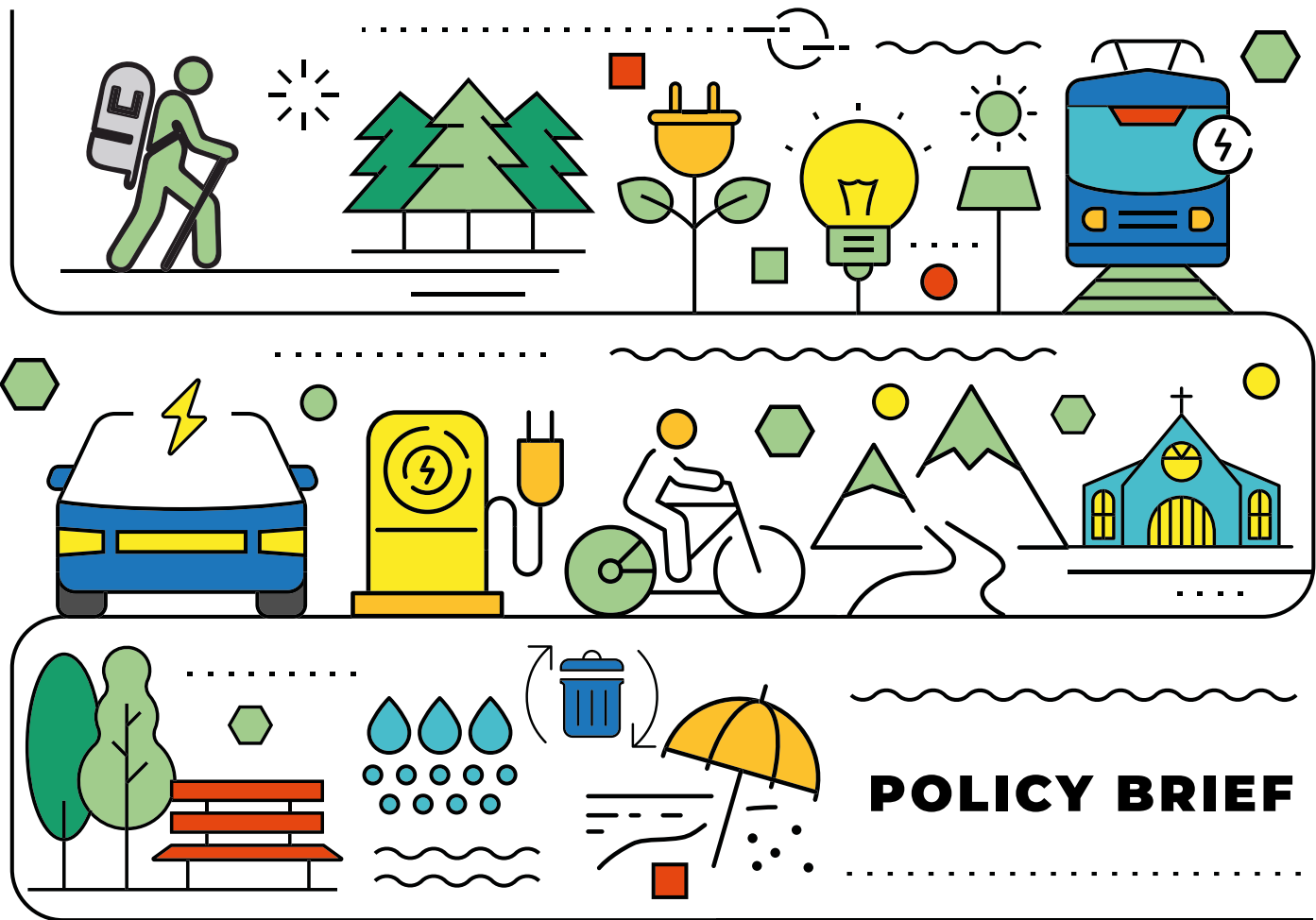


# INCIRCLE

PROJECT

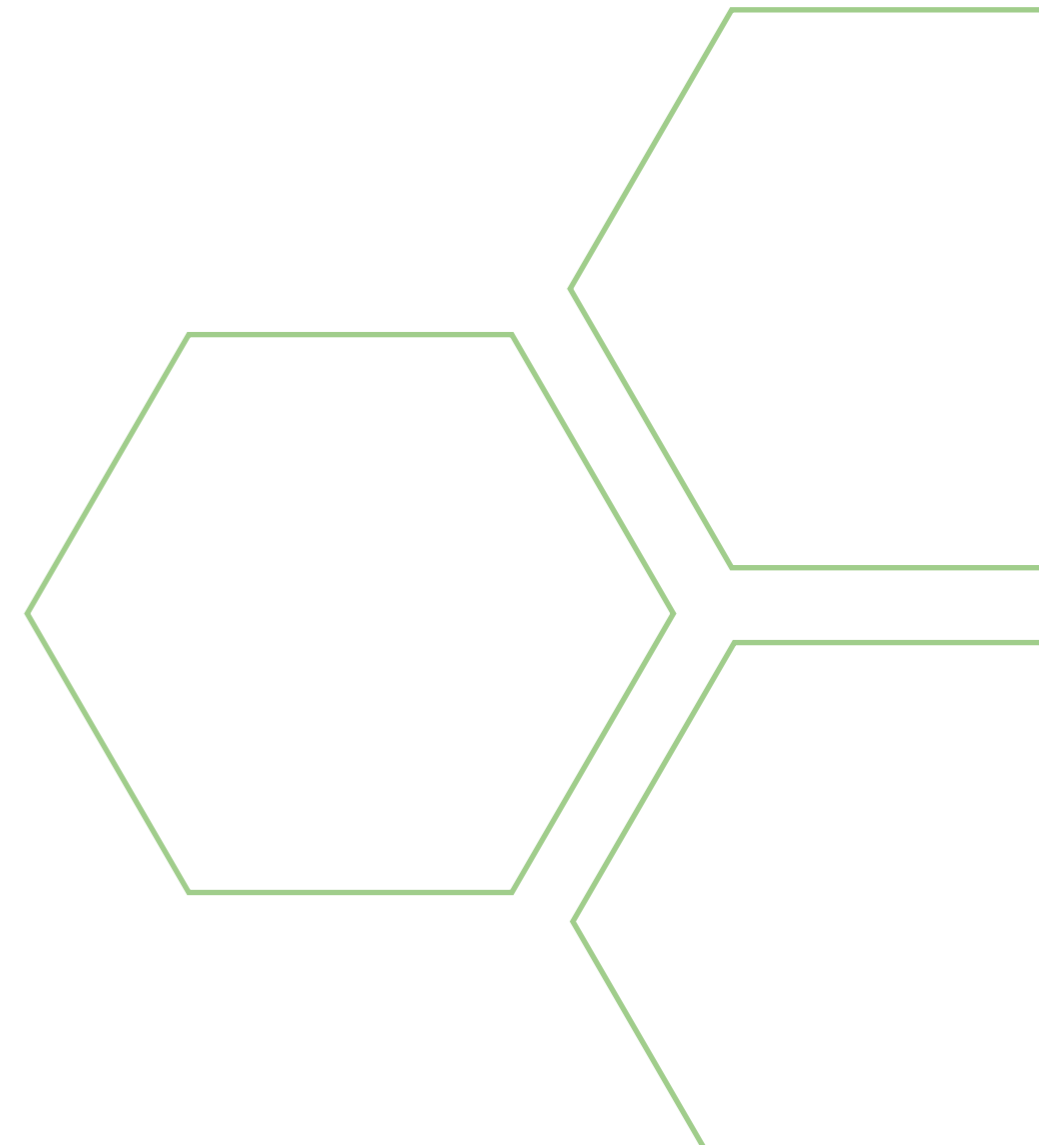


BE PART OF THE CIRCLE

# INCIRCLE

## POLICY BRIEF

**How to lead the change  
towards a circular tourism in  
the Mediterranean**



## Tourism overshoot day: are we able to seize the day?

**Tourism is the key economic driver of the Mediterranean. According to the Eurostat, in 2019 the Mediterranean region welcomed more than 400 million international tourists, almost equivalent to the entire EU27 population of about 448 million.**

Such an influx makes the Mediterranean one of the most popular destinations in the world, and this has generated 11 million jobs. In a pre-covid scenario, the tourism sector in the Mediterranean accounted for up to 15% of regional GDP, with a 75% growth since 1995. It is expected that by 2025 international tourist arrivals will reach 626 million according to the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

In the past two years, the COVID pandemic has wiped out tourist flows, heavily impacting worldwide economies (UNWTO, 2021). The global tourism

industry is struggling and looking forward for a resolute recovery and relaunch, waiting for people to feel safe enough to travel *en masse* again.

However, the experience shows that this is neither the right direction to look at nor the one to follow. Starving to go back to the irresponsible model of the “hit and run” tourism might be a temporary solution but is far from being enough in the process of building the sector resilience or even its sustained continuity in time. In such a perspective, it is becoming increasingly clear that the recovery and relaunch of the tourism sector must start from the assessment of its economic, social and environmental dependencies and impacts.

Over time, the Mediterranean region has created distinct combinations of tourism offers and activities related to sea and coastal areas, health, sports, nature, commerce, and culture, providing consistency to regional economies (WTTC, 2015).

However, such tourism-related activities are increasingly putting pressure on the natural assets of destinations, from a qualitative and quantitative point of view. Massive inflows of tourists, to relatively small and insulated areas, cause a wide range of impacts on destinations, by depleting their environmental capital, which is being used more quickly than it can be renewed.

Such impacts are clearly visible and concentrated in Mediterranean coastal zones and tend to attenuate with distance from the coast, reflecting the spatial tourist distribution within the destinations. The vulnerability of such territories is destined to increase in the years to come, due to the combination of expected increase of tourist flows with high consumption patterns generated by the tourism sector, causing increased stresses on the already limited natural resources and further environmental deterioration and depletion.

In the last decades, the growth of tourism infrastructure, especially in Mediterranean coastal and insular areas, has wiped out entire ecosystems, intensifying the negative anthropogenic impact on the environment.

More and more Mediterranean destinations are characterised by high concentration of commercial activities, overdevelopment, and tourist saturation, which in turn result into negative externalities affecting residents and tourists alike, as well as

fragile ecosystems both at the coastal belt and at sea. Stress on local land use, unbearable noise and air pollution, increased traffic congestion, reduced road safety, increasing water and energy shortages coupled with alarming environmental degradation and depletion are striking examples of negative impacts that are jeopardising the attractiveness, authenticity and liveability of Mediterranean destinations, and thus influencing the choices and trends of tourists in the years to come.

Therefore, the priority of restoring the tourism economy in the post-covid era cannot escape the pressing sustainability requirements. Sustainability is the only option for tourism renaissance in Mediterranean destinations, preventing them from losing their habitats and ecosystems, as well as their distinctive attractiveness and authenticity, which would result in the decline of visitors’ satisfaction and inevitable loss of Mediterranean primacy in the tourism field.

### MAIN MEDITERRANEAN TOURISM FIGURES

- 400 million international tourists vs 448 million of EU 27 population
- Among world top destination
- Generation of 11 million jobs
- Accounting for 15% of regional GDP, with a 75% growth since 1995.
- Expecting to host 626 million tourists in 2025

The recovery and relaunch of the tourism sector, awaited after COVID pandemic, must start from the assessment of its economic, social and environmental dependencies and impacts.

### ANTHROPOGENIC NEGATIVE IMPACTS ON DESTINATIONS

- stress on local land use and high concentration of commercial activities
- overdevelopment and tourist saturation
- increased traffic congestion, alarming noise and air pollution, and reduced road safety
- increased water and energy shortages
- environmental degradation and depletion

Sustainability is the only option for tourism renaissance in Mediterranean destinations, preventing them from losing their habitats and ecosystems, as well as their distinctive attractiveness and authenticity

A trade-off between the increase of tourism-related profits and the preservation of natural resources is to be put forward. This is essential for the survival of both destinations and ecosystems that the “hit and run” mass tourism industry will gradually consume and pollute if no change is proposed and jointly encouraged and implemented.

We cannot wait any longer for admitting to ourselves that the economic sustainability of the tourism sector in the Mediterranean depends, far and foremost, on its environmental sustainability, a subtle balance that

needs to be restored and sustained over time. To maintain the leading position in the sector a more conscious and responsible form of tourism is to be fostered by Mediterranean decision makers and destination managers - in tight cooperation with local communities, the visitors and the private actors - putting the protection and valorisation of natural resources at the heart of their political agendas and actions to maximise their efficiency and reduce their consumption.

**A trade-off between the increase of tourism-related profits and the preservation of natural resources is to be put forward.**

**Protection and valorisation of natural resources must be put at the heart of tourism political agendas and actions, maximising their efficiency and reducing their consumption.**

## Circular tourism as an opportunity to drive the change: follow the resource and not merely the money.

### ***Tourism is in a special position to drive the transition towards a more responsible and efficient use of natural finite resources.***

Firstly, due to its dynamism and to the special interaction that it establishes between visitors, the industry, the environment and local communities, that culminates in the consumer directly travelling to the producer and the product (UNWTO, 2005) to experience and buy it.

Secondly, due to its tight dependency on environmental resources: much of tourism is based on visitors seeking to experience intact and clean environments, attractive natural areas, authentic historic and cultural traditions, and welcoming hosts with whom they might establish a good relationship (Sant’Anna School of Advanced Studies, 2020).

Transforming the current mass tourism into a sustainable and circular tourism in the long run is a matter of survival for Mediterranean destinations, not only to preserve their natural environment and to maintain destinations’ competitiveness, attractiveness and authenticity, but also to maintain a good quality of life for citizens.

In such a perspective, circular tourism, defined as “a model able to create a virtuous circle producing goods and services without wasting the limited resources of the planet that are raw materials, water and energy<sup>1</sup>”, appears crucial for Mediterranean destinations and their resources.

The application of circular economy (CE) principles ensures to put an end to the *take-make-dispose* pattern (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2013) that characterises

the current tourism patterns and trends. It enhances the general mission of sustainable tourism, focused on the satisfaction of tourism needs by addressing current and future economic, social and environmental impacts (UNWTO, 2005), by setting the bar higher in the improvement of the sector’s environmental performance. The increased global resource depletion coupled with anthropogenic climate changes call upon the need to change the current tourism consumption and production patterns promoting a “consume less and produce differently” approach, resulting into the optimisation, analysis and rethinking of resource use within the tourism industry and its value chain.

Circular economy might act as a means to achieve full sustainability in the tourism sector and generate opportunities for competitive advantage for destinations.

Literature suggests (Ritchie and Crouch, 2003) that the competitiveness of a destination depends upon two main factors:

- the capital possessed (natural, cultural, intellectual, infrastructural resources)
- the ability to use it (resource deployment), i.e. to transform it into an offer of tourist goods and services.

In such a perspective, circular economy must be integrated into the tourism value chain at all its stages, through resource extraction, processing, manufacturing at industrial and service scale, storage and distribution and use, not limited to resource-efficient manufacturing but including resource-efficiency after use in terms of extension of the product lifespan through reuse and repair (Kurtagić, 2018).

**Circular tourism, defined as “a model able to create a virtuous circle producing goals and services without wasting the limited resources of the planet that are raw materials, water and energy” (Girard & Nocca, 2017).**

**The application of circular economy (CE) principles ensures to put an end to the take-make-dispose pattern (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2013) that characterises the current tourism patterns and trends, promoting a “consume less and produce differently” approach.**

To facilitate the transition towards circularity in tourism, every industry belonging to the tourism sector, as for instance food industry, construction industry or textile industry, should be designed to allow repair, reuse and recycling.

The revision of the tourism value chain, resulting into a systemic circular tourism transition, relies on the tight cooperation between all the actors of a territory, that share values, ethical principles and business projects. In order for a destination to be competitive, the destination itself must adequately respond to environmental and social needs of all tourism stakeholders, ensuring a real commitment among all of them.

A systemic approach to destination management is awaited with at heart the creation of a shared value. New paths for integrated policy making and the uptake of CE ideas by tourism consumer and producers must be pioneered, going beyond the mere limitation of the consumption and waste of resources. Evolving from the concepts to the praxis, a series of strategies, plans and policy regulations are needed to reduce the ecological footprint of tourism, starting from the revision of tourism products and services.

In such a transition destination managers must act as heralds and facilitators of change, defining clear priorities and roadmaps.

Trust, awareness and engagement among local authorities, business operators, tourists and local communities have to be built and nourished to move forward in thinking and action, to create a more circular experience for all stakeholders involved in the hospitality and tourism industry, contributing to turn the circular tourism niche in the new mainstream form in of tourism.

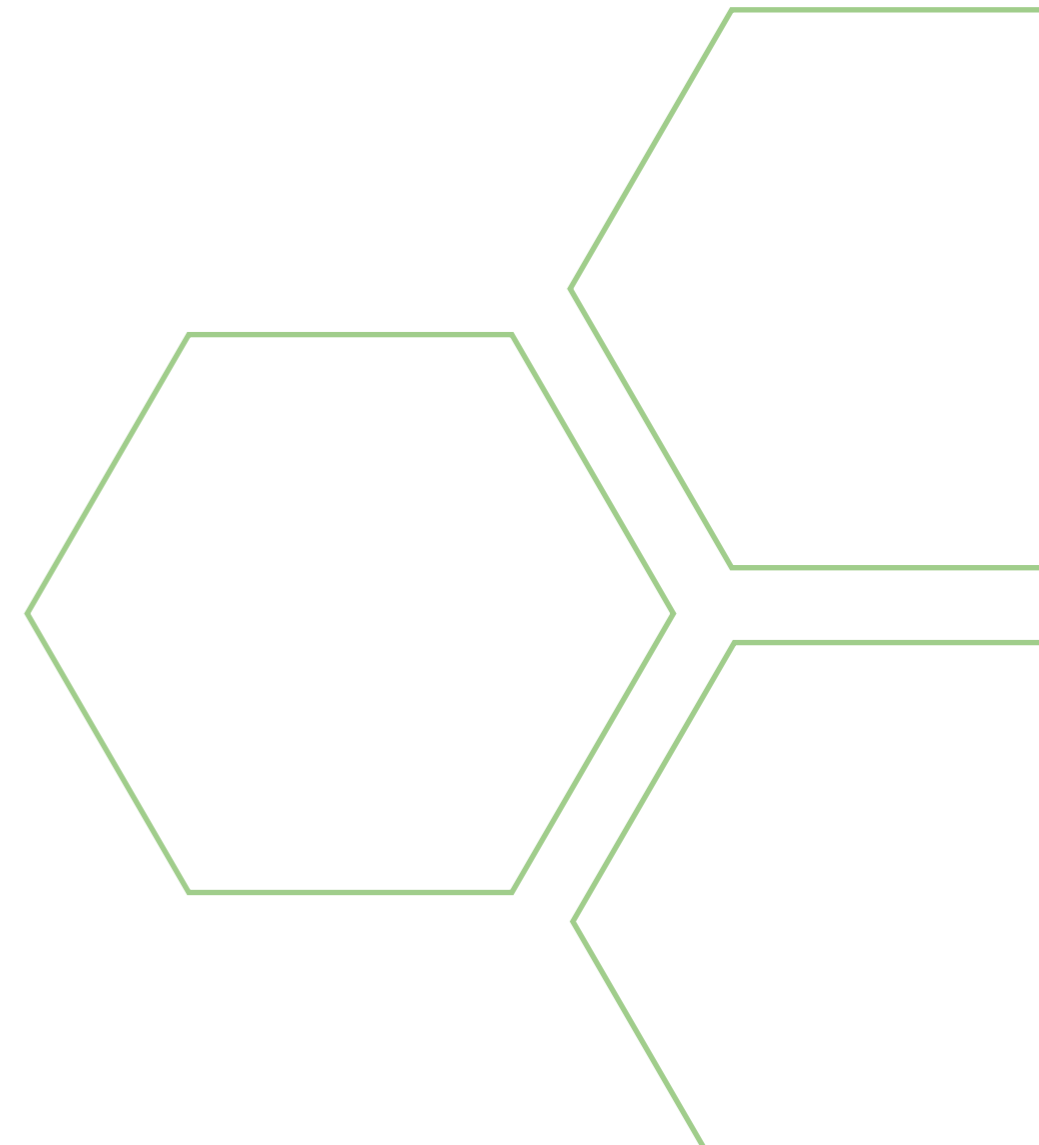
**Every industry belonging to the tourism sector, as for instance food industry, construction industry or textile industry, should be designed to allow repair, reuse and recycling.**

**A systemic approach to destination management is to be built and nourished, relying on trust, awareness, and engagement among local authorities, business operators, tourist and local communities.**

**Destination managers must act as heralds and facilitators of change, defining clear priorities and roadmaps.**

# The INCIRCLE's experience:

**the efficiency of natural  
resources put at the heart of  
tourism policy making**



## INCIRCLE IN A NUTSHELL

**Funding programme**  
Interreg MED programme

**Partner countries**  
Albania, Italy, Spain, Malta, Cyprus, Greece

**Duration**  
November 2019 – June 2022 (32 months)

**Main goal**  
enhance circularity in Mediterranean vulnerable touristic destinations

**Website:** <https://incircle.interreg-med.eu/>  
**INCIRCLE knowledge platform:** <https://incircle-kp.eu/>  
**INCIRCLE replication package:** <https://www.incircle-kp.eu/replication-toolkit/>

### MAIN AREAS OF ACTION:

#### Sustainable mobility:

Development of sustainable transport solutions, of supporting infrastructure as well as of modes of collective transportations systems

#### Waste management

Reduction of waste generation at source, optimisation of waste separation, reduction of landfilling and recovery of material and energy

#### Renewable energy sources and energy efficiency

Energy demand management and optimisation of energy use, diversification of energy supply sources and the development of renewable energy systems to address energy use particularly in buildings, for lighting, air cooling and heating, water heating and cooking purposes

#### Water management

Water demand management, optimisation of water use, conservation and regeneration of water supply sources, wastewater reclamation and alternative water production

### MAIN PRINCIPLES APPLIED:



**Reduce:** promotes a shift towards dematerialization and the use of renewable resources, secondary raw materials and byproducts, highlighting the reuse, recycling, and recovering of resources



**Rethink:** requires decision makers to adopt a new way to think about resources management, taking into account the whole lifecycle of products and services.



**Innovate:** requires decision makers to be innovative, considering the use of new ideas or methods.



**Regenerate:** needs the adoption of a holistic and systemic vision in the management of resources to keep resources as much as possible in use



**Revalue:** relies on the capacity of decision makers to maintain the value of resources and products across different economic cycles.

## INCIRCLE has supported Mediterranean vulnerable tourist destinations, such as islands and scarcely inhabited territories, in seizing the increasing environmental challenges caused by tourist activities.

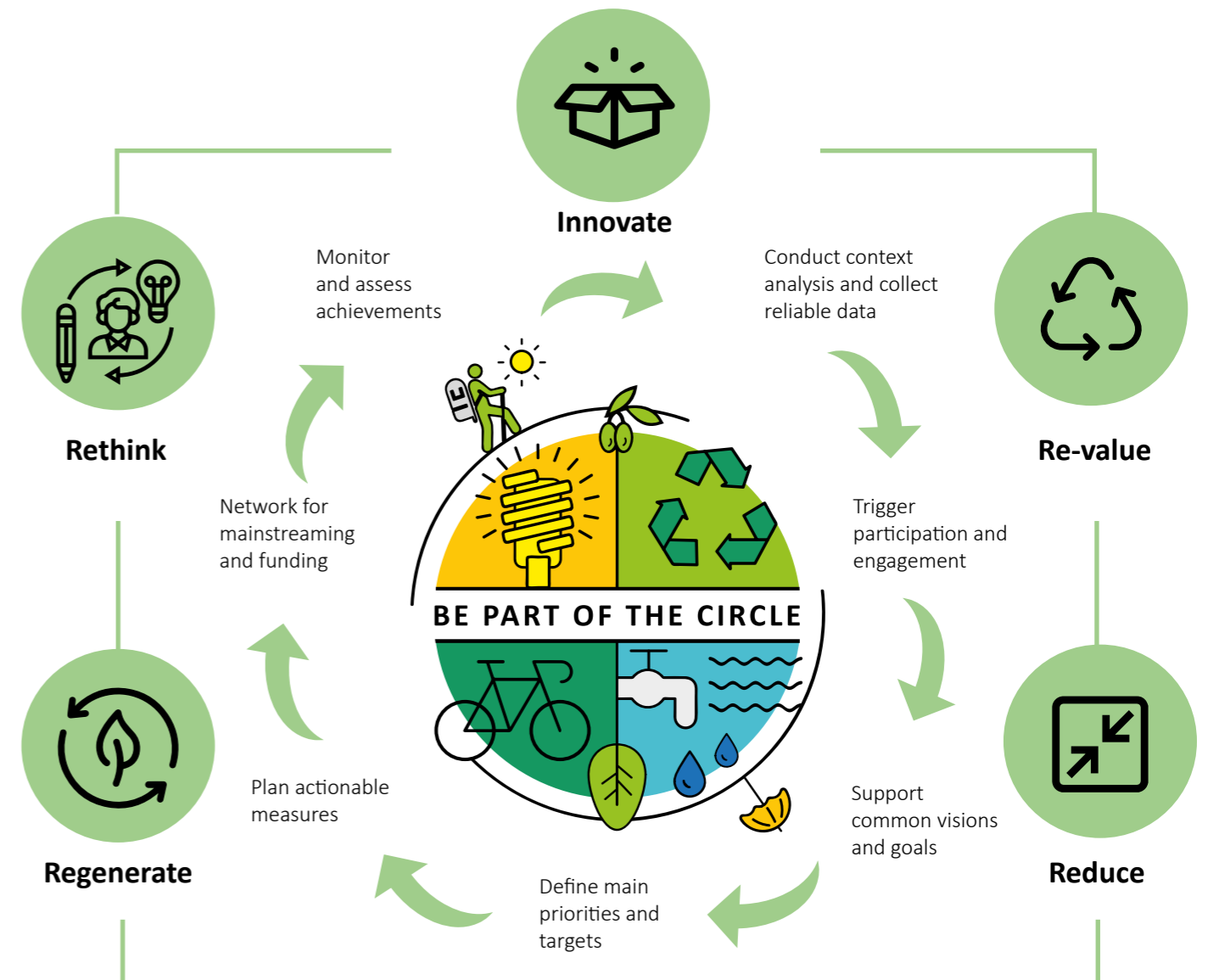
The massive inflows of tourists to such relatively small and insulated areas, have been causing a wide range of negative impacts on destinations, in terms of over-consumption and depletion of the local environmental capital.

To overcome the current contradiction of tourism, clearly described above, CE principles were promoted and integrated within the tourism planning and management sector to both

preserve and valorise natural resources while improving the quality of life of residents and tourists alike.

A methodology for incorporating the critical sustainability and circularity aspects in the destination management was fine-tuned and implemented. A set of policy making instruments, that guide and support MED policy and decision makers in the establishment of an effective decision-making process, was tested, aiming at reducing tourist negative impact on destinations' environmental capital and at preserving natural finite resources.

The INCIRCLE methodology rests on 7 main steps tightly intertwined with the management of local natural finite resources and general CE principles (Area Science Park, 2020), as can be seen in the graphic below:





The testing of INCIRCLE policy instruments gave birth to:

- The collection of existing knowledge and available CE practices in the [INCIRCLE Knowledge Platform](#) to support MED destinations and tourism stakeholders in the planning and implementation of CE tourism measures and solutions.
- The development of tools to assess the existing level of tourism circularity in interested areas and match them with practices that best fit their needs.
- The elaboration of 11 integrated strategies for circular tourism at a state and regional level, containing an overall of 259 devised measures to improve tourism policy making in terms of protection and valorisation of already scarce and finite natural resources.
- Engagement of more than 300 territorial stakeholders in order to promote participatory and collaborative approaches for circular tourism, establishing a critical mass for a sustainable and circular development in the Mediterranean.
- The development of the [INCIRCLE replication toolkit](#) to support the transformation of the tourism sector according to the principles of the circular economy, available in all MED languages.

When it comes to the performance of circularity in tourism, the INCIRCLE experience highlights that the path towards circularity in tourism is still winding and long.

According to gained experience and collected data, partner and replicating MED destinations (a total number of 16 tourism destinations) fall within the “beginning-pro activist category”, meaning that the CE principles begin to be sufficiently integrated in the management of the destination, acknowledging the role of CE as a lever for economic development of the territory as well as for environmental restoration and regeneration.

Significant efforts have been put in place so far, but additional ones are required to support the smooth CE transition in partner territories and its uptake by all tourism stakeholders and actors. Further opportunities for improvement are present, providing basis for future sustainable and circular tourism strategies.

**BEGINNING-PRO ACTIVIST CATEGORY**

**CE principles begin to be sufficiently integrated in the management of the destination.**

**CE acknowledged as a lever for economic development of the territory as well as for environmental restoration and regeneration.**

**Additional efforts are required to support the smooth CE transition in partner territories and its uptake by all tourism stakeholders and actors.**

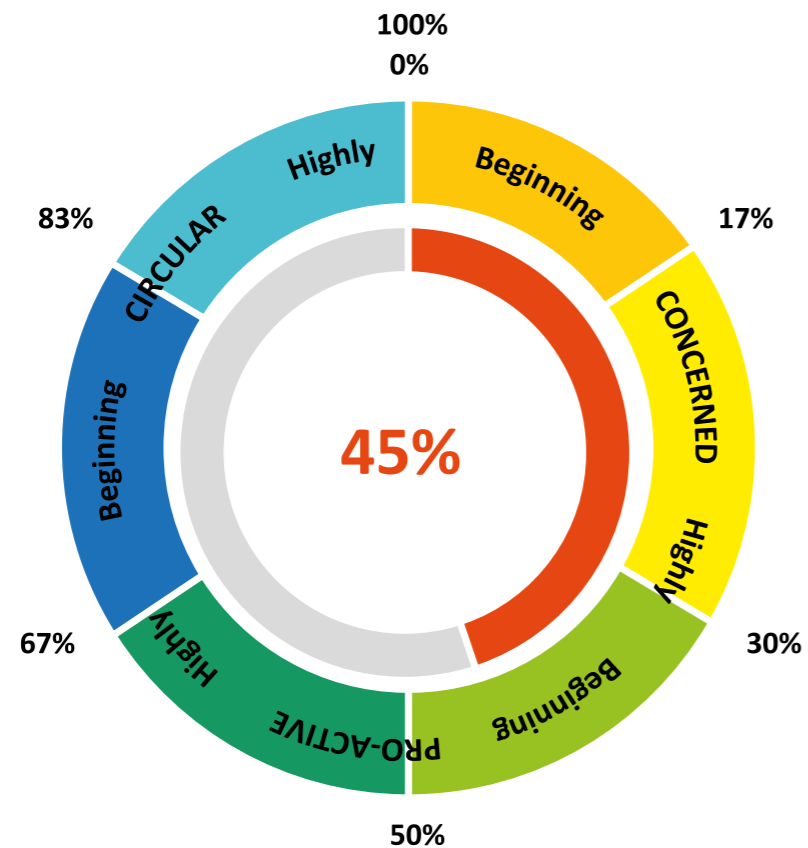
**BASIC LEVEL OF COLLABORATION**

**Starting to “build up” a collaborative network with all tourism stakeholders, engaging them into their own decision-making process**

**Common aim of reducing the overall environmental impact thanks to:**

- the adoption of better waste management approaches,
- the creation of a common circular/sustainable know-how
- the development of a proper physical infrastructure capable to support an integrated system to adequately manage energy, water, waste and raw materials

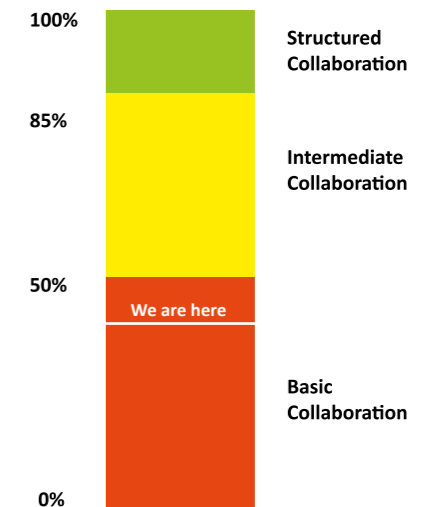
INCIRCLE circular tourism performance



As the INCIRCLE experience shows, the successful development and ownership of circular tourism strategies walks hand in hand with the readiness of territories and stakeholders to hold shared values and to closely collaborate for their preservation. Collaboration, acknowledged as a dense network of interactions which are present between the tourism destination and the tourism industry (INCIRCLE, Circular Tourism Tools Guideline), is at the heart of the circular transition of the entire tourism sector.

In terms of established collaboration networks, partner and replicating MED destinations fall within the “basic collaboration category”, meaning that these tourism destinations are starting to “build up” a collaborative network with all other tourism stakeholders (e.g., tourism industries, communities, tourists, services providers, etc.), to develop shared circular/sustainable strategies. Such a collaboration level is characterised by the common aim of reducing the overall environmental impact thanks to the adoption of better waste management approaches, the creation of a common circular/sustainable know-how as well as the development of a proper physical infrastructure capable to support an integrated system to adequately manage energy, water, waste and raw materials. Without the latter, any type of more structured collaboration cannot be fully achieved.

INCIRCLE collaboration level among tourism stakeholders



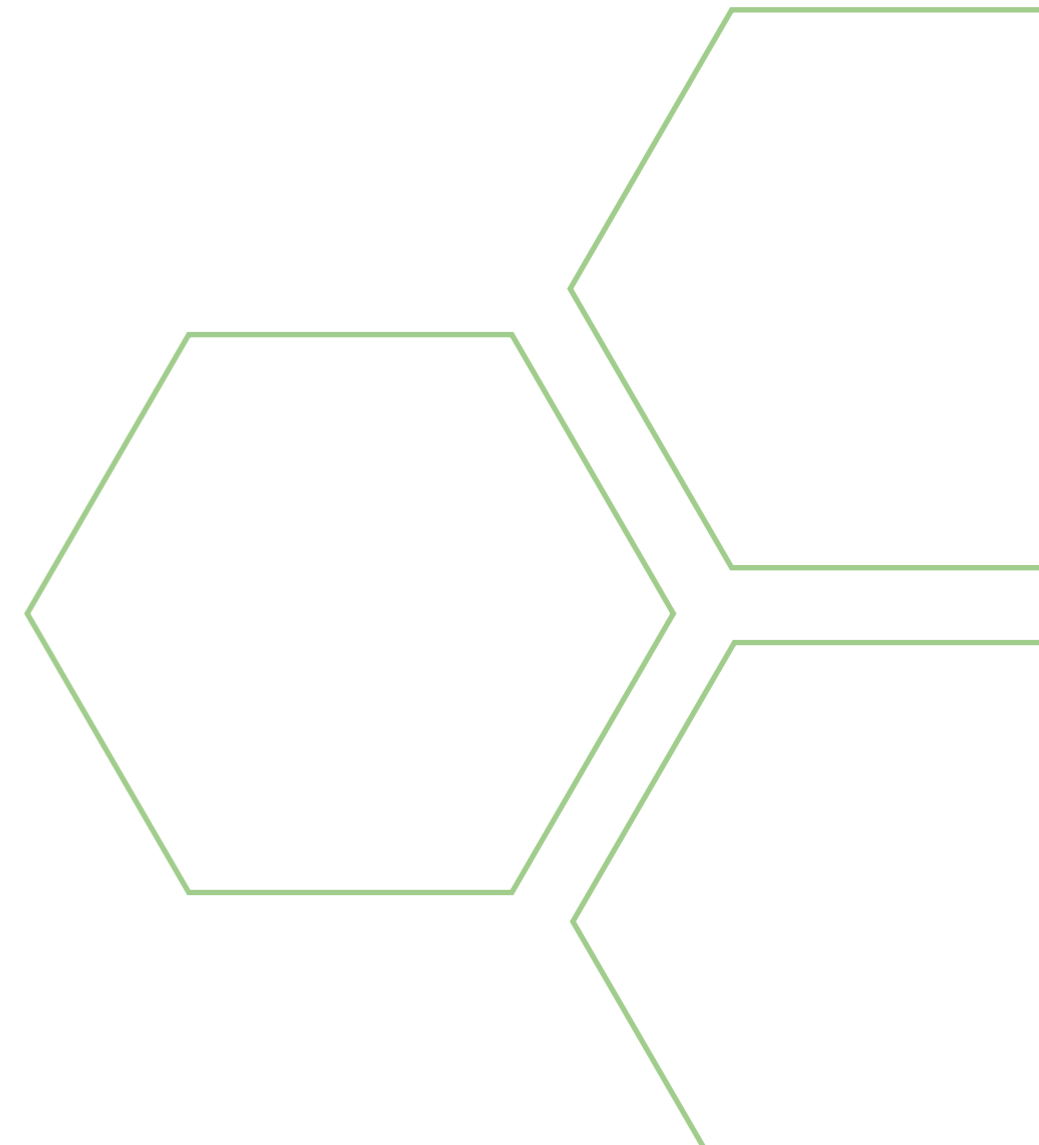
The above shown INCIRCLE experience might, till a certain extent, provide the key to the better understanding of the circular performance of the sector also at a Mediterranean level, clearly emphasising the main barriers and drivers of the circular tourism shift along with a firm set of recommendations that need to be endorsed and adopted by decision makers to let the change occur.



# INCIRCLE

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

**Circular tourism: how to move forward and seize the day**





R1

## Improve data collection and monitoring for more efficient decision making



*Being a transversal sector, the analysis of tourism performance requires the data collection covering a wide range of domains.*

Reliable, regularly updated, and well-defined data are crucial to design and implement the most efficient policies and effective rules. Data are also a key element to demonstrate the benefits and the return on investment of the implemented measures and also to evaluate them.



R2

## Set up a circular tourism governance structure in targeted territories



*As a key economic driver for territories, the decisions regarding the tourism sector have a widespread impact.*

In that sense, to ensure the shift towards a responsible production and consumption in the tourism sector, collectively embraced by citizens, businesses and institutions alike, it is necessary to establish the best collaborative procedures to integrate the multiplicity of visions and needs. To be fruitful, this process has to be considered in a long-term/permanent perspective. The proposals emerging from such processes must be seriously considered for implementation and the engagements of the public authorities *vis-à-vis* the stakeholders cannot be overseen or disrespected.

### Key actions to move forward:

- Assess the existing level of tourism circularity performance in your territory  
[Check and use the INCIRCLE Circular Tourism Destination Tool](#)
- Increase vertical collaboration within MED destinations and support exchange and benchmarking between them, by means of adopting and sharing common indicators for circular tourism  
[Check the INCIRCLE circularity indicators](#)
- Introduce sustainability and circularity criteria in the internal tools for monitoring of tourism sector performance and its environmental impacts in the longer term  
[Check and use the INCIRCLE Circular Tourism Industry Tool](#)
- Support and engage citizens, tourists, private actors and research institutions in the collection of monitoring data (use open data and citizen science in a quadruple helix perspective)

### Key actions to move forward:

- Apply co-development methodologies to the governance of the destination, clearly explaining the scope and limits of the participatory approach and sticking to the agreements you'll conclude during the process  
[Check the INCIRCLE capacity building report](#)
- Implement and foster a participatory approach with a long-term perspective, creating permanent stakeholders' boards and adapting the format to your local context.
- Integrate the participatory approach in the planning of the destination as well as in the regular evaluation and revision of existing strategies.



# R3

## Develop a 360-degrees intervention to drive the transition



*The multiple and interconnected dimensions associated with the circular tourism require a holistic approach and a global coordinated intervention to meet present and future challenges.*

To ensure the delivery of tangible results, it's necessary to develop and complement a set of measures and policy instruments, able to drive all tourism stakeholders in the transition towards a circular tourism. To achieve such a goal the striking force of public authorities at regulatory, economic, and social level is called upon to support behavioural and societal change towards sustainability and circularity in tourism with the guide of the demand management principle, by means of the following dedicated policy instruments:

### Key actions to move forward:

- **Regulatory and legal instruments:** (co)design and implement the rules and norms aiming at driving changes in production and consumption behaviour. These tools may address stricter control on the use of resources, territorial planning, promotion of circular solutions, and/or restrictions, such as:
  - **Implementation of a Green Tax Reform.**
  - **Adoption of recognized sustainable and/or circular criteria for planning public events.**
  - **Regulation of mobility of rental cars.**
  - **Mandatory introduction of separate waste disposal by the tourist companies and in general to all sectors of the economy to allow waste separate collection by the local government.**
- **Educative and voluntary instruments:** apply tools that enable informed choices and actions through societal self-regulation as well as the transfer of knowledge, information and awareness-raising; (e.g.: guidance and certification systems that enable stakeholders to adhere to sustainable consumption and production approaches and principles, awareness raising campaigns, capacity building for tourist operators), such as:
  - **Provision of public grants for new active and soft mobility solutions focusing on ride pooling/sharing schemes.**
  - **Setting up support schemes for the development of energy storage installations in conjunction with renewable energy sources within tourism premises.**
- **Economic and fiscal instruments:** develop incentive and disincentive tools which make certain behaviours or practices more or less financially attractive by rewarding or penalising both economic activities and public demand (e.g.: fiscal incentives that could support sustainable consumption and production, support for the optimisation and efficiency of resources where tourist infrastructure/ services are concerned and the adoption and installation of new technologies, etc ), such as:
  - **Setting up of support schemes for the installation of greywater/blackwater treatment systems within the touristic sector.**
  - **Provision of public grants to improve recycling goals on non-industrial packaging waste.**
  - **Implementation of quality labels and green certifications to improve awareness about water management in tourism sector.**
  - **Organisation of annual "Let's do it" awareness campaigns that promote environmentally responsible behaviours for waste reduction, reuse and recycling.**
  - **Launching of public awareness measures to increase the knowledge about active mobility modes and electric vehicles and their benefits to encourage a wider uptake of electric vehicles.**
  - **Organisation of training programmes on the issues of waste prevention, separate collection, and re-utilisation of waste by the tourism sector companies.**
  - **Setting up of technical support for tourism establishments in undertaking/planning energy management optimisation initiatives.**



# R4

## Commit to lead by example



*To ensure all the stakeholders embrace the changing of paradigms and practices promoted by the public authorities, they have to be the first to actively engage in what they are promoting and therefore lead by example.*

**procurement to induce change towards circularity, it is important to improve the knowledge of the services in charge of launching tenders, providing training, assistance with collective approaches, support in writing or responding to calls for tenders, and tools for sharing experiences and solutions for better drafting of public contracts with a view to supporting circularity throughout the tourism value chain. At the same time, the approach and impacts of public procurement will never be sustainable if they do not match a social demand. In that sense, public procurement shall reinforce/lever the role of consumers and private stakeholders as actors of change.**

As an inevitable piece of the public action, the purchasing of services and goods is an ideal field to promote change and lead by example. **To take stock of the potential of public**

### Key actions to move forward:

- Implement pilot actions and projects to support the optimisation of public tourism infrastructure and services in a CE perspective.
- Reduce bureaucracy and revise regulations to support the valorisation of resources as well as their reuse, starting from within the institution itself.
- Develop and abide by green public procurement rules and criteria. Public procurement is a central lever for change as it can finance transformation while serving the consolidation of virtuous trends.
- Support the revision of European regulations, particularly those concerning public procurement, which prohibit favouring local supply in the name of free competition, having the pernicious effect of inhibiting the design of calls for tenders favouring local and circular models. Advocacy for changing these constraints should be developed and supported, in particular by regional and national authorities at EU level.
- Implement circular strategies in the functioning of the institution, the management of its facilities and services.

**R1**

- Assess the existing level of tourism circularity performance in your territory
- Introduce sustainability and circularity criteria in the internal tools for monitoring of tourism sector performance and its environmental impacts in the longer term
- Increase the vertical collaboration within MED destinations and support exchange and benchmarking between different MED territories, by means of adopting and sharing common indicators for circular tourism
- Support and engage citizens, tourists, private actors and research institutions in the collection of monitoring data (use open data and citizen science in a quadruple helix perspective)

**Improve data collection and monitoring for more efficient decision making**



**R2**

- Apply co-development methodologies to the governance of the destination, clearly explaining the scope and limits of the participatory approach and sticking to the agreements you'll conclude during the process
- Implement and foster a participatory approach with a long-term perspective, creating permanent stakeholders' boards and adapting the format to your local context.
- Integrate the participatory approach in the planning of the destination as well as in the regular evaluation and revision of existing strategies.

**Set up a circular tourism governance structure in targeted territories**



**Commit to lead by example**

**R4**

- Implement pilot actions and projects to support the optimisation of public tourism infrastructure and services in a CE perspective.
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**R3**

- Regulatory and legal instruments: (co)design and implement the rules and norms aiming at driving changes in production and consumption behaviour. These tools may address stricter control on the use of resources, territorial planning, promotion of circular solutions, and/or restrictions
- Economic and fiscal instruments: develop incentive and disincentive tools which make certain behaviours or practices more or less financially attractive by rewarding or penalising both economic activities and public demand
- Educative and voluntary instruments: apply tools that enable informed choices and actions through societal self-regulation as well as the transfer of knowledge, information and awareness-raising; (e.g.: guidance and certification systems that enable stakeholders to adhere to sustainable consumption and production approaches and principles, awareness raising campaigns, capacity building for tourist operators

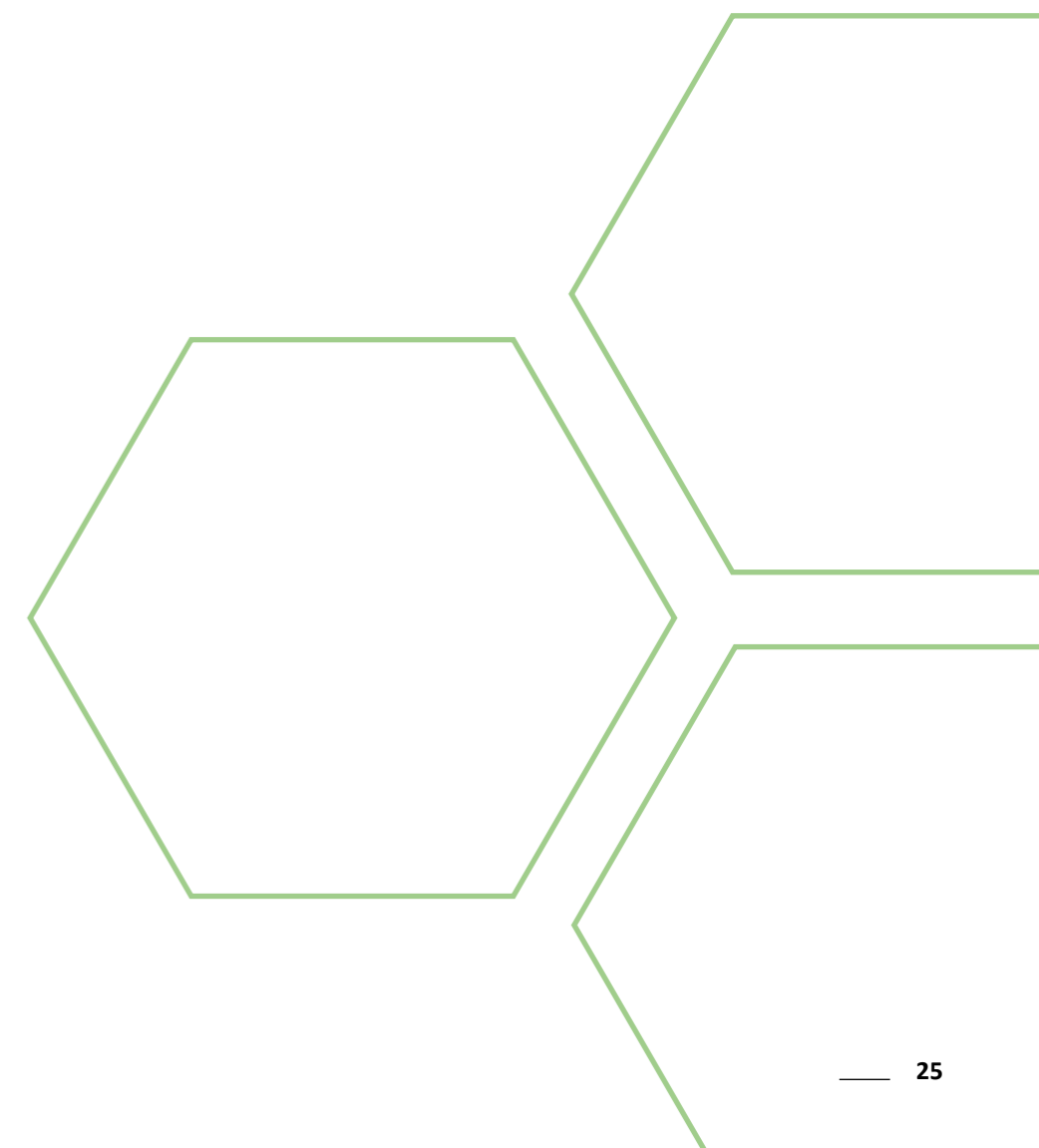
**Develop a 360-degree intervention to drive the transition**



# INCIRCLE

## POLICY INSTRUMENTS

for circularity in tourism



*Developed and tested policy instruments are available on the [INCIRCLE knowledge platform](#).*

## THE INCIRCLE REPLICATION TOOLKIT



The [INCIRCLE replication toolkit](#) supports decision makers in the facilitation of the transition towards a more sustainable and circular Mediterranean tourism. It is composed by several instruments:

- **Operation model toolkit**, providing a framework for incorporating the critical sustainability and circularity aspects in all policymaking phases, aimed at guiding the development of integrated regional and national strategies toward a more circular tourism.
- **Participatory process toolkit**, providing insights and hints for the building up of interdisciplinary working teams made up of organizations and individuals involved and interested in all aspects of tourism.
- **Strategy evaluation toolkit**, providing the framework to assess strategies' correspondence to the circular principles set in the INCIRCLE operational model.
- **Set of circular tourism indicators**, providing a set of management and monitoring indicators to assess tourism impact both at destination and at tourism industry level from a circular economy perspective.
- **Summary of INCIRCLE strategies**, providing main findings and conclusions deriving from circular tourism strategies developed in partner territories (Albania, Balearic Islands, Crete, Cyprus, and Malta).

## THE INCIRCLE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLS

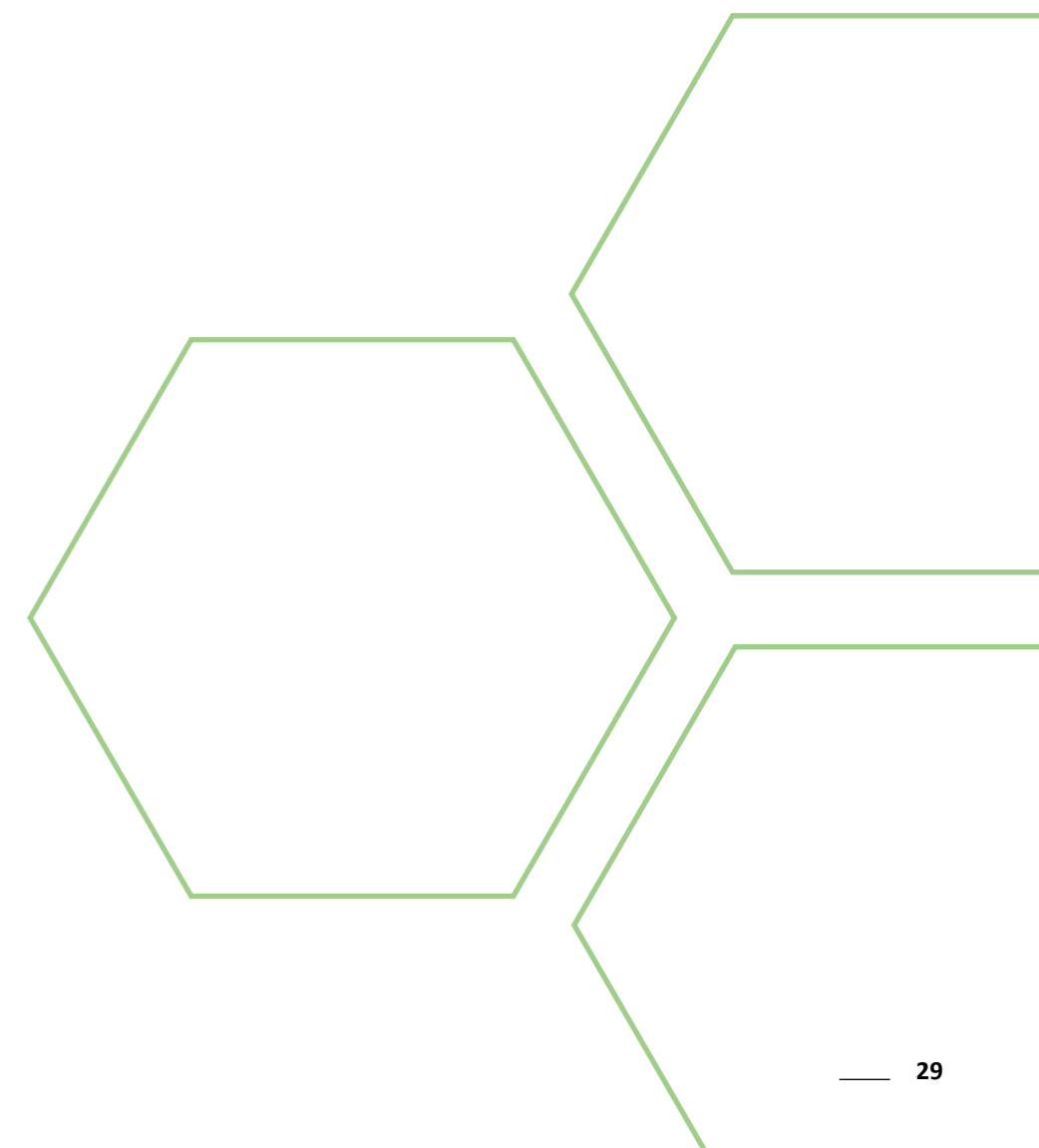


By the end of the project, two Circular tourism self-assessment tools have been developed and made available on the [project knowledge platform](#), to enable decision makers, on the one side, and tourism entrepreneurs, on the other one, to self-assess the sustainability and circularity of their performance with the aim to increase the competitiveness, resilience and networking skills of Mediterranean destinations as a whole.

# INCIRCLE

## POLICY BRIEF

### Testimonials





**AREA Science Park, Italy**[www.areasciencepark.it](http://www.areasciencepark.it)

INCIRCLE proved to Italian destination managers that resource-consuming tourism paradigms and practices can be given up, giving way to the establishment of a new trade-off between the increase of tourism-related profits and the preservation of natural resources. Area Science Park supported project partners and replicating organisations in applying and implementing circular economy principles - such as the efficiency of resources, their recovery, reuse, redevelopment, valorisation and regeneration - into tourism strategies, thus guaranteeing the economic, environmental and social sustainability of the tourism sector in the Mediterranean in the years to come.

**MEDCITIES, Spain**[medcities.or](http://medcities.or)

During the INCIRCLE project, we have seen how the actors of the tourist sector came together with a common aim of making efforts and increasing together the sustainability of the tourism in different territories. We have perceived the change of paradigm and mentality, embracing the circular and sustainability concept as a must and no longer a possibility. In our opinion, the project has planted a seed and facilitated its partner and replicating territories to continue working towards this aim, both in the long term (with the strategy) and by implementing tangible solutions (tailor-made activities and pilots).

**CIVINET Greece-Cyprus, Greece**[civitas.eu/civinet/civinet-greece-cyprus](http://civitas.eu/civinet/civinet-greece-cyprus)

The INCIRCLE project had an added value to the existing activity of the CIVINET Network which specialises in the field of sustainable mobility with a focus on the insular, coastal and tourist areas. At the same time, the project contributed to the broadening of the Network's thematic scope and the services it can offer to its members towards climate-neutral and smart cities. Equally important is the fact that it matured its cooperation with four of its members (Rethymno, Larnaca, Crete and Attica), and brought it closer to other areas of the Mediterranean, outside the field of its activity.

**Larnaca - Famagusta District Development Agency, Cyprus**[www.anetel.com](http://www.anetel.com)

The next decade is critical for a successful transition to circular economy, resource efficiency and green growth. With the INCIRCLE project we had the opportunity to draft a national Circular Strategy and to play a catalytic role in enabling and accelerating the transition of the Cyprus economy to a circular and green economy by involving all key stakeholders and enhance the multilevel development of circularity in Cyprus.

**Albanian Institute of Transport, Albania**[www.ital.gov.al](http://www.ital.gov.al)

The INCIRCLE project was among the firsts that brought Circular Economy to the attention of Albanian policymakers and stakeholders. As an institution operating in transport, one of top producers of greenhouse gas emissions, it was important to be part of an initiative that is driven by the purpose of using our Earth's resources more efficiently and productively. With tourism being a wide-ranging industry, the tools developed by the INCIRCLE project will come to help not only to the tourism sector, but to all the industries that it incorporates.

**Energy and Water Agency, Malta**[www.energywateragency.gov.mt](http://www.energywateragency.gov.mt)

The Energy and Water Agency, throughout the duration of the INCIRCLE project has worked towards the formation of a comprehensive Circular Tourism Strategy for the Maltese Islands. The strategy has focused on addressing important environmental topics that are relevant for our islands. The result of extensive stakeholder involvement from the tourism, water, energy, waste and mobility sectors, has helped create a robust, valuable strategy, having the potential for a sufficient impact on the sustainability and circularity of the tourism sector! Additionally, the Energy and Water Agency, was responsible for the creation of a Strategy Evaluation Framework with the scope of assessing how circular a strategy is, which can be used by any territory!

**Region of Crete - Directorate of Environment and Spatial Planning, Greece**[www.crete.gov.gr](http://www.crete.gov.gr)

As the Region of Crete our goal through INCIRCLE program is to reach a sustainable development, in the context of 3 key factors:

- a) Carbon emission relief: Avoid CO<sub>2</sub> or CH<sub>4</sub> (GHG) emissions using RES and energy integration techniques.
- b) Decentralization: To minimize the carbon footprint, most water and energy systems need to be localized and decentralized.
- c) Digitization: Decentralized units and efficient integration require advanced control methods and can only be viable through digitalization.

This leads to improved environmental conditions for everybody in Crete, the citizens and the tourists, because the nature stays intact

**Municipality of Himara, Albania**[himara.gov.al](http://himara.gov.al)

As one of the foundations of sustainable development, circular economy is getting more and more importance and relevance in our today's world. Bringing together the need for rapid development and the responsibilities that comes with that, will determine the path for future generations. As a cornerstone of these ideas stands INCIRCLE project and the benefits that it brought to Himara community. Each of us can help to put together it's part of the puzzle and thus be part of the circle.

**Municipality of Palma, Spain**[www.palma.cat](http://www.palma.cat)

Even the project has been developed in the middle of a pandemic, this last has served to impulse the awareness of circularity and to increase the desire of being engage in it. The increasing number of activities/businesses willing to take part of circularity throughout the project has been a motivation for the City Council. Although the barriers we found within the City Council at administrative level, we keep on going and we were awarded with a single use plastic reduction (more than 482.000 half a litter bottles in 10 months). This is going to be a revolution in the water consumption paradigm in our city. Causing a tap water consumption increase and a reduction of single use plastic bottles generation.

**Agency for Tourism of the Balearic Islands, Spain**[www.caib.es](http://www.caib.es)

The Balearic Islands aim at becoming a circular tourism world leader offering the best tourism experience possible while improving the Balearics quality of life. The INCIRCLE project amplified the current Government partnership with its public and private stakeholders to design, plan and implement a circular tourism strategy, including a comprehensive design of pioneering alternative solutions over the entire life cycle of products and adoption of closing-the-loop production and consumption patterns within the entire tourism economy.

**Municipality of Larnaca, Cyprus**[www.larnaka.org.cy](http://www.larnaka.org.cy)

INCIRCLE, was a very rewarding experience for the Larnaka Municipality local team, especially because it gave us the opportunity to continue working on the implementation of projects on sustainability, as part of the official SUMP strategy. Given the low circularity in our region, INCIRCLE helped us raise awareness in our community around the concept of circular economy, and involve relevant key stakeholders in designing our local circular tourism strategies. We will continue working on developing additional circular tourism applications in the city of Larnaka, while making sure to capitalise on the expertise and experience we have developed in this project, together with our partners. The CYCLE LARNAKA is a great and green way to explore the city with a bicycle, materialised through INCIRCLE.

**Ministry for Gozo, Malta**[mgoz.gov.mt](http://mgoz.gov.mt)

Gozo, being a small island with double insularity has an economy which depends heavily on tourism. Since natural resources are limited, it is important that the concept of circular tourism is given priority and adopted by the local tourism sector so that our finite natural resources are not depleted. Throughout the INCIRCLE project we showed the importance of circular tourism to the main tourism stakeholders in the Maltese islands. This was further highlighted through our local demonstrator project which was the construction of a water reservoir for the collection of rainwater runoff.

**Institute Scuola Superiore Sant' Anna (SSSA), Italy**[www.santannapisa.it](http://www.santannapisa.it)

Participation in the INCIRCLE project has meant a lot for SSSA, from multiple points of view. Firstly, it allowed SSSA researchers to increase their know-how regarding main circular challenges in the tourism sector: circular economy still represents a highly unexplored topic, even if fundamental for making real the achievement of sustainable development by tourism. Secondly, working on this project enabled SSSA to fully understand the importance of peculiarities of each context with its characteristics when there is the will to assess circularity. ast, but not least, participation in this project has led SSSA to work with enthusiastic partners having the desire to initiate a positive change in a key sector such as the tourism one.

**Municipality of Rethymno, Greece**[www.rethymno.gr](http://www.rethymno.gr)

For Rethymno Municipality, INCIRCLE was a chance to introduce Circular Economy concept in local community empowering the knowledge of decision and policy makers and raising awareness of citizens and tourists. Rethymno's demonstrators which are easily replicable proved the feasibility to incorporate Circular Economy solutions in the citizens' daily lifestyle and in the touristic sector. Renewable Energy Sources can be the solution for Green Energy production for e-mobility.

**Regional Unit of Attica Islands - Region of Attica, Greece**[www.patt.gov.gr](http://www.patt.gov.gr)

The INCIRCLE Project had a great impact on the Region of Attica and the Regional Unit of the Islands, in particular. Circular tourism strategy is a great tool for the increase of viability and attractiveness of Attica's islands, the maintenance of the quality and availability of natural resources, and the improvement of the quality of life for the residents and the visitors. The cooperation and the exchange of know – how with the executives of Medcities and CIVINET, our technical partner, was smooth and fruitful. As a result, the executives of the Region of Attica gained further insights of the current situation and the specific needs of each one of the islands of Attica. The greatest contribution of the program is the increase of environmental awareness of professionals, residents and visitors of the Attica's islands and the network that is formed between the Region of Attica and the stakeholders that took part.

**Split - Dalmatia County Tourist Board, Croatia**[www.dalmatia.hr](http://www.dalmatia.hr)

During the process of being a part of INCIRCLE project our territory gained a lot. Different sectors started to communicate, share ideas, we learnt how to properly contribute to community. Different ideas were implemented, we achieved a high level of collaboration among stakeholders, became a recognized as territory that cares about cultural heritage, local habitants, natural beauties, and invest in our environment. We will continue our efforts in transition towards more circular destination but will always invest in human capital as well. This was such important experience for us.

**Delta de l' Ebre National Park, Spain**[parcsnaturals.gencat.cat/ca/xarxa-de-parcs/delta-ebre/inici](http://parcsnaturals.gencat.cat/ca/xarxa-de-parcs/delta-ebre/inici)

Participating in the INCIRCLE project has been a very challenging but enriching learning experience. First, because the good results of the evaluation of the degree of circularity into the destination reinforces the bet of the Ebro Delta towards sustainability in tourism sector. Secondly, we highlight the broad participation of stakeholders within the working groups, despite COVID19 constraints. Particularly, sustainable mobility issues, mainly focus on cycling proposals are some of the main results from the project, to be developed for the years on. All this outcomes and benchmarks wouldn't be also possible without the support and knowledge shared with the Albanian Institute of Transport, Medcities, Schola Santa Anna, and the external consultant Xavier Cazorla from Elements.

**Local Action Group Terra Barocca, Italy**[galterrabarocca.com](http://galterrabarocca.com)

The INCIRCLE project offered the Terra Barocca LAG the opportunity to integrate a process that will allow the LAG territory to turn its gaze towards sustainable and circular tourism, thanks to a shared strategy that brings together all the pillars of sustainability. Environmental issues were investigated (mobility, energy, waste and water), more challenges were identified and at the end of the process a complete strategy was drawn up that is directed towards a circular and sustainable tourism model. In addition, to give continuity, the formation of a permanent Observatory was strongly desired as a transversal measure which aims to recognize the territory as a sustainable and circular tourist destination, with the premise of improving and strengthening knowledge of the impact of tourism on the territory relatively to the main pillars of circularity.

**Bergueda County, Spain**[www.adbergueda.cat/](http://www.adbergueda.cat/)

The Berguedà county is a territory that has been working for years to become a sustainable tourist destination and the Incircle project gives us an opportunity to accelerate the reduction of disposable waste from the picnic service especially in mountainous areas. The agents of the territory have been very receptive and open to the project. This is very positive as they are the ones who will have to manage and distribute the picnic kits among the visitors. So we hope that tailor made action will be a great success. We hope that the pilot test will accelerate the circularity of the region by reducing the impact of waste and increasing reuse.

**Consorzio Oltrepò Mantovano, Italy**[www.oltrepomantovano.eu](http://www.oltrepomantovano.eu)

The impact that the Oltrepò Mantovano Consortium intends to produce through its participation in INCIRCLE is to characterize the tourist destination of the Oltrepò Mantovano as circular, green and slow, to intercept the segments of tourists / visitors attentive to these issues. As a Consortium we are convinced that working to qualify the local tourist offer towards the principles of sustainability and circularity can also have positive impacts on the quality of life of all citizens, residents and visitors alike, combining tourism promotion with collection and analysis of data and information on the territorial management of waste, water, energy and mobility.

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Project co-financed by the European  
Regional Development Fund