The six target cultural sites were maintained and enhanced through appropriate signage, so that they will be more attractive to visitors in the years to come.

With regard to the local network of actors, JREDS implemented the project activities with the support of ASEZA and by actively involving the Ministry's Department of Antiquities. The relationships established with institutional stakeholders within the project are a guarantee of sustainability even after the conclusion of the initiative. Local stakeholders who have been involved in capacity building activities and are part of the network activated by CROSSDEV will be able to guarantee the sustainability of the results achieved in the future. Similarly, the subgrant component will be sustainable, as JREDS chose to support already established organisations.

With regard to the Hidden Mediterranean platform, JREDS and ASEZA will keep on promoting the platform in events and initiatives. The know how related to the platform that thanks to CROSSDEV is now internal to JREDS will be transferred to other people, in order to be able to keep the work on the platform. That will be necessary, as it is unclear if the project manager will work for JREDS in the future, as it is a small organisation. To further increase the impact, it would be good to expand the platform, including other less known sites in the surroundings of Aqaba.

PALESTINE - PALESTINIAN HERITAGE TRAIL

The segment from Beit Mersim to Battir created thanks to CROSSDEV is the fourth segment of the trail that PHT is managing, together with the Ministry of Tourism. Given its mandate, PHT will continue to promote the entire trail, with a specific focus on the new segment. PHT will continue its activities, as the staff is working already on other projects promoting sustainable tourism and community-based tourism in the communities along the trail. The main objective of PHT is to make local communities able to promote their heritage and to give services to visitors autonomously. The service providers that benefited from CROSSDEV project, both thanks to capacity building and subgrants, will continue to improve and more people will start working in the tourism sector. CROSSDEV supported the development of 16 Local Action Plans, one for each community involved, and a unique tourism Action Plan approved by the 16 communities. Local tourism committees have been created and empowered by CROSSDEV. Some villages and municipalities along the trail already included sustainable tourism in their strategic plans, guaranteeing their future commitment.

It will be necessary to focus on promotional activities at the international level in order to have more visitors from EU and US to the PHT. The Hidden Mediterranean platform will help in this sense and has already helped draw the attention of international tour operators and guides. The political context will be the main obstacle in terms of sustainability, also during the CROSSDEV implementation PHT cancelled or postponed several activities. Moreover, again because of the external context, Palestine is not an inexpensive country to reach and visit, when compared to other countries in the Middle East. The political environment and the cost of visiting the country are major obstacles to increasing international tourism in Palestine, an aspect that plays a key role in making the project's results fully sustainable and increasing sustainable tourism and CBT initiatives along the PHT.

As PHT, they have several project and initiatives to keep sustaining the local communities around the trail. A project with the WB will allow to give around 50 subgrants to local communities' stakeholders along the entire trail, some of them in the new segment developed thanks to CROSSDEV. Relevant to keep having results and impact on local communities and to improve services for visitors.

5 LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the main lessons learned from the project and the recommendations for future initiatives in the sector of sustainable tourism and local development. Together, they can represent the basis for decision making processes for scaling up, replication, diffusion and continuation of the actions supported through the Project.

CROSSDEV APPROACH TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The strategical developmental approach of CISP - community and rights based approach addressing roots of the inequalities -, integrated with the experience and concept of the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, allowed the development of the CROSSDEV project idea to promote territorial and community development in the most disadvantaged areas, through the creation of sustainable tourism products from the valorisation of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of each territory. CROSSDEV acted in an integrated manner by implementing numerous activities in a synergetic manner for the benefit of the five target destinations and their respective local communities: awareness raising on the valorisation of cultural heritage, capacity building, financial support to subgrantees, networking with local and national institutions, marketing and promotion of the sustainable tourism products created. The project promoted a community-based tourism approach that aimed to work with local communities for local communities, tailoring activities and strategies according to need and potential. CROSSDEV showed how, in order to have a positive impact on territories with differences, it is necessary to use in a flexible way the approach, adapting it to each context. Furthermore, the importance of involving local communities as much as possible from the beginning of the process should be emphasised. The engagement of local communities - service providers, institutions, women, youth, leaders - enabled the project to have an even greater impact. Local communities will help sharing the knowledge and making the results achieved more sustainable.

Recommendations for future initiatives:

- To design future sustainable tourism strategies, processes and interventions grounded on a community-based approach, because there is no sustainable tourism without community engagement and ownership.
- To start from aspirations and needs of local communities, engaging with a variety of local stakeholders (such as local authorities, private sector organisations, service providers, community-based and civil society organisations, academia, etc.) since the very early stage of any initiative.

CROSSDEV APPROACH WITH PROJECT PARTNERS

The partners involved in the project, although different in terms of legal form, NGOs, universities, associations, were selected because they were well rooted in the territory and/or had the necessary skills to succeed in establishing themselves as actors capable of contributing to the development of destinations for the benefit of local communities. All partners also confirmed their common desire to involve local communities throughout the entire process. The methodology of community-based tourism applied represented a learning opportunity for the project partners. The CROSSDEV partnership took advantage of the diversity in terms of areas and know-how, creating a very cohesive network around the concept of Hidden Mediterranean and providing a strong added value to the project. CROSSDEV, thanks to the collaboration established, led to the personal and professional growth of the partners, providing opportunities to share experiences and know-how with others involved. The frequency of interactions was continuous, first online during the Covid-19 period and then online and in-person at project events. CISP's work in managing the consortium proved to be successful:

on the one hand, it was left to the individual partners to identify the main needs of the communities and to decide on specific activities for greater impact, shaping the overall model on each of the five destinations; on the other hand, CISP continuously supported the partners, both for implementation, management and administrative issues.

Recommendations for future initiatives:

- To select partners rooted in their areas, with expertise, experience and the willingness to continue or to establish long-lasting relations with local communities and stakeholders (rather than only spot for the project intervention)
- To include in the partnership different actors, both in terms of types of organizations and of countries and areas of origin, with a cross-border exchange perspective.
- To combine strong and frequent coordination of efforts among partners with high flexibility concerning the necessary actions and activities, according to local contexts and needs

SUBGRANTS

The subgrants awarded by the partners in three of the five CROSSDEV target destinations were one of the most positive outputs of the project. In fact, they provided selected service providers and Local Authorities with financial resources to put into practice what the project intended to promote, increasing attractiveness through improved service and promoting sustainable tourism and development practices that can improve the socio-economic opportunities of local communities. Despite the differences between the subgrantees, the differences between the amount of subgrants, and the different destinations and local communities to which the subgrantees belong, the support given through the subgrants led in all cases to positive results. The subgrants provided a strong signal of project commitment, triggering an intangible change in the local communities. Subgrants were received very positively by the local communities and represented an opportunity for growth and empowerment for both the beneficiaries themselves and the project partners, as they were required to produce a significant amount of reporting and accountability. Finally, subgrants are a key component in terms of visibility in local communities and target destinations for the ENI CBC MED programme and for the European Union as a donor. Subgrants, in fact, together with capacity-building and awareness-raising activities, gave local communities concrete support.

Recommendations for future initiatives:

- To include concrete actions to financially support local communities' stakeholders, in order to make capacities on sustainable tourism operational in disadvantaged areas and further increase the empowerment of tourism service providers in line with sustainable tourism principles.
- To adopt robust and transparent criteria to identify beneficiaries of subgrants, keeping into account their existing capacities, their willingness to improve following the sustainable tourism principles and to continue their activities in the future.
- To reduce the administrative burden on subgrantees according to the amount received.

DIVERSITY AS ADDED VALUE

The five target destinations show numerous differences from each other, and some of them cannot be properly defined less-known destinations, such as Aqaba in Jordan and the area of the Via Selinuntina in Sicily. These two destinations are indeed popular as tourist destinations in the peak season, but for their coastline rather than reasons strictly related to their local cultural heritage as for the rest of CROSSDEV destinations. However, even in these two destinations the project focused on enhancing the local cultural heritage, identifying

historical and archaeological sites less known to visitors and locals, and identifying sustainable tourism products capable of attracting visitors beyond the peak tourist season. In addition, the theme of sustainable tourism and the enhancement of cultural heritage was linked to cross-cutting themes depending on the know-how and expertise of the partners and on the needs of the destinations. For example, in Aqaba and Umm Qais, the local partners implemented numerous activities aimed at raising awareness of environmental sustainability, directed mainly at young students. Therefore, although not all destinations involved by CROSSDEV appear to be less-known, culture has been used as lever for the development of sustainable tourism and diversification of tourism offers, focusing on tangible and intangible heritages and thanks to the support of local communities. All in all, the cultural itineraries promoted by CROSSDEV differ from each other in terms of cultural heritage but are linked by the fact that each of them represents the thread of connection between the strengths of their territories. The diversity of the destinations and of the partners responsible for implementation in each destination represents an added value of the project, which made it possible to create opportunities for exchanging experiences and comparing practices for promoting the territories among partners and destinations in different contexts and with different levels of tourist development.

Recommendations for future initiatives:

- To base cross-border exchange and networking on a strong common element (e.g. cultural heritage valorisation and promotion), involving stakeholders from different contexts and with different experiences on sustainable tourism in order to enrich peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

CROSSDEV M&E SYSTEM

The result and output indicators of the CROSSDEV project were selected from those set out in the M&E Plan for the ENI CBC MED Programme 2014-20, which also specified how target values were to be calculated. As it was necessary to stick to this system, some project outputs were calculated using the same indicators, and setting the same targets, leading to some overlapping across them. Furthermore, as the calculation method was established in the M&E Plan, CROSSDEV met and exceeded most of the indicators, in some cases significantly. Space for improvement can be identified concerning the rationales and methods for setting similar target values in the future.

With regard to CROSSDEV's internal monitoring, each partner was responsible for identifying the sources and calculating the achievement of the indicators in their respective areas and then reporting to the Lead Beneficiary. Although the monitoring process was carried out effectively, it was done with a variable temporary frequency. Despite being obviously demanding for partners in terms of human resources, it would have been advisable to have a greater frequency and timing of monitoring data to be able to envisage corrective actions, if necessary. Furthermore, it might have been advisable to provide for greater consistency among the partners regarding the sources used to calculate the achievement of certain result and output indicators, primarily regarding the attractiveness of the destinations, calculated on the basis of the increase in visitor days. In this regard, CROSSDEV's M&E activity could have been better exploited as an opportunity to discuss among partners and identify the best sources and methods of data collection to verify the attainment of certain indicators, and then to contribute to the ENI CBC MED programme.

Recommendations for future initiatives:

- To adopt a robust internal M&E system ensuring frequency, timing, and consistency on data and information across all partners, especially in cross-border initiatives.

ANNEX 1 – LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Table 6 – Project partners and key stakeholders interviewed

Organization	Role	Country	Interviewee(s)	Contact
Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP)	Lead Partner	Italy	- Deborah Rezzoagli, project coordinator - Gianluca Falcitelli, Director Geographical Area Middle East & Mediterranean - Annalisa Marocchi, communication officer - Sara Canobbi, financial officer - Emanuela Panke, sustainable tourism expert	- rezzoagli@cisp-ngo.org - falcitelli@cisp-ngo.org - annalisa.marocchi@cisp-ngo.org - canobbi@cisp-ngo.org - emanuelapanke@gmail.com
Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST)	Project Partner	Jordan	- Ahmed Freewan, project manager - Ismaiel Abuamoud, communication officer	- aafreewan@just.edu.jo
The Royal Marine Conservation Society of Jordan (JREDS)	Project Partner	Jordan	- Mohammed Al-Tawaha, project manager - Waed Ajarmeh, communication officer	- aqabamanager@jreds.org - Communication@jreds.org
Palestinian Heritage Trail (PHT)	Project Partner	Palestine	- Ghaida Rahil, project manager - Rawan Awwad, project manager - George Rishmawi, director	- ghaida@phtrail.org - rawan@phtrail.org - george@phtrail.org
Association for the Protection of Jabal Moussa (APJM)	Project Partner	Lebanon	- Joelle Barakat and Roula Mezher, project manager - Marc Atallah, communication officer - Pierre Doumet, president	- joelle.barakat@jabalmoussa.org - roula.mezher@jabalmoussa.org - marc.atallah@jabalmoussa.org - pierre.doumet@jabalmoussa.org
Ministero della Cultura	Project Partner	Italy	- Alessandra Lucchese, project manager - Anna Principato, communication officer	- alessandra.lucchese@cultura.gov.it - anna.principato@cultura.gov.it
CoopCulture	Project Partner	Italy	- Paola Autore, project manager - Sara Moscatelli, communication officer - Paolo Stecconi, technical support	- p.autore@coopculture.it - p.stecconi@coopculture.it
Minister of Tourism	Associate partner	Lebanon	Walid Nassar	-
Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority	Associate partner	Jordan	Thelma Radwan, Directorate of Tourism	tproduct@aseza.jo

Department of Antiquities, Antiquities Directorate Aqaba	Relevant stakeholder	Jordan	Maher Amareen	-
ENI CBC MED	Relevant stakeholder	Jordan	Esmat Al-Karadsheh - ENI CBC MED Eastern Mediterranean Branch Office	-
JTS ENI CBC MED	Relevant stakeholder	Italy	Stefania Barsoni, JTS Project officer	-
Phoenicians' Route	Relevant stakeholder	Italy	Antonio Barone, director	direttore@fenici.net

Source: Authors' elaboration

Finally, the following stakeholders (including beneficiary of subgrants and other activities and local actors) have been interviewed in person:

Table 7 – Stakeholders interviewed

Country	Place	Stakeholder	Name and surname
Italy	Sicily	Villa Giadel	Valentina Mangiaracina
Italy	Sicily	Mayor, Comune di Menfi	Marilena Mauceri
Italy	Sicily	Museo delle Trame Mediterranee di Gibellina	Enzo Fiammetta
Lebanon	Jabal Moussa	Rita Keirouz's guesthouse (subgrantee)	Rita Keyrouz
Lebanon	Jabal Moussa	Lara's Guesthouse (subgrantee)	Lara Abou Mraus
Lebanon	Jabal Moussa	Eco-guide from the local community	Elsy Nader
Lebanon	Jabal Moussa	Hoda's Guesthouse (subgrantee)	Hoda Nader
Lebanon	Jabal Moussa	Agro-food producer	Roula Souaid
Jordan	Umm Qais	Philodemus	Ahmad Alomari
Jordan	Umm Qais	Al Yarmouk ladies association handicrafts	-
Jordan	Umm Qais	Al Hara Al Fouqa gallery	-
Jordan	Aqaba	Aqabawi Foundation (subgrantee)	Mustafa Al Ajlouni
Jordan	Aqaba	Johud Al Ayadi (subgrantee)	Aya Al Kurdi
Jordan	Aqaba	House of Roses – Ladies association in Aqaba	-

Source: Authors' elaboration

The evaluators also had informal non-structured conversations during the field visits with around other 10 stakeholders (among the others, bloggers involved in Sicily, local guides during the final event in Lebanon and others, participants to the Jordan final event).

ANNEX 2 – FIELD VISITS

Country	Site	Date	Main event
Italy	Via Selinuntina, Sicily	15/03/2023; 18/03/2023	Closing event Via Selinuntina, Castelvetrano, 17/03/2023
Lebanon	Jabal Moussa	16/05/2023; 21/05/2023	Closing CROSSDEV event, Jabal Moussa, 18-19/05/2023
Jordan	Aqaba and Umm Qais	11/07/2023; 17/07/2023	Closing event Aqaba and Umm Qais, Amman, 12/07/2023

The evaluators also took part to the steering committee in Rome the 5th of December 2022.

ANNEX 3 – EVALUATION TOOLS

INTERVIEW STRUCTURE – PROJECT PARTNER

EFFECTIVENESS: is the intervention achieving its objectives?

- 1.1 To what extent did the intervention achieve its objectives and results?
- 1.2 To which extent the Project activities contributed to enhance strategical and operational capacities of Project partners and other involved stakeholders as developmental actors?
- 1.3 To which extent the project activities contributed to raise awareness on sustainable tourism concept, cultural heritage valorisation and conservation, sustainable tourism and socio-economic development links?
- 1.4 What are the major positive factors/constraints influencing the achievement of the expected results?

EFFICIENCY: how well are resources being used?

- 2.1 Did the intervention deliver its results in an cost-effective and timely way?
- 2.2 How well the intervention was managed?
- 2.3 How well human and financial resources were allocated?

IMPACT: What difference does the intervention make?

- 3.1 What are the main outcomes the project contributed to?
- 3.2 What was the impact of capacity building to tourist sector operators and support to subgrantees?
- 3.3 What was the impact in terms of ncreased attractiveness of less known touristic destinations, in particular thanks to the new sustainable touristic off season products?
- 3.4 What is CROSSDEV impact in terms of CROSS BORDER exchange of experiences and methods and in terms of cooperation and networking?
- 3.5 How did the intervention cause higher-level effects (such as changes in norms or systems)?

3.6 Is the intervention leading to other changes, including “scalable” or “replicable” results?

SUSTAINABILITY: Will the benefits last?

4.1 Did the project design incorporate appropriate elements of sustainability? What has been done to ensure that the benefits generated by the project continue in the medium-long run?

4.2 Do the relevant target groups (such as subgrantees of the less-known destinations 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?

4.4 What were the major factors which influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the programme or project?

4.5 To what extent the benefits of the project will continue after donor funding ceased?

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 If you could go back to the moment when the project was designed, what would you do differently in hindsight? (RECOMMENDATIONS)

5.2 Lessons learned

INTERVIEW STRUCTURE – STAKEHOLDERS and BENEFICIARIES

1. Which CROSSDEV project activities have you been involved in?

2. How important do you think the CROSSDEV project activities are for the tourist and socio-economic development of the area/community where you live?

3. How has CROSSDEV affected the development of sustainable tourism in your area/community and in increasing the attractiveness of less-known tourist destinations?

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?

6. Are you satisfied with the CROSSDEV project activities? Why?

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