

Background

According to the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Mediterranean is the world's leading tourism destination, in terms of domestic and international tourism. The region receives more than 300 million international tourist arrivals, representing 30% of total world tourism, and half of these arrivals are in coastal areas. International tourist arrivals have grown from 58 million in 1970 to nearly 314 million in 2014, with a forecast of 500 million by 2030. Tourism in the Mediterranean region is highly concentrated, both spatially and seasonally, with most visits occurring during the summer months. Coastal tourism is the largest sea-related economic activity in the Mediterranean, with 11.3 of the regional GDP. It is evident therefore that tourism represents an important source of revenues and employment in the Mediterranean area. At the same time it implicates enormous negative impacts for nature and society.

Large-scale studies of consumer tendencies and behavior (e.g. TripAdvisor, Travelocity-Sabre) have shown that there is a strong and growing preference by travelers for environmentally and socially responsible businesses and destinations. There is a strong desire to do no harm environmentally and to leave positive social benefits from their visits. Coupled with this, however, the studies have revealed a deep distrust of self-proclaimed sustainability claims by businesses and destinations.

Despite increasing international efforts to create harmonized concepts, agreed definitions and quality standards for ecotourism, these are still missing in the Mediterranean Region, where different organizations adopt different criteria and methods for managing and measuring quality and sustainability vary for ecotourism destinations and products.

Due to the lack of coherent planning, monitoring, and promotion that is perceived in a serious way, ecotourism in the MED does not yet constitute a viable alternative. This can be changed through a governance system for ecotourism in protected areas, constituted through a destination management organisation (DMO), which would harmonize quality standards and tools to monitor compliance, and develop attractive ecotourism offers promoted through a lasting brand. This is where the DestiMED project comes into play.

DestiMED is an INTERREG MED project led by Regione Lazio which aims to build the pre-conditions for a Mediterranean DMO. Specifically, the project aims to further develop and test ecotourism packages, standards, and monitoring tools in 13 protected areas around the basin, while bringing together stakeholders in a network for ongoing collaboration. DestiMED builds on the results of the MEET (Mediterranean Experience of Eco-Tourism) project, which created and tested planning and marketing approaches and built the foundation of this network.

Ecotourism packages to be designed will exploit the special features of each Protected Area, allowing visitors the opportunity over 3-6 nights to not just visit each place, but to get in touch with the local way of life, meet local people, and experience nature and culture authentically. Visitors will also build awareness and potentially participate in the protected areas' conservation goals and activities.

Overall Goal of Service

One of DestiMED's primary objectives is to apply a Life Cycle Assessment approach to tourism products in Protected Areas, utilizing a practical instrument (Ecological Footprint) designed to assess and link the quality and sustainability performance improvement of service providers.

With this goal in mind, a consultant is needed to develop an online monitoring platform and resource center for Local Economic Clusters (LECs), consisting of Protected Areas and tourism service providers, especially inbound tour operators. The online platform will enable the LEC and the project partners to collect data, evaluate key sustainability and quality indicators of tourism-related services, and track progress over time.

This online platform must also be able to collect and compile survey responses from travelers at the end of their stay, ideally through an online questionnaire.

Furthermore the consultant will have an opportunity to review and provide feedback on the specific indicators and guidelines for environmental, socio-cultural and economic aspects of ecotourism packages established during the project.

Expected Methodology

Phase I: Research (*Deadline: May 15, 2017*)

Purpose: Understand existing methods and platforms globally for monitoring tourism in Protected Areas, including those involved in DestiMED

- Complete a survey of existing tourism monitoring systems used in parks and other designated conservation areas similar to Mediterranean protected areas worldwide.
 - This research should also include specific information on any existing monitoring systems utilized to evaluate the sustainability of tourism products in protected areas.
 - Information on the tourism monitoring systems of the 13 participating protected areas will also be provided to the consultants for analysis

Deliverables:

- *A summary of the research on global systems*
- *A summary of existing tourism monitoring systems being used in DestiMED protected areas*
- *A short presentation highlighting the lessons learned from the research*

Phase II: Criteria and Indicator Development (*Deadline: June 15, 2017*)

Purpose: Provide feedback to the team developing criteria and indicators, in order to ensure the online platform is not developed in a silo

- Provide technical review and feedback, along with other representatives of the DestiMED team, on the selection of final criteria and indicators to be utilized in monitoring the sustainability and quality of DestiMED packages.

- This will include Ecological Footprint indicators, social and economic criteria and indicators, and customer satisfaction data points.

Deliverable:

- *Comments in the working documents as requested*

Phase III: Design of the Online Platform (July 15, 2017)

Purpose: Develop a thoughtful design of the online platform that is cognizant of the needs of the project and the end-user

- Interview up to 3 participating LECs (tour operators and Protected Area managers), in order to evaluate how the platform can be developed in a user-friendly and practical manner, cognizant of day-to-day realities
- In close coordination with the DestiMED team, agree on the main components to be taken in consideration by the software. The platform design will include a practical online “resource center” to be utilized by LECs in assessing, monitoring, and tracking progress over time of the sustainability, quality, and Ecological Footprint of DestiMED packages. This resource center should include at least:
 - An introduction to the criteria and indicators and the business case for adoption
 - Concise technical guidance for implementation of criteria
 - A section for surveying DestiMED packages service providers concerning EF of their services and offer
 - A section for allowing participants in the DestiMED package tests to fill in the quality-related questionnaires for the packages
 - A section for surveying other non-DestiMED travelers on site
 - Reporting templates designed to clearly communicate the results of the monitoring efforts, while providing LECs and Project Partners with a compelling way to communicate key aspects to stakeholders, including good practices, and trends, such as linking quality to sustainability.

Deliverable:

- *Final agreed structure and components of the software*

NB. The monitoring platform should ultimately allow for inclusion of data to manage Ecological Footprint, although will be done in a second phase and at the end of the project. Nevertheless, structure and content should be developed considering this future development.

Phase IV: Online Tool Development (August 31, 2017)

Purpose: Develop and test the online platform so that it is ready to be used in time for the first round of ecotourism package tests in Fall 2017

- Develop the software/platform
- Develop and record a training module to be delivered to Project Partners via webinar, including a train-the-trainer section which will enable Project Partners to effectively train the Pilot Actors they are responsible for.
- Provide continuous online support during the testing phase in the way of answering questions and fixing any bugs

Deliverables:

- *Final online resource center ready for use by LECs*
- *Final training module delivered to Project Partners*

Approval of Deliverables

IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation will approve all deliverables.

Budget and Timeline

The budget for this consultancy should be around 15.000 euros (VAT included); proposals with amounts larger than this should be clearly justified.

One travel to and from the region for one representative will be covered by IUCN Med; all other travels should be included in the consultancy fee.

The consultant is expected to be paid 30% of the total amount agreed upon contract signing, an additional 20% upon completion of Phase 1 and the final 50% upon completion of Phase 3.

The consultancy will start in April 2017 and end in August 2017.

Profile and Experience

Successful candidates will be able to demonstrate specific experience and expertise in all topics targeted by the Terms of Reference.

Documents to be Presented

- Methodological proposal on the basis of the ToRs including calendar of actions;
- CV of the candidate/es;
- Financial offer

Evaluation of the Offer

The evaluation will be based in: (i) the expertise of the candidate/es in relation with the goals of the TORs; (ii) methodological proposal, (iii) financial offer.

Application and Deadline

The application pack should be sent in pdf to: carla.danelutti@iucn.org no later than 27th March at 00.00 CET.