T4T Report: Unbalanced Tourism in the EU

ANNEX 1 – GOOD PRACTICES

Case Studies of EU-Funded Projects Addressing Unbalanced Tourism

- Case Study 1: Vienna (Austria) - Vienna faced overtourism in its historic centre. Through EU-funded workshops and GIS-based mapping, the city developed early-warning indicators and spatial redistribution strategies to guide tourists to lesser-known areas.
- Case Study 2: Florence (Italy)- Florence used EU support to promote longer stays and off-centre attractions, reducing pressure on iconic sites. The strategy included digital tools and local partnerships to enhance visitor experience and spread demand.
- Case Study 3: Dubrovnik (Croatia) - Dubrovnik implemented visitor caps and smart ticketing systems with EU funding, improving crowd control and preserving heritage. The city also invested in seasonal diversification and community engagement.
- Case Study 4: Canary Islands (Spain) - EU funds supported the development of alternative tourism models (e.g., rural and cultural tourism) to reduce dependency on mass beach tourism. The project included training for SMEs and digital marketing campaigns.

Case Studies of engaging with local communities

- Flanders has surveyed residents' attitudes toward tourism since 2017 in Antwerp, Bruges, Ghent, Leuven, and Mechelen. The latest results show that 69% of residents support tourism, proving the value of transparency and dialogue.
- Catalonia is establishing a new tourism strategy public–private–residents partnership that ensures community voices directly shape solutions to tourism challenges. Catalonia aims to accelerate the transition from volume to value in this new tourism model.

Case studies from the supply side

- o **DRV working group "local value creation"** - The DRV Working Group "Local Value Creation" focuses on how the share of local or national value creation in the price of packaged tours can be measured and consistently presented. Existing approaches and experiences from Tour Operators are being compiled, differences (e.g. in data availability, ownership structures, inbound/outbound travel, or leakage effects) and options for establishing common standards are discussed. The working group aims to establish an industry-wide, practical framework / standardized calculation method that creates transparency for customers, meets regulatory requirements (e.g. Green Claims Directive, CSRD), and provides member companies with applicable solutions while serving as an internal management tool.
- o **DERTOUR Planning calendar** - A planning calendar is integrated into the website where DERTOUR sells excursions. This allows travellers to see immediately and easily whether an

excursion on a particular day is already sold out or still available. This directs demand to less frequented periods.

- **DETOUR – Labelling of more sustainable portfolio -** DERTOUR labels accommodation with sustainability certification and also bundles offerings communicatively in a magalog and an online theme world in order to provide travellers with more environmentally friendly options: More sustainable holidays – offers for conscious travel. DERTOUR has also developed criteria for excursions and round trips that take into account factors such as local transport and the integration of the local population.

- European Greeways – At European level, greenways are an example of the creation of new tourist and local infrastructure, and of the preservation and enhancement of heritage, through the reuse of abandoned railway lines and canal towpaths. Greenways generate new infrastructures for active mobility, appealing facilities and accommodation to attract tourists and creating new jobs, mostly in very rural areas, not previously tourist destinations. Greenways are non-motorised communication routes, safe and accessible, for all types of users, for cycling, walking and wheeling, which mainly use disused railway lines and canal paths. Highly appreciated and supported by local communities, who use them throughout the year, and tourists alike, they have become a tourist attraction in a variety of areas, mainly in rural areas, but also in formerly industrial areas that have undergone the transformation of mining sectors and have significant industrial heritage. Generating a very significant economic impact (see examples of economic impact >> here) . They are a wide variety of examples from across Europe, at national, regional and local level, which are highly valued by local communities and tourists alike see some examples here. The development of greenways, cycle routes and non-motorised itineraries as a key offering to promote sustainable tourism, decarbonise transport by promoting active mobility, particularly cycling, and at the same time preserve the authenticity of territories by highlighting their heritage, is a transformative action at European level. Greenways have a transnational dimension and a great development potential especially in rural area; we estimate that only-15-20 % of the disused lines in Europe has been already transformed. Since 2023, the European Greenways Association has organised a biannual award to promote best practices on greenways, recognizing examples at national, regional and local realizations, promoted by public and private entities, to disseminate the good work done and to encourage other greenways to replicate these best practices. See BPs in greenways >> here

Case Studies of engaging with depressuring tourism

- **Skåne, Sweden – Smart Nature – balancing visitor flows through "Uncrowded"**

In South Sweden's Skåne region, growing visitor numbers have placed pressure on its diverse natural landscapes, causing congestion, environmental degradation, and reduced visitor satisfaction. To address this, Visit Skåne launched the Smart Nature initiative, a data-driven project inspired by smart city principles and designed to balance visitor flows in nature. The project aims to develop and test digital tools that help manage visitor numbers, reduce environmental wear at popular sites, and improve the visitor experience through informed choices about when and where to travel. From 2022 onwards, Smart Nature has evolved through workshops, pilot studies, and MVP testing of the digital

service Uncrowded, which provides real-time and forecasted information about visitor pressure at key natural destinations. The platform uses parking sensors, artificial intelligence, and weather data to show levels of crowding, encouraging visitors to choose less busy times or places. Expected outcomes include reduced environmental strain, lower CO_2 emissions, and improved visitor satisfaction, as well as the spread of tourism benefits across a wider geography. Developed with municipalities, landowners, and associations such as Länsstyrelsen Skåne and Friluftsfrämjandet, the project is financed internally by Visit Skåne and continues as a long-term innovation process without a defined end date.

- **Amsterdam, Netherlands – Balanced Urban Tourism**

In Amsterdam, the city authorities have put 'balanced urban tourism' policies into practice with a strategy defined along the value chain.

- The city adopted the "Tourism in Balance" policy in 2021, setting a maximum of 20 million overnight stays per year. If visits exceed 18 million, the council must intervene. Despite this, numbers have surpassed 22 million in recent years, leading to lawsuits from residents demanding stricter enforcement.

- Ban on new hotels: Construction of new hotels is prohibited unless an existing one closes (one-in-one-out rule). The new property cannot add more beds and must be more sustainable.

- No extra beds: Hotels are forbidden from adding sleeping pods or bunk beds to increase capacity.

- Conversion of hotels into housing or offices: This aims to reduce tourist accommodation and ease housing pressure.

- Limits on short-term rentals: Home rentals are capped at 30 nights per year with strict permit requirements.

- River cruises capped: Amsterdam plans to halve river cruise calls from 2,300 to 1,150 annually by 2028, reducing about 271,000 visitors per year. Ocean-going cruise ships were banned from the city centre in 2023.

- Coach traffic reduction: Measures aim to cut coach journeys by tens of thousands of kilometers.

- "Stay Away" campaign: Targets nuisance tourists, especially those seeking drugs or rowdy parties.

- Ban on cannabis smoking in public (Red Light District) and restrictions on alcohol consumption.

- Earlier closing times for bars, clubs, and sex clubs in the city center.

- Tourist tax increase: Raised to 12.5%, the highest in Europe, with discussions about further hikes.

- Amsterdam's goal is to solve overtourism by 2035, focusing on sustainable tourism and prioritizing residents' needs over mass tourism.

- **Madrid, Spain - Territorial Tourism Governance Model in Madrid Region**

The Community of Madrid is developing a sustainable and regenerative tourism model based on coordination, innovation, and territorial cohesion. Its approach connects municipalities and stakeholders through a network of four Tourism Innovation Centers that cover 110 municipalities and act as intermediaries between the regional administration and local actors. The model's core objectives are to foster sustainable tourism, strengthen rural and cultural assets, promote circular economy principles, and enhance cooperation across public and private sectors. Current projects include the Madrid Rural Destination brand, which unites rural destinations under a shared identity, the promotion of local products, the implementation of carbon footprint measurement tools, and the development of sustainable mobility options such as cycling networks. By applying environmental clauses to tourism grants and integrating bottom-up participation, the region ensures that development remains equitable and community-driven. Managed by the Directorate General for Tourism and funded through Next Generation EU programmes and the Madrid Region's own budget, this governance framework enhances competitiveness while maintaining environmental responsibility and social inclusion across the Madrid region.

- **The holistic approach to tourism in Dubrovnik, Croatia.**

This practice involved collaboration between the City of Dubrovnik, cruise lines, and the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) with the aim of making cruise tourism more sustainable within the city. The maximum number of ships was set to two ships at once and the limit of visitors in the walled city coming from cruise ships at 4,000. In 2019, the City of Dubrovnik and CLIA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on four key areas of focus to stimulate more sustainable governance of the city. Studies have shown positive shifts in guest dispersion within the historic core. Data from the University of Dubrovnik, comparing figures from 2017, 2019, and 2022, indicate that the measures have led to a more balanced distribution of tourists, reducing peak-time congestion.

Implemented a digital response system combining "Du Visitors" (real-time visitor counting via cameras) and "DuCard" (mobile app for discounts and alternative suggestions). When thresholds (e.g., 4,000 people in the Old Town) are reached, the system sends notifications to DuCard users to visit less-crowded areas like nearby beaches or islands. The city also uses the "Dubrovnik Eye" web platform for citizen feedback on tourism-related issues and promotes agrotourism via "Rural Dubrovnik-Neretva" to spread visitors.

- **Urban Destination**
  - **Venice**: Explores a multi-faceted approach, including a reservation system for visitors, creating a "buffer of terminals" around the historical center to manage incoming flows, and using real-time data (security cameras, mobile phone data) for internal flow management. "Detourism" campaigns promote alternative routes. The city has considered subsidizing non-tourism activities and housing to counter gentrification and regulating cruise tourism.

- **Natural Heritage Sites**
  - Dolomites UNESCO World Heritage Site (Italy): Utilizes big data from telco companies to monitor tourist movement, quantify daily visitors (including day-trippers often missed by official statistics), and analyze their behavior in natural areas. This data helps identify congestion points and informs strategies like redesigning mobility systems, adding traffic circles, and implementing underground parking with real-time availability information to encourage public transport and walking.
  - Etablissement Public de Parc National des Calanques (France): Project focuses on understanding visitor flows and publics to better welcome and manage frequentation within the National Park.
  - Gorges de l'Ardèche Tourisme (France): Fostering synergies among stakeholders to diffuse fluxes spatially and temporally, including the implementation of "Canoë Malin," a predictive tool to inform visitors about optimal times to avoid peak crowds on rivers, with plans for similar tools for hiking trails.

- **Emerging / Underdeveloped Destinations**
  - Scheldeland Region (Flanders, Belgium): In areas with low-to-modest tourism, the focus is on understanding resident attitudes and support for tourism development. Studies using simplified Resident Empowerment through Tourism Scale (RETS) found that psychological, social, and political empowerment are stronger drivers for tourism support than purely economic benefits. This indicates that involving locals as "stewards and local ambassadors" and improving quality of life contributes to sustainable development even before major economic gains are realized.
- **Multi-stakeholder collaboration in destinations:** Effective partnerships between governments, civil society, academia, and the tourism sector are key to sustainable destination management. A leading example is the TUI Rhodes Co-Lab, which is piloting sustainable solutions on the island, including the adoption of e-bikes by tour guides, reforestation projects with fire-resistant trees, a "field-to-fork" programme to integrate local agriculture into the tourism supply chain, and a new biogas plant to convert organic waste into energy. The Co-Lab has also partnered with local schools to integrate sustainable tourism topics into the curriculum and is planning an international centre for sustainable tourism development.
- **Offering a more diverse range of experiences promoting alternative attractions:** For example, Lisbon promotes alternative city tours, such as street art tours or food tours in emerging neighbourhoods like Alfama and Marvila. Additionally, they encourage experiences like surfing lessons on the Lisbon coast and fado music performances in local taverns, offering tourists a wider range of activities tied to Lisbon's cultural heritage. These strategies help distribute visitors more evenly across the city, and they provide a richer, more local experience for tourists. Tourism companies can also contribute by promoting and encouraging visitors to engage in specific interests like culinary tours, wildlife experiences, or active outdoor adventures, which can divert traffic from heavily visited tourist sites (e.g. TUI collection experiences), further benefiting local communities whilst enriching travellers' experience through the discovery of "hidden gems". Other best practices bringing together various

stakeholders in destinations include the Colourful Cultures programme of the TUI Care Foundation, which empowers artists and artisans to gain access to new income opportunities and promote their cultural heritage through new tourism offers. In addition, the TUI Field to Fork projects, for example in Greece, Cyprus and Portugal, offer training programmes to local farmers on regenerative agriculture, establish important links to the local tourism ecosystem and create new experiences for tourists, such as wine tastings and organised tours in the surrounding agricultural areas.

- **ETOA** has launched a new event www.etoa.org/SHOP promoting shoulder and off-peak travel. Its marketing campaign will raise awareness of off-season appeal, and the not-so-famous-but-good, and awareness of strong demand if the product is there (see previous comment about whether hotels are open). As such, it is an opportunity for both destinations/supply chain and operators.

o **Actions by Tourism Professionals** - also the professionals have been developing actions in this context that could bring value-added to this challenge.

   The European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations launched a large survey between August and September 2025 on the topic of Unbalanced Tourism. Received 896 replies, which makes a strong sample of this professional level.

   More information on the Annex 2.

   While Travel Agents and Operators have projects like Intrepid, with the "Not Hot list" where spotlights 10 lesser-known places works on the side of undertourism dimension., easyJet Holidays are promoting the "Different holiday destinations", where the OTA offers solutions on less pressured regions.

o **Tourism for Rural Development Programme by UN Tourism and Best Tourism Villages Initiative**[1]: The programme aims to make tourism a driver in reducing regional inequalities and promote territorial cohesion while addressing challenges such as depopulation. The Best Tourism Villages seeks to advance the role of tourism in valuing and safeguarding rural villages along with their associated landscapes, knowledge systems, biological and cultural diversity, local values and activities (agriculture, forestry, livestock and/or fisheries), including their gastronomy.

Case studies on a Regional dimension

o **French Cities (AMI "Gestion des flux touristiques" Laureates): Various projects address flows management:**

  ▪ **Communauté de Communes Presqu'île de Crozon Aulne Maritime**: Conducting a study to measure and observe visitor flows within the "Opération Grand Site" framework.

  ▪ **Iles du Ponant**: Organizing concerted management of visitor flows across 15 islands, including training for local officials on legal tools to regulate fluxes and launching a sustainable tourism awareness campaign.

- **Grand Site des Falaises d'Etretat Côte d'Albâtre**: Developing a visitor observatory and a flux management plan, with a focus on reviewing mobility plans and promoting intermodality and diffusing visitors beyond the main cliffs.
- **Office de tourisme de la métropole de Lyon**: Deploying a system for welcoming and diffusing visitor flows, including mapping and training reception structures.
- **Grand Site Cité de Carcassonne**: Aiming to balance fluxes, particularly through better parking management to access the city center.

o **Valley of Arts Festival (Művészetek Völgye) – Measures to Manage Seasonal Overtourism – The Valley of Arts Festival is Hungary's largest multi-arts festival, held annually in late July across several small villages in the Káli Basin—primarily Kapolcs,** Taliándörögd, and Vigántpetend. During the 10-day event, these normally quiet rural communities experience a significant, yet short-term, surge in visitor numbers. This results in *temporary overtourism* concentrated around the main festival venues, while the rest of the year remains calm and community-oriented. The entire festival area can only be accessed with a valid ticket or pass. Temporary parking zones are established on the outskirts of the villages, with shuttle buses transporting visitors to and between main venues. This system efficiently reduces congestion within village streets, though coordination challenges remain during peak arrival times. Entry to the festival area requires a day pass or full festival pass, and most programs are scheduled at specific times. This structure naturally regulates visitor flow and prevents overcrowding at individual venues. The festival encourages walking between nearby villages, and the event area is largely pedestrian-friendly. However, dedicated cycling routes and improved pedestrian pathways between settlements could further enhance visitor management and safety. Sustainability and respect for local communities are key elements of festival communication. Visitors receive ongoing information about environmental protection, noise reduction, waste management, and supporting local artisans and producers. Smaller off-season cultural initiatives (e.g., *MiniVölgy* or winter art weekends) attract visitors at other times of the year. This helps distribute tourism more evenly and supports local economies beyond the main summer season.

o **Tihany** (Population: 1,338 inhabitants)– **Measures to Reduce Overtourism -** Peak Overtourism Periods: Late June to early August, especially during the lavender bloom and main summer holiday season. Weekends and national holidays see the highest visitor numbers. Designated parking areas are provided and car access to the village center is restricted, which helps reduce traffic congestion. However, during peak season, the village can still become crowded. Timed events, such as the lavender harvest and abbey tours, are organized to prevent all visitors from arriving at the same time. This partially disperses tourists, but crowds can still occur during the busiest days. The village center has been designated as a pedestrian zone, and cycling paths around the area encourage visitors to avoid cars. This reduces vehicular congestion but does not fully prevent large crowds from forming. Online maps and apps guide visitors to less crowded areas and suggest alternative routes. While this helps disperse tourists, not everyone uses these tools, so crowding can still occur. Additional programs mainly operate during the lavender season. They help reduce congestion, but only during these specific periods.

o **Hollókő** (Population: 304 inhabitants) **– Measures to Reduce Overtourism**. With **p**eak overtourism at Easter, spring and summer weekends, and major festivals (e.g., folk heritage events). Parking is strictly regulated within the village streets. This effectively limits the number of visitors and prevents overcrowding in the historic areas. Visits to museums, traditional houses, and craft workshops are scheduled by appointment, ensuring that crowds do not gather in all locations at the same time. Information boards and guided tours educate visitors about respecting local customs and heritage. This encourages tourists to behave responsibly, which helps reduce pressure on the village. During busy periods, additional programs are offered in surrounding villages. This effectively disperses visitors and prevents all crowds from concentrating in Hollókő at once.