



**Deliverable D.T1.9.1 – CROSS BORDER NETWORK FOR A&S TOURISM
STRATEGY ACTION PLAN**



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This section presents the proposed *Cross border Network for A&S Tourism Strategy Action Plan*, as this was agreed by the partners of the P.A.S.T.4FUTURE project and after taking into consideration their input and a number of consultations that took place between them, during the implementation of the project.

1. The Role of the Network in the EUSAIR area

The Cross border network for A&S tourism is set of formal and informal social relationships that shape collaborative action between government, industry and civil society in target area – Italy, Albania, Montenegro. It allows the development of understanding about interdependence, reciprocity, mutual interest, trust, representativeness and leadership. Subsequently there is to consider that the involved territories in the project are Rural or peripheral areas. These territories have often been regarded as being less favourable than their urban counterpart for regional development. Rural areas tend to be associated with more traditional industry or having standardised secondary businesses that support more innovative developed areas (Landabaso, 1999), often located in more vibrant urban areas. Indeed, it has been acknowledged that governments of developed countries need to recognise and better understand rural communities and the process of economic development that occurs (Brennan & Luloff, 2007) in order to address challenges in these areas. In this regard, much emphasis has been placed in recent years on collaborative relations between network partners to aid the facilitation of rural development and sustainable tourism. It has been well-documented in the literature that inclusive rural stakeholder networks, involving third level institutions and public-private stakeholders, are considered pivotal to successful and sustainable rural development (Johnson et al., 2000).

In this sense, in EUSAIR area, the Cross Border Network for A&S tourism has a potentially significant contribution to make towards accessible and sustainable tourism embracing community and commercial interests. Companies started to search for sources of their competitive advantage in non-competitive relations with other entities, including competitors. Furthermore, tourism is a sector considered as a system, where interdependence is essential and

collaboration as well as cooperation between different organisations within a tourism destination create the tourism product. In this sense, EU alliance, local alliances, agreements and other formal and informal governance structures help to compensate for the fragmented nature of a tourism destination. This “connectedness”, in turn, gives rise to opportunities for the transfer and sharing knowledge, which is an important driver form increasing innovation and competitiveness in the involved territories and the Cross Border network for A&S tourism can function as a viable strategy for transboundary regions to overcome border related barriers that otherwise inhibit socio-economic development and political cooperation.

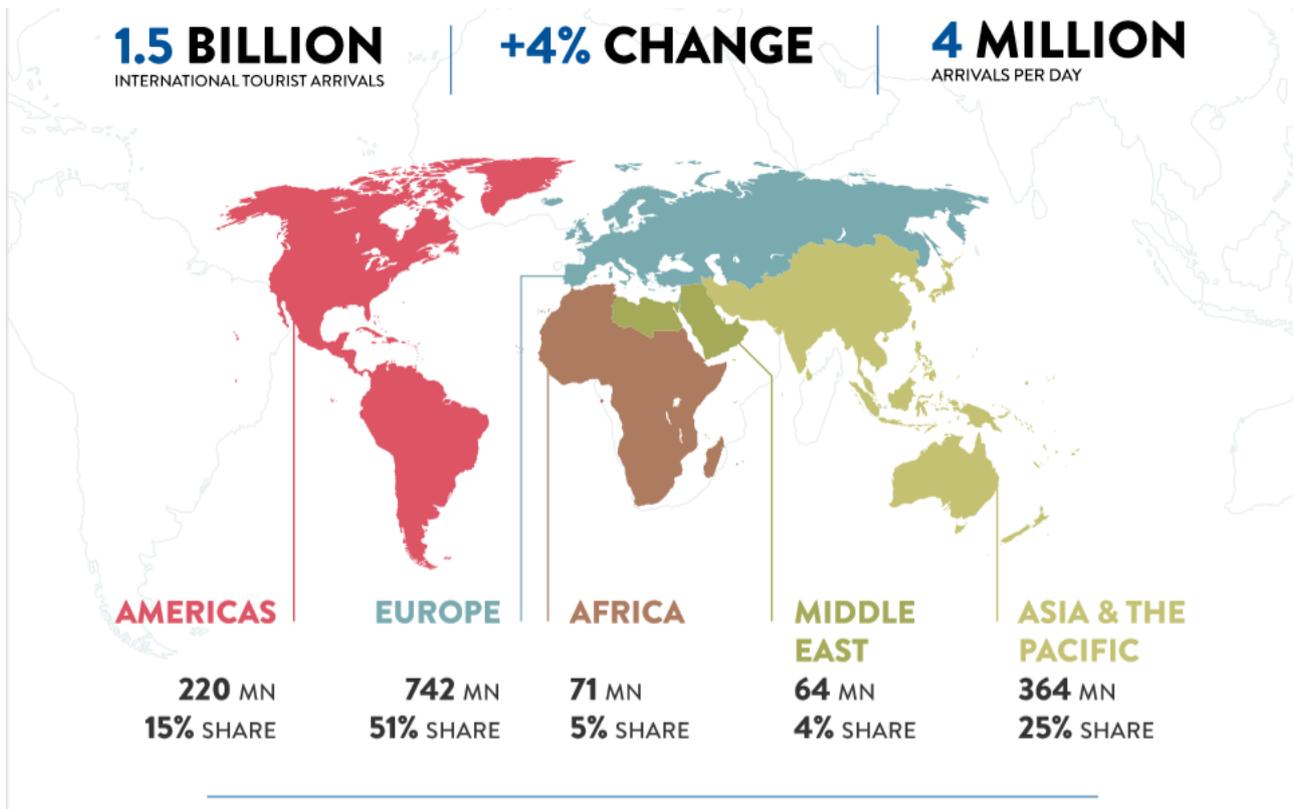
Within the EUSAIR area, four main advantages of the Cross Border policy network for A&S tourism approach are identified.

1. The Cross Border Network for A&S tourism approach recognises the overlapping and simultaneous manner in which different issues within the one policy community can be addressed by different networks operating at different scales and over time. For example, networks addressing regional co-ordination, the development and management of A&S tourism product, and marketing and promotion may all co-exist within the one EU tourism policy community.
2. The Cross Border Network for A&S tourism approach recognises that distinctions between private and public domains is blurred by the push to implement the strategies of collective action and shared responsibility that are embedded in the notion of governance. The network approach therefore fits well with the realities of tourism as a multidimensional area of public and private sector policy interest.
3. The Cross Border Network for A&S tourism approach recognises that different levels of political support may exist for different policy issues within one policy network. For example, there may be political support for the development of a local tourism association but the same level of support may not exist for regional cooperation.
4. The Cross Border Network for A&S tourism approach recognises that policy actors may have membership in different policy networks and their powers, roles, functions and level of support and interaction may vary within these structures.

It is believed that cooperation in tourism management, marketing planning, and implementation and control of designed programs can create, build and maintain mutual benefits, not only for the countries involved in cooperation, but also for tourists and other stakeholders as well. In this sense the network is a complicated process, containing long-term strategic and tactical plans. The strategy implementation can only be successful if based on long-term vision and efficient coordination and cooperation structures with the necessary administrative capacity, as well as on shared long-term political commitment among the institutional levels concerned and by enhancing the ETC programmes, promoting cross-border projects within the ESI funds and EFSI and also through direct funding.

2. The Placement of the touristic product and services in the international market (before the COVID-19).

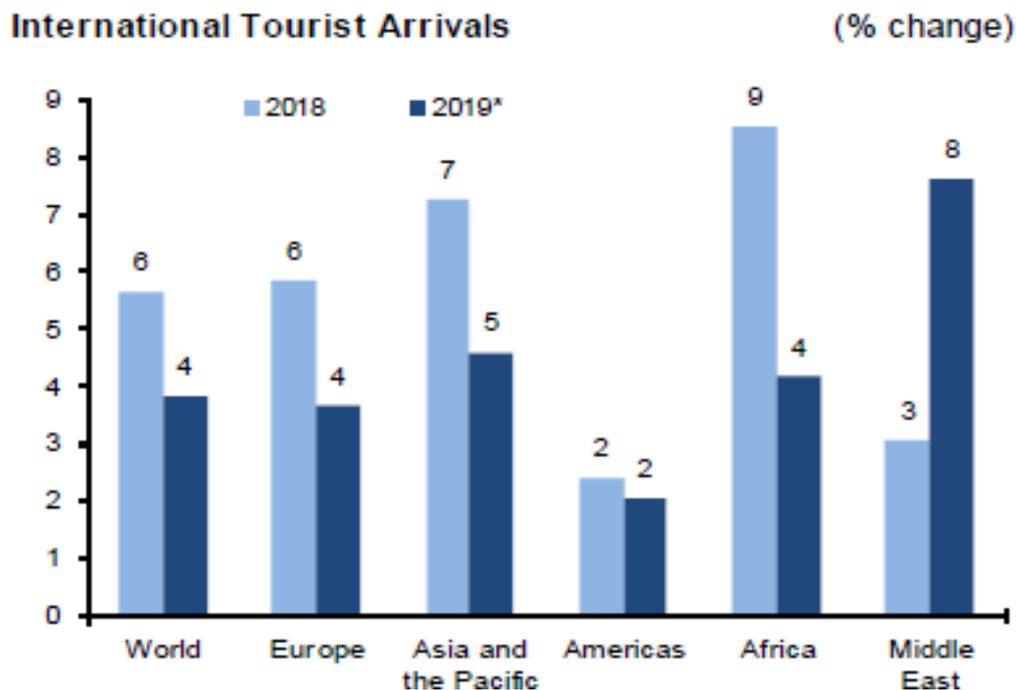
1.5 billion international tourist arrivals were recorded in 2019, globally. A 4% increase on the previous year which is also forecast for 2020, confirming tourism as a leading and resilient economic sector, especially in view of current uncertainties. By the same token, this calls for such growth to be managed responsibly so as to best seize the opportunities tourism can generate for communities around the world.



Source: UNWTO, January 2020

According to the first comprehensive report on global tourism numbers and trends of the new decade, the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, this represents the tenth consecutive year of growth. 2019 was another year of strong growth, although slower compared to the exceptional rates of 2017 (+7%) and 2018 (+6%). Demand was slower mainly in advanced economy and particularly in Europe (UWTO,2019).

All regions saw a rise in international arrivals in 2019. However, uncertainty surrounding Brexit, the collapse of Thomas Cook, geopolitical and social tensions and the global economic slowdown all contributed to a slower growth in 2019, when compared to the exceptional rates of 2017 and 2018. This slowdown affected mainly advanced economies and particularly Europe and Asia and the Pacific. The Middle East (+8%) led growth, followed by Asia and the Pacific (+5%). International arrivals in Europe and in Africa (both +4%) increased in line with the world average, while America saw growth of 2%.



Source: UNWTO, January 2020

On the base of these results, tourism remains a reliable economic sector. Against the backdrop of recently downgraded global economic perspectives, international trade tensions, social unrest and geopolitical uncertainty, the tourism sector keeps outpacing the world economy and calling upon us to not only grow but to grow better.

Given tourism's position as a top export sector and creator of employment, UNWTO advocates the need for responsible growth. Tourism has, therefore, a place at the heart of global development policies, and the opportunity to gain further political recognition and make a real impact as the Decade of Action gets underway, leaving just ten years to fulfil the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

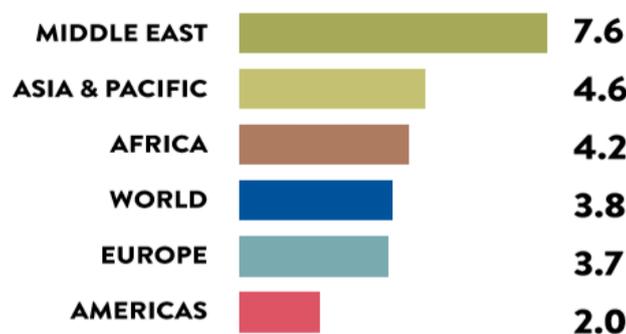
The Middle East has emerged as the fastest-growing region for international tourism arrivals in 2019, growing at almost double the global average (+8%). Growth in Asia and the Pacific slowed down but still showed above-average growth, with international arrivals up 5%.

Europe where growth was also slower than in previous years (+4%) continues to lead in terms of international arrivals numbers, welcoming 743 million international tourists last year (51% of the global market). The Americas (+2%) showed a mixed picture as many island destinations in the

Caribbean consolidated their recovery after the 2017 hurricanes while arrivals fell in South America due partly to ongoing social and political turmoil. Limited data available for Africa (+4%) points to continued strong results in North Africa (+9%) while arrivals in Sub-Saharan Africa grew slower in 2019 (+1.5%).

MIDDLE EAST LED GROWTH IN 2019

CHANGE BY REGION (%)



Source: UNWTO, January 2020

Against a backdrop of global economic slowdown, tourism spending continued to grow, most notably among the world's top ten spenders. France reported the strongest increase in international tourism expenditure among the world's top ten outbound markets (+11%), while the United States (+6%) led growth in absolute terms, aided by a strong dollar. However, some large emerging markets such as Brazil and Saudi Arabia reported declines in tourism spending. China, the world's top source market saw outbound trips increase by 14% in the first half of 2019, though expenditure fell 4%.

The number of destinations earning US\$1 billion or more from international tourism has almost doubled since 1998. The challenge we face is to make sure the benefits are shared as widely as possible and that nobody is left behind. In 2020, UNWTO celebrates the Year of Tourism and Rural Development, and we hope to see our sector lead positive change in rural communities, creating jobs and opportunities, driving economic growth and preserving culture (UNWTO, 2020). This latest evidence of the strength and resilience of the tourism sector comes as the UN celebrates its 75th anniversary. During 2020, through the UN75 initiative the UN is carrying out the largest, most

inclusive conversation on the role of global cooperation in building a better future for all, with tourism to be high on the agenda.

2.1 The accessible tourism in the international market

The idea "Accessible Tourism for All" is becoming more common all over the world with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, whose rights expressed.

The rate of people with disabilities is assumed to be 15 percent of total population of the world according to "2011 World Report on Disability" that is prepared by the World Bank and the World Health Organization. The increase of number of people with disabilities is explained by aging of the population and increasing of chronic health problems worldwide. World Health Survey designates that the number of people in the event of living with disability over the age of 15 as 785 million (15.6 per cent) and Global Burden of Disease study estimates the number of people with disabilities as 975 million (19,2 per cent). Studies have shown that the number of people with disabilities is growing rapidly. The total number of disabled people is nearly half of the world's population, if restricted number of elderly people, pregnant women, children and their families are added.

The governments have the responsibility to provide accessible tourism for disabled people (Poria, Reichel and Brandt, 2010). Disabled people are described as the world's largest minority by United Nations has become the world's largest special market for the tourism industry. Effective legislation for people with disabilities has been neglected for many years in many countries (especially in developed countries) and the implementation of legal regulations to take effect gradually started slowly. However, legal regulations participated the people with disabilities have become much more mobile than in the past and gained the various economic and social benefits, in the increasingly closer to travel and tourism activities.

Businesses in the tourism sector compete intensely with each other on quality, price, service offering and the charm. Accessible businesses provide an additional attraction for the customers and gain a significant competitive advantage. Likewise, the current level of access to tourism enterprises can vary considerably. Disabled people create large and growing market for both business and leisure travel in the world and the European Union. Researches show that people

with disabilities are loyal customers and they go to again destinations that offer good accessible facilities (EC, 2004).

The study "Accessible Market and Stakeholder Analysis-2005" which has been conducted by the University of Surrey British OSSATE (One-Stop-Shop for Accessible Tourism in Europe) in Europe reveals 46 million people with disabilities living in the physical or mental problem.

This figure reaches 130 million people, when pregnant women and the population over the age of 65 are taken into account. 70 percent of this population is travelling according to the aforesaid survey. The tourism expenditure of this potential travelling figure (130 million) is estimated more than 80 billion €, if it is considered that these people with disabilities are travelling generally by one or a few individuals. Total number of disabled people reached nearly 50 million in USA and purchasing power of this sector exceeded \$ 175 billion. The amount of the annual tourism expenditure is \$ 13,6 billion. There are in China "growing economy in the world" 60 million and in developed Japan 5 million disabled people. It comes out that disabled people produce more overnight, if it is considered that the Accessible tourism refers to tourism and travel that is accessible to all people, regardless of their physical limitations, disabilities or age. This includes those with mobility, hearing, sight, cognitive, or intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, as well as elderly people and people with temporary disabilities.

According to UNTWO, the world's population is far more affected by disabilities than it had been thought before. At least 15% of the global population is involved somehow, which accounts for at least 1 billion people (UNWTO, 2013). Disability is the umbrella term for impairments, activity 6th Central European Conference in Regional Science – CERS, 2017 - 31 - limitations and participation restrictions, referring to the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and that individual's contextual factors (environmental and personal factors) (WHO, 2011). Disabilities can appear in various forms, covering the whole spectrum of the accessible tourism market. The term disability not only refers to reduced mobility, visual impairment, hearing impairment, developmental disabilities, mental disabilities, learning disabilities or long-term health related disabilities: people with prostheses, allergies or other sensitivities, invisible disabilities and even the elderly all belong to this group. Among elderly

people, the possibility of developing some form of disability is increasing with age (Zsarnoczky, 2016c).

2.2 The accessible tourism in the European market

The EU is currently among the world's leading tourism destinations and does everything to keep its position. The tourism policy of the EU is setting a trend for the global tourism market. Being the global leader in tourism industry is of key importance for the economy of the EU, with regards to income and employment alike. The tourism of the EU is truly versatile and one of its most developing segment is accessible tourism. Accessible tourism is a niche tourism segment, where developers have to meet the highest standards both in quality and sustainability. As anticipated, accessible tourism does not only serve the needs of those with special needs (EC, 2015a), but also provides solutions for the elderly (Zsarnoczky, 2016b), families with small children and tourist for whom safety is a priority European travellers with access needs are found in all age groups and have a wide variety of disabilities. Studies indicate that tourists with disabilities are becoming an important part of the tourism market. For example, they tend to stay longer and spend more per visit than the average tourist. Especially the seniors among them. Disabled travellers who travel further from home are generally higher educated (or travel with family members who are) and from higher income groups. In this sense the European market for accessible tourism is large and continues to grow. This type of tourism is accessible to all people, regardless of physical limitations, disabilities or age. Due to the demographic processes, the ratio of elderly people is growing in the EU. Taking into account the whole population, the number of senior people – represented by the 65+ age group – is above 88 million, which means that every 5th person belongs to this demographic group. Senior citizens and people with disabilities together represent a demographic group with significant economic importance within the EU. These people are consumers of the same economic sectors as other citizens, and under some specific circumstances, they often have stronger buying power.

The largest markets, the United Kingdom, Germany and France, offer especially good opportunities. Smaller countries in Northern and Western Europe are also promising.

In 2015, the tourism industry registered 1.72 billion travels, 5.985 billion guest nights and 408.306 billion EUR income in the European Union (EUROSTAT, 2017). The expenditures of disabled people represented a significant ratio within these outstanding results. However, not all types of disabilities were registered in the statistics: the numbers only show the visible forms of different impairments (mobility, hearing, speech, developmental and mental disabilities). Although hidden (visually not recognisable) disabilities like surgical removals or prostheses are not recorded in the statistics, experts estimate the number of people living with hidden disabilities at least the same as those of with visible impairments. It means that the whole group of disabled people accounts for a lot more than the size of the group of people living with visible disabilities. According to data from 2011, the number of disabled people in the 15-64 age group was 49.8 million, while 88.8 million belonged to the 65+ age group, of which 37.4 were male and 64.4 million female. Within the 65+ age group, there is a growing tendency of multiple disabilities and disabilities related to ageing (Buhalis et al., 2011). From the aspect of our research, the numbers of the two groups add up to a total of 138.6 million people, which means approximately 36% of the total population of 500 million people living in the EU. The total number of travels by people with disabilities was 744.3 million, predicted to reach 861.9 million by 2020, with a growth rate of 1.64%. The net expenditure of tourists and disabled people in the EU is 150 billion EUR: The average tourist expenditure is 700 EUR within their home country and 1100 EUR in other member states. The average amount of daily tourism expenditure is 80 EUR (EC, 2014). The expenditures of accessible tourism show a growing tendency on other continents as well.

The European accessible tourism organisations represent very important added values in the accessible tourism industry. The most significant organisations are the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT), the One-Stop-Shop for Accessible Tourism in Europe (OSSATE) and the Spanish ONCE Foundation (Once Foundation for the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities). European tourist with disabilities can rely on the support of several websites and local programmes. One of the most successful websites is the Europe For All1 portal that offers practical guidelines and descriptions. Another popular site is Pantou2, an initiative by the European Commission, which collects travel services and destinations in the EU: The European Union takes particular care to provide a wide availability of accessible information systems (AIS) in

the accessible tourism industry. During the development of tourism products, great emphasis is put on the uniform standardisation of signs and pictographs, and as for digital and ICT platforms, the harmonisation of mobile applications, visual signs, fonts and colours is also important (UNWTO, 2016a). The development of tourism products is mainly the responsibility of service providers; however, the community programmes of the EU can further contribute to their success by collecting and offering these services in a standardised way (EC, 2015b).

3. The Development priorities in each target territory and in the EUSAIR area

Major needs and challenges:

- Tourism suffers from a number of weaknesses that should be addressed and of several risks generating negative impacts on the environment to be avoided or properly managed such as seasonal and mass tourism congestion.
- Important to promote measures to integrate sustainable policies for the protection and enhancement of natural resources, landscape and cultural heritage in a framework of sustainable tourism development.
- Boosting the process of system of rationalisation and territorial clustering for the current Tourist boards, which will become Destination Management Organisations (DMOs County/Region or municipalities/cities), recruiting appropriate staffing and additional education management.
- Developing an Integrated Action Plan to implement the tourism strategy, including the sources of financial investments.
- Fostering the sustainable management and innovative use of its territory (preserving natural and cultural heritage), identifying relevant indicator systems and data collection.
- Fulfilling the gap of quality, qualified and motivated human resources in hospitality and tourism industry.

These challenges indicate that implementing these proposed strategies for cooperation in tourism will not be easy. Challenges to cross-border cooperative tourism strategies in EUSAIR area could be classified under four main sub-headings:

1. political sensitivity and aversion;
2. lack of financial resources;
3. lack of experience in cross-border cooperative strategies;
4. and structure of the international tourism system.

4. Transnational governance: activities and actions to be taken into consideration even after the project

Tourism is a cross-cutting activity in society; it is both result and vehicle of virtuous globalization. The most important issue is the sustainability of tourism activities. Tourism policies do not exist without political will and measures: regulatory, economic and operational.

People with disabilities represent in the project's territories a significant overlooked development challenge. The ensuring equality of rights and access for these persons will have an enormous impact on the social and economic situation in countries around the world. Countries involved in the project, even after the end of the project, must support people in cultural life, recreation, leisure, vacation and sports, and the purpose of the obligation to participate. This is as a whole global problem that must be addressed raising the quality standards of the tourism industry and precisely to overcome this problem that our Cross Border network for A&S tourism is realized.

Accessible tourism management which requires universal design within the economic, social, cultural, physical and environmental phenomena is an ethical process which everyone will have the opportunity to benefit from tourism activities as an equal and honourable. In this sense, an accessible tourism transnational governance should be established to develop an Accessibility Action Plan, involving political decision-makers, city planners and technical managers, as well as businesses and citizens in the involved territories.

The Network has the responsibility to liaise with all relevant actors and stakeholders, including public authorities and agencies, business chambers, non-profit and non-governmental associations, cultural operators and educational institutions to harness the creativity and energy which is needed to develop a coordinated and forceful plan of action to enhance accessible and sustainable tourism offers.

Universal design should be implemented to improve the state of the market for accessible tourism regulations (laws, regulations, and standards, etc.). These regulations should include social responsibility in the context of challenging and encouraging the participation of all people. In this sense, the transnational governance must take into account several factors, including infrastructure that is a key factor in all sectors of accessible tourism. In case the infrastructure is not good enough, tourists will choose shorter trips to closer destinations; if the infrastructure is satisfying, they will travel further for a longer period. Investors of accessible tourism in the involved territories have to face challenges that cover much more than just special standards regarding architecture. It is useful to involve people with disabilities as early as the planning stage of destination development, in order to exploit their first-hand experiences and suggestions during the implementation.

The action plan of accessible tourism for involved territories should be included within the scope of the tourism master plan. The relevant public and private institutions should implement the regulations and practices simultaneously and in a coordinated way in accordance with the tourism master plan. Some suggestions can be made to improve the conditions for accessible tourism in tourism sector. Based on their experience, the transnational accessible tourism destination should include:

- an accessible website,
- accessible transportation,
- accessible accommodation facilities,
- accessible catering services,
- accessible program offers,
- accessible local information,
- safe environment,
- professional service providers and staff,
- accessible touristic sites,
- self-sustainable communities,
- alternative services and tools to attract tourists with special needs,
- accessible tradition and delicious cuisine,

- development of agrotourism,
- user-friendly app and website,
- comprehensive & safe signage,
- accessible accommodation structures,
- accessible religious tourism,
- activities in order to promote current Accessible and Sustainable destination,
- mapping and creating new destinations,
- raising awareness of Accessible and Sustainable to consumers,
- raising awareness of Accessible and Sustainable tourism
- lobbying on local and national authorities for more grant opportunities on Accessible and Sustainable tourism development

In accessible tourism, the availability of professional staff, who understand the special needs of people with disabilities is a key requirement. The competence of staff members greatly improves the level of services and by increasing guest satisfaction, also contributes to a larger income. For example, tourists with disabilities like to purchase tourism services designed for them, especially when these services are labelled with a unique trademark.

For the operators of transnational accessible tourism destinations, it is important to provide wide-spectrum trainings for their staff that covers the whole structure of services. Corporate marketing experts and website designers just as much need to have a clear understanding of the needs of tourist with disabilities as facility managers and front office employees. In this sense the introduction and high quality operation of accessible services can earn important market benefits for tourism service providers in involved territories.

4.1 Proposed support services / main activities offered by the members

1. Technical expert & Policy maker missions to end-users

The personal contact and the presentation-promotion of the offered products/services of Cross Border Network of A&S tourism to end-users / beneficiaries (locals of rural areas) in individual meetings are an important step for creating collaborations. These missions can include, among

others, B2B meetings between selected members of the network and tourist industries such as owners of accommodation facilities to present, promote and match the compatible services offered by the entire network.

2. Networking & Matchmaking to expand the crossborder membership to different public and private stakeholders

The network coordinator and the Networks' managers, with the support of their advisors, will analyze the activities of the members of the network, identify and propose transnational synergies - collaborations between the members of each Countries, taking into account the offered services/products. They will also seek for networking and matchmaking with actors outside the Network.

3. Provision of Pitching & Coaching/mentoring services

The visibility of Network members' activities and their guidance for achieving their goals should be Network's priority. The relevant services should identify new business opportunities, their representation in exhibitions and their guidance for the valorization of technological innovations, new business models and their differentiation in the A&S tourism market.

4. Organization of Info days & capacity building seminars

The Networks can organize capacity building seminars/webinars and info-days informing the members about innovative greenhouse technologies and financing schemes at regular basis (e.g. every 4 months).

5. Mapping activities in neraby regions as well

The network must involve and direct neighboring Countries in the mapping activity in order to develop new accessible and sustainable destinations

6. Transfer of specific know-how related to the reception of travelers with special needs

In the network every partner with the support of local stakeholder have to transfer best practice in with the aim to with the aim of welcoming tourists in the best possible way and improving the offer

7. Development of other tourist itineraries in the region

The Network have to continue to develop and organize new itineraries over the entire regions in the involved territories

8. Other offered services to members:

- ✓ Interactive European framework for the creation of innovative projects.
- ✓ Sharing success stories from different actors.
- ✓ Advice and technical suggestions.
- ✓ Provide a database of European actors.
- ✓ Offer/propose innovative tools for tourism management
- ✓ Promotions of members' activities and products.
- ✓ Financial advices and suggestions of financial mechanism.
- ✓ Chance to share opinion with policy makers – organization of consultations.

5. Marketing policies on the territories and directly on the market

The governance scheme should define the business and communication strategy in line with the Cross Border Network for A&S tourism's objectives in order to increase the number of the members and attract more investors.

A marketing plan should be elaborated identifying potential market segments, customers and new members and define available promotion approaches and channels which could contribute to product/services valorisation.

Additionally, the information, communication, awareness raising and dissemination activities will be based on a communication plan. This plan will be the cornerstone of all communication related activities and it will be internally updated at regular basis by the communication officer who will be a member from the management team of the Cross Border Network for A&S tourism.

Milestones of the Joint Communication Plan are the following:

- I. Establishment of the network's identity (Logo, presentation template etc.);
- II. Define the network's communication approach towards its members and related key stakeholders/players;
- III. Establish the joint communication channels and means;
- IV. Define and describe relevant communication material;

- V. Direct and online marketing campaign addressed to international and national tourists with special needs;
- VI. Engagement the public about the newly created destinations that accommodate people with disabilities;
- VII. Creation of the sensation and feeling that finally people with disabilities are hear and their problems regarding accessibility to tourism are being addresses;
- VIII. Offering knowledge together with logging. Creating a profound experience where nature meets heritage, and hospitality meets accessibility;
- IX. Marketing campaign on social media in order to promote created destination within PAST4Future;
- X. Establish the joint communication channels and means;
- XI. Define and describe relevant communication material.

Key questions that need to be addressed will include:

- Who are the Cross Border Network for A&S tourism stakeholders?
- Why is it important to communicate with the Cross Border Network for A&S tourism stakeholders?
- What needs to be communicated to the Cross Border Network for A&S tourism stakeholders?
- When should this communication take place?
- What communication mechanisms should be employed?
- What are the key challenges for effective communication?
- How can these challenges be overcome?

5.1 Potential members.

In the involved territories the main stakeholder groups/potential members for knowledge-intensive Cross Border Network for A&S tourism should be general public and SMEs/policy makers of the tourism.

However, other Key stakeholders can be large companies (etc. agro-food companies, Agro-tourism guest houses, restaurants, bars...), Research institutes, national and regional policy makers,

development agencies, tourist associations, incubators, NGOs and other supporting structures, Municipalities, Industry Influencers, Local governments, Labs, regional development agencies, business associations and chambers.

Cross Border Network for A&S tourism should present accurate, meaningful and actionable information to a highly diversified audience. It is therefore important to acknowledge the difference between various stakeholder groups and tailor communication to the needs of particular group(s).

5.2 Online Market place

An online-platform, facilitating an effective communication and the creation of synergies and collaborations at transnational level should be created. This platform will form the basis for all communication within the network and would be the agreed basis for information sharing and dissemination. Failure to communicate effectively leads to delays in collaborative action, reduces the quality of shared information and thus hinders the development of the network.

5.3 Other Communication aspects to be taken into consideration

The Communication with stakeholders and the members of the Cross Border Network for A&S tourism should be occurred on a regular basis. Communication will be elaborated taking into account that members require daily attention and others that may only need passive communication every few months. Web-enabled solutions allow for a constant flow of up-to-date information to a wide variety of stakeholders (e.g., customized network web pages depending on a stakeholder group).

- Communication routines will be developed with different methods and will be used to communicate with different stakeholders. A selection of specific communication mechanisms includes newsletters, Annual Reports, emails to stakeholders, interactive web portals; formal and informal dialogue (e.g., meetings) will be elaborated.
- Communication with network stakeholders should be based on a clearly defined communication plan and follows agreed timeline.

- Each Network should have a communication officer (This role can be given to one of the advisors).
- The development of a common brand (including the visual identity of the Cross Border Network for A&S tourism) should be developed, presenting the network at national and international conferences and exhibitions, preparing press releases and giving interviews.
- Media events and press releases will be used for communicating with the media and the outside world. Media events will be combined with Cross Border Network for A&S tourism workshops or other network events.
- Direct and offline Marketing;
- Newspaper and Radio Advertisements;
- Business Cards;
- Visit / Create Events;
- Business Stand;
- Use Word of Mouth;
- Cold-Calling;
- Online Marketing;
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO);
- Search Engine Marketing (SEM);
- Social Media Marketing;
- Pay-Per-Click (PPC) Ads;
- Affiliate Marketing;
- Influencer Marketing;
- Blogging;
- Video and content Marketing;
- Online meetings with stakeholders;
- CBN of Accessible and Sustainable tourism branding.

For the early years of its operation, the Cross Border Network for A&S tourism can make use of the communication plan elaborated in the context of the P.A.S.T. 4 FUTURE project.

5.4 Sustainability Factors

1. Grants - Funding Schemes

The funding of the Cross Border Network for A&S tourism is one of the main factors for its sustainability. The budget of the Network should be exclusively dedicated to the governance, its operational activities and the associated costs in terms of salaries and non-staff costs. Once the Network has a dedicated team to support the member's activities (Cross Border Network for A&S tourism Coordinator, Cross Border Network for A&S tourism Team etc.), sources of funding are required for its operation. These resources could be:

- Venture Capital;
- Membership fees;
- Business Angels;
- Funds from banks;
- Public funding (including operational programs);
- European Funding;
- Fee-based services (services offered to network members or outside);
- Private sources of funding as in-kind (non-cash) contributions (e.g. seconded staff from members).

2. Promotional activities

The governance team shall define the business and communication strategy in line with the Cross Border Network for A&S tourism objectives in order to increase the number of the members involved and attract more investors contributing to the funding of its activities and its operation.

3. Evaluation of performance indicators

The assessment of the performance of the Cross Border Network for A&S tourism should be based on a review of defined quantitative and qualitative indicators addressing categories such as:

- Formalization of economic, technological & scientific objectives;
- Evolution of the Cross Border Network for A&S tourism perimeter (critical mass);
- Number & quality of the actors involved;
- Business-research-training synergies;
- Qualities of governance;

- International visibility & international projects;
- Territorial anchorage;
- Presence of funders;
- Human Resources&Training.

4. Follow-Up activities

The partners of the P.A.S.T.4FUTURE project should proceed with the elaboration of special agreements (this is planned to be undertaken during project implementation) aiming at ensuring the continuation of their cooperation after the project's end as well as their interaction at transnational level within the Cross Border Network for A&S tourism. These activities should focus on the Accessible and Sustainable tourism, setting specific set of actions and framework that will foster the continuation of its successful operation. The Partners of the project should establish special written agreements, in order to ensure their cooperation at transnational level. Among others, the Agreement should include the responsibilities and the privileges of Cross Border Network for A&S tourism's members and the terms of the membership including details about member's fee, participation in network's regular meetings, conferences, training seminars etc.

5. Links with other Existing Network of the tourism sector

In order to guarantee the sustainability of the Cross Border Network for A&S tourism it is important to link it to existing networks. So the Cross Border Network for A&S tourism should identify any existing network and create synergies and collaboration with them.

6. Number of members & Fees for membership in order to maintain the network activities

One of the main sustainability factors of every network is the number of the registered members that need to be reached. A critical mass for the early years of its operation should be 30 members per Network (National level) of involved territories. Once the Cross Border Network for A&S tourism maintains the critical mass of the satisfied members for a couple of years (or increase the number of them), will be able to request a specific membership fee for the provision of tailored services to the members.

5.5 Performance indicators

The assessment of the performance of the Cross Border Network for A&S tourism should be based on a review of defined performance (quantitative and qualitative) indicators such as:

- Total number of members registered in the Cross Border Network for A&S tourism;
- Total number of projects undertaken by Cross Border Network for A&S tourism;
- Number of collaborative projects undertaken by Cross Border Network for A&S tourism;
- Number of companies/municipalities involved in projects;
- Presence of investors;
- Formalization of economic, technological and scientific objectives;
- Number of jobs created;
- Number of companies involved in collaborative projects;
- Number of research-technology bodies working in network projects;
- Number of new members per 6 months;
- Number of questions asked in the chat zone;
- Frequency of the use of the databases;
- Participation in Cross Border Network for A&S tourism meetings & working groups;
- Annual satisfaction survey to members;
- Tourist Satisfaction (periodic survey);
- Number of stakeholders reached (local/regional/national authorities, NGOs, professors & SME);
- Initiatives undertaken by Cross Border Network for A&S tourism;
- New itineraries created;
- Number of new investors in the region;
- Number of new businesses in the region (less than 1 year of operation);
- Number of national tour operators operating in the region;
- Number of international tour operators operating in the region;
- Number of articles about the region;
- Number of TV coverage;
- Number of new job opportunities;

- Number of Start-ups created in the region;
- Register of complaints by tourists;
- Books of impressions for tourists;
- Number of check-ins in the region;
- Number of Donors in the region;
- Number of public events in the region.

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Partnership

- Lead Partner: Ministry of Economy and Finance - Republic of Albania – Albania <http://www.financa.gov.al/>
- Partner 2: GAL Molise towards 2000 – Italy <http://www.moliseversoil2000.it/>
- Partner 3: ESCOOP - European Social Cooperative - Cooperativa Sociale Europea – sce – Italy <http://www.escoop.eu/en/>
- Partner 4: Municipality of Gravina in Puglia – Italy <https://www.comune.gravina.ba.it/>
- Partner 5: Municipality of Malesi e Madhe – Albania <http://bashkiamalesiemadhe.gov.al/>
- Partner 6: Municipality of Tuzi – Montenegro <https://tuzi.org.me/>

Associated Partners

- PA 1: ITRIA - Intercultural and Accessible Religious Tourist Itineraries - Italy <http://www.itria.org/>
- PA 2: Alta Murgia National Park – Italy <https://www.parcoaltamurgia.gov.it/>

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