



CULTMED

Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

WP3 - D3.1

TRAINING MODULES



CYPRUS
SUSTAINABLE
TOURISM
INITIATIVE



Co-funded by the European Union

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



Table of Content

1. Introduction	3
2. Methodological Approach.....	3
3. Overview of the Training Modules	3
4. Piloting and Validation Process	4
5. Acknowledgements	4

1. Introduction

Work Package 3 (WP3), coordinated by **ARCES**, focuses on the development of training modules aimed at strengthening sustainability competences in the field of cultural tourism. The work contributes to the overall objective of promoting more responsible, inclusive, and environmentally conscious practices across the cultural tourism sector.

The training modules included in this deliverable are the result of a collaborative process involving all project partners (ASPON, ReadLab, Gelnnova, E&D, CSTI, ANHER). This collective effort ensured that the content reflects different territorial realities, professional needs, and cultural contexts.

This section introduces the methodological framework and overall structure adopted for the development of the training materials. The complete training modules are presented in the following sections of this deliverable.

2. Methodological Approach

The development of the training modules followed a structured, competence-based, and participatory methodology.

The design process was grounded in the evidence and needs identified in WP2, ensuring that the content responds to real challenges in sustainable cultural tourism. The modules were aligned with the **GreenComp**, integrating key sustainability competences such as systems thinking, responsibility, and active citizenship.

The training approach was designed to be **interactive and practice-oriented**, combining theoretical inputs with applied learning tools. Each module includes educational resources such as quizzes, short educational videos in different language, and gamified activities, supporting active engagement and knowledge retention. Each of these interactive materials are available in the Cultmed Platform and its Youtube Page. External expert was involved in the development of multimedia content, particularly short educational videos.

A strong **collaborative development process** was adopted, with all partners contributing to the drafting, revision, and validation of the content, ensuring its relevance across different national and sectoral contexts.

In addition, **accessibility** was a core design principle throughout the development phase. Beyond multilingual elements and inclusive language, all visual materials were enhanced with **alternative text descriptions (alt text)** to ensure usability for visually impaired learners.

3. Overview of the Training Modules

Four training modules were developed within WP3, each addressing a key dimension of sustainable cultural tourism:

- Sustainable cultural events, including reference to standards such as ISO 20121
- Sustainable transformation of museums, galleries, and cultural institutions into greener destinations

- Sustainable management and preservation practices for archaeological sites under tourism pressure
- Sustainable cultural tourism development in villages and rural areas

Each module is designed for specific target groups, including cultural operators, site managers, local authorities, and SMEs. The structure of the modules combines theoretical foundations, practical examples, and applied activities to support real-world implementation.

The full content of each training module is provided in the subsequent sections of this deliverable.

4. Piloting and Validation Process

A small-scale piloting phase was conducted in all partner countries to test and validate the training modules.

Each pilot involved participants from relevant stakeholder groups, such as cultural tourism professionals, local authorities, and sector practitioners. Feedback was collected through structured questionnaires and qualitative input.

The piloting phase confirmed the overall relevance, clarity, and usability of the training materials. It also provided valuable insights for refinement, which were integrated into the final version of the modules included in this deliverable.

5. Acknowledgements

This publication was made possible through the valuable contribution of two experts from the Project Management Team (PMT) of the ARCES Association (Italy), namely Mr. Alessandro Pernice and Ms. Melinda Terranova, representing the CULTMED project (co-funded by Creative Europe).

We sincerely thank them for their significant input and for the logistical support that enabled the completion of this study. We are also grateful to the project partners (PPs) for their insightful contributions and for sharing their experience and practices.

Special appreciation goes to our colleague Ms. Elena Michael, Manager at Aspon Consulting Ltd., for her thoughtful feedback, critical review, and careful proofreading of this publication.

Above all, we extend our gratitude to all partners who participated in this research and generously shared their perspectives and vision.

Thanks to the openness and engagement of all contributors, this publication includes a set of training modules that we believe will inspire readers and meaningfully support the development of their skills.



TRAINING MODULE 1

HOW TO ORGANISE SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL EVENTS BASED ON ISO STANDARDS (ISO-20121)



CYPRUS
SUSTAINABLE
TOURISM
INITIATIVE



Co-funded by the European Union

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Table of content

Executive Summary	8
EN.....	8
EL.....	8
IT.....	9
ES.....	9
PT	10
1. INTRODUCTION.....	11
1.1 Purpose	11
1.2 Methodological Approach.....	11
1.3 Target Groups.....	12
1.4 Structure of the Module:	12
2. EXPECTED OUTCOMES	13
3. MODULE SUBTOPICS (UNITS).....	13
3.1 Unit 1 - Understanding Sustainable Event Management.....	13
3.1.1 Learning Objective	13
3.1.2 Key Concepts	14
3.1.2.1 The Three Pillars of Sustainability.....	14
3.1.2.2 Cultural Sustainability: The Emerging Fourth Pillar	15
3.1.2.3 Cultural Identity & Community Participation	16
3.1.2.3 ISO 20121: Sustainable Event Management System.....	17
3.1.2.4 GreenComp: The European Sustainability Competence Framework.....	19
3.1.3 Case Studies	21
3.1.6 Key Takeaways.....	23
3.2 Unit 2- Planning a Sustainable Cultural Event.....	23
3.2.1 Learning Objective	23
3.2.2 Key Concepts	24
3.2.2.1 Setting Measurable Sustainability Goals & KPIs	24
3.2.6 Key Takeaways.....	30
3.3 Unit 3 – Implementing, Monitoring & Improving Sustainability.....	30
3.3.1 Learning Objective	30
3.3.2 Why Monitoring & Improvement Matter	30



Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

3.3.3 Key Takeaways.....	32
ANNEXES	33
Annex 1 - Glossary of Terms.....	33
Annex 2: Matching Pillars	34
Annex 3: List of KPIs (examples)	34
Annex 4: 5-Step Framework for Planning Sustainable Cultural Events.....	36
Annex 5: Sustainability Monitoring & Improvement Worksheet	39
Annex 6: Interactive activities	40

Executive Summary

EN

The “Training Module 1: How to Organise Sustainable Cultural Events Based on ISO Standards (ISO 20121)” introduces a practical approach to planning and delivering cultural events in a more sustainable way. It is based on the ISO 20121 framework and the principles of sustainable cultural tourism and helps participants understand how sustainability applies in real cultural contexts, not only in environmental terms but also in relation to communities, local economies and cultural heritage. Through a combination of explanations, case studies and interactive activities, the module supports learners in building both knowledge and practical skills that can be applied in their own work.

The module is designed for cultural event organisers, local authorities and professionals involved in cultural tourism. It is structured around three main stages of the event lifecycle: (i) understanding key sustainability concepts, (ii) planning sustainable cultural events and (iii) monitoring and improving their performance over time. Participants learn how to set clear goals, define relevant KPIs, engage stakeholders and apply responsible practices in areas such as accessibility, communication and resource management. By linking planning with continuous evaluation, the module supports the organisation of sustainable cultural events that create lasting value for communities while respecting cultural identity and local context.

EL

Η «Εκπαιδευτική Ενότητα 1: Πώς να οργανώσετε βιώσιμες πολιτιστικές εκδηλώσεις βάσει προτύπων ISO (ISO 20121)» εισάγει μια πρακτική προσέγγιση στον σχεδιασμό και την υλοποίηση πολιτιστικών εκδηλώσεων με πιο βιώσιμο τρόπο. Βασίζεται στο πλαίσιο ISO 20121 και στις αρχές του βιώσιμου πολιτιστικού τουρισμού και βοηθά τους συμμετέχοντες να κατανοήσουν πώς εφαρμόζεται η βιωσιμότητα σε πραγματικά πολιτιστικά περιβάλλοντα, όχι μόνο σε περιβαλλοντικό επίπεδο αλλά και σε σχέση με τις κοινότητες, τις τοπικές οικονομίες και την πολιτιστική κληρονομιά. Μέσα από έναν συνδυασμό επεξηγήσεων, μελετών περίπτωσης και διαδραστικών δραστηριοτήτων, η ενότητα υποστηρίζει τους εκπαιδευόμενους στην ανάπτυξη τόσο γνώσεων όσο και πρακτικών δεξιοτήτων που μπορούν να εφαρμοστούν στην επαγγελματική τους δραστηριότητα.

Η ενότητα απευθύνεται σε διοργανωτές πολιτιστικών εκδηλώσεων, τοπικές αρχές και επαγγελματίες που δραστηριοποιούνται στον τομέα του πολιτιστικού τουρισμού. Είναι δομημένη γύρω από τρία βασικά στάδια του κύκλου ζωής μιας εκδήλωσης: (i) κατανόηση βασικών εννοιών βιωσιμότητας, (ii) σχεδιασμός βιώσιμων πολιτιστικών εκδηλώσεων και (iii) παρακολούθηση και βελτίωση της απόδοσής τους με την πάροδο του χρόνου. Οι συμμετέχοντες μαθαίνουν πώς να θέτουν σαφείς στόχους, να ορίζουν σχετικούς δείκτες απόδοσης (KPIs), να εμπλέκουν τα ενδιαφερόμενα μέρη και να εφαρμόζουν υπεύθυνες πρακτικές σε τομείς όπως η προσβασιμότητα, η επικοινωνία και η διαχείριση πόρων. Μέσω της σύνδεσης του σχεδιασμού με τη συνεχή αξιολόγηση, η ενότητα υποστηρίζει την οργάνωση βιώσιμων πολιτιστικών εκδηλώσεων που δημιουργούν διαρκή αξία για τις κοινότητες, με σεβασμό στην πολιτιστική ταυτότητα και το τοπικό πλαίσιο.

IT

Il “Modulo Formativo 1: Come Organizzare Eventi Culturali Sostenibili Basati sugli Standard ISO (ISO 20121)” presenta un approccio pratico per la pianificazione e l'erogazione di eventi culturali in modo più sostenibile. Si basa sul quadro operativo ISO 20121 e sui principi del turismo culturale sostenibile e aiuta i partecipanti a comprendere in che modo la sostenibilità si applica ai contesti culturali reali, non solo in termini ambientali, ma anche in relazione alle comunità, alle economie locali e al patrimonio culturale. Attraverso una commistione di spiegazioni, casi di studio e attività interattive, il modulo supporta gli studenti nell'acquisizione sia di nozioni che di competenze pratiche che possono essere applicate al proprio lavoro.

Il modulo è pensato per organizzatori di eventi culturali, autorità locali e professionisti impegnati nel turismo culturale. Si struttura in seno alle tre fasi principali del ciclo di vita dell'evento: (i) comprensione dei concetti chiave della sostenibilità, (ii) pianificazione di eventi culturali sostenibili e (iii) supervisione e perfezionamento della propria prestazione nel corso del tempo. I partecipanti imparano in che modo fissare degli obiettivi chiari, stabilire Indicatori Chiave di Prestazione (ICP) adeguati, coinvolgere i portatori di interesse e applicare delle procedure affidabili ad ambiti quali l'accessibilità, la comunicazione e la gestione delle risorse. Unendo la pianificazione a una valutazione continua, il modulo supporta l'organizzazione di eventi culturali sostenibili che generano un valore duraturo per le comunità rispettando l'identità culturale e il contesto locale.

ES

El «Módulo de formación 1: Cómo organizar eventos culturales sostenibles basados en las normas ISO (ISO 20121)» presenta un enfoque práctico para planificar y llevar a cabo eventos culturales de una manera más sostenible. Se basa en el marco de la norma ISO 20121 y en los principios del turismo cultural sostenible, y ayuda a los participantes a comprender cómo se aplica la sostenibilidad en contextos culturales reales, no solo en términos medioambientales, sino también en relación con las comunidades, las economías locales y el patrimonio cultural. Mediante una combinación de explicaciones, casos prácticos y actividades interactivas, el módulo ayuda a los alumnos a adquirir tanto conocimientos como habilidades prácticas que pueden aplicar en su propio trabajo.

El módulo está diseñado para organizadores de eventos culturales, autoridades locales y profesionales del turismo cultural. Se estructura en torno a tres etapas principales del ciclo de vida de un evento: (i) comprensión de los conceptos clave de la sostenibilidad, (ii) planificación de eventos culturales sostenibles y (iii) seguimiento y mejora de su rendimiento a lo largo del tiempo. Los participantes aprenden a establecer objetivos claros, definir indicadores clave de rendimiento (KPI) relevantes, involucrar a las partes interesadas y aplicar prácticas responsables en ámbitos como la accesibilidad, la comunicación y la gestión de recursos. Al vincular la planificación con la evaluación continua, el módulo apoya la organización de eventos culturales sostenibles que crean un valor duradero para las comunidades, respetando al mismo tiempo la identidad cultural y el contexto local.



Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

PT

O «Módulo de Formação 1: Como Organizar Eventos Culturais Sustentáveis com Base nas Normas ISO (ISO 20121)» apresenta uma abordagem prática para planear e realizar eventos culturais de forma mais sustentável. Baseia-se no quadro da norma ISO 20121 e nos princípios do turismo cultural sustentável, ajudando os participantes a compreender como a sustentabilidade se aplica em contextos culturais reais, não só em termos ambientais, mas também em relação às comunidades, às economias locais e ao património cultural. Através de uma combinação de explicações, estudos de caso e atividades interativas, o módulo apoia os formandos na aquisição de conhecimentos e competências práticas que podem ser aplicadas no seu próprio trabalho.

O módulo foi concebido para organizadores de eventos culturais, autoridades locais e profissionais envolvidos no turismo cultural. Está estruturado em torno de três fases principais do ciclo de vida do evento: (i) compreensão dos conceitos-chave de sustentabilidade, (ii) planeamento de eventos culturais sustentáveis e (iii) monitorização e melhoria do seu desempenho ao longo do tempo. Os participantes aprendem a definir objetivos claros, a estabelecer indicadores-chave de desempenho (KPI) relevantes, a envolver as partes interessadas e a aplicar práticas responsáveis em áreas como a acessibilidade, à comunicação e a gestão de recursos. Ao associar o planeamento à avaliação contínua, o módulo apoia a organização de eventos culturais sustentáveis que criam valor duradouro para as comunidades, respeitando simultaneamente a identidade cultural e o contexto local.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable event management refers to planning and delivering cultural events in ways that reduce environmental impact, support local communities and strengthen cultural value. Cultural events (i.e. festivals, performances, exhibitions) often generate waste, consume resources and place pressures on local areas, making sustainability increasingly essential.

This module introduces the principles of **ISO 20121: Sustainable Event Management**, offering a clear, practical framework for integrating sustainability into every stage of an event. Developed within the **CultMed – Sustainable Cultural Tourism on the Mediterranean** project (Creative Europe Programme), the module aims to equip cultural event organisers, local authorities and stakeholders with the knowledge and tools to design more responsible and community-oriented events.

Training is delivered through a **blended methodology**, including short instructional videos, practical templates, case studies, quizzes and a gamification activity. Through this learning process, participants will gain both an understanding of sustainability concepts and the ability to apply ISO 20121 in real cultural event settings.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this module is to equip participants with the knowledge and practical tools needed to integrate sustainability into the planning, organisation and evaluation of cultural events. By introducing the principles of **ISO 20121: Sustainable Event Management**, the module supports event organisers, cultural organisations and local authorities in adopting responsible practices that minimise environmental impact, enhance social value and strengthen local economies.

Aligned with the broader goals of the **CultMed** project, this module contributes to the transition toward more sustainable cultural tourism models across the Mediterranean. It promotes approaches that reduce resource consumption, support inclusivity and accessibility and encourage active collaboration with local communities and stakeholders.

Through practical examples, templates, videos, quizzes and interactive learning activities, this training module aims to help participants:

- understand how sustainability applies to cultural events
- apply ISO 20121 principles in real event contexts
- design measurable sustainability objectives, and
- embed responsible practices throughout the event lifecycle.

Ultimately, the purpose of this module is to empower learners to organise cultural events that are not only successful and meaningful, but also aligned with long-term sustainability goals and the values of community-centred cultural tourism.

1.2 Methodological Approach

The development of this training module follows the shared WP3 methodology, grounded in

CultMed's participatory, competence-based and practice-oriented approach. The training uses a **blended learning format**, combining traditional materials with digital and interactive tools to support flexibility and practical engagement.

Learners will interact with:

- clear explanations of ISO 20121 and sustainability concepts
- case studies
- practical templates and planning tools
- short instructional videos
- gamified activities
- mini-quizzes and reflection questions

The written module forms the basis for the audiovisual materials and for the piloting activities under WP3. During the piloting phase and the WP4 capacity-building workshops in all partner countries, a **flipped and challenge-based learning approach** will be used. Specifically, participants will review materials in advance and use workshop time for practical exercises, collaborative tasks and real-life problem-solving.

A comprehensive set of interactive activities and games supporting all training modules is provided in **Annex 6: Interactive activities**.

1.3 Target Groups

This training module is designed for professionals and organisations involved in the planning, management and delivery of cultural events across the Mediterranean. It supports both **piloting activities under WP3** and the broader **capacity-building workshops under WP4**, which will be implemented in all partner countries, each focusing on a specific module.

The **primary target groups** of this particular training module include:

- **Cultural event organisers** (festivals, performances, community events, cultural fairs)
- **Local and regional authorities** involved in cultural planning or tourism development
- **Tourism boards and destination management organisations (DMOs)**
- **Event management companies and cultural SMEs**
- **Managers of cultural venues, heritage sites and public cultural spaces**

The **secondary target groups** of this particular training module include:

- **NGOs and community groups** active in cultural or environmental initiatives
- **Professionals from creative and cultural industries**
- **Students and early-career practitioners** in culture, tourism or event management
- **Volunteers or support staff** involved in cultural event delivery

1.4 Structure of the Module:

This training module is structured around the ISO 20121 Sustainable Event Management System and the European Commission's GreenComp Framework, which together provide the conceptual, managerial and competence-based backbone of the learning process.

ISO 20121 offers the *process logic* for the module, following the Plan–Do–Check–Act (PDCA) cycle, while GreenComp provides the *competence orientation*, emphasising systems thinking, responsibility, futures thinking and collaborative problem-solving. These frameworks ensure that participants do not only learn *what* sustainable cultural events are, but also *how* to think, plan, collaborate and evaluate sustainability in practice.

The module is organised into three Units, each aligned with a stage of the sustainability management process:

- **Unit 1 – Understanding Sustainable Event Management (PDCA: conceptual foundation):** Introduces sustainability in cultural events, the Four Pillars (environmental, social, economic and cultural), and the relevance of ISO 20121, GreenComp, and Cultural Identity & Community Participation. This Unit sets the strategic groundwork for all later activities.
- **Unit 2 – Planning a Sustainable Cultural Event (PDCA: Plan–Do):** Translates the concepts of Unit 1 into practical planning tools: goal-setting, SMART objectives, KPI development, stakeholder engagement strategies and responsible budgeting. This is the “applied” planning stage where participants practise the competences required by ISO 20121 and GreenComp.
- **Unit 3 – Implementing, Monitoring and Improving Sustainability (PDCA: Check–Act):** Focuses on monitoring sustainability performance and identifying improvement actions. A real case study (TIFF Festival) is used for applied learning, allowing participants to experience how evaluation informs continuous improvement.

2. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- **Understand** the core principles of sustainable cultural event management and how ISO 20121 and the PDCA cycle support continuous improvement.
- **Set measurable sustainability goals** and **define KPIs** tailored to cultural events in Mediterranean contexts.
- **Identify and engage stakeholders** using simple mapping tools and collaborative problem-solving methods.
- **Plan sustainability actions** related to budgeting, procurement, accessibility and communication.
- **Monitor and evaluate performance**, using case-based evidence to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Apply practical tools** to real or fictional cultural event scenarios.

3. MODULE SUBTOPICS (UNITS)

3.1 Unit 1 - Understanding Sustainable Event Management

3.1.1 Learning Objective

Learners will understand the foundational principles of sustainable event management, including the three pillars of sustainability, the ISO 20121 Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle, and the GreenComp competences that support systems thinking, responsible decision-making, and stakeholder collaboration. By the end of the unit, participants will be able to recognise the value of applying sustainability frameworks to cultural events and identify opportunities for

improvement in their local context.

3.1.2 Key Concepts

3.1.2.1 The Three Pillars of Sustainability

Sustainable event management is grounded in the well-established framework of the Three Pillars of Sustainability: environmental, social and economic responsibility. These pillars provide an integrated way to evaluate how cultural events influence local communities, heritage environments and long-term development. They are widely used in sustainability education and event management practice, offering organisers a practical structure for designing events that are both responsible and meaningful. This model (i.e. Three Pillars of Sustainability) are widely recognised across international sustainability frameworks, including **ISO 20121** and the **UN 2030 Agenda** and provides a clear and integrated foundation for understanding the impacts of cultural events and the long-term value they can create.^{1 2}



Figure 1: Three (3) pillars of sustainability, Enel Group³

To fully understand this framework, it is useful to explore how each pillar contributes to a balanced and responsible approach to event planning:

¹ Enel Group. *The Three Pillars of Sustainability: Environmental, Social and Economic*. Retrieved from: <https://www.enel.com/learning-hub/sustainable-development/three-pillars-sustainability>

² Auaha. *Sustainability in Events: The Three Pillars of Sustainability*. Retrieved from: <https://www.auaha.co.nz/sustainability-in-events/>

Environmental Sustainability

Environmentally sustainable cultural events integrate measures such as:

- implementing environmentally preferred procurement and resource-efficient infrastructure,
- adopting circular economy principles (reuse, recycling, reduction),
- ensuring the protection of natural and heritage-sensitive sites,
- promoting low-carbon mobility solutions for participants and visitors, and
- monitoring environmental indicators throughout the event lifecycle.

Social Sustainability

A socially sustainable cultural event:

- ensures accessibility and inclusivity for all social groups, including marginalised or vulnerable populations,
- engages local stakeholders through participatory planning processes,
- respects and promotes local cultural traditions and identities,
- fosters safe, welcoming environments that encourage social cohesion, and
- generates opportunities for learning, volunteerism, and civic engagement.

Economic Sustainability

Economically sustainable cultural events:

- adopt transparent and responsible financial planning aligned with sustainability goals,
- strengthen local value chains and prioritise local procurement,
- create stable opportunities for local employment and skills development,
- contribute to year-round economic resilience rather than seasonal peaks, and
- ensure that financial decisions support the preservation of cultural and environmental assets.

Thus, the three pillars of sustainability are mutually reinforcing and must be addressed holistically. ***A cultural event cannot be considered sustainable if it achieves environmental gains while excluding local communities, nor can it generate economic value at the expense of cultural heritage or social trust.*** Sustainable cultural events integrate environmental protection, community wellbeing and economic resilience in equal measure.

This integrated approach aligns directly with the vision of the CultMed project, which promotes cultural tourism that is authentic, community-centred, environmentally responsible and future-oriented across the Mediterranean.

3.1.2.2 Cultural Sustainability: The Emerging Fourth Pillar

In addition to the well-established environmental, social and economic pillars, contemporary sustainability frameworks increasingly recognise ***culture as a fourth pillar of sustainable development.*** Cultural sustainability refers to the protection, transmission and enhancement of cultural heritage, creative expression, identity and community values, ensuring that development does not erode the cultural foundations that give meaning and cohesion to societies.

This perspective is widely supported in international policy. The global organization United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) formally declared ***culture the fourth pillar of sustainable development*** in 2010, arguing that sustainable development models must include cultural rights, heritage safeguarding and support for creativity alongside environmental and socio-economic goals.⁴ UNESCO similarly emphasises that culture is a

⁴ UCLG (2010). *Culture: Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development*. United Cities and Local Governments.

driver and enabler of sustainability, essential for community resilience, social inclusion and responsible tourism.

For cultural events, this means that sustainability is not only about minimising environmental impacts or strengthening local economies, but it also requires:

- **safeguarding local cultural heritage and traditions,**
- **ensuring respectful and ethical cultural representation,**
- **fostering intergenerational knowledge exchange, and**
- **enabling communities to shape how their culture is shared with visitors.**

To help learners consolidate the four pillars of sustainability before moving into real examples, a short matching activity is provided.

Participants are invited to complete the **Pillar Matching Exercise** (see **Annex 2: Matching Pillars**), where they match short real-life situations with the correct sustainability pillar. This quick activity serves as a warm-up that enables learners to distinguish between different sustainability dimensions.

3.1.2.3 Cultural Identity & Community Participation

Cultural events are deeply connected to the identity, memory and social fabric of the communities that host them. For this reason, **cultural identity and community participation** form a central component of sustainable event management. In the Mediterranean context, where heritage, traditions and local narratives play a defining role, these elements are not only desirable but essential for ensuring that events are meaningful, respectful and beneficial.^{5 6}

Cultural identity encompasses the traditions, values creative expressions and heritage that shape how communities understand themselves. Events such as festivals, exhibitions and local celebrations act as platforms where identity is performed, shared and transmitted across generations. Sustainable event management therefore requires that organisers consider how event design, programming and communication influence the preservation and expression of cultural identity. This includes acknowledging the cultural significance of event venues, respecting traditional practices and ensuring that heritage elements are presented accurately and ethically.

Community participation is equally fundamental. Sustainable cultural events cannot be designed in isolation; they require the active involvement of the people who live, work and hold cultural connections in the area. Participatory approaches (i.e. stakeholder consultations, community workshops, co-creation sessions and volunteer engagement) strengthen legitimacy, improve cultural relevance and foster a sense of shared ownership.

⁵ UNESCO. *Culture & Sustainable Development*. Available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-development/culture>

⁶ UNWTO. *Sustainable Development of Tourism*. Available at: <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development>

When communities are involved in decision-making, events become more inclusive, context-sensitive and aligned with local expectations.⁷

In practical terms, community participation contributes to sustainability in several ways:

Cultural relevance

Local knowledge helps ensure that the event reflects authentic cultural values rather than externally imposed narratives.

Social cohesion

Community involvement fosters trust, dialogue, and collaboration among residents.

Accessibility and inclusion

Local stakeholders can identify barriers faced by diverse groups and propose appropriate solutions.

Environmental stewardship

Residents often possess valuable knowledge about heritage-sensitive areas and local ecosystems.

Fair economic distribution

Engaging local businesses, artisans and creative professionals supports economic sustainability.

For cultural events, the interplay between identity and participation creates a strong foundation for long-term sustainability. Events rooted in local cultural realities and shaped collaboratively with the community contribute to the preservation of heritage, strengthen social bonds and enrich the visitor experience in ways that are respectful and authentic.

3.1.2.3 ISO 20121: Sustainable Event Management System

ISO 20121 is an **international standard** that provides organisations with a structured management system for integrating sustainability across all stages of event planning, delivery, and legacy. Rather than serving as a checklist, it functions as a holistic framework that helps event organisers identify, manage and continuously improve the social, environmental and economic impacts of their events.⁸

The standard applies to **all types and scales** of events (*i.e. from small cultural gatherings and community festivals to international mega-events*) making it highly relevant for Mediterranean cultural tourism contexts.

Cultural events operate at the intersection of heritage, community identity and local economies. ISO 20121 supports organisers in:

- embedding sustainability into decision-making and governance structures,
- managing resource use (energy, water, materials) responsibly,
- strengthening stakeholder participation, including local communities,
- ensuring accessibility, inclusion and ethical practices,

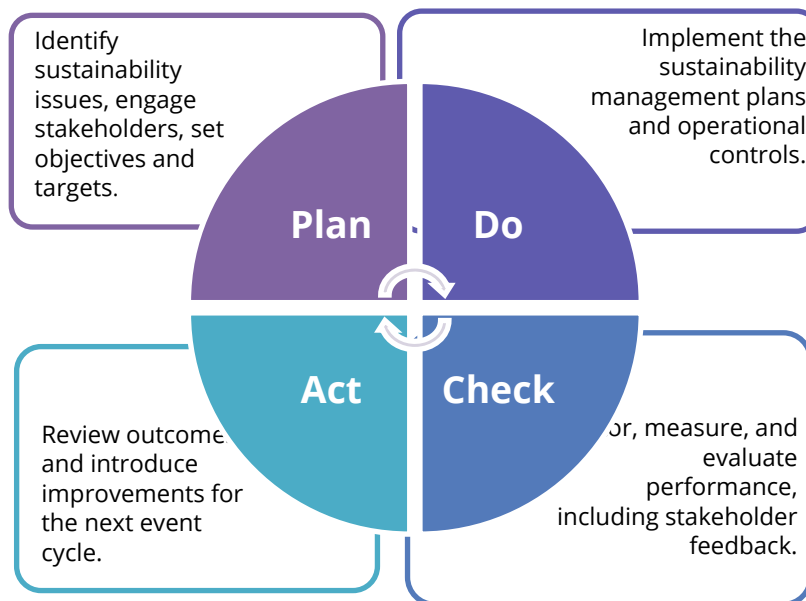
⁷ European Commission. *European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage*. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/5a9c3144-80f1-11e9-9f05-01aa75ed71a1>

⁸ ISO (2024). *ISO 20121 – Sustainable Events – Specification with guidance for use*. International Organization for Standardization. <https://www.iso.org/standard/86389.html>

- leaving a positive social and cultural legacy, and,
- ensuring accountability through transparent reporting and improvement cycles.

With the **2024 revision**, the standard places even greater emphasis on *social legacy, inclusivity and diverse means of demonstrating conformity*, making it more accessible for smaller cultural organisations that may not pursue full third-party certification.

ISO 20121 is grounded in a continuous improvement logic structured around a cycle comparable to the **“Plan-Do-Check-Act” (PDCA) model⁹** used in other ISO management:



This approach encourages cultural event organisers to move beyond isolated “green actions” (e.g., recycling, switch to LED lights) and instead embed sustainability within governance, procurement, logistics, communication and community relations.

By adopting ISO 20121 principles, whether through full certification, self-declaration or progressive alignment, organisers can:

- **Reduce environmental impacts**, including waste, energy use and emissions.
- **Improve community relations** by involving residents, cultural groups and local SMEs.
- **Enhance visitor experiences** through inclusive and responsible event design.
- **Strengthen credibility and transparency**, contributing to greater trust among stakeholders.
- **Contribute to local economic resilience** through fair procurement and legacy planning.

For cultural tourism specifically, applying ISO 20121 helps preserve cultural identity,

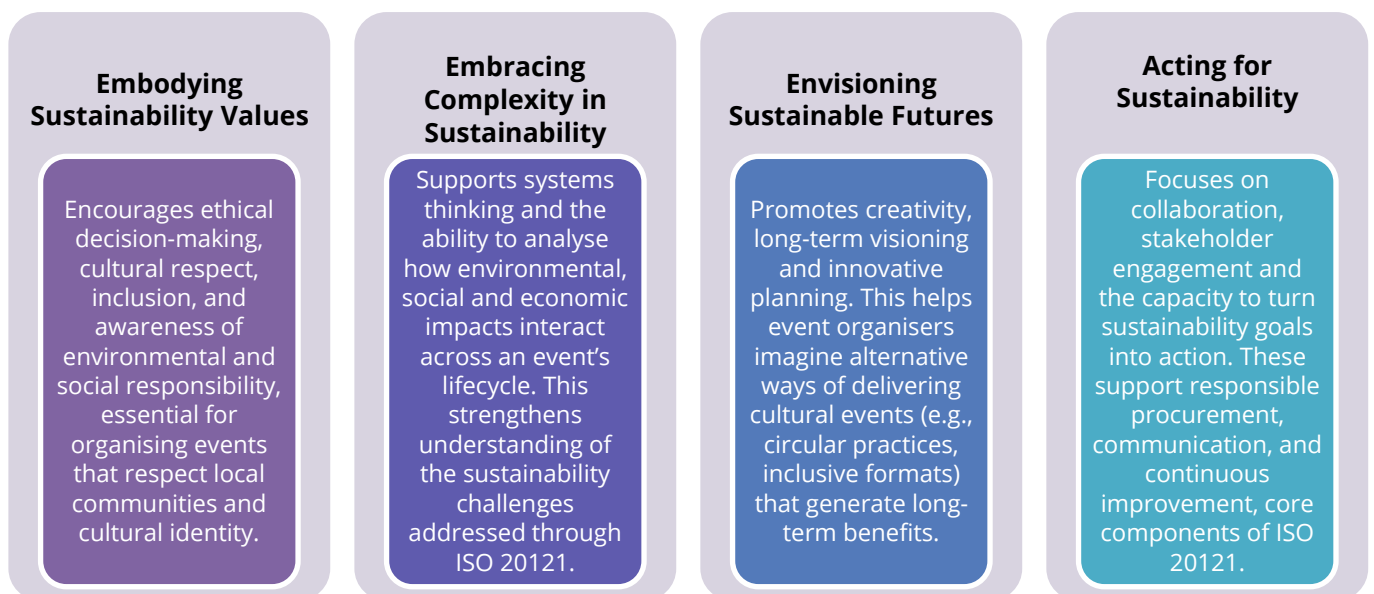
⁹ Malik, A. (2024) *Mastering sustainable event management: Your complete guide to ISO 20121:2024 certification in the Middle East*, SGSCorp. Available at: <https://www.sgs.com/en-ae/news/2024/04/mastering-sustainable-event-management-your-complete-guide-to-iso-20121-2024-certification> (Accessed: 01 December 2025).

safeguard community interests and build long-term sustainability into events that attract both local and international audiences.

3.1.2.4 GreenComp: The European Sustainability Competence Framework

The **GreenComp framework**¹⁰, developed by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC), provides a shared set of sustainability competences that support individuals in making responsible, future-oriented decisions across different professional contexts. Although not specific to event management, GreenComp aligns closely with the skills needed to design and deliver sustainable cultural events and complements the ISO 20121 management approach.

GreenComp is structured around **four competence areas**, all of which reinforce the principles introduced in this module:



By integrating GreenComp into this module, learners are not only introduced to the technical requirements of sustainable event management but also develop the broader values, behaviours and problem-solving capacities needed to apply sustainability in real cultural tourism contexts. This supports CultMed's mission to promote cultural events that are environmentally responsible, socially inclusive and economically meaningful.

To support learners in visualising the challenges and opportunities of sustainable cultural tourism, this unit includes a **short video**. The video illustrates real examples from cultural events in Mediterranean destinations where poor planning has caused cultural, social or environmental pressures and contrasts them with successful sustainable practices.

¹⁰ European Commission, Joint Research Centre (2022). *GreenComp: The European Sustainability Competence Framework*. Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/greencomp-european-sustainability-competence-framework_en

CULTMED

Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

The video is available on the CULTMED platform and can be accessed at the following link:
<https://cultmed.eu/digital-library/>

For ease of access, especially in case of printed versions of the module, a QR code is also provided below.



3.1.3 Case Studies

Case Study – London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games

The first mega-event certified under ISO 20121

Why it matters:

London 2012 was the **first global event** to implement and receive certification under ISO 20121, becoming a landmark example of sustainable event management.

Key Achievements Enabled by ISO 20121

- **Clear Sustainability Governance**
The organising committee (LOCOG) adopted a formal sustainability management system aligned with ISO 20121, ensuring coordinated planning, monitoring and continuous improvement.
- **Environmental Performance**
 - 60% of Games-time waste was reused, recycled or composted
 - Low-carbon construction and temporary venues reduced environmental footprint
 - Responsible water, energy and materials management across all sites
- **Social & Community Benefits**
 - Strong focus on accessibility and inclusion (venues, services, mobility)
 - Volunteer engagement programme (>70,000 volunteers)

Why this Case Study helps trainees/learners:

London 2012 demonstrates how ISO 20121 can be applied **at any scale**, using the same principles to:

- reduce negative impacts,
- maximise social and economic benefits, and
- build a positive legacy for communities.^{11 12}

¹¹ London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (2012). *London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games Sustainability Report*. Available at: https://stillmed.olympic.org/Documents/Reports/Official%20Past%20Games%20Reports/Summer/2012/ENG/2012-RO-S-London_V3_eng.pdf

¹² Institution of Environmental Sciences (2013). *Environmental Scientist: Sustainability of the London 2012 Games*. Available at: https://www.the-ies.org/sites/default/files/journals/env_sci_feb_13.pdf

Case Study – FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022

The first FIFA World Cup certified under ISO 20121

Why it matters:

The 2022 FIFA World Cup was the first in history to be certified under ISO 20121, showcasing how a mega-event can apply structured sustainability management to minimise impacts and create long-term benefits. FIFA has confirmed it will continue applying ISO 20121 for future World Cups, including 2026.

Key Achievements Enabled by ISO 20121

○ Sustainability Governance

- Comprehensive Sustainability Management System with clear planning, audits and monitoring.
- Multiple conformity pathways (self-assessment, supplier validation, external certification).

○ Environmental Performance

- Energy-efficient stadium technologies and low-carbon operations.
- Waste reduction through segregation, recycling initiatives and awareness campaigns.
- Sustainable procurement (recycled uniforms, compostable packaging).

○ Social & Community Benefits

- Strong accessibility measures (inclusive seating, mobility services, audio description).

Why this Case Study helps trainees/learners:

- Demonstrates how sustainability principles can be applied even in **large, complex, high-pressure events**.
- Provides practical examples relevant to **event organisers of any size**, showing that ISO 20121 is scalable and flexible.
- Shows the link between **sustainable event management, community engagement, human rights** and long-term legacy planning.
- Helps learners visualise how structured systems (Plan-Do-Check-Act) translate into

real operational improvements.^{13 14}

After reviewing the case studies, learners are invited to reflect on how different cultural events demonstrate the principles of sustainable event management. The questions below guide participants to analyse real situations, identify patterns and connect theoretical concepts with practical realities.

“What can small/local cultural events could learn from the case studies?”

“What sustainability principles are already present in your local events?”

Complementary interactive activities and practical exercises related to this unit are available in **Annex 6: Interactive activities**.

3.1.6 Key Takeaways

- Sustainable event management is based on balancing **environmental, social** and **economic** considerations.
- Cultural events become sustainable when they **respect local identity, engage communities** and **benefit local stakeholders**.
- ISO 20121 provides a **structured framework** that helps organisers plan, implement and continuously improve sustainability practices.
- Even small actions (i.e. reducing waste, improving accessibility, or supporting local suppliers) can significantly increase the long-term impact of an event.
- Sustainability is an **ongoing process**, not a one-time effort. Learning, monitoring and adapting are essential parts of improving event management.

3.2 Unit 2- Planning a Sustainable Cultural Event

3.2.1 Learning Objective

At the end of this unit, learners will be able to **plan a sustainable cultural event** in line with ISO 20121 principles and the realities of Mediterranean cultural tourism.

More specifically, they will be able to:

- **Define clear and measurable sustainability goals (KPIs)** that respond to environmental, social and economic priorities commonly found in Mediterranean cultural destinations (e.g. seasonality, local heritage protection, community wellbeing etc).
- **Map and engage key stakeholders**, including local authorities, cultural associations, community groups, SMEs and artisans, reflecting the high community involvement typical of Mediterranean cultural events.

¹³ FIFA (2023). *Sustainability at the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 – Sustainability Targets*. Retrieved from: <https://inside.fifa.com/tournament-organisation/world-cup-2022-sustainability-report/sustainability-at-the-fifa-world-cup-2022/sustainability-targets>

¹⁴ FIFA (2023). *Sustainability Performance Monitoring*. Retrieved from: <https://inside.fifa.com/tournament-organisation/world-cup-2022-sustainability-report/governance/transparency-and-accountability/sustainability-performance-monitoring>

- **Design a sustainable event plan**, including responsible budgeting, socially inclusive practices and procurement choices that support local economies and cultural identity.
- **Integrate sustainability into the planning process**, ensuring events enhance local heritage, minimise environmental impacts and strengthen community participation across Mediterranean contexts.

This unit focuses on transforming sustainability concepts into **practical planning tools** suitable for cultural events across the Mediterranean region.

3.2.2 Key Concepts

3.2.2.1 Setting Measurable Sustainability Goals & KPIs

Planning a sustainable cultural event begins with defining **clear sustainability goals and measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**. According to recognised good practice in sustainable event management^{15 16 17}, early goal-setting provides direction, ensures accountability and allows organisers to monitor the environmental, social, cultural and economic impacts of the event.

Within the ISO 20121 Sustainable Event Management framework¹⁸, goal-setting forms part of the **“Plan”** phase of the **Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA)** cycle. ISO 20121 emphasises that sustainability objectives must be *measurable, evidence-based* and *linked to continuous improvement*. This approach helps event organisers move beyond broad intentions (“reduce waste”, “support the community”) toward practical, trackable outcomes.

In the Mediterranean region, where cultural events often take place in fragile natural landscapes or heritage-rich settings, measurable goals are essential. Research on sustainable cultural tourism conducted in WP2 of CultMed shows that community involvement, resource management and the protection of cultural identity are critical success factors. Measurable KPIs allow organisers to demonstrate progress in these areas, particularly in contexts affected by seasonality, overtourism, limited public transport, or high cultural sensitivity.

To support structured goal-setting, this unit uses a **5-Step Framework** (see Table 1). During the workshop, participants will identify sustainability issues, draft goals and link them to KPIs. This exercise strengthens the GreenComp competences *“Systems Thinking”* and *“Promoting Sustainable Practices”*.

¹⁵ Creative Structures Worldwide. *Planning a Sustainable Event*.

<https://creativestructuresworldwide.com/planning-a-sustainable-event/>

¹⁶ University of Gloucestershire. *ISO 20121: Essential for the Future Success of Event Venues*.

<https://uniofglos.blog/eventsglos/2015/03/09/iso20121-essential-for-the-future-success-of-event-venues/>

¹⁷ ICLEI – Sustainable Event Guidelines.

<https://e-lib.iclei.org/ICLEI%20SUSTAINABLE%20EVENT%20GUIDELINES.pdf>

¹⁸ ISO 20121 Standard. <https://www.iso.org/standard/86389.html>

A 5-Step Framework for Setting Sustainability Goals in Cultural Events

Across all sustainability guidelines reviewed, the following steps consistently appear:

Table 1: A 5-Step Framework for Setting Sustainability Goals in Cultural Events

STEP 1 Identify the event's material sustainability issues	STEP 2 Translate issues into SMART goals	STEP 3 Link each goal to a measurable KPI	STEP 4 Identify & map key stakeholders	STEP 5 Communicate the goals internally and externally
<p>The first step is determining <i>what matters most</i> for sustainability in the specific cultural context.</p> <p>Relevant issues for Mediterranean cultural events include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> waste from food stalls and single-use items impact on historic sites or local traditions noise, traffic or congestion affecting residents accessibility barriers carbon emissions from travel low local economic benefit 	<p>SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound</p> <p>Example (Mediterranean village cultural festival):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Reduce mixed waste by 40% compared to last year by introducing compostable packaging and recycling stations.</i> <p>This step develops the "Plan" phase of the ISO PDCA cycle and aligns with GreenComp's strategic competence.</p>	<p>The KPI shows whether progress is happening. Examples of event-appropriate KPIs from international practice can be found in Annex 3: List of KPIs (examples).</p>	<p>Sustainable event planning requires identifying all individuals, groups and organisations affected by or are able to influence the event.</p> <p>Mapping stakeholders (influence/interest) helps organisers prioritise engagement and supports ISO 20121 principles of inclusiveness, transparency and continuous improvement.</p>	<p>ISO 20121 and ICLEI guidelines both emphasise that sustainability goals must be known by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> staff volunteers suppliers attendees community members <p>Clear communication strengthens trust, accountability, and community ownership, central to sustainable cultural tourism.</p>

While the 5-Step Framework provides a clear process for designing and monitoring sustainability within cultural events, several thematic areas require additional emphasis to fully reflect the realities of event planning in Mediterranean contexts. In particular, effective

stakeholder engagement, responsible budgeting and procurement, and accessible, inclusive communication are essential dimensions of sustainable event management. These areas are strongly aligned with ISO 20121 requirements for transparency, inclusiveness and continuous improvement, and they are especially relevant in Mediterranean cultural settings where events rely heavily on community participation, local economic networks, and sensitive heritage environments.

For this reason, the unit explores these themes in dedicated sections before applying the full framework. Stakeholder engagement strategies help organisers build trust and co-create solutions with community actors. Sustainable budgeting and procurement ensure that resources are used efficiently and that local suppliers, artisans and cultural practitioners benefit equitably. Communication and accessibility inclusion guarantee that diverse audiences can understand, access and meaningfully participate in the event. Together, these themes reinforce the practical application of the 5-Step Framework and prepare learners to analyse real sustainability challenges.

Stakeholder engagement strategies

Effective stakeholder engagement is central to planning a sustainable cultural event and is closely aligned with the principles of ISO 20121, which emphasises transparency, inclusiveness and continuous improvement. Cultural events involve a wide range of actors, such as local authorities, community groups, cultural organisations, small businesses, volunteers and audiences, each with different expectations and forms of influence. Identifying these actors early, understanding their needs and involving them meaningfully in decision-making strengthens both the event's sustainability and its cultural relevance.

This process reinforces **GreenComp's "Collaborative Problem-Solving" competence**, which highlights working with diverse stakeholders to define shared challenges, co-design solutions and collectively evaluate outcomes. In practice, applying this competence means:

- mapping stakeholders based on their level of influence and interest,
- creating open communication channels,
- involving community actors in shaping the event narrative, and,
- ensuring that vulnerable or underrepresented groups are not excluded.

By integrating these principles, event organisers enhance community ownership, reduce potential conflicts and support a culturally grounded and socially responsible approach to sustainable event planning.

Key stakeholders in Mediterranean cultural events often include:

- local authorities
- residents and neighbourhood groups
- cultural organisations & heritage bodies
- SMEs, artisans, food vendors
- volunteers & accessibility groups
- visitors and tourism actors

Sustainable Budgeting & Responsible Procurement

Sustainable budgeting ensures that cultural events allocate resources in ways that minimise environmental impact and maximise social and economic value. In line with ISO 20121, budgeting becomes part of a broader sustainability management system, by helping organisers plan responsibly, anticipate risks and make informed choices.

Responsible procurement supports this by prioritising suppliers and materials that are ethical, inclusive, and environmentally conscious. This reflects the GreenComp principles of **responsibility, resource efficiency and futures thinking**, encouraging organisers to consider long-term impacts rather than short-term cost alone.

Hence, when planning a budget, organisers should consider:

- **Resource efficiency:** reducing waste, reusing materials, choosing low-impact options.
- **Inclusive access:** allocating funds for accessibility tools or translations.
- **Local procurement:** supporting local suppliers, artisans, and communities.
- **Responsible sourcing:** selecting items that are reusable, recyclable, or sustainably produced.

Communication & Accessibility Inclusion

Effective communication and accessibility are core elements of planning sustainable cultural events. ISO 20121 emphasises that events must be **inclusive, transparent and accessible to all stakeholders**, ensuring that information is understandable, participation is equitable and barriers are minimised.

From a GreenComp perspective, this aligns with the competencies of **empathy, responsibility and systems thinking**, encouraging organisers to consider diverse user needs (i.e. linguistic, physical, digital and social) and to design events that everyone can meaningfully participate in.

Cultural events often attract diverse audiences and their success depends on participants being able to access information and spaces without obstacles. Sustainable communication therefore means:

- **Clear information:** using simple language, visual aids and multilingual materials when needed.
- **Accessible formats:** subtitles in videos, alternative text for digital content, readable documents.
- **Inclusive event design:** providing ramps, interpretation, accessible seating and clear signage.
- **Engaging local communities:** ensuring communication channels reach all stakeholder groups, not only those already involved.

These practices reinforce the goals of sustainable cultural tourism by making cultural participation more equitable and strengthening community ownership.

This unit is complemented by the short **video “Inside the Planning Room: Designing a Sustainable Cultural Event”**, which illustrates how sustainability goals, stakeholder

engagement and early planning decisions take shape in practice. The video offers a concise, visual walkthrough of the planning logic discussed in the unit, helping learners see how theoretical principles translate into real-world event design.

The video is available on the CULTMED platform and can be accessed at the following link:
<https://cultmed.eu/digital-library/>

For ease of access, especially in case of printed versions of the module, a QR code is also provided below.



Following the above framework, participants will ***work in groups using the fictional case study to apply each step in practice.*** *By positioning themselves as the event organisers of the 'Athens Cultural Rhythms Festival', groups will analyse the event's sustainability challenges and complete the exercise in **Annex 4: 5-Step Framework for Planning Sustainable Cultural Events.*** Their task is to identify material issues, set SMART goals, link them to KPIs, map stakeholders and propose communication and engagement strategies for improving the festival's sustainability performance.

Functional Case Study – The “Athens Cultural Rhythms Festival”

A large-scale cultural event facing sustainability challenges

Event Overview

- **Location:** Athens City Centre (Zappeion)
- **Duration:** 2 days
- **Visitors:** ≈ 70,000 attendees (locals, international tourists, cultural enthusiasts)
- **Type:** Open-air cultural festival showcasing music, visual arts, gastronomy, and heritage storytelling
- **Organiser:** Municipality of Athens & Cultural Foundations

Objectives:

- Celebrate Athenian cultural heritage and diversity
- Strengthen local creative industries and artisans
- Promote community participation in urban cultural life
- Extend cultural activity beyond summer peak tourism
- Ensure responsible use of a heritage-rich area

The festival presents several sustainability challenges typical of Mediterranean urban cultural events:

Environmental Issues

- High waste generation from food stalls and single-use materials
- Increased mobility, thus congestion, emissions and pressure on pedestrian zones
- Risk of damage to heritage paths and green areas
- High energy use for sound and lighting

Having explored how sustainable planning principles apply to a real scenario through the case study, learners are now invited to reflect on how these concepts translate into their own organisational or community contexts. This reflective step consolidates understanding and strengthens the connection between theory, practice and local cultural tourism realities.

“How can you adapt these planning methods to your context?”

“Which sustainability KPIs make sense for your organisation?”

Complementary interactive activities and practical exercises related to this unit are available in **Annex 6: Interactive activities**.

3.2.6 Key Takeaways

- Clear sustainability goals and KPIs are the foundation of effective planning.
- Stakeholder engagement ensures relevance, legitimacy and community ownership.
- Sustainable budgeting & procurement translate values into concrete choices.
- Accessibility and inclusive communication are essential for equitable participation.
- The 5-Step Planning Framework helps structure decisions aligned with ISO 20121.
- Planning must reflect Mediterranean cultural realities (heritage, community, seasonality).
- The case study exercise shows how these principles apply to real cultural events.

3.3 Unit 3 – Implementing, Monitoring & Improving Sustainability

3.3.1 Learning Objective

By the end of this unit, learners will understand how to monitor sustainability performance during and after a cultural event and how to implement improvements following the “Check–Act” stages of the Plan–Do–Check–Act cycle, which underpins the ISO 20121 approach to sustainable event management. Using a real case study, learners will practise analysing results and designing improvement actions that enhance sustainable cultural tourism outcomes.

3.3.2 Why Monitoring & Improvement Matter

Sustainable event planning does not end once the event is implemented. According to ISO 20121, organisers must:

- **Check** whether sustainability objectives and KPIs were achieved.
- **Act** by implementing improvements for next years event.

This ensures events evolve over time, minimise negative impacts and maximise social, cultural, environmental and economic value. In sustainable cultural tourism, especially in Mediterranean destinations where events occur in sensitive cultural landscapes, continuous improvement is essential for **protecting local identity, managing visitor pressures, strengthening community trust and ensuring long-term viability of the event**.

To help learners understand how monitoring and evaluation can work in real event settings, this unit introduces a case study from the **Transilvania International Film Festival (TIFF)** in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. A peer-reviewed study by **Negruşa et al. (2016)**¹⁹ investigated how **residents perceived the festival’s economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts**, using survey data from a large sample of local participants.

¹⁹ Negruşa, A.L. *et al.* (2016) *Study of perceptions on cultural events’ Sustainability*, MDPI. Available at: <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/8/12/1269> (Accessed: 28 November 2025).



Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

Although these findings do **not** represent the organisers' internal sustainability evaluation, they provide a valuable and credible **external perspective**. An external perspective that cultural event organisers must take seriously during the **Check** stage of the ISO 20121 PDCA cycle. Community perceptions form an important part of post-event monitoring, especially in cultural tourism contexts where local acceptance, cultural identity and quality of life are central to long-term event sustainability.

This case study therefore offers a realistic example of how sustainability performance can be assessed through **feedback, impact perceptions and community responses**. Learners will examine the insights emerging from the study and then practise translating these into **improvement actions** as if they were planning the next edition of the event.

To support this learning process, the following **case study** is provided. Please read the summary below and then complete the applied group exercise in **Annex 5: Sustainability Monitoring & Improvement Worksheet**, where you will analyse the TIFF example and propose realistic Check–Act improvements as if you were part of the organising team.

Case Study – Transilvania International Film Festival (TIFF)

Event Overview

- **Location:** Cluj-Napoca, Romania
- **Duration:** 10 days (annual event)
- **Visitors:** ≈ **100,000 participants** per edition (local residents, domestic & international cultural tourists)
- **Type:** International Film Festival (400+ film screenings across indoor cinemas, cultural venues and open-air spaces)

Key Findings on Sustainability Performance

Environmental Dimensions

- Environmental impacts are generally perceived as low.
- The festival contributed to the renovation and reuse of abandoned cultural venues.
- Occasional issues include traffic congestion and increased energy use during peak events.

Sociocultural Dimensions

- Identified as the strongest sustainability pillar in the study.
- Enhances cultural life, community pride, and social cohesion.
- Long-standing initiatives such as EducaTIFF (launched in 2009) strengthen cultural participation by developing film literacy among children and young audiences.
- The festival also includes thematic programmes such as EcoTIFF, which use

Complementary interactive activities and practical exercises related to this unit are available in Annex 6: Interactive activities.

3.3.3 Key Takeaways

- Monitoring sustainability performance shows whether event goals and KPIs were achieved.
- The ISO 20121 Check-Act stages provide a structured way to evaluate results and implement improvements.
- Community-based evidence, such as the TIFF case study, offers valuable insights into the real impacts of cultural events.
- Effective evaluation requires linking evidence to action, by identifying what worked, what

did not and what needs adjustment.

- Improvement measures should strengthen all sustainability pillars; environmental, social, economic and cultural.
- Sustainable cultural events evolve over time. Each edition should improve on the previous one through documented lessons learned.
- Applying a structured PDCA process enhances transparency, trust and long-term cultural value.

ANNEXES

Annex 1 - Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Sustainable Cultural Tourism	Tourism that values and preserves cultural assets while ensuring benefits for local communities, respecting natural and cultural environments, and promoting long-term resilience.
ISO 20121	An international standard for Sustainable Event Management that provides a structured framework (Plan-Do-Check-Act) to embed sustainability across all aspects of event planning and delivery.
Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) Cycle	A continuous improvement model used in ISO 20121: Plan (set objectives), Do (implement actions), Check (monitor performance), Act (improve future events).
KPIs (Key Performance Indicators)	KPIs (Key Performance Indicators)
SMART Goals	Measurable indicators used to monitor progress toward sustainability goals (e.g., waste reduction %, local suppliers %). Objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound, used to structure sustainability targets.
GreenComp Framework	The European Sustainability Competence Framework outlining competencies such as systems thinking, responsibility, cooperation, and future-thinking needed to act sustainably.
Stakeholder Mapping	A tool to identify stakeholders, understand their influence and interest, and define effective engagement strategies.
Responsible Procurement	Selecting suppliers and products that minimise environmental impact, support ethical labour practices and promote local cultural and economic value.
Inclusive Accessibility	Designing events so all people, including persons with disabilities, linguistic minorities, and vulnerable groups, can participate equally.
Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)	Systematic collection and assessment of data to understand event performance measured against KPIs and sustainability goals.
Material Issues	The sustainability themes most relevant to an event's context (e.g., waste, community impact, cultural preservation), used as a foundation for setting goals.

Annex 2: Matching Pillars

Match the Sustainability Action with the Sustainability Pillar

A. Sustainability Actions

1. Introducing a free community shuttle bus to the event
2. Providing recycled and reusable stage materials
3. Booking internationally famous artists, increasing ticket prices
4. Offering sign-language interpretation for live performances
5. Highlighting local craftspeople and traditional artists
6. Implementing pay-what-you-can entry for low-income residents
7. Ensuring food vendors use compostable packaging
8. Partnering with local SMEs for logistics and services
9. Designing a quiet/relaxation space for neurodivergent visitors
10. Monitoring energy use during rehearsals and performances

B. Pillars

- A. Environmental
- B. Social
- C. Economic
- D. Cultural

Annex 3: List of KPIs (examples)

A. Environmental KPIs

Waste & Materials

- % of waste diverted from landfill
- Kg of waste per attendee
- % reduction in single-use plastics
- % of compostable or recyclable materials used
- Number of recycling stations installed

Energy

- Energy consumption per participant
- % of renewable energy used
- Reduction in electricity consumption vs previous editions

Water

- Litres of water used per attendee
- % reduction in water use

Mobility & Carbon

- CO₂ emissions per attendee (transport + energy)
- % of attendees using sustainable transport
- % of suppliers within 50 km
- Km travelled for logistics compared to previous events



Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

B. Social KPIs

Accessibility & Inclusion

- Number of accessibility measures implemented
- Visitor satisfaction with accessibility
- % of venue areas fully accessible

Community Engagement

- Number of community partners involved
- % of staff/volunteers from the local community
- Attendance from underrepresented groups

Wellbeing & Safety

- Number of incidents / safety events
- Volunteer satisfaction score

C. Economic KPIs

- % of budget spent on local suppliers
- Total economic benefit to local SMEs
- Number of new local jobs created (temporary or permanent)
- Cost savings from sustainable practices (waste reduction, energy efficiency)
- Increase in local procurement year-to-year

D. Cultural KPIs

Cultural Heritage & Authenticity

- Visitor satisfaction with cultural authenticity
- % of programming dedicated to local traditions
- Number of local cultural practitioners involved
- Number of activities related to cultural heritage protection

Cultural Impact / Legacy

- Creation of new cultural collaborations
- Increase in local cultural participation
- Number of educational cultural activities delivered



Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

Annex 4: 5-Step Framework for Planning Sustainable Cultural Events

Split into groups and read the fictional case study and do the following exercise.

STEP 1 — Identify the event’s material sustainability issues

What matters most in this cultural event? (environmentally, socially, economically, culturally)

#	Material Issue	Why is it important? (local impact / community needs)
1.		
2.		
3.		
...		

STEP 2 — Translate issues into SMART sustainability goals

For each issue you identified, draft a **SMART goal**.

#	Material Issue	Draft Goal
1.		
2.		
3.		
...		

Then, choose a goal and complete the following:

SMART GOALS PLANNER

Identify a goal that is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). Break it into actionable steps, each with its own deadline.



Specific

What exactly do you want to achieve?



Measurable

How will you track your advancement?



Attainable

Evaluate the feasibility of your goal.



Relevant

How does it fit into your broader objectives?



Time-bound

What is the deadline?

STEP 3 — Link each goal to a measurable KPI

A KPI shows whether progress is happening.

#	Goal	KPI	Measurement Method	Target
1				
2				
3				

STEP 4 — Identify and map Stakeholders

List all individuals, groups, or organisations affected by or involved in this event.

Stakeholder (Name/Group)	Their Role / Why They Matter	Their Needs / Expectations	Influence (H/M/L)	Interest (H/M/L)

STEP 5 — Communicate the goals internally and externally

Describe how you, as the organisers, would communicate these sustainability goals to:

- staff and volunteers
- local authorities
- suppliers and vendors
- community members
- visitors and tourists

For the most important stakeholders (2–4 groups), define a simple engagement plan.

Stakeholder	Preferred Engagement Method (meeting, email, workshop, co-design session)	Engagement Goal	Contribution to Sustainability

Annex 5: Sustainability Monitoring & Improvement Worksheet

Instructions:

Working in small groups, read the case study summary “*Transilvania International Film Festival (TIFF)*”. Then complete the following three tasks as if you were preparing the next edition of the festival.

Task 1 — Select Priority Issues to Monitor (“Check”)

From the sustainability insights presented (environmental, socio-cultural, economic), discuss: “Which 2–3 sustainability issues require closer monitoring for the next edition of TIFF?”

#	Priority Issue	Why this issue matters? (based on the case study)
1		
2		
3		

Task 2 — Propose “Check” Actions (How would you monitor performance?)

For each priority issue you identified, decide:

- **What evidence** you need (e.g. audience feedback, crowd counts, accessibility audits, energy use data).
- **Which tools** you will use (e.g. surveys, volunteer reports, ticketing data, simple environmental measurements, stakeholder interviews).

Provide practical monitoring ideas.

#	Issue	What evidence would you collect?	How would you collect it? (Monitoring tool/method)
1			
2			
3			

Task 3 — Propose “Act” Actions (What improvements would you make?)

Using your monitoring insights, propose realistic improvement actions for the next edition of the festival. These can include operational adjustments, stakeholder engagement ideas or community-focused improvements.

#	Issue	Improvement Action (Act)	Expected Sustainability Benefit
1			
2			
3			

Annex 6: Interactive activities

#	ACTIVITY TYPE	LINK	QR CODE
1	Training Video 1	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdYnBetPFwI	
2	Training Video 2	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jxK4kKbtCZs	
3	Educational Games	https://cultmed.eu/educational-games/	
5	Interactive Quizzes	https://cultmed.eu/interactive-activities/	



TRAINING MODULE 2

APPLYING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES AT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES



CYPRUS
SUSTAINABLE
TOURISM
INITIATIVE



Co-funded by the European Union

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Table of content

Executive Summary	43
EN.....	43
EL.....	43
IT.....	44
ES.....	44
PT	45
1. INTRODUCTION.....	47
2. GOAL OF THE MODULE.....	48
2.1. GreenComp: The European Sustainability Competence Framework	48
2.2. Chosen Methodology for the development and implementation of training content .	49
2.3. Target Groups.....	50
3. MODULE SUBTOPICS.....	51
3.1. First Subtopic	53
3.2. Second Subtopic	57
3.3. Third Subtopic	63
4. ANNEXES.....	69

Executive Summary

EN

The «Training Module 2: Applying Sustainable Practices at Archaeological Sites» introduces a practical approach to managing and preserving archaeological heritage in a responsible and inclusive way. It is grounded in international frameworks such as UNESCO, ICOMOS, and the EU GreenComp competence model. The module helps participants understand how sustainability applies across the full scope of archaeological site management, not only in environmental terms but also in relation to visitor behaviour, local communities, and digital innovation. Through a combination of explanations, case studies and interactive activities, learners are supported in building both knowledge and practical skills that can be applied directly in their own professional contexts.

The module is designed for archaeological site managers, conservation technicians, local authorities and professionals involved in heritage tourism. It is structured around three main areas of intervention. The first focuses on environmental and conservation practices for protecting archaeological assets. The second addresses responsible visitor management and sustainable tourism strategies. The third explores community engagement and inclusive governance models. Participants learn how to apply eco-friendly conservation techniques, manage visitor flows effectively and use digital tools to support site monitoring and interpretation. They also develop the capacity to involve local communities meaningfully in heritage decision-making processes. Finally, the module supports the development of sustainable management models that safeguard cultural identity while contributing to the long-term resilience of Mediterranean archaeological heritage.

EL

Η «Εκπαιδευτική Ενότητα 2: Εφαρμογή Βιώσιμων Πρακτικών σε Αρχαιολογικούς Χώρους» εισάγει μια πρακτική προσέγγιση για τη διαχείριση και τη διατήρηση της αρχαιολογικής κληρονομιάς με υπεύθυνο και συμπεριληπτικό τρόπο. Βασίζεται σε διεθνή πλαίσια, όπως της UNESCO, του ICOMOS και του ευρωπαϊκού μοντέλου ικανοτήτων GreenComp. Η ενότητα βοηθά τους συμμετέχοντες να κατανοήσουν πώς η βιωσιμότητα εφαρμόζεται σε όλο το φάσμα της διαχείρισης ενός αρχαιολογικού χώρου, όχι μόνο σε περιβαλλοντικό επίπεδο αλλά και σε σχέση με τη συμπεριφορά των επισκεπτών, τις τοπικές κοινότητες και την ψηφιακή καινοτομία. Μέσα από έναν συνδυασμό επεξηγήσεων, μελετών περίπτωσης και διαδραστικών δραστηριοτήτων, οι εκπαιδευόμενοι υποστηρίζονται στην οικοδόμηση γνώσεων και πρακτικών δεξιοτήτων που μπορούν να εφαρμοστούν άμεσα στο δικό τους επαγγελματικό περιβάλλον.

Η ενότητα απευθύνεται σε επαγγελματίες που διαχειρίζονται αρχαιολογικούς χώρους, τεχνικούς συντήρησης, τοπικές αρχές και επαγγελματίες του πολιτιστικού τουρισμού. Είναι

διαρθρωμένη γύρω από τρεις βασικές περιοχές παρέμβασης. Η πρώτη επικεντρώνεται σε περιβαλλοντικές πρακτικές και πρακτικές συντήρησης για την προστασία των αρχαιολογικών στοιχείων. Η δεύτερη αφορά την υπεύθυνη διαχείριση επισκεπτών και στρατηγικές βιώσιμου τουρισμού. Η τρίτη εξερευνά τη συμμετοχή της κοινότητας και συμπεριληπτικά μοντέλα διακυβέρνησης. Οι συμμετέχοντες μαθαίνουν να εφαρμόζουν οικολογικές τεχνικές συντήρησης, να διαχειρίζονται αποτελεσματικά τις ροές επισκεπτών και να χρησιμοποιούν ψηφιακά εργαλεία για την παρακολούθηση και την ερμηνεία των χώρων. Αναπτύσσουν επίσης την ικανότητα να εμπλέκουν ουσιαστικά τις τοπικές κοινότητες στις διαδικασίες λήψης αποφάσεων. Τέλος, η ενότητα υποστηρίζει την ανάπτυξη βιώσιμων μοντέλων διαχείρισης που διασφαλίζουν την πολιτιστική ταυτότητα, συμβάλλοντας παράλληλα στη μακροπρόθεσμη ανθεκτικότητα της αρχαιολογικής κληρονομιάς της Μεσογείου.

IT

Il «Modulo Formativo 2: Applicare Procedure Sostenibili ai Siti Archeologici» presenta un approccio pratico per la gestione e la tutela del patrimonio archeologico in modo responsabile e inclusivo. Si basa su quadri internazionali come UNESCO, ICOMOS e il modello di competenze dell'UE GreenComp. Il modulo aiuta i partecipanti a comprendere come la sostenibilità si applica all'intero ambito della gestione dei siti archeologici, non solo in termini ambientali, ma anche in relazione al comportamento dei visitatori, alle comunità locali e all'innovazione digitale. Attraverso una combinazione di spiegazioni, casi di studio e attività interattive, gli allievi vengono supportati nello sviluppo sia di conoscenze che di competenze pratiche direttamente applicabili ai propri contesti professionali.

Il modulo è progettato per direttori di siti archeologici, tecnici del restauro, autorità locali e professionisti del turismo culturale. Si articola intorno alle tre aree di intervento principali. La prima si concentra su pratiche ambientali e di tutela per la salvaguardia dei beni archeologici. La seconda riguarda la gestione responsabile dei visitatori e le iniziative devote al turismo sostenibile. La terza approfondisce il coinvolgimento della comunità e i modelli di governance inclusivi. I partecipanti imparano ad applicare tecniche per la tutela dell'ambiente, a gestire efficacemente i flussi dei visitatori e a utilizzare strumenti digitali per l'osservazione e la comprensione dei siti. Sviluppano inoltre la capacità di coinvolgere attivamente le comunità locali nei processi decisionali legati al patrimonio. Infine, il modulo sostiene lo sviluppo di modelli di gestione sostenibile che salvaguardino l'identità culturale, contribuendo al mantenimento a lungo termine del patrimonio archeologico del Mediterraneo.

ES

El «Módulo de Formación 2: Aplicación de Prácticas Sostenibles en Sitios Arqueológicos» introduce un enfoque práctico para la gestión y preservación del patrimonio arqueológico de manera responsable e inclusiva. Se fundamenta en marcos internacionales como la UNESCO,

el ICOMOS y el modelo de competencias GreenComp de la UE. El módulo ayuda a los participantes a comprender cómo se aplica la sostenibilidad en todo el ámbito de la gestión de sitios arqueológicos, no solo en términos ambientales sino también en relación con el comportamiento de los visitantes, las comunidades locales y la innovación digital. Mediante una combinación de explicaciones, estudios de caso y actividades interactivas, se apoya a los alumnos en la adquisición de conocimientos y habilidades prácticas que pueden aplicarse directamente en sus propios entornos profesionales.

El módulo está diseñado para gestores de sitios arqueológicos, técnicos de conservación, autoridades locales y profesionales del turismo patrimonial. Se estructura en torno a tres áreas principales de intervención. La primera se centra en prácticas ambientales y de conservación para la protección de los activos arqueológicos. La segunda aborda la gestión responsable de visitantes y estrategias de turismo sostenible. La tercera explora la participación comunitaria y modelos de gobernanza inclusiva. Los participantes aprenden a aplicar técnicas de conservación ecológicas, a gestionar los flujos de visitantes de manera eficaz y a utilizar herramientas digitales para el seguimiento e interpretación de los sitios. También desarrollan la capacidad de involucrar a las comunidades locales de forma significativa en los procesos de toma de decisiones. Finalmente, el módulo fomenta el desarrollo de modelos de gestión sostenible que salvaguarden la identidad cultural, contribuyendo a la resiliencia a largo plazo del patrimonio arqueológico mediterráneo.

PT

O «Módulo de Formação 2: Aplicação de Práticas Sustentáveis em Sítios Arqueológicos» apresenta uma abordagem prática para a gestão e preservação do património arqueológico de forma responsável e inclusiva. Baseia-se em quadros internacionais como a UNESCO, o ICOMOS e o modelo de competências GreenComp da UE. O módulo ajuda os participantes a compreender como a sustentabilidade se aplica em todo o âmbito da gestão de sítios arqueológicos, não só em termos ambientais, mas também no que diz respeito ao comportamento dos visitantes, às comunidades locais e à inovação digital. Através de uma combinação de explicações, estudos de caso e atividades interativas, os formandos recebem apoio na aquisição de conhecimentos e competências práticas que podem ser aplicados diretamente nos seus próprios contextos profissionais.

O módulo foi concebido para gestores de sítios arqueológicos, técnicos de conservação, autoridades locais e profissionais envolvidos no turismo patrimonial. Está estruturado em torno de três áreas principais de intervenção. A primeira centra-se nas práticas ambientais e de conservação para a proteção dos bens arqueológicos. A segunda aborda a gestão responsável dos visitantes e as estratégias de turismo sustentável. A terceira explora o envolvimento da comunidade e modelos de governação inclusivos. Os participantes aprendem a aplicar técnicas de conservação ecológicas, a gerir eficazmente os fluxos de visitantes e a utilizar ferramentas digitais para apoiar a monitorização e a interpretação dos sítios. Desenvolvem também a capacidade de envolver as comunidades locais de forma



Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

significativa nos processos de tomada de decisão relativos ao património. Por fim, o módulo apoia o desenvolvimento de modelos de gestão sustentáveis que salvaguardam a identidade cultural, contribuindo simultaneamente para a resiliência a longo prazo do património arqueológico mediterrânico.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainability in archaeological heritage refers to the responsible management and preservation of cultural sites in ways that balance environmental protection, cultural integrity, and socioeconomic viability. Archaeological sites are not only historical assets but also living resources that contribute to local identity, education, and tourism. However, they face growing pressures from mass tourism, urban development, and the effects of climate change, including erosion, pollution, and temperature fluctuations that threaten their long-term preservation. Achieving sustainability, therefore, means ensuring that archaeological heritage can be safeguarded for future generations while continuing to provide value to present communities through inclusive and responsible tourism practices.

Cultural heritage sites across the Mediterranean are central to the region's identity, but they face increasing challenges from mass tourism, environmental pressures, and inadequate management practices. Within this context, **Module 2: Applying sustainable practices at Archaeological sites** aims to equip professionals and heritage managers with the knowledge, skills, and practical tools needed to ensure the long-term preservation and responsible promotion of archaeological heritage.

Developed under the CultMed – Sustainable Cultural Tourism on the Mediterranean project, this module aligns with the broader objectives of the initiative: fostering responsible tourism, supporting the green transition, and strengthening the social and economic value of culture. It builds directly on the findings of previous project phases, including the collection of best practices and research on sustainable cultural tourism models across partner countries.

The module emphasizes an integrated approach that combines environmental protection, digital innovation, and community participation. Through a balance of theoretical content and applied learning, participants will explore strategies for sustainable site management, eco-friendly conservation methods, responsible visitor management, and inclusive governance models that involve local communities.

The training uses a blended methodology combining traditional learning tools with innovative resources, including quizzes, case studies, videos, and gamified learning elements. These activities are designed to encourage reflection, problem-solving, and collaboration, ensuring that participants not only understand sustainability principles but are also prepared to apply them in real-world contexts across the Mediterranean.

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Design eco-friendly conservation plans;
- Manage visitor flows sustainably;
- Implement inclusive governance models;
- Apply digital tools to support heritage site management.

2. GOAL OF THE MODULE

The goal of this module is to equip learners with the knowledge and practical tools necessary to integrate sustainability into the management, conservation, and promotion of archaeological sites. It seeks to build the capacity of heritage professionals to address the environmental, cultural, and socio-economic challenges faced by archaeological destinations, ensuring that tourism and preservation coexist in a balanced and responsible way.

Aligned with the **CULTMed project's overarching objectives**, the module promotes a shift toward sustainable cultural tourism models that reduce environmental impact, strengthen community engagement, and foster innovation. By doing so, it contributes to the protection of Mediterranean heritage while supporting the transition toward greener, more inclusive tourism economies.

Through interactive learning activities, real-world case studies, and examples drawn from Mediterranean contexts participants will develop competences to:

- apply eco-friendly conservation techniques and responsible visitor management practices;
- engage local communities in heritage governance and decision-making;
- implement policies and strategies aligned with EU sustainability frameworks; and
- use digital tools to enhance both conservation and visitor experiences.

Ultimately, this module aims to inspire professionals to become active agents of change, capable of designing and implementing sustainable management models for archaeological sites that safeguard cultural identity while contributing to long-term territorial resilience and the green transition of the Mediterranean tourism sector.

2.1. GreenComp: The European Sustainability Competence Framework

Within this module, the GreenComp framework developed by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre²⁰ serves as a guiding reference for integrating sustainability into professional practice.

Rather than being presented as a standalone theoretical model, GreenComp is used here as a lens to interpret the key challenges and opportunities related to the sustainable management of archaeological sites. These contexts often require a careful balance between heritage conservation, environmental protection, visitor experience and the well-being of local communities.

²⁰ European Commission, Joint Research Centre (2022). *GreenComp: The European Sustainability Competence Framework*. Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/greencomp-european-sustainability-competence-framework_en

The framework identifies four core areas of competence which are embedded throughout the module's content. Each of these dimensions supports learners in approaching archaeological site management in a holistic and reflective way: from recognising the ethical implications of preservation, to understanding the complex interactions between natural and cultural systems, to anticipating long-term impacts and engaging stakeholders in shared responsibility.

By adopting this competence-based perspective, the module promotes the development of transversal skills that go beyond technical knowledge. Learners are encouraged to critically engage with sustainability issues, apply context-sensitive solutions and contribute to practices that ensure the protection, accessibility and resilience of archaeological heritage over time.

2.2. Chosen Methodology for the development and implementation of training content

The development of **Module 2: Applying sustainable practices at Archaeological sites** follows the common WP3 training methodology coordinated by ARCES, aligned with the **CultMed project's participatory and competence-based approach**. The methodology promotes active learning and professional skill development in sustainable heritage management through a blend of conceptual, practical, and digital tools.

The module combines **traditional learning resources** with **innovative formats**, including a **short educational video**, a **gamified activity**, and a **multiple-choice quiz** developed by ARCES. This blended approach ensures flexibility and inclusivity, accommodating different professional profiles and learning preferences. A comprehensive set of interactive activities and games supporting all training modules is provided in the Annex.

The training content is structured around **six thematic sections**, which collectively guide learners from conceptual understanding to practical application:

1. Sustainability in archaeological heritage
2. Environmental practices for site conservation
3. Responsible visitor management
4. Community engagement and local participation
5. Policy and institutional support
6. Case studies and best practices

The **written module** will serve as the **foundation for the audiovisual materials** to be developed by ARCES - Two short videos, interactive quizzes and a digital game - to reinforce learning through visual and interactive experiences.

The **evaluation** will include a short quiz to assess comprehension and a practical group exercise during the pilot to test the applicability of learned concepts. All reference materials and resources are drawn from UNESCO, ICOMOS, UNWTO, and EU cultural heritage

frameworks, as well as the CULTMed Best Practices Collection, ensuring scientific relevance and alignment with international standards.

2.3. Target Groups

The training module specifically targets professionals and stakeholders directly involved in the management, conservation, and promotion of archaeological heritage. These actors are essential to the transition toward sustainable and community-oriented cultural tourism models. The pilot training will involve up to 10 trainees representing two main professional categories:

- **Staff from archaeological sites**, including site managers, conservation technicians, and cultural heritage professionals responsible for maintenance, interpretation, and visitor services;
- **Relevant agencies**, including local or regional authorities, public institutions, and organizations tasked with heritage conservation, tourism development, or environmental protection.

These target groups were identified as key to ensuring the practical application and long-term impact of the module's content. Their direct involvement will facilitate the adoption of sustainable management practices, such as environmentally responsible visitor planning, eco-friendly conservation measures, and community participation in site governance.

Through the piloting and subsequent capacity-building actions, these professionals will strengthen their competences to lead sustainability initiatives within archaeological sites and contribute to the overall objectives of the CULTMed project—enhancing the resilience, authenticity, and sustainability of Mediterranean cultural tourism.

Expected Learning Outcomes and Competences

At the end of the training module, participants will have strengthened both their theoretical understanding and practical competences related to sustainable archaeological site management. Learners will acquire the ability to critically assess environmental, social, and tourism-related challenges affecting archaeological sites and to design context-specific solutions aligned with sustainability principles.

More specifically, participants will develop competences to:

- apply eco-friendly and preventive conservation approaches adapted to different archaeological contexts;
- plan and implement responsible visitor management strategies that balance heritage protection and tourism development;
- integrate digital tools to support site monitoring, visitor experience enhancement, and community engagement;



Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

- design inclusive governance and participation models that actively involve local communities and stakeholders;
- align site management practices with European and international sustainability frameworks for cultural heritage and tourism.

Through challenge-based learning activities and practical exercises, learners will also enhance transversal skills such as problem-solving, collaborative work, critical thinking, and strategic planning. Overall, the module enables participants to act as informed and proactive professionals capable of promoting sustainable, resilient, and community-oriented management models for archaeological sites across the Mediterranean.

3. MODULE SUBTOPICS

The three subtopics proposed are closely aligned with the methodological structure of the module and with the learning objectives defined in Section 1. Together, they translate the core principles of sustainable cultural tourism into concrete and applicable areas of intervention for archaeological site management.

Each subtopic addresses a key dimension of sustainability, including environmental protection and preventive conservation, responsible visitor management, community participation, and the strategic use of digital tools. This structure allows learners to progressively build knowledge and competences, moving from the protection of archaeological assets, to the sustainable management of tourism flows, and finally to inclusive governance models that involve local communities and stakeholders.

By integrating these thematic areas, the module ensures a holistic and practice-oriented approach that reflects real management challenges faced by archaeological sites across the Mediterranean.

Subtopic 1 — Environmental and Conservation Practices for Sustainable Archaeological Site Management



This subtopic equips heritage professionals with practical knowledge and tools to address environmental risks affecting archaeological sites. It focuses on preventive and eco-friendly conservation approaches, climate-related challenges, and the use of digital monitoring technologies to support evidence-based decision-making. The aim is to ensure the long-term preservation of archaeological heritage while minimizing environmental impact.

Subtopic 2 — Responsible Visitor Management and Sustainable Tourism Strategies



This subtopic addresses the challenge of balancing heritage protection with tourism development. It provides participants with strategies to manage visitor flows, reduce the negative impacts of mass tourism, and enhance visitor awareness through interpretation and education. Special attention is given to digital tools that support sustainable tourism practices while improving the overall visitor experience.

Subtopic 3 — Community Engagement, Governance Models and Digital Tools for Inclusive Heritage Management



This subtopic highlights the central role of local communities and stakeholders in the sustainable management of archaeological sites. It introduces inclusive governance models, participatory decision-making processes, and digital tools that support transparency, collaboration, and community involvement. The objective is to strengthen local ownership of cultural heritage and ensure socially sustainable management practices.

The training module will cover **three main subtopics**, each providing participants with in-depth knowledge, practical skills, and the tools needed to apply sustainable practices in archaeological site management. These subtopics are designed to help professionals in the field of cultural heritage to integrate environmental protection, sustainable tourism, and community engagement into their daily management and conservation tasks.

3.1. First Subtopic

Subtopic 1 — Environmental and Conservation Practices for Sustainable Archaeological Site Management

This subtopic focuses on the foundational principles and practices of sustainability in archaeological site management, with particular emphasis on environmental conservation. Archaeological sites face numerous threats, including climate change, pollution, and unsustainable tourism, which can compromise their long-term preservation. This section introduces practical, eco-friendly conservation methods and digital tools that help protect these valuable cultural assets.

Key Topics Covered:

- **Environmental sustainability in archaeological sites:** This includes identifying and managing risks related to environmental factors, such as erosion, water damage, pollution, and the effects of climate change. Participants will learn how to integrate sustainability into the preservation process to protect both the environment and the cultural integrity of the site.

- **Preventative conservation techniques:** The focus will be on non-invasive conservation methods that ensure minimal impact on the archaeological site. This includes the use of sustainable materials for restoration, applying eco-friendly techniques for preserving monuments, and preventing the degradation of materials due to environmental stress.
- **Digital tools for monitoring and conservation:** New technologies such as drones, environmental sensors, and GIS (Geographic Information Systems) are becoming essential in heritage management. Participants will learn how to use these tools to monitor the site's health, track changes over time, and implement early interventions to mitigate damage.

Environmental Sustainability in Archaeological Sites

Integrating environmental sustainability into archaeological site management means making deliberate, practical choices that protect the site from environmental damage while preserving its cultural integrity over the long term. Below are concrete approaches that site managers can adopt.

Develop a Site-Specific Risk Assessment

Before any conservation decision is made, a structured risk assessment should be carried out. This means walking the site systematically and documenting where environmental stress is already visible. Signs of erosion, water pooling, vegetation encroachment, and pollution deposits on stone surfaces all need to be recorded, along with identifying which areas are most vulnerable. The ARCH project (EU H2020)²¹ developed a practical tool for exactly this purpose: the Resilience Assessment Dashboard (RAD), a free online tool that guides heritage managers through a structured evaluation of their site's vulnerabilities to climate-related and other environmental hazards, and helps them prioritise which risks to address first.

Integrate Green Infrastructure Around the Site

One of the most effective and low-cost ways to protect a site from erosion and water damage is to manage the landscape surrounding it as a buffer. The municipality of Valongo (Portugal)²² applied bioengineering techniques, using living vegetation as structural elements, to stabilise riverbanks and control water flow adjacent to heritage landscapes. This approach improved the ecological, hydro-geomorphological, and environmental quality of the area, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerabilities identified in the Municipal Strategies for Adaptation to Climate Change. The same logic applies directly to archaeological sites: native vegetation planted strategically around a site's perimeter can intercept rainwater, reduce run-off velocity, and prevent the erosion of protective soil layers.

²¹ ARCH Project: <https://savingculturalheritage.eu/solutions/overview>

²² https://smart-tourism-capital.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2024-02/GreenPioneer_BestPractices_2024.pdf

Adopt Renewable Energy for Site Infrastructure

The infrastructure that supports a site has its own environmental footprint. This includes lighting, visitor facilities, monitoring equipment, and administrative buildings. Transitioning this infrastructure to renewable energy is a concrete sustainability action that reduces both emissions and long-term operating costs. In Dubrovnik (Croatia)²³, as part of the EU-funded SEADRION project, seawater heat pumps were installed in the Rector's Palace, a UNESCO-listed heritage building. The new system replaced a 40-year-old fossil fuel setup and resulted in a reduction in CO₂ emissions of approximately 30 tonnes per year. It also eliminated external air conditioning units that were visually damaging the protected building. For sites with more modest means, even the installation of solar panels to power sensor nodes or pathway lighting represents a meaningful step toward environmental sustainability.

Build Climate Resilience into Long-Term Planning

Sustainability in archaeological site management is not only about responding to current conditions, but also about anticipating future ones. Resilience-building strategies need to be included in heritage management policies and practices, while the role heritage can play in climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction needs to be emphasised. Practically, this means that site management plans should include specific climate adaptation measures: updated drainage capacity for more intense rainfall, protocols for emergency protection of exposed features during extreme weather events, and regular review cycles that incorporate new climate data as it becomes available. The ARCH project's Resilience Measures Inventory (RMI)²⁴ provides a searchable and free database of specific, tested measures that heritage managers can browse, evaluate, and adapt to their own site context.

²³ GreenPioneer Best Practices 2024 (European Commission / DG GROW) — SEADRION, Dubrovnik, Section 3.6.1

https://smart-tourism-capital.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2024-02/GreenPioneer_BestPractices_2024.pdf

²⁴ <https://www.heritageresearch-hub.eu/heritage-research-community/>

Some additional examples of application:

Altamira Cave (Spain)



Altamira Cave represents one of the most fragile archaeological environments in Europe due to the presence of prehistoric cave paintings highly sensitive to environmental changes. Increased visitor numbers in the past caused significant alterations in CO₂ levels, humidity, and temperature, accelerating the deterioration of the paintings. To address these challenges, strict environmental monitoring systems were introduced, including sensors to continuously measure microclimatic conditions²⁵. Visitor access was significantly limited and regulated, prioritizing conservation over mass tourism. This

case demonstrates how preventive conservation and scientific monitoring can protect highly vulnerable heritage while redefining visitor access in a sustainable way.

Pompeii (Italy)



The archaeological site of Pompeii faces ongoing environmental threats linked to rainfall, water infiltration, and soil instability, which pose serious risks to its extensive and exposed structures. To mitigate these challenges, drainage and water management systems were implemented to control rainwater flow and prevent erosion and structural damage²⁶. These interventions are combined with regular maintenance and monitoring activities to detect early signs of deterioration. Pompeii illustrates how large-scale archaeological sites can integrate environmental

management measures into daily conservation practices to enhance resilience against

²⁵ UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Altamira Cave and Paleolithic Cave Art of Northern Spain – State of Conservation Reports; see also UNESCO (2013), Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, paras. 108–118.

²⁶ ICOMOS (2019). Climate Change and Cultural Heritage; European Commission (2021), Strengthening Climate Resilience of Cultural Heritage.

climate-related risks.

Empúries (Spain)



At the archaeological site of Empúries, exposure to weather conditions posed a constant threat to mosaics and other delicate archaeological elements. To address this issue, lightweight and permeable protective coverings were installed, allowing airflow while shielding sensitive surfaces from rain, wind, and direct sunlight²⁷. This solution balances effective conservation with minimal visual impact, preserving both the physical integrity and the visitor experience of the site. Empúries provides a practical example of how simple, low-impact interventions can significantly improve long-term conservation

outcomes.

While environmental conservation is crucial, the impact of visitor management plays a vital role in the sustainability of these heritage sites. Therefore, Subtopic 2 will focus on responsible visitor management and the integration of sustainable tourism strategies.

3.2. Second Subtopic

Subtopic 2 — Responsible Visitor Management and Sustainable Tourism Strategies

Tourism plays an important role in the economy of many Mediterranean regions, but unmanaged or unsustainable tourism can damage archaeological sites and harm local communities. This subtopic will explore how to balance the need for tourism with the imperative to preserve archaeological sites for future generations. It will introduce strategies for managing visitor flows, using digital tools to enhance the visitor experience, and ensuring that tourism contributes positively to the site and surrounding community.

Key Topics Covered:

- **Managing visitor impacts:** Overcrowding, environmental degradation, and physical damage are common challenges at popular archaeological sites. Participants will learn to assess the carrying capacity of a site, manage visitor flows, and establish rules and strategies to reduce wear and tear on archaeological features²⁸.

²⁷ ICOMOS (2017). The Burra Charter: Principles for Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance, Articles 1–6.

²⁸ UNWTO (2017). Sustainable Tourism for Development: Guide for Policy Makers, Chapter 3 – Visitor Management and Carrying Capacity.

- **Visitor behavior and education:** Educating visitors about the significance of the site and how to behave responsibly is crucial. This section will cover the creation of educational materials and interactive experiences that encourage respectful engagement with the heritage, such as interpretive signage, workshops, and guided tours.
- **Digital tools for visitor management²⁹:** With the help of technology, visitor flows can be efficiently controlled. Participants will be introduced to digital solutions like online booking systems, visitor tracking, augmented reality (AR) apps, and other innovations that reduce the physical impact of tourism while enhancing the visitor experience.

Implement Sustainable Visitor Management

Unmanaged visitor flow is one of the most direct causes of environmental degradation at archaeological sites. Soil compaction, erosion along informal paths, and physical damage to surfaces are all consequences that site managers encounter regularly. The key principle here is that sustainable management means redistributing pressure across the site and across the year, rather than simply restricting access.

The city of Trebinje (Bosnia and Herzegovina) offers a useful example. By developing tourism products that spread visitor numbers throughout the whole year, the city successfully extended its tourist season to almost its entirety. Investment in sports and congress infrastructure played a central role in achieving this, and the result was a significant reduction in concentrated visitor pressure during the summer months.

For archaeological sites, the same logic applies. A combination of timed entry systems, designated path networks, and off-peak programming can make a real difference. Guided tours, educational events, and seasonal activities all help to make a site attractive throughout the year, drawing visitors away from peak periods and distributing their impact more evenly across the site.

In practice, a well-established management framework for heavily visited sites follows three sequential stages³⁰:

- The first is restricting overall numbers.
- The second is redistributing visitors in time and space.
- The third is interpreting the site in ways that account for the presence of large groups.

A review of visitor management strategies implemented across eleven archaeologically

²⁹ European Commission (2020). *EU Strategy for Sustainable and Smart Tourism, Priority Area 1; European Commission (2021), Digital Cultural Heritage and Innovation.*

³⁰ Enseñat-Soberanis, F. et al. (2019). *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 14(4). Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2018.1529179>

significant sites worldwide identified 96 distinct measures, all synthesised into exactly this three-stage process.

What makes this framework particularly valuable for site managers is that it can be implemented gradually. Physical measures are often the most immediate starting point. Rope barriers, wooden boardwalks, and clearly marked gravel paths can define permitted routes and steer visitors away from fragile surfaces without requiring significant investment. For most World Heritage sites, putting into place measures that restrict visitor access, such as set tour routes or pre-booked excursions, is both necessary and effective for protecting fragile heritage³¹.

Timed entry is another practical tool, and it does not have to depend on expensive software. A basic booking form linked to a shared calendar is sufficient for smaller sites. Sites threatened by mass tourism can limit visitor numbers by requiring reservations, setting a daily capacity limit, introducing time slots, or keeping people in small manageable groups³².

It is also worth remembering that site managers do not have to work alone. Tour operators and hotel chains can play a meaningful role by making financial contributions, supporting monitoring efforts, or simply briefing their clients on responsible behaviour before they arrive at the site³³.

Interpretation as a Tool for Protection

It is necessary that archaeological sites be actively managed and interpreted rather than left to be understood by the visitor alone. Signage and panels add pleasure and enhance the value of the tourist's visit and encourage pre-designed routes through the site to minimise crowding and negative impact³⁴. Well-designed interpretive signage is one of the most accessible tools available to any site. At its core, it aims to build a consistent narrative that develops as visitors move through the space. Beyond that, it provides educational and learning opportunities, promotes local heritage, and encourages sustainable practice³⁵.

For sites where resources are tight, there are still good options. Printed weather-resistant panels on timber or recycled plastic posts offer real durability without major expenditure. QR code technology is another practical solution, particularly for heritage trails where

³¹ UNESCO World Heritage Centre – Guide 8: Managing Visitor Behaviour

³² Curiosity Saves Travel – Sustainable Traveler's Guide to UNESCO World Heritage Sites <https://curiositysavestravel.com/unesco-world-heritage-sustainable-travel-guide-and-responsible-travel-tips/>

³³ UNESCO World Heritage Centre – Managing Tourism at World Heritage Sites <https://whc.unesco.org/uploads/activities/documents/activity-113-2.pdf>

³⁴ Academia.edu – Historical Archaeology on Public Display: Outdoor Interpretive Signage https://www.academia.edu/8207962/Historical_Archaeology_on_Public_Display_Outdoor_Interpretive_Signage

³⁵ Travel Wayfinding – What is Heritage Interpretation and Interpretive Signage? <https://travelwayfinding.com/what-is-heritage-interpretation/>

strict environmental requirements apply. It offers a way to deliver dynamic information during a visit, even along trails that are not always covered by internet connectivity³⁶. Free QR code generators allow staff to link physical markers to multilingual web pages or audio descriptions, all without any specialist costs.

Training community members as volunteer guides is equally valuable, and in many cases it strengthens the site's relationship with the people who live around it. Developing tourism initiatives that benefit the local economy directly supports sustainable site management. Hiring residents as guides or promoting local crafts and products are two straightforward ways to achieve this. The example of Petra in Jordan illustrates the point well. There, the local Bedouin community plays an essential role in guiding tourists through the archaeological wonders. Their intimate knowledge of the site enriches the visitor experience considerably, while at the same time providing sustainable livelihoods for the community itself³⁷.

Technology That Works at Every Scale

Technology offers site managers a growing range of tools to improve how visitors experience and move through a site. Virtual and augmented reality applications, for example, allow visitors to see reconstructions of how a site once looked, either through a screen or by holding up a smartphone. These tools are increasingly being used both in museums and directly on site. Online ticketing systems allow managers to control exactly how many people enter on any given day. Visitors simply show a code on their phone at the entrance, removing the need for printed tickets and making it much easier to manage daily numbers.

For sites that do not have a large technology budget, there are still practical options worth considering. The iMuse³⁸ programme, for instance, has tested a range of simple digital activities for heritage visitors, including information codes that visitors scan with their phone and basic interactive games. The programme shared its findings openly, specifically so that smaller sites with limited resources could learn from the experience. Free website-building tools such as Google Sites or Canva can be used to create a simple guide to the site in multiple languages, accessible to visitors through a scannable code placed on a sign or panel. Free audio guide platforms, such as izi.TRAVEL³⁹, allow site staff to record and publish spoken tours that visitors can follow at their own pace using their own phones.

When choosing any digital tool, it is worth keeping things simple. Applications that require a large amount of data to download will not work well in areas with poor internet coverage, which is common at many archaeological sites⁴⁰. Finally, whatever tools a site

³⁶ MDPI Sustainability – A Sustainable Approach to Tourist Signage on Heritage Trails (2023) <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/15/23/16251>

³⁷ FasterCapital – Successful Cultural Heritage Tourism Initiatives <https://fastercapital.com/topics/successful-cultural-heritage-tourism-initiatives.html/1>

³⁸ <https://imuse.e-ce.uth.gr/>

³⁹ <https://www.izi.travel/en?visit=1776163025>

⁴⁰ Internet Archaeology – An On-Site Presentation of Invisible Prehistoric Landscapes

CULTMED

Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

uses, generating income to sustain them matters. A growing number of heritage destinations are encouraging visitors to contribute financially, either through a small addition to the entry fee or through a voluntary donation box at the entrance. A clear and honest explanation of how those funds are used can make a significant difference to how willing visitors are to contribute⁴¹.

<https://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue43/13/13.html>

⁴¹ UNESCO World Heritage Centre – Guide 9: Securing Funding and Investment
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/sustainabletourismtoolkit/guide9/>

Some additional examples of application:

Roman Theatre in Mérida (Spain)



The Roman Theatre of Mérida is a highly visited archaeological site that combines heritage conservation with cultural programming, including performances and guided visits. High visitor numbers, especially during peak tourist seasons and events, posed risks to the preservation of fragile structures and the overall visitor experience. To address these challenges, visitor access has been regulated through controlled entry times, capacity limits, and differentiated visitor routes. These measures help reduce physical pressure on the

site while ensuring visitor safety and enjoyment. Mérida illustrates how structured visitor flow management can protect archaeological heritage without compromising its cultural and economic value.

Akrotiri (Greece)



Akrotiri is a prehistoric settlement preserved beneath protective structures, making visitor circulation and physical access a critical issue. To minimize damage to the archaeological remains, raised walkways were installed, allowing visitors to explore the site without direct contact with sensitive surfaces. This approach significantly reduces wear and tear while maintaining visibility and interpretive quality. Akrotiri demonstrates how spatial design solutions can effectively balance accessibility, conservation, and educational

objectives in high-value archaeological contexts.

Egnazia (Puglia, Italy)



At Egnazia, digital tools have been introduced to enhance the visitor experience while limiting physical interaction with the site. An interactive mobile application provides historical context, interpretative content, and thematic routes, reducing the need for extensive signage or physical infrastructure⁴². This digital approach supports sustainable tourism by improving visitor understanding and engagement while minimizing environmental and material impacts. Egnazia shows how technology can be used as a strategic tool for responsible visitor

management and heritage interpretation.

Beyond environmental and visitor management, effective governance that includes the community is key to ensuring the long-term success of sustainable heritage practices. Subtopic 3 will explore inclusive governance and the role of local communities in preserving heritage.

3.3. Third Subtopic

Subtopic 3 — Community Engagement, Governance Models, and Digital Tools for Inclusive Heritage Management

This subtopic highlights the importance of involving local communities in the management of archaeological sites. Local people are not only stakeholders but can also play a key role in the site's conservation and sustainable tourism development. This section will focus on governance models that integrate community participation and the role of digital tools in promoting inclusive management practices.

Key Topics Covered:

- **Community involvement in heritage management:** The active participation of local communities ensures the protection of cultural heritage and fosters a sense of ownership⁴³. This section will cover methods for involving the local population in decision-making processes, raising awareness, and fostering collaborative efforts for heritage management.

⁴² UNESCO (2022). *Digital Technologies and Sustainable Visitor Experiences in Cultural Heritage Sites*.

⁴³ UNESCO (2015). Policy Document for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention.

- **Inclusive governance models:** Traditional top-down management systems often overlook the needs and priorities of local communities. In contrast, inclusive governance promotes collaboration among local authorities, cultural heritage managers, community representatives, and other stakeholders⁴⁴. Participants will learn how to design participatory governance structures that allow all voices to be heard and valued.
- **Digital tools for community engagement:** Technology is increasingly being used to bridge the gap between heritage managers and local communities. Tools like online platforms, social media, and crowdsourcing applications enable better communication and collaboration⁴⁵. This subtopic will explore how digital technologies can support transparency and facilitate community engagement in heritage conservation.

Community Involvement in Heritage Management: Practical Approaches

UNESCO recognises community participation as a fundamental tool in heritage management, seeking to involve public participation. A first practical step is understanding who the community actually is. Communities can be those who live near heritage, those who feel a connection to it, or those who work with it. Talking to local leaders, craftspeople, teachers and neighborhoods groups before designing any heritage programme helps avoid plans that ignore what people already know and care about⁴⁶.

Once the community is understood, practical tools can be used to involve them in real decisions. One of the most effective is cultural mapping, where residents use maps or simple digital tools to identify and document local heritage sites, stories and traditions that outside experts might never find on their own. Cultural mapping can generate new forms of knowledge about both tangible and intangible heritage within a community and serve as a vehicle for engaging populations in a dialogue about what they value. Regular community workshops are equally important. Evidence from heritage projects in Cairo shows that through participatory workshops and mapping tools, local residents became dynamic decision-makers, with over 70% reporting increased ownership and engagement in heritage conservation efforts⁴⁷. Setting up formal community committees with real decision-making power alongside local authorities helps make this involvement permanent rather than occasional.

Inclusive governance models

⁴⁴ Council of Europe (2005). *Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention)*.

⁴⁵ European Commission (2021). *Digital Participation and Cultural Heritage Governance*, policy brief.

⁴⁶ ICCROM (2015). *Promoting People-Centred Approaches to Conservation: Living Heritage*. https://www.iccrom.org/sites/default/files/PCA_Annexe-2.pdf

⁴⁷ *Engagement Approach Enhances Heritage Conservation: Two Case Studies on Sustainable Urban Development in Historic Cairo*, available at: <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/17/10/4565>

Inclusive governance is best understood as a spectrum, ranging from simple information sharing to genuine shared decision making. Arnstein's well known "ladder of participation" illustrates this idea, with each rung showing how much real power citizens actually have in shaping a plan or programme⁴⁸. Several practical models already exist and can be copied in other places. In Scotland, the Adopt a Monument scheme helps local communities look after monuments they care about. It provides training, advice, fundraising support, and hands on activities at the site itself⁴⁹. The scheme works through a simple agreement between public authorities, private landowners, and local groups. In this way, much of the regular upkeep is carried out by volunteers and supported by small grants, instead of relying fully on state funding. A different but equally useful model comes from Italy. In 2006, a young cooperative called La Paranza took over the management of the Naples catacombs. What started with only 5 employees has grown into a team of more than 40 people. The money earned from visitors is reinvested into the site itself and into jobs for young people from the neighbourhood, making the site largely self funded⁵⁰.

In conclusion, real community involvement in heritage management is not an optional add on, but the foundation on which lasting and meaningful protection of cultural heritage is built. Communities should not only help carry out heritage projects, but also take part in designing and evaluating them. This can happen through joint policy boards, planning committees, and clear ways of resolving disagreements when they appear. This kind of shift does not cost much, yet it brings real long term benefits. It improves trust between communities and authorities, and it helps avoid conflicts that would otherwise be costly to fix later on. As recent studies show, when people are truly involved in decisions, the outcomes tend to be more democratic, more creative, and better aligned with the common good. Conflicts are reduced, and awareness of heritage values grows. The key is simple: communities should be treated as partners who help shape heritage governance, not as passive receivers of decisions made elsewhere.

Using Digital Tools to Strengthen Community Participation in Heritage Management

Digital tools can make community participation in heritage management easier, more equal, and far less expensive when chosen with care. Free and open source platforms such as [QGIS](#) (a mapping programme) and [OpenStreetMap](#) (a community built world map similar to Google Maps but edited by volunteers) allow local groups to document and monitor their heritage sites without buying expensive equipment. Free social media channels and smartphone based photogrammetry apps (programmes that turn a series of ordinary photos into a 3D model of an object or building) also give communities the means to record, watch over, and promote their heritage using only the tools they already

⁴⁸ A ladder of citizen participation

https://www.historyofsocialwork.org/1969_ENG_Ladderofparticipation/1969,%20Arnstein,%20ladder%20of%20participation,%20original%20text%20OCR%20C.pdf

⁴⁹ Archaeology Scotland. *Adopt-a-Monument Scheme*. Archaeology Scotland, Musselburgh, UK. Available at: <https://www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk/adopt-a-monument>

⁵⁰ European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards (2021). *La Paranza Cooperative – Grand Prix Winner*. Available at: <https://www.europeanheritageawards.eu/winners/la-paranza-cooperative/>

have in their pocket. Recent research in Xie et al. highlights exactly this point, recommending mobile based digital tools for places where funding is limited⁵¹

Several real projects across Europe show how these ideas work in practice. MicroPasts, a platform co founded by University College London and the British Museum, has invited thousands of volunteers to transcribe old archaeological records, add geographical information to ancient artefacts, and even help build 3D models from photographs⁵². In Italy, the #InvasioniDigitali (meaning "Digital Invasions") movement encourages citizens to visit heritage sites and share their photographs and stories on social media, helping to promote lesser known places through everyday tools like Instagram and Facebook⁵³. Projects like these show that volunteers, using only ordinary phone cameras, can produce genuinely useful research material while also building a stronger personal connection to their local heritage.

Beyond documentation, simple digital channels can also improve transparency and everyday communication. Social media groups can work as open noticeboards where heritage managers share upcoming works, decisions, and budgets, giving residents a chance to raise concerns early, before small issues turn into disputes.

Additional Examples of Application: Tarragona World Heritage (Spain)



The World Heritage Site of Tarragona has developed volunteer programs that actively involve local residents in heritage preservation, interpretation, and educational activities. Through training and participation initiatives, community members contribute to guided visits, awareness campaigns, and heritage monitoring. This participatory approach strengthens local ownership of cultural heritage and fosters a shared responsibility for its protection. Tarragona demonstrates how community engagement can enhance both conservation outcomes and

social cohesion.

Matera (Italy)

⁵¹ Xie et al., 2024, *npj Heritage Science*, available at: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s40494-024-01407-x>).

⁵² UCL and British Museum, 2014, available at: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/impact/case-studies/2022/apr/harnessing-power-citizen-archaeology> and <https://micropasts.org>

⁵³ Invasioni Digitali, available at: <https://www.invasionidigitali.it>

CULTMED

Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean



During and after its designation as European Capital of Culture, Matera placed strong emphasis on community involvement in heritage promotion and cultural tourism development. Local residents, cultural associations, and creative professionals were actively engaged in the design of cultural routes, events, and storytelling initiatives linked to the city's archaeological and historical landscape. This inclusive model ensured that tourism development reflected local identity and generated economic benefits for the community. Matera illustrates how

participatory governance can support sustainable heritage-led development.

Alcáçova de Évora (Portugal)



At the Alcáçova de Évora, collaborative projects were developed with local artisans, food producers, and cultural operators to co-create immersive heritage experiences. These initiatives integrate traditional crafts, local gastronomy, and storytelling, offering visitors authentic cultural encounters while supporting the local economy. Digital communication tools were used to coordinate stakeholders and promote transparency. This case highlights how inclusive governance and local partnerships can transform archaeological sites into living cultural spaces

rooted in the community.

Training and Practical Challenge Activities

Each subtopic will be followed by a **challenge-based learning activity** designed to give participants hands-on experience in solving real-world problems related to heritage management and sustainability.

1) Practical Activity for Subtopic 1: Environmental and Conservation Practices

Challenge: "How Can We Save the Site?"

Duration: 45–60 minutes

Objective: In groups, participants will select an archaeological site facing environmental challenges and design a conservation strategy that incorporates eco-friendly solutions and monitoring technologies. They will pitch their solutions to the group.

Participants will create a **conservation strategy document** that outlines the eco-friendly solutions and monitoring technologies they propose, which will be presented as part of a peer review exercise.

2) Practical Activity for Subtopic 2: Responsible Visitor Management

Challenge: "Redesigning the Visitor Experience"

Duration: 45–60 minutes

Objective: Participants will create a sustainable visitor management plan for a site suffering from overcrowding and damage due to tourism. They will integrate digital tools, manage visitor flows, and develop educational strategies to encourage responsible tourism.

Participants will produce a **visitor management plan** that includes a digital tool integration proposal and visitor education materials, to be presented and discussed.

3) Practical Activity for Subtopic 3: Community Engagement and Governance

Challenge: "Building a Community-Driven Heritage Model"

Duration: 45–60 minutes

Objective: Groups will develop an inclusive governance model that involves local communities in the decision-making process of an archaeological site. They will propose a project for community engagement, integrating digital tools for participation and transparency.

Participants will design a **community engagement project**, including governance structures and a digital communication plan, to be presented in small groups for feedback.

4. ANNEXES

- Glossary of Terms
- Essential Reading and Resources
- Other relevant materials (Web portals, etc)
- Link and QR Code of Interactive Activities

Glossary of Terms

Sustainability	The ability to maintain and preserve resources, ecosystems, and cultural heritage for future generations while meeting current needs without depleting or damaging those resources.
Carrying Capacity	The maximum number of visitors a site can accommodate without causing negative impacts on the site's physical integrity, environment, or the local community.
Preventive Conservation	Conservation techniques aimed at slowing or preventing deterioration through non-invasive methods, such as environmental control or monitoring, rather than intervention after damage has occurred.
Erosion Control	Measures taken to prevent or reduce the erosion of soil, structures, or archaeological remains, often due to natural factors like water, wind, or human activity.
Stakeholder Engagement	The process of involving all relevant parties (e.g., local communities, heritage professionals, government agencies) in decision-making processes related to the management and conservation of cultural heritage sites.
Eco-friendly Restoration	The use of sustainable materials and techniques in restoring cultural heritage sites, ensuring minimal environmental impact and the preservation of the site's authenticity.
Digital Tools for Heritage Management	Technologies, such as GIS (Geographic Information Systems), drones, and digital sensors, used to monitor, map, and manage archaeological sites more effectively and sustainably.
Community-based Tourism	A tourism approach that actively involves local communities in the planning, development, and management of tourism activities, ensuring that benefits are shared within the community.
Interpretive signage	Interpretive signage refers to informational panels, boards, or markers placed around a site that do more than simply label what visitors are looking at. Their purpose is to explain the significance of what they are seeing, provide historical and

	cultural context, and guide visitor behaviour in a way that feels engaging rather than instructive.
--	--

Essential Reading and Resources

To deepen your understanding of sustainable practices in heritage management and archaeological site preservation, the following resources are recommended. These readings provide further insight into the principles and practices introduced in the training.

- 1. UNESCO (2013). *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.**
A comprehensive guide for managing World Heritage sites, emphasizing sustainable conservation and management strategies for heritage protection.
- 2. ICOMOS (2017). *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance*.**
This document outlines the principles and procedures for the conservation of cultural heritage sites, with a focus on respecting both the historical and social significance of the site.
- 3. UNWTO (2017). *Sustainable Tourism for Development: Guide for Policy Makers*.**
A valuable resource that provides guidelines for integrating sustainability into tourism planning and policy, emphasizing the role of local communities in fostering responsible tourism.
- 4. Hernandez, J.C., & Gonzalez, A. (2018). *Sustainable Heritage Management: Practices and Approaches*.**
This book explores sustainable management models for cultural heritage sites, presenting case studies and practical strategies for balancing tourism, preservation, and community involvement.
- 5. EU (2020). *EU Strategy for Sustainable and Smart Tourism*.**
A strategic document from the European Union outlining policies and initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable tourism in Europe, particularly in cultural heritage areas.

Interactive Activities

#	ACTIVITY TYPE	LINK	QR CODE
1	Training Video 1	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNINUSTqRNY	
2	Training Video 2	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJOyTHuaCvs	
3	Educational Games	https://cultmed.eu/educational-games/	
5	Interactive Quizzes	https://cultmed.eu/interactive-activities/	



TRAINING MODULE 3

TRANSFORMING CULTURAL TOURISM ENTITIES LIKE GALLERIES AND MUSEUMS INTO GREEN DESTINATIONS



Co-funded by the European Union

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Table of content

Executive Summary	74
EN.....	74
EL.....	74
IT.....	75
ES.....	76
PT	76
INTRODUCTION	77
1. GOAL OF THE MODULE.....	79
1.1 Purpose & design principles.....	80
2. Pedagogical model.....	81
3. Development workflow (content production)	83
4. Accessibility, localisation & languages.....	86
5. Implementation in the pilot phase (Spain as test case)	86
Bibliography.....	88
2. MODULE SUBTOPICS.....	89
2.1. Introduction to Sustainability in Cultural Institutions	89
Practical Case 1 – Sustainability challenges in heritage contexts	90
2.2. Green Cultural Management: Principles and Practices	90
Practical Case 2 – Operational sustainability in museums.....	92
2.3. Engaging Visitors Sustainably	92
Practical Case 3 – Visitor management and sustainability	94
Practical Case 4 – Sustainable tourism and visitor flow	94
Practical Case 5 – Community and sustainability.....	94
3. Annex: Interactive Activities.....	95

Executive Summary

EN

The “*Training Module 3: Transforming Cultural Tourism Entities into Green Destinations*” introduces a practical and operational approach to supporting museums, galleries, and similar cultural institutions in their transition towards sustainability. Grounded in recognised frameworks such as UNESCO guidance, ICOM perspectives, and EU policy directions like the European Green Deal, the module translates high-level sustainability principles into concrete, everyday practices. It emphasises sustainability not only in environmental terms but also in relation to social inclusion, community engagement, and economic resilience, helping participants understand how to embed these dimensions into real institutional contexts. Through a combination of practical guidance, case studies from CultMed WP2, and interactive learning activities, the module equips learners with actionable knowledge and tools that can be directly applied in their organisations.

The module is designed for professionals working in museums, galleries, and cultural tourism entities, including managers, curators, operations staff and visitor experience teams. It is structured around key domains of sustainable transformation: (i) improving operational efficiency and resource management, (ii) strengthening climate-risk preparedness and sustainable practices, and (iii) engaging visitors and communities through inclusive and responsible approaches. Participants learn how to assess their institution’s current sustainability performance, identify priority actions, and implement feasible improvements through practical tools such as the Green Destination Checklist and the Mini Action Plan. By linking immediate “no-regret” actions with simple monitoring and KPIs, the module supports institutions in achieving measurable progress within a short timeframe. Ultimately, it fosters the development of cultural destinations that are environmentally responsible, socially inclusive, and deeply connected to their local context and communities.

EL

Η «Ενότητα Εκπαίδευσης 3: Μετασχηματισμός Φορέων Πολιτιστικού Τουρισμού σε Πράσινους Προορισμούς» εισάγει μια πρακτική και λειτουργική προσέγγιση για την υποστήριξη μουσείων, γκαλερί και παρόμοιων πολιτιστικών ιδρυμάτων στη μετάβασή τους προς τη βιωσιμότητα. Βασισμένη σε αναγνωρισμένα πλαίσια όπως οι κατευθυντήριες γραμμές της UNESCO, οι προσεγγίσεις του ICOM και οι πολιτικές κατευθύνσεις της ΕΕ, όπως η Ευρωπαϊκή Πράσινη Συμφωνία, η ενότητα μεταφράζει αρχές βιωσιμότητας υψηλού επιπέδου σε συγκεκριμένες, καθημερινές πρακτικές. Δίνει έμφαση στη βιωσιμότητα όχι μόνο σε περιβαλλοντικούς όρους, αλλά και σε σχέση με την κοινωνική ένταξη, τη συμμετοχή της κοινότητας και την οικονομική ανθεκτικότητα, βοηθώντας τους συμμετέχοντες να κατανοήσουν πώς να ενσωματώσουν αυτές τις διαστάσεις σε πραγματικά θεσμικά πλαίσια. Μέσα από έναν συνδυασμό πρακτικής καθοδήγησης, μελετών περίπτωσης από το CultMed WP2 και διαδραστικών μαθησιακών δραστηριοτήτων, η ενότητα εξοπλίζει τους εκπαιδευόμενους με εφαρμόσιμη γνώση και εργαλεία που μπορούν να χρησιμοποιηθούν άμεσα στους οργανισμούς τους.

Η ενότητα έχει σχεδιαστεί για επαγγελματίες που εργάζονται σε μουσεία, γκαλερί και φορείς

πολιτιστικού τουρισμού, συμπεριλαμβανομένων διευθυντών, επιμελητών, προσωπικού λειτουργίας και ομάδων εμπειρίας επισκεπτών. Δομείται γύρω από βασικούς τομείς βιώσιμου μετασχηματισμού: (i) βελτίωση της λειτουργικής αποδοτικότητας και της διαχείρισης πόρων, (ii) ενίσχυση της ετοιμότητας απέναντι σε κλιματικούς κινδύνους και υιοθέτηση βιώσιμων πρακτικών, και (iii) εμπλοκή επισκεπτών και κοινοτήτων μέσω συμπεριληπτικών και υπεύθυνων προσεγγίσεων. Οι συμμετέχοντες μαθαίνουν πώς να αξιολογούν την τρέχουσα απόδοση βιωσιμότητας του οργανισμού τους, να εντοπίζουν δράσεις προτεραιότητας και να εφαρμόζουν εφικτές βελτιώσεις μέσω πρακτικών εργαλείων όπως η Λίστα Ελέγχου Πράσινου Προορισμού και το Μίνι Σχέδιο Δράσης. Συνδέοντας άμεσες «χωρίς μεταμέλεια» ενέργειες με απλή παρακολούθηση και βασικούς δείκτες απόδοσης (KPIs), η ενότητα υποστηρίζει τα ιδρύματα στην επίτευξη μετρήσιμης προόδου σε σύντομο χρονικό διάστημα. Τελικά, προάγει την ανάπτυξη πολιτιστικών προορισμών που είναι περιβαλλοντικά υπεύθυνοι, κοινωνικά συμπεριληπτικοί και βαθιά συνδεδεμένοι με το τοπικό τους πλαίσιο και τις κοινότητές τους.

IT

Il *“Modulo Formativo 3: Trasformare gli Organi per il Turismo Culturale nelle Mete Ecosostenibili”* presenta un approccio pratico e funzionale per sostenere musei, gallerie ed enti culturali affini nel corso della loro transizione verso la sostenibilità. Basato su quadri istituzionali riconosciuti come le direttive dell’UNESCO, la visione dell’ICOM e le normative politiche dell’UE tra cui il Patto Verde Europeo, il modulo traduce i principi della sostenibilità ad ampia portata in abitudini concrete e quotidiane. Pone l’accento sulla sostenibilità non solo in termini ambientali, ma anche in relazione all’inclusione sociale, al coinvolgimento comunitario e alla resilienza economica, aiutando i partecipanti a comprendere in che modo integrare questi aspetti all’interno dei reali contesti istituzionali. Attraverso un connubio di orientamento pratico, casi di studio rilevati dal WP2 di CultMed, e attività volte all’apprendimento interattivo, il modulo fornisce agli studenti delle competenze effettive e degli strumenti che possono essere applicati direttamente alle proprie organizzazioni.

Il modulo è concepito per professionisti che lavorano nei musei, nelle gallerie e negli enti per il turismo culturale, come amministratori, sovrintendenti, membri dello staff operativo e squadre per l’esperienza dell’ospite. Si struttura intorno agli elementi chiave della trasformazione sostenibile: (i) migliorare l’efficienza operativa e la gestione delle risorse, (ii) consolidare le modalità di reazione ai rischi climatici e incrementare le pratiche sostenibili, quindi (iii) coinvolgere i turisti e le comunità per mezzo di approcci inclusivi e responsabili. I partecipanti imparano in che modo valutare l’applicazione di pratiche sostenibili da parte delle proprie attuali organizzazioni, adottare degli interventi prioritari e instaurare dei progressi attuabili mediante strumenti pratici come la Green Destination Checklist (“Lista di Controllo delle Mete Ecosostenibili”) e il Mini Action Plan (“Piano d’Azione Rapido). Accostando delle azioni dirette e determinate a una supervisione di base e agli Indicatori Chiave di Prestazione (ICP), il modulo supporta gli enti nell’acquisizione di progressi tangibili entro un breve lasso di tempo. Infine, promuove lo sviluppo delle mete culturali dotate di consapevolezza ambientale, socialmente inclusive e profondamente connesse al proprio contesto locale e alle comunità.

ES

El «*Módulo 3: Transformar las entidades de turismo cultural en destinos sostenibles*» presenta un enfoque práctico y operativo para apoyar a museos, galerías y otras instituciones culturales en su transición hacia la sostenibilidad. Basado en marcos reconocidos como las directrices de UNESCO, las perspectivas de ICOM y las políticas europeas como el Pacto Verde Europeo, el módulo traduce los principios de sostenibilidad en prácticas concretas aplicables al día a día. Hace hincapié en la sostenibilidad no solo desde una perspectiva medioambiental, sino también social y económica, ayudando a los participantes a comprender cómo integrar estos aspectos en contextos culturales reales. A través de una combinación de orientaciones prácticas, estudios de caso procedentes de CultMed WP2 y actividades interactivas, el módulo permite a los participantes adquirir conocimientos y herramientas aplicables directamente en sus organizaciones.

El módulo está dirigido a profesionales de museos, galerías y entidades de turismo cultural, incluidos gestores, comisarios, personal técnico y equipos de experiencia del visitante. Se estructura en torno a varios ámbitos clave de la transformación sostenible: (i) mejora de la eficiencia operativa y la gestión de recursos, (ii) refuerzo de la preparación frente a riesgos climáticos y la adopción de prácticas sostenibles, y (iii) implicación de visitantes y comunidades mediante enfoques inclusivos y responsables. Los participantes aprenden a evaluar la situación actual de sus instituciones, identificar acciones prioritarias y aplicar mejoras factibles mediante herramientas prácticas como la Green Destination Checklist y el Mini Action Plan. Al vincular acciones inmediatas de bajo coste con sistemas simples de seguimiento e indicadores clave (KPI), el módulo facilita la obtención de resultados medibles en un corto plazo. En última instancia, promueve el desarrollo de destinos culturales sostenibles, inclusivos y estrechamente vinculados a su contexto local y a sus comunidades.

PT

O “*Módulo de Formação 3: Transformar Entidades de Turismo Cultural em Destinos Ecológicos*” apresenta uma abordagem prática e operacional para apoiar museus, galerias e instituições culturais semelhantes na sua transição para a sustentabilidade. Baseado em quadros de referência reconhecidos, tais como as orientações da UNESCO, as perspectivas do ICOM e as orientações políticas da UE, como o Pacto Ecológico Europeu, o módulo traduz princípios de sustentabilidade de alto nível em práticas concretas do dia-a-dia. Enfatiza a sustentabilidade não só em termos ambientais, mas também em relação à inclusão social, ao envolvimento da comunidade e à resiliência económica, ajudando os participantes a compreender como integrar estas dimensões em contextos institucionais reais. Através de uma combinação de orientações práticas, estudos de caso do WP2 do CultMed e atividades de aprendizagem interativas, o módulo dota os formandos de conhecimentos e ferramentas úteis que podem ser diretamente aplicados nas suas organizações.

O módulo foi concebido para profissionais que trabalham em museus, galerias e entidades de turismo cultural, incluindo gestores, curadores, pessoal operacional e equipas de experiência do visitante. Está estruturado em torno de domínios-chave da transformação

sustentável: (i) melhorar a eficiência operacional e a gestão de recursos, (ii) reforçar a preparação para riscos climáticos e práticas sustentáveis, e (iii) envolver visitantes e comunidades através de abordagens inclusivas e responsáveis. Os participantes aprendem a avaliar o desempenho atual da sua instituição em matéria de sustentabilidade, a identificar ações prioritárias e a implementar melhorias viáveis através de ferramentas práticas, tais como a Lista de Verificação de Destinos Verdes e o Mini Plano de Ação. Ao associar ações imediatas «sem arrependimentos» a um acompanhamento simples e a indicadores-chave de desempenho (KPI), o módulo apoia as instituições na obtenção de progressos mensuráveis num curto espaço de tempo. Em última análise, promove o desenvolvimento de destinos culturais que sejam ambientalmente responsáveis, socialmente inclusivos e profundamente ligados ao seu contexto local e às suas comunidades.

INTRODUCTION

This module supports cultural tourism entities, especially museums and galleries, in taking concrete, manageable steps toward becoming environmentally responsible, socially inclusive, and economically resilient green destinations. It treats sustainability not as an abstract aspiration but as a set of day-to-day practices that can be embedded in operations, exhibition-making, visitor services, and partnerships. By translating sector standards and the CultMed WP2 Best Practices into clear actions, the module helps institutions reduce resource use, protect collections against climate risk, widen access and inclusion, balance visitor flows, and deepen value for local communities.

The content is deliberately practical. It sets out how to make progress on energy and water efficiency, materials and waste reduction (including single-use plastics), and climate preparedness for buildings and collections, without overstepping conservation constraints or requiring immediate capital investment. It then shows how to engage visitors sustainably—nudging low-impact behaviours through wayfinding and information design, improving accessibility across physical, sensory, cognitive, and socio-economic dimensions, and using timed entry or shoulder-season programming to ease pressure on fragile spaces. Throughout, examples and “transfer tips” from the CultMed WP2 cases illustrate what similar institutions have done, what it cost, what indicators they used, and how small pilots can scale.

The module is anchored in recognised frameworks and sector perspectives. It draws on UNESCO guidance for responsible tourism and visitor management at heritage sites, aligns with ICOM’s emphasis on sustainability and local development in museums, and situates operational choices within broader EU policy directions (e.g., the European Green Deal) and competence-based learning (GreenComp). This ensures that actions proposed here reinforce, rather than compete with, institutional missions and regulatory requirements, and that they can be communicated clearly to leadership, funders, and public authorities.

While the pilot context is Spain, the pathway is designed to travel. Tools and examples are chosen for relevance to European museums and galleries—reflecting typical building types, mobility options, governance arrangements, and community ecosystems—yet the guidance

CULTMED

Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

remains adaptable across the Mediterranean. In particular, the module reflects shared challenges across Mediterranean countries such as Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal, and Cyprus, including seasonality, heritage preservation constraints, and tourism pressure on cultural assets. Local inserts and a bilingual glossary make the material easy to tailor, and the emphasis on “no-regret” measures means that progress can begin even where budgets and staffing are tight. The module is designed with a strong focus on transferability and scalability across European cultural tourism contexts.

1. GOAL OF THE MODULE

The goal of this module is to enable practitioners in museums, galleries, and related cultural venues to plan and execute a credible transition toward environmental sustainability while safeguarding heritage value and visitor experience. It does this by turning high-level frameworks into clear operational measures, realistic KPIs, and implementation checklists that staff can adopt immediately and scale over time.

Who this module is for

- Directors and senior managers
- Curators, collections and conservation staff
- Facility and operations managers, building services staff
- Education, public programmes and visitor experience teams
- Exhibition, design and technical crews
- Communications and marketing staff responsible for visitor information and wayfinding
- Café, shop and events managers, procurement and vendor liaison staff
- Municipal or regional cultural officers working with museums and galleries
- Accessibility, inclusion and community engagement leads
- Students and professionals in the tourism sector

Concretely, by the end of the module participants will be able to diagnose their institution's current position using a Green Destination Checklist; prioritise one or two feasible improvements that respect conservation constraints; plan those improvements through a Mini Action Plan that names owners, timelines, resources, and indicators; and evidence early change via simple, repeatable monitoring. The emphasis is on no-regret actions—measures that reduce waste, save energy and water, improve inclusion, and ease visitor pressure without requiring complex capital projects.

The learning outcomes are aligned with EU and sector frameworks so that actions are defensible to leadership, funders, and public authorities. Operational choices are situated within the European Green Deal's direction of travel; competence development maps to GreenComp (visioning, impact assessment, collective action, and monitoring); heritage and access considerations reflect UNESCO guidance on visitor management and ICOM positions on sustainability and local development. This alignment ensures the module strengthens, rather than competes with, core institutional missions and compliance duties.

The scope spans five interconnected domains: efficient operations (energy, water, materials, waste—including single-use plastics), climate-risk preparedness for buildings and collections, inclusive access across physical, sensory, cognitive and socio-economic dimensions, visitor-flow management that protects fragile spaces, and community-embedded programming that grows local value chains. For each domain, the module provides tiered pathways—no-cost, low-cost, and investment options—plus resource-light variants suitable for small and mid-

sized institutions.

Success is defined not by the volume of paperwork but by actionable progress within 30 days of training. Participants leave with a short, feasible plan and starter KPIs (e.g., hours of lighting reduced, number of single-use items eliminated, accessibility cues added, queue time changed, local collaborations initiated). These signals create a credible trail of improvement and a base for future funding or technical upgrades.

In short, the module's goal is to move teams from intention to implementation—providing the knowledge, structure, and tools to start now, measure honestly, learn quickly, and build a sustainable, inclusive visitor experience that is authentic to place and purpose.

1.1 Purpose & design principles

This methodology turns high-level sustainability frameworks into actionable training that museums and galleries can use immediately. Rather than treating sustainability as an abstract ideal, it translates UNESCO/ICOM guidance and EU policy into concrete routines, how to run buildings more efficiently, protect collections from climate risk, welcome visitors inclusively, and engage local communities, while remaining faithful to each institution's mission and constraints. The design emphasises both rigour and usability: we align with recognised standards (including GreenComp's competence families) yet package the content as checklists, templates, and short activities that staff can adopt with minimal friction. The goal is for participants to leave the workshop not with theory alone, but with a workable plan that fits their context.

Competency development anchors the module from the outset. Each learning outcome maps to the capacities staff actually need on the ground: visioning a greener destination that still preserves cultural integrity; assessing impacts and trade-offs before investing scarce resources; mobilising colleagues and partners for collective action; and monitoring what changes after decisions are made. This mapping keeps the training focused on behaviours and decisions. how a curator, facilities lead, or educator will act differently on Monday morning, rather than on a static list of "green" measures.

The content is evidence-led and designed to travel well between institutions. We build the narrative on CultMed Best Practices and complementary sector literature, then distil what makes each example transferable. For every initiative highlighted, we draw out the enabling conditions, the minimum viable version, and the likely pitfalls. Where larger budgets or specialist expertise are required, we propose resource-light variants so that small and mid-sized institutions can still move forward. The emphasis is on pathways, progressive steps that can start small, produce visible value, and justify deeper change.

Accessibility and inclusion are not add-ons but structural features of the design. The written module uses plain language, logical headings, readable typography, and alt-texted visuals so the material is usable by diverse staff teams. In the pedagogy, activities invite contributions

from different roles—collections, operations, education, visitor services—so the sustainability conversation is not siloed with technicians alone. On the visitor side, the examples and prompts consistently ask how changes will improve access for people with different physical, sensory, cognitive, and socio-economic needs, and how interpretation and wayfinding can welcome more people without increasing pressure on fragile spaces.

Implementation is the organising principle of the whole module. Each section closes by funnelling insights into two practical outputs: a Green Destination Checklist that helps teams diagnose where they stand on operations, risk, access, engagement, and monitoring; and a Mini Action Plan that names one or two priority measures, assigns owners, and sets a realistic timeline. This structure keeps momentum: participants never encounter material without an immediate step that translates it into their own institution.

Finally, the design is measurable by construction. We embed simple, repeatable KPIs that institutions can track with minimal burden—energy and water baselines and savings from basic scheduling and fixtures; reductions in single-use items and clearer supplier policies; concrete accessibility updates and qualitative user feedback; small visitor-flow gains from timed entry or shoulder-season programming; and evidence of community value through local collaborations. By pairing these indicators with short monthly check-ins and photo or document snapshots, teams can see progress, communicate it to leadership and funders, and decide where to iterate next. The intention is to create a virtuous cycle: measure a little, learn quickly, scale what works, and retire what does not—without losing sight of heritage authenticity or the visitor experience.

Expected outcomes and competences

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

- Explain the core principles of sustainability as applied to museums and galleries. environmental, social, economic.
- Diagnose their institution's current status using the Green Destination Checklist. and identify at least two priority gaps.
- Plan no-regret improvements with a Mini Action Plan. specifying goals, actions, owners, timelines, and starter KPIs.
- Apply resource-efficient routines in operations. lighting and HVAC scheduling, low-flow fixtures, single-use reduction, basic risk checks. within conservation constraints.
- Integrate inclusive access into visitor experience. wayfinding, formats, information design. and propose one change that is feasible within 30 days.
- Manage visitor flow using light-touch tools. timed entry, pacing, off-peak programming. and document a simple before. after signal.
- Engage one local partner. SME, artisan, CSO. to co-create a small sustainability action with fair value sharing.
- Monitor and report early results with simple evidence. a photo, a log entry, a short metric. and communicate the case for scaling to leadership.

2. Pedagogical model



Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

The training blends flipped learning with challenge-based learning (C-BL) so that contact time is used primarily for practice, decision-making, and peer exchange. Participants arrive with a shared baseline and then work on their own institutional challenges, producing an actionable plan by the end of the session. This combination keeps the experience focused on real-world constraints—limited time, budgets, building restrictions—while still aligning to recognised standards and measurable outcomes.

2.1 Flipped learning (pre-work, 45–60 minutes total)

The pre-work ensures that everyone enters the workshop with a common language and a basic grasp of key ideas. Participants receive a short pre-read of four to six pages that introduces sustainability in cultural institutions through the familiar three pillars and relates them to daily operations: energy and water management, materials and waste (including single-use plastics), accessibility and inclusion, visitor-flow, and community value. To anchor concepts in evidence, the text includes two or three brief vignettes drawn from CultMed WP2 cases, each ending with a one-sentence transfer tip. A compact glossary clarifies terms that often cause confusion (e.g., operational vs. embodied carbon; universal design vs. accessibility; mitigation vs. adaptation).

An accompanying one-page infographic, ***“Roadmap to a Green Destination”*** visualizes the journey from quick wins to longer-term improvements. It sets out five lanes—efficient operations, climate risk and collection care, inclusive access, visitor-flow, and community partnerships—and shows how small steps can build toward more ambitious change. The short video (no more than ten minutes) then ties these pieces together in a narrative: what makes a museum or gallery sustainable in practice, why this matters for mission and audience, and what to expect in the workshop. It closes with a teaser of the tasks to come, so participants arrive ready to act. Finally, a lightweight self-check quiz (six to eight items) confirms that the essentials have landed; automated feedback points to the specific pages of the pre-read so people can quickly revisit any gaps.

This flipped design reduces lecturing during the workshop and allows the facilitator to begin from a higher baseline. It also respects participants’ time by front-loading information that can be absorbed individually and reserving synchronous time for collaborative problem-solving.

2.2 Challenge-based learning (in-person/online workshop)

The workshop itself is structured as a sequence of short, purposeful sprints that culminate in a concrete plan. Led by GEINNOVA, which is responsible for the design and delivery of the training workshop.

The heart of the workshop consists of deep-dive clinics organised as rotating stations. One station focuses on efficient operations—how simple schedules, set-points, lighting retrofits, and procurement choices reduce energy, water use, and waste without compromising conservation standards. A second station addresses climate risk and collection safety, helping teams think through passive protection, incident readiness, and maintenance routines that



Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

reduce vulnerabilities. A third station looks at inclusive access and visitor-flow management, from low-cost wayfinding improvements to timed entry and shoulder-season programming that distributes pressure more evenly. The fourth station explores community engagement and local value chains, showing how partnerships with artisans, SMEs, and civic groups can advance sustainability while enhancing authenticity. Each station provides a short tool, a micro-case, and a decision prompt; teams annotate their Action Plan as they rotate, translating generic guidance into context-specific steps.

Before closing, a brief peer review gives each team external eyes on its plan. Using a simple “two stars and a wish” format keeps feedback constructive and fast. The session ends with a commitment moment: each team sets one concrete task for the next 30 days and designates a *Green Coordinator* responsible for convening colleagues and reporting back. This final step converts intention into accountability and sets up the post-work follow-up.

The format works in person or online. In a virtual setting, station work occurs in breakout rooms with shared worksheets; the facilitator time-boxes transitions and uses a visible progress timer. Regardless of modality, the rhythm—short inputs, active work, immediate application—keeps energy high and output tangible.

2.3 Micro-assessments and reflection

To maintain momentum and verify understanding without breaking flow, the session includes micro-assessments at natural transition points. Quick polls or short scenario questions help the facilitator see whether ideas have landed and where to slow down. These checks are not graded; they are signals for adaptation in real time. The workshop closes with a brief reflection card in which participants note what they will start, stop, and continue, alongside the single largest enabler and barrier they expect to encounter. These reflections serve three purposes: they consolidate learning; they alert the facilitator to common obstacles that can be addressed in follow-up materials; and they provide a baseline for the 30-day check-in. Together with the pre-work quiz and the Action Plan rubric, they form a light-touch assessment framework that privileges application over testing and helps institutions demonstrate progress without administrative burden.

3. Development workflow (content production)

The module will be produced as a concise, highly usable document of approximately ten to fifteen pages including images and graphics. It is designed to function both as a stand-alone training resource and as the narrative backbone for the audiovisual assets (two short videos, quizzes and one gamified activity to be produced by ARCES). To achieve this dual purpose, we will write in a “script-ready” style: sections begin with plain-language statements, proceed to evidence-based guidance, and close with an actionable prompt that can be adapted directly into on-screen captions, voiceover lines, or interactive cues in the game.

The writing will follow a consistent editorial voice—clear, active, and non-technical—so that operations, collections, and education staff can all engage with equal confidence. Figures will be functional rather than decorative: quick flow diagrams, before/after schematics, and small

checklists embedded next to the relevant text. Each figure will include alt text and a one-sentence caption so that the same visual can be re-used in subtitled video frames and social posts without redrafting. The layout will favour short paragraphs, meaningful sub-headings, and call-out boxes that surface transfer tips, resource-light variants, and common pitfalls.

3.1 Content structure

The document opens with a short introduction that explains why “green destinations” matter to cultural institutions now—linking mission, visitor experience, and risk reduction—and situates the module within recognised policy and sector standards. We will reference UNESCO and ICOM frameworks and point to the EU Green Deal as the strategic backdrop, making explicit that the module translates these agendas into operational steps that are feasible for small and mid-sized institutions.

The second part presents principles and practices for efficient operations. Here we cover the essentials of energy and water stewardship, materials and waste reduction (including single-use plastics), and climate-risk preparedness for buildings and collections. The emphasis is on low-regret actions and decision pathways rather than prescriptive engineering. Where specialised assessment is necessary, the text signposts that requirement and provides a checklist to prepare for professional consultation.

The third part addresses sustainable visitor engagement. It explains how institutions can nudge low-impact behaviours through wayfinding and information design; how inclusive access can be improved for physical, sensory, cognitive, and socio-economic needs; how visitor-flow can be managed with simple tools such as timed entries or shoulder-season programming; and how to embed community co-creation so that sustainability strengthens authenticity rather than diluting it.

The fourth part brings the guidance to life through case studies drawn from CultMed WP2. We will select museum and gallery examples, and for each we will present the context, what changed, what it cost in broad terms, which indicators were tracked, and what made the practice transferable. Each case ends with two practical prompts: one “start tomorrow” action and one “scale next” action.

The fifth part provides tools and templates. This includes the Green Destination Checklist for a quick self-diagnosis, a Mini Action Plan template that captures goals, actions, roles, resources, timeline, and indicators, a one-page monitoring sheet that can be printed and posted in staff areas, and a vendor-guidelines outline that institutions can adapt for procurement and contracts.

The final part explains assessment and follow-up. It sets out how the pre-work quiz, workshop micro-assessments, and 30-day check-in work together; it describes the post-session reflection and the role of the designated Green Coordinator; and it provides short instructions for sharing results internally with leadership and externally with the CultMed network.

Throughout the document, margin notes will indicate where text, figures, or lists map to the planned video storyboard or to the game’s interaction prompts. This keeps all teams aligned

and reduces rework during audiovisual production.

3.2 Roles and responsibilities

GEINNOVA leads elaboration. This includes drafting and editing the module, integrating WP2 cases with proper attribution, shaping the tools and templates, and ensuring that learning outcomes map to sustainability competences, including GreenComp families such as visioning, impact assessment, and collective action. GEINNOVA will also provide ongoing feedback on the video production led by ARCES, ensuring alignment of script, visuals, accessibility, and terminology across all outputs.

Piloting is led by GEINNOVA. Together we will recruit up to ten participants from museums, galleries, and related entities in Spain, confirm logistics, deliver the flipped-plus-challenge workshop, and run the evaluation instruments. ANHER will support local contextualisation, help identify a suitable venue that allows short back-of-house walkthroughs, and co-facilitate the station work.

3.3 Quality assurance and versioning

Quality assurance is built into the workflow rather than appended at the end. Editorial quality will be ensured through a two-pass review: the first pass focuses on clarity, coherence, and consistency of terms; the second addresses style, readability, and the elimination of jargon. Technical quality is safeguarded through targeted checklists that validate the correctness of operational guidance and, crucially, the boundaries of that guidance: where expert assessment is required, the module explicitly says so and provides preparation steps instead of instructions that would over-reach the training's scope.

Reference quality is maintained by verifying every quoted figure, definition, or procedural claim against the cited source. Short citations appear in-line, with a consolidated bibliography at the end of the module to simplify future translation and layout.

Accessibility quality is treated as non-negotiable. Headings follow a logical hierarchy, images include meaningful alt text, contrast and font sizes meet readable standards, and plain-language summaries close each major section. For audiovisual alignment, we will draft caption-ready text and identify segments that require slower on-screen pacing or descriptive narration for visually rich sequences.

3.4 Ethics, rights and risk

Ethical practice, rights management, and risk control are embedded from the outset. All visuals will be project-owned, partner-supplied with written permission, or sourced from rights-cleared libraries. Credits will be recorded in a short media log to simplify reuse by CultMed project. Evaluation data gathered during piloting will be pseudonymised and reported in aggregate. Consent forms will be used for participants and for any individuals appearing in interviews or b-roll. Where third-party technologies or vendors are referenced, the text remains neutral and descriptive. Procurement guidance will encourage transparent

processes that consider life-cycle impacts and accessibility.

The evaluation will include a short quiz to check key concepts and a practical group exercise during the pilot to test applicability. The quiz will use 8–10 items mapped to learning outcomes and GreenComp competences. The group exercise will produce a Diagnostics Note and a Mini Action Plan that can be assessed with a simple rubric for relevance, feasibility, clarity, and monitoring.

The module also recognises practical risks and addresses them upfront. It avoids offering prescriptive engineering advice for historic or complex buildings, instead providing decision pathways and preparation checklists for engaging qualified professionals. It manages expectations by distinguishing between immediate, low-cost improvements and longer-term investments that require governance decisions. And it balances sustainability ambitions with conservation duties, reminding teams to evaluate changes against collection care and visitor safety requirements.

4. Accessibility, localisation & languages

Accessibility is built into the module from the first draft rather than retrofitted at the end. The written document follows a predictable structure with logical headings and short paragraphs, so readers can skim or dive deeper as needed. Lists are used sparingly and only where they genuinely improve comprehension. Line spacing is generous and the body text is set at a minimum of 12–14 pt with high legibility fonts; headings increase size proportionally to create a clear visual hierarchy. Colour is never the only carrier of meaning; diagrams and charts rely on patterns, labels, and clear shapes, and every visual includes an equivalent text description. Contrast is tested against current guidance for comfortable reading in print and on screens. Where the module is exported to web or PDF, the reading order, tags and bookmarks reflect the structure faithfully so that assistive technologies can navigate it without friction.

Audiovisual assets adopt the same standard of inclusivity. The two short videos will be produced in English with an English mother tongue to be more inclusive. Captions convey speech verbatim, identify speakers when ambiguous, and include essential non-speech information that affects meaning (for example, “[crowd noise fades]” or “[door alarm]”). Time-coding respects a comfortable reading speed and line lengths are kept short to aid comprehension. A transcript accompanies the video so that participants can review or quote content easily and screen readers can access the full text. If a sequence relies heavily on on-screen information that is not spoken, a short audio-description note is scripted to bridge the gap for blind and low-vision viewers.

5. Implementation in the pilot phase (Spain as test case)

The Spanish pilot is designed to validate the module's practicality in real institutional settings and to generate credible, early evidence of change.

The pilot will also test the flipped-plus-challenge pedagogy, the usability of the tools, and the suitability of the audiovisual assets for pre-work.



Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

5.1 Cohort and logistics

The cohort will bring together up to ten professionals drawn primarily from museums, galleries and closely related cultural entities. Selection aims for a balanced mix across functions—operations and facilities, collections and conservation, education and visitor experience—so that sustainability planning reflects the whole institution rather than one department. When inviting organisations, we will ask each to nominate two participants from different roles; this increases the chance that post-pilot actions are coordinated and reduces single-point dependency.

The core learning format is a single half-day workshop of three-and-a-half to four hours followed by a thirty-day period in which teams implement at least one “no-regret” measure. In-person delivery is preferred to allow short walk-throughs of back-of-house areas during the diagnostics exercise; a hybrid fallback is kept ready in case of travel or access constraints. The venue will be a museum, gallery, or similar cultural space with a quiet room for the group sessions, stable Wi-Fi for light digital activities, and permission to observe plant rooms or staff corridors for ten to fifteen minutes under staff supervision. Basic accessibility needs are checked in advance (step-free access, accessible restroom, seating variety, good acoustics) and any dietary or sensory accommodations are gathered during registration.

Bibliography

1. Apple Inc. 2011. *Challenge Based Learning: A Classroom Guide*. URL: apple.com/br/education/docs/CBL_Classroom_Guide_Jan_2011.pdf. Accessed October 13, 2025.
2. Bishop, J. L., and M. A. Verleger. 2013. "The Flipped Classroom: A Survey of the Research." In *ASEE Annual Conference Proceedings*. URL: polyu.edu.hk/flti/What-is-Flipped-Classroom/What-is-a-Flipped-Classroom. Accessed October 13, 2025.
3. CEN (European Committee for Standardization). 2018. *EN 16893:2018—Conservation of Cultural Heritage: Specifications for Location, Construction and Modification of Buildings or Rooms Intended for the Storage or Use of Heritage Collections*. Brussels: CEN.
4. CultMed Consortium. 2025. *WP2 Best Practices Report: Sustainable Cultural Tourism on the Mediterranean*. Internal project deliverable, CULTMed.
5. European Commission. 2019. *The European Green Deal (COM/2019/640 final)*. URL: eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52019DC0640. Accessed October 13, 2025.
6. European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC). 2022. *GreenComp: The European Sustainability Competence Framework*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. URL: publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC128040. Accessed October 13, 2025.
7. ICOM (International Council of Museums). n.d. *Sustainability & Local Development Resources*. URL: icom.museum/en/research/sustainability-and-local-development/. Accessed October 13, 2025.
8. Interpret Europe. n.d. *About Heritage Interpretation*. URL: interpret-europe.net/about-heritage-interpretation/. Accessed October 13, 2025.
9. ISO (International Organization for Standardization). 2012. *ISO 20121—Event Sustainability Management Systems: Requirements with Guidance for Use*. URL: iso.org/standard/54552.html. Accessed October 13, 2025.
10. Johnson, L. F., R. Smith, J. Smythe, and S. Varon. 2009. *Challenge-Based Learning: An Approach for Our Time*. URL: challengebasedlearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/CBL_approach_for_our_time.pdf. Accessed October 13, 2025.
11. Julie's Bicycle. n.d. *Creative Climate Tools: Carbon and Impact Calculators for Cultural Organisations*. URL: juliesbicycle.com/our-work/creative-green/creative-climate-tools/. Accessed October 13, 2025.
12. Ki Culture. 2021. *Ki Books: Social Sustainability (Vol. I)*. URL: heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/Social_Sustainability_Ki_Book__Ki_Culture_Jan2021.pdf. Accessed October 13, 2025.
13. MuseumNext. 2024. "How Can Museums Become More Sustainable? 10 Ways to Start." URL: museumnext.com/article/10-ways-museums-can-be-more-sustainable/. Accessed October 13, 2025.
14. UNESCO. n.d. *Visitor Management Guidelines: Managing Tourism at World Heritage Sites*.

URL: whc.unesco.org/document/198420. Accessed October 13, 2025.

15. UNESCO World Heritage Centre. n.d. *Sustainable Tourism Toolkit*. URL: whc.unesco.org/en/sustainabletourismtoolkit/. Accessed October 13, 2025.

2. MODULE SUBTOPICS

2.1. Introduction to Sustainability in Cultural Institutions

- What sustainability means for **museums, galleries, heritage sites** (environmental, social, economic pillars).
 - Key challenges: energy intensity; environmental footprint; **climate risk** for buildings/collections; seasonality & revenue volatility; accessibility gaps.
 - **UNESCO** and **ICOM** perspectives on heritage sustainability and responsible tourism.
- References**
- UNESCO Sustainable Tourism Toolkit – <https://whc.unesco.org/en/sustainabletourismtoolkit/>
 - ICOM Sustainability & Local Development – <https://icom.museum/en/research/sustainability-and-local-development/>
 - Others from PPs

This subtopic sets a common baseline for what sustainability means in museums, galleries, and heritage sites, and why it is urgent now. We work across three pillars: environmental, social, economic, and connect each pillar to everyday decisions inside an institution. Environmentally, we target resource use and risk: energy and water stewardship, materials and waste reduction including single-use plastics, and climate preparedness for buildings and collections. Socially, we focus on inclusive access for visitors and staff across physical, sensory, cognitive, and socio-economic dimensions. Economically, we consider seasonality, revenue volatility, and the role of local value chains, showing how modest operational efficiencies and community partnerships can improve resilience without compromising conservation.⁵⁴

Typical constraints are acknowledged from the start: energy-intensive environments, ageing infrastructure, conservation requirements that limit retrofits, visitor peaks that strain staff, and gaps in accessibility that exclude potential audiences. Rather than treating these as blockers, the module frames them as design constraints and offers tiered choices: no-cost, low-cost, and investment options, so progress can begin now and build over time.⁵⁵

The perspective is anchored in recognised sector guidance. UNESCO emphasises protecting heritage values while enhancing experience and managing flows. This provides a policy backdrop for choices on routing, access, and risk. ICOM underlines the civic role of museums and the link between environmental action and community benefit. Together, these positions help participants treat sustainability as core stewardship rather than a parallel agenda.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ UNESCO World Heritage Centre, *Sustainable Tourism Toolkit*, URL: whc.unesco.org/en/sustainabletourismtoolkit/

⁵⁵ European Commission, *The European Green Deal (COM/2019/640)*, URL: eur-lex.europa.eu. See also JRC, *GreenComp. The European Sustainability Competence Framework*

⁵⁶ ICOM, *Sustainability and Local Development Resources*, URL: icom.museum

References (for orientation and citation in the module)

UNESCO World Heritage Centre — Sustainable Tourism Toolkit. URL: whc.unesco.org/en/sustainabletourismtoolkit/

ICOM — Sustainability & Local Development resources. URL: icom.museum/en/research/sustainability-and-local-development/
(Additional partner resources to be added during development)

Practical Case 1 – Sustainability challenges in heritage contexts

The ***Museo del Teatro Romano de Zaragoza (ES)*** operates in a highly sensitive archaeological environment where structural interventions are limited due to heritage protection regulations. The building experiences high temperatures during summer, which affects both visitor comfort and energy consumption.

Additionally, the museum faces challenges in accessibility and visitor communication, particularly for international tourists and people with different sensory needs. Instead of relying on major investments, the institution can implement small but effective measures:

- Adjusting opening hours during extreme heat periods
- Improving multilingual and accessible signage
- Reducing energy use in non-visited areas

These actions demonstrate how sustainability can begin with low-cost, adaptable solutions in heritage-constrained environments.

2.2. Green Cultural Management: Principles and Practices

- **Energy efficiency** in buildings: audits; insulation; HVAC tuning; LED; smart controls; on-site renewables (where feasible/appropriate).
- **Water stewardship:** low-flow fixtures; leak detection; greywater options; native landscaping.
- **Materials & waste:** circular procurement; non-toxic exhibit materials; repair/reuse; vendor guidelines; **single-use plastic reduction.**
- **Climate-risk preparedness:** risk assessment for collections; emergency plans; passive solutions; basic monitoring.

References

- European Green Deal – https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en
- ICLEI Sustainable Events Guidelines – <https://iclei.org/e-library/sustainable-events-guidelines/>
- Others from PPs

This subtopic converts sustainability into daily routines that reduce resource use and risk without compromising conservation or visitor experience. The approach is principle-based,

not prescriptive engineering. where specialist assessment is required, teams prepare for expert input rather than attempt design decisions in house.⁵⁷

Energy efficiency in buildings. Start with what you control today. align lighting and HVAC schedules with opening hours and cleaning routines, tighten set-points to avoid simultaneous heating and cooling, and use a simple nightly shutdown checklist for AV and back-of-house equipment. Replace failed lamps with LED in non-sensitive areas first, then test in sensitive spaces under conservation guidance. Validate impact with low-cost data such as portable loggers or BMS trends. Investment steps. insulation, glazing upgrades, high-efficiency plant, smart controls, or on-site renewables. require feasibility checks in heritage contexts. the module provides a prep list for audits. baseline, loads profile, conservation constraints, and access notes.⁵⁸

Water stewardship. Fit low-flow fixtures where comfort allows, institute a monthly leak-check routine, and update cleaning practices to reduce use without affecting hygiene. Outdoors, prioritise native or low-water landscaping and timed irrigation. where feasible, explore greywater with specialist advice. Track simple indicators. fixtures installed, leak checks completed, and estimated litres saved from schedule changes.⁵⁹

Materials and waste. Use procurement as a lever. a short vendor clause can preference reusable or refillable options, repair and reuse, and non-toxic materials, and ask suppliers to state end-of-life options. For exhibitions, choose modular and demountable components. Maintain a small materials library to encourage reuse between departments. In cafés and shops, remove a first tranche of single-use plastics and add clear sorting signage. Monitor a “lines removed or substituted” count and a monthly contamination spot-check.⁶⁰

Climate-risk preparedness for buildings and collections. Begin with a light risk scan. heatwaves, humidity swings, water ingress, power loss, wildfire smoke, or extreme wind. Draft or refresh a short emergency plan that covers roles, priorities, and communication. Run a 15-minute tabletop drill each season. Emphasise passive measures first. shrouds and blinds, buffered micro-climates, door discipline, and routine maintenance. gutters, thresholds, seals. Use basic monitoring in key stores and galleries to spot patterns. If structural upgrades are contemplated, capture constraints. fabric, listing, fire safety, access. and brief conservation-competent engineers.⁶¹

How the pieces fit. Energy, water, materials, and risk interact. smarter schedules ease grid strain and thermal stress. modular builds cut waste and shorten turnaround. passive shading reduces cooling load and stabilises RH. The Green Destination Checklist helps teams see links and choose no-regret measures that create momentum, while the Mini Action Plan locks

⁵⁷ ICLEI, *Sustainable Events Guidelines*, URL. iclei.org

⁵⁸ European Commission, *The European Green Deal*

⁵⁹ JRC, *GreenComp*

⁶⁰ Julie's Bicycle, *Creative Climate Tools*, URL. juliesbicycle.com

⁶¹ CEN, *EN 16893.2018 Conservation of Cultural Heritage. Specifications for buildings or rooms intended for collections*, Brussels. CEN

decisions into owners, timelines, and starter KPIs. lighting hours reduced, low-flow fixtures installed, single-use lines removed, drills completed.

References (for orientation and citation in the module)

European Commission — European Green Deal. URL: commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

ICLEI — Sustainable Events Guidelines (adaptable principles for cultural venues). URL: iclei.org/e-library/sustainable-events-guidelines/

(Additional partner resources to be added during development)

Practical Case 2 – Operational sustainability in museums

The **Museo Nacional del Prado (ES)** has progressively implemented energy efficiency strategies to reduce its environmental impact while maintaining strict conservation conditions for its collections.

Measures include:

- Transition to LED lighting systems
- Improved climate control management
- Monitoring energy consumption through smart systems

While large institutions have more resources, many of these practices can be adapted at a smaller scale in regional museums by focusing on operational routines rather than infrastructure investments.

This demonstrates how sustainability is not only about technology, but about management decisions and daily practices.

2.3. Engaging Visitors Sustainably

- **Low-impact behaviors:** wayfinding to public transport, cycling info, combined tickets to disperse flows.
- **Inclusion & accessibility:** physical, sensory, cognitive, and socio-economic access; inclusive interpretation and wayfinding.
- **Visitor-flow management:** timed entries; shoulder-season programming; capacity indicators; digital ticketing.
- **Community involvement:** co-creation with residents, artisans, SMEs; fair value chains.

References

- Interpret Europe – <https://interpret-europe.net/>
- UNESCO Visitor Management Guidelines – <https://whc.unesco.org/document/198420>
- European Route of Industrial Heritage (ERIH) – <https://www.erih.net/>
- CultMed Best Practices (WP2) – (as provided to partners)
- Others from PPs

This subtopic focuses on the visitor journey. before, during, and after the visit. The aim is to make low-impact choices obvious, ensure inclusion by default, balance flows across

space and time, and embed the local community as co-author of the offer. Small design changes here are highly visible and can produce outsized shifts in behaviour.⁶²

Low-impact behaviours. Normalise sustainable travel and on-site choices with just-in-time information. A “How to get here” panel on the website, in ticket confirmations, and at the entrance prioritises public transport stops, walking times, and cycling routes, with wayfinding for the last 200 to 500 metres. Inside, cues make refilling bottles, reusing guides, and responsible sorting feel standard. Where multiple sites exist, combined or time-staggered tickets help disperse demand. Measure clicks on the “How to get here” page, refill uses where visible, and bin contamination spot-checks.⁶³

Inclusion and accessibility. Access is part of sustainability. Improve the physical experience with step-free routes, seating variety, and good sightlines. Strengthen sensory access with large-print and high-contrast text, audio description, tactile cues, and quiet hours. Support cognitive access with plain-language summaries, clear iconography, and predictable wayfinding. Ease socio-economic barriers with transparent pricing and targeted free windows. Provide layered interpretation in multiple formats so visitors can choose their path. A “Know before you go” page reduces uncertainty for many visitors, including neurodivergent guests and families. Track simple signals: number of accessible formats, wayfinding fixes delivered, and short user feedback snapshots.⁶⁴

Visitor flow management. Balance experience quality and conservation by spreading visits across time and space. Timed entry for pressure points, shoulder-season programming, and pacing prompts can smooth peaks without feeling restrictive. Digital ticketing supports demand forecasting and communicates alternatives. “quieter after 15.00”, “second entrance open”. On the floor, gentle staff prompts and small spatial cues keep circulation natural. Use light indicators. Queue time samples before and after a change, occupancy thresholds for sensitive rooms, and the share of visits outside peak windows.⁶⁵

Community involvement and fair value chains. Root the offer in place. Co-create small elements with residents, artisans, and local SMEs. Rotating maker showcases, repair or skills demos, locally sourced café items with low-impact packaging, neighbourhood walking loops. Share value fairly through visible credit and simple terms. Benefits compound. Authenticity rises, supply chains become greener, and audiences encounter living heritage rather than static displays. Track collaborations started, events co-hosted, and locally sourced lines added to procurement.

Make it stick. Bundle these actions into a visible **Sustainable Visit promise**. Three things visitors can expect, and three things they can do. Align staff briefings and signage so the

⁶² Interpret Europe, resources on heritage interpretation, URL. interpret-europe.net

⁶³ UNESCO, *Visitor Management Guidelines. Managing Tourism at World Heritage Sites*, URL. whc.unesco.org

⁶⁴ ICOM, *Sustainability and Local Development Resources*

⁶⁵ European Route of Industrial Heritage, examples of route-based dispersal, URL. erih.net

promise is consistent online and on site. Fold related items into the **Green Destination Checklist** and the **Mini Action Plan** with starter KPIs chosen for ease of collection.⁶⁶

References (for orientation and citation in the module)

Interpret Europe — resources on heritage interpretation and inclusive engagement. URL: interpret-europe.net/

UNESCO — Visitor Management Guidelines (managing tourism at World Heritage sites). URL: whc.unesco.org/document/198420

European Route of Industrial Heritage (ERIH) — examples of route-based dispersal and interpretation. URL: erih.net/

CultMed WP2 Best Practices — partner-provided case set (to be cited where specific examples are used).

Practical Case 3 – Visitor management and sustainability

The **Acropolis Museum (GR)** faces significant visitor pressure due to its global popularity. To manage flows and improve visitor experience, the museum has implemented timed entry systems and structured visitor circulation routes.

These strategies help reduce overcrowding, protect the site, and improve overall visitor satisfaction without limiting access.

Practical Case 4 – Sustainable tourism and visitor flow

In **Venice**, cultural institutions and local authorities have introduced measures to address overtourism, including visitor flow regulation, promotion of off-peak visits, and awareness campaigns encouraging responsible tourism behaviour.

These initiatives show how sustainability in cultural tourism requires coordination between institutions and the wider destination.

Practical Case 5 – Community and sustainability

The **MAAT – Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (PT)** integrate sustainability not only in its building design but also in its public engagement strategies, promoting environmental awareness through exhibitions and educational activities.

This highlights the role of cultural institutions as educators and agents of change in sustainable tourism.

⁶⁶ JRC, *GreenComp*

3. Annex: Interactive Activities

#	ACTIVITY TYPE	LINK	QR CODE
1	Training Video 1	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ql0427CYYGE	
2	Training Video 2	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVD_gS5THYk	
3	Educational Games	https://cultmed.eu/educational-games/	
5	Interactive Quizzes	https://cultmed.eu/interactive-activities/	

CULTMED

Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean



TRAINING MODULE 4

IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL TOURISM IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND RURAL SETTINGS



Co-funded by the European Union

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Table of content

Executive Summary	98
EN	98
EL.....	98
IT.....	99
ES.....	99
PT.....	100
INTRODUCTION	101
1. GOAL OF THE MODULE	101
1.1. Chosen Methodology for the development and implementation of training content	101
1.2. Beneficiary country and responsible for Piloting	102
1.3. Target Groups:.....	102
2. MODULE SUBTOPICS.....	103
2.1. Introduction to Rural Sustainable Tourism.....	103
What sustainable cultural tourism means in practice for rural areas and small communities?.....	103
2.2. Identifying and capitalising in a sustainable manner on local heritage	111
2.3. Capitalising in a sustainable manner on local heritage - Designing Sustainable Tourism Experiences	116
2.3.1. Moving from mapping to experiences.....	117
2.4. Key trends and skills supporting effective sustainable cultural tourism implementation	124
2.4.1. Key Trends in Sustainable Cultural Tourism Experiences.....	125
2.4.2. Key Skills for Sustainable Cultural Tourism	127
2.5. Beyond a single product – conclusions on sustainable cultural tourism strategies for rural areas and peripheral regions	129
3. ANNEXES	136
Glossary of Terms	136
Key Resources	137
Interactive Activities	138

Executive Summary

EN

CultMed Training Module 4 - Implementing sustainable cultural tourism in local communities and rural settings, provides a practical framework for developing sustainable cultural tourism (SCT) in rural, small-town, and peripheral areas. It supports practitioners in creating tourism that attracts visitors while protecting cultural heritage, respecting environmental limits, and generating long-term local value.

The module promotes an approach based on transforming existing local assets, as traditions, crafts, food, stories, or landscapes, into authentic, small-scale experiences. Rather than focusing on mass tourism, it emphasises low-impact, locally rooted development that balances cultural integrity, environmental sustainability, and economic viability.

It introduces key principles such as authenticity, community benefit, integration of culture and nature, value over volume, and attracting respectful visitors aligned with local contexts. The module also highlights the importance of gradual growth, protection of sensitive assets, and managing seasonality through cultural activities.

With a strong focus on practical application, the module provides step-by-step tools and methods to help users identify cultural assets, design meaningful visitor experiences, test ideas, and develop sustainable tourism strategies tailored to their context.

Through practical guidance and real-life examples, the module demonstrates how even the most remote communities can successfully develop authentic, inclusive, and sustainable tourism models, while equipping practitioners with the skills and tools needed to implement sustainable cultural tourism in diverse local settings.

EL

Η Εκπαιδευτική Ενότητα 4 του CultMed – Εφαρμογή βιώσιμου πολιτιστικού τουρισμού σε τοπικές κοινότητες και αγροτικές περιοχές, παρέχει ένα πρακτικό πλαίσιο για την ανάπτυξη βιώσιμου πολιτιστικού τουρισμού σε αγροτικές, μικρές αστικές και περιφερειακές περιοχές. Υποστηρίζει τους επαγγελματίες στη δημιουργία τουριστικών εμπειριών που προσελκύουν επισκέπτες, προστατεύοντας παράλληλα την πολιτιστική κληρονομιά, σεβόμενες τα περιβαλλοντικά όρια και δημιουργώντας μακροπρόθεσμη τοπική αξία.

Η ενότητα προωθεί μια προσέγγιση που βασίζεται στη μετατροπή των υφιστάμενων τοπικών πόρων, όπως παραδόσεις, τέχνες, τοπική γαστρονομία, ιστορίες ή τοπία, σε αυθεντικές, μικρής κλίμακας εμπειρίες. Αντί να εστιάζει στον μαζικό τουρισμό, δίνει έμφαση σε μια ανάπτυξη χαμηλού αντίκτυπου, βαθιά συνδεδεμένη με την τοπική κοινωνία, που εξισορροπεί την πολιτιστική αυθεντικότητα, την περιβαλλοντική βιωσιμότητα και την οικονομική βιωσιμότητα.

Εισάγει βασικές αρχές όπως η αυθεντικότητα, το όφελος για την κοινότητα, η ενσωμάτωση πολιτισμού και φύσης, η έμφαση στην αξία αντί στον όγκο, καθώς και η προσέλκυση επισκεπτών που σέβονται το τοπικό πλαίσιο. Η ενότητα αναδεικνύει επίσης τη σημασία της σταδιακής ανάπτυξης, της προστασίας ευαίσθητων πόρων και της διαχείρισης της εποχικότητας μέσω πολιτιστικών δραστηριοτήτων.

Με έντονη έμφαση στην πρακτική εφαρμογή, η ενότητα παρέχει εργαλεία και μεθόδους βήμα-βήμα που βοηθούν τους χρήστες να εντοπίσουν πολιτιστικούς πόρους, να σχεδιάσουν

ουσιαστικές εμπειρίες για επισκέπτες, να δοκιμάσουν ιδέες και να αναπτύξουν βιώσιμες τουριστικές στρατηγικές προσαρμοσμένες στο δικό τους πλαίσιο.

Μέσα από πρακτική καθοδήγηση και παραδείγματα από την πραγματική ζωή, η ενότητα δείχνει πώς ακόμη και οι πιο απομακρυσμένες κοινότητες μπορούν να αναπτύξουν με επιτυχία αυθεντικά, συμπεριληπτικά και βιώσιμα τουριστικά μοντέλα, εξοπλίζοντας παράλληλα τους επαγγελματίες με τις απαραίτητες δεξιότητες και εργαλεία για την εφαρμογή του βιώσιμου πολιτιστικού τουρισμού σε διαφορετικά τοπικά περιβάλλοντα.

IT

Il Modulo di Formazione CultMed 4 – Implementare il turismo culturale sostenibile nelle comunità locali e nei contesti rurali – offre un quadro pratico per sviluppare il turismo culturale sostenibile (SCT) in aree rurali, piccoli centri e territori periferici. Supporta gli operatori nella creazione di un turismo capace di attrarre visitatori, proteggere il patrimonio culturale, rispettare i limiti ambientali e generare valore locale nel lungo periodo.

Il modulo promuove un approccio basato sulla valorizzazione delle risorse locali esistenti – come tradizioni, artigianato, gastronomia, narrazioni e paesaggi – trasformandole in esperienze autentiche e su piccola scala. Piuttosto che puntare sul turismo di massa, si concentra su uno sviluppo a basso impatto, radicato nel territorio, che equilibri integrità culturale, sostenibilità ambientale e sostenibilità economica.

Vengono introdotti principi chiave quali l'autenticità, il beneficio per la comunità, l'integrazione tra cultura e natura, la centralità del valore rispetto ai volumi e l'attrazione di visitatori consapevoli e rispettosi del contesto locale. Il modulo sottolinea inoltre l'importanza di una crescita graduale, della tutela delle risorse più sensibili e della gestione della stagionalità attraverso attività culturali.

Con un forte orientamento pratico, il modulo offre strumenti e metodi passo dopo passo per aiutare gli utenti a individuare le risorse culturali, progettare esperienze significative per i visitatori, testare le idee e sviluppare strategie di turismo sostenibile adattate al proprio contesto.

Attraverso indicazioni operative ed esempi concreti, il modulo dimostra come anche le comunità più remote possano sviluppare con successo modelli di turismo autentici, inclusivi e sostenibili, fornendo agli operatori le competenze e gli strumenti necessari per implementare il turismo culturale sostenibile in diversi contesti locali.

ES

El Módulo de Formación CultMed 4 – *Implementación del turismo cultural sostenible en comunidades locales y entornos rurales* proporciona un marco práctico para el desarrollo del turismo cultural sostenible (TCS) en zonas rurales, pequeñas localidades y áreas periféricas. Su objetivo es apoyar a los profesionales en la creación de un turismo que atraiga visitantes al mismo tiempo que protege el patrimonio cultural, respeta los límites ambientales y genera valor local a largo plazo.

El módulo promueve un enfoque basado en la transformación de los recursos locales existentes —como tradiciones, artesanía, gastronomía, relatos o paisajes— en experiencias auténticas y de pequeña escala. En lugar de centrarse en el turismo de masas, hace hincapié

en un desarrollo de bajo impacto y arraigado en el territorio, que equilibra la integridad cultural, la sostenibilidad ambiental y la viabilidad económica.

Asimismo, introduce principios clave como la autenticidad, el beneficio para la comunidad, la integración de cultura y naturaleza, el valor por encima del volumen y la atracción de visitantes respetuosos con el contexto local. El módulo también destaca la importancia del crecimiento gradual, la protección de los recursos sensibles y la gestión de la estacionalidad mediante actividades culturales.

Con un fuerte enfoque en la aplicación práctica, el módulo ofrece herramientas y métodos paso a paso que ayudan a los usuarios a identificar activos culturales, diseñar experiencias significativas para los visitantes, probar ideas y desarrollar estrategias de turismo sostenible adaptadas a su contexto.

A través de orientaciones prácticas y ejemplos reales, el módulo demuestra cómo incluso las comunidades más remotas pueden desarrollar con éxito modelos de turismo auténticos, inclusivos y sostenibles, al tiempo que dota a los profesionales de las habilidades y herramientas necesarias para implementar el turismo cultural sostenible en diversos entornos locales.

PT

O Módulo de Formação 4 do CultMed — Implementação do turismo cultural sustentável em comunidades locais e contextos rurais — fornece um quadro prático para o desenvolvimento do turismo cultural sustentável (SCT) em zonas rurais, pequenas cidades e áreas periféricas. Apoia os profissionais na criação de um turismo que atraia visitantes, protegendo simultaneamente o património cultural, respeitando os limites ambientais e gerando valor local a longo prazo.

O módulo promove uma abordagem baseada na transformação dos ativos locais existentes, tais como tradições, artesanato, gastronomia, histórias ou paisagens, em experiências autênticas e de pequena escala. Em vez de se centrar no turismo de massa, enfatiza um desenvolvimento de baixo impacto e enraizado localmente, que equilibra a integridade cultural, a sustentabilidade ambiental e a viabilidade económica.

Introduz princípios-chave como a autenticidade, o benefício para a comunidade, a integração da cultura e da natureza, o valor em detrimento do volume e a atração de visitantes respeitosos, alinhados com os contextos locais. O módulo também destaca a importância do crescimento gradual, da proteção de ativos sensíveis e da gestão da sazonalidade através de atividades culturais.

Com um forte enfoque na aplicação prática, o módulo fornece ferramentas e métodos passo a passo para ajudar os utilizadores a identificar bens culturais, conceber experiências significativas para os visitantes, testar ideias e desenvolver estratégias de turismo sustentável adaptadas ao seu contexto.

Através de orientações práticas e exemplos da vida real, o módulo demonstra como mesmo as comunidades mais remotas podem desenvolver com sucesso modelos de turismo autênticos, inclusivos e sustentáveis, ao mesmo tempo que dota os profissionais das competências e ferramentas necessárias para implementar o turismo cultural sustentável em diversos contextos locais.

INTRODUCTION

This module will help you understand the concept of sustainable cultural tourism, its different forms, and the practical approaches for identifying cultural assets and transforming them into valuable, community-led experiences. It supports professionals in promoting and valorising local culture, attracting respectful forms of tourism to rural areas, small towns, and peripheral regions, and in sharing this knowledge with the key actors in their communities.

Beyond conceptual understanding, the module equips participants with the skills and tools needed to support the development and implementation of sustainable cultural tourism products and strategies. Through clear concepts, real examples, and hands-on methods, it prepares professionals to:

- **Identify and assess cultural assets** as the foundation for authentic visitor experiences,
- **Translate heritage into experience ideas** using practical frameworks for small-scale, respectful, and community-driven activities.
- **Facilitate co-creation processes**, including community mapping workshops, participatory prioritisation, stakeholder engagement, and collaborative decision-making.
- **Develop locally rooted tourism strategies** that balance visitor interest with community values, sustainability principles, and long-term cultural preservation.
- **Support implementation**, guiding communities in piloting experiences, refining concepts, protecting sensitive areas, and ensuring cultural and environmental responsibility.

By strengthening both strategic insight and practical facilitation skills, the module empowers professionals to help local communities in design, implementation, and sustaining meaningful cultural tourism initiatives that reflect their identity and contribute to long-term vitality. The module is aligned with the European GreenComp framework for sustainability competences, ensuring that the skills developed support responsible, future-oriented practices.

1. GOAL OF THE MODULE

This module looks to provide tourism sector professionals, culture custodians and other agents engaged in supporting cultural tourism across Mediterranean and beyond with the skills and strategies needed to implement and promote sustainable cultural tourism in rural and peripheral areas contexts. The module explores how small communities can leverage their cultural heritage, traditions, and landscapes related to cultural heritage to attract responsible tourism, generate local benefits, promote their culture and preserve authenticity.

1.1. Chosen Methodology for the development and implementation of training content

This module is designed to give users a practical understanding of the key concepts and real-world methods needed to capitalise on cultural heritage in a sustainable way. The approach is intentionally simple, accessible, and action-oriented, using clear language, concrete examples, and step-by-step application guidelines.



Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

The module functions as a practical learning pill with ready to use toolkit supporting hands-on implementation. It addresses common limitations faced by practitioners in rural and peripheral regions, such as lack of accessible practice-oriented training, existing materials being too theoretical, academic, or policy-making-oriented, limited time to engage with complex frameworks, and the need for ready-to-use models and tools to support creation of products and initiatives in line with sustainable cultural tourism principles in non-urban settings.

The methodology therefore focuses on learning by doing, co-creation, and direct applicability, helping professionals and community actors move from understanding concepts to designing and implementing sustainable cultural tourism initiatives in their own contexts.

1.2. Beneficiary country and responsible for Piloting

While within the development the main focus of the CultMED project is on support to the Mediterranean region, the materials have been developed for benefit of all small communities, rural areas and peripheral regions across Europe looking to share and benefit from their cultural resources within the sustainable cultural tourism model. To ensure the responsiveness of the methodology and the provided materials to the needs of practitioners, the training has been tested with local stakeholders in Portugal and Italy and, based on their feedback, has been revised to better serve communities across the Mediterranean, Europe, and beyond.

1.3. Target Groups:

This module supports the broad ecosystem of actors shaping sustainable cultural tourism in rural and peripheral areas. It focuses on three key groups:

1. Organisations supporting tourism and cultural heritage - Tourism boards/DMOs, municipalities, heritage authorities, development agencies, chambers of commerce, cooperatives, NGOs, community enterprises, and VET providers that through the training gain practical tools to strengthen local tourism strategies, support community stakeholders, and design sustainable, culturally grounded tourism development initiatives.
2. Tourism professionals and heritage custodians - Hospitality and tourism entrepreneurs, local guides, experience providers, rural accommodation operators, cultural site managers, route custodians, and tradition bearers (associations, NGOs, individuals, cultural sites etc.) to learn how to create responsible, authentic visitor experiences, improve sustainability practices, and enhance local value while safeguarding cultural integrity.
3. Creative, Cultural, and Artisan Entrepreneurs - Artisans, craftspeople, gastronomy producers, artists, creative startups, cultural associations, and community cultural groups to explore ways to integrate creativity and heritage into tourism offers, reach new audiences, and develop sustainable, culturally rooted products and experiences.

2. MODULE SUBTOPICS

2.1. Introduction to Rural Sustainable Tourism

A VILLAGE ON THE CROSSROADS

Imagine a small Mediterranean village.

Old stone houses, a central square where elders gather under a plane tree telling stories and practicing old crafts. Narrow streets where the smell of fresh bread mingles with herbs carried by mountain wind.

For decades, young people left, shops closed, and fields slowly abandoned.

But then, visitors began arriving, attracted by its authenticity, legends, and landscapes. Local residents wondered:

"Can tourism help us revive our community... without losing who we are?"



"Can tourism help us revive our community... without losing who we are?"

"How can we share our heritage with visitors without turning it into a performance?"

"How do we welcome guests in a way that keeps our culture alive, rather than reshaped for outsiders?"

"How can we build tourism together as a community, not have it done to us?"

"How can tourism help protect our cultural sites, traditions, and landscapes, rather than put pressure on them and how do we prevent cultural erosion or commodification as more visitors come?"

Those are key central questions behind sustainable cultural tourism. **Sustainable cultural tourism aims to "provide opportunities for economic development in local communities, enhance local culture, and protect and preserve the heritage and authenticity of the destination.** Its ultimate goal is to balance the needs of visitors seeking meaningful experiences with the needs of local communities, ensuring that tourism strengthens, rather than erodes, local identity and long-term sustainability.

What sustainable cultural tourism means in practice for rural areas and small communities?

It means using what a community already has: its traditions, stories, food, crafts, culturally relevant landscapes, and historic places, to create small, respectful tourism experiences.



Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

It's about locals leading the way, keeping control over what is shared, and making sure tourism brings real benefits: income, pride, restored heritage, and vivid community life. It focuses on authentic, low-impact, meaningful encounters that help a village or destination stay alive while staying true to who it is rather than looking for crowds and rush development.

It helps communities attract customers for local businesses, promote and keep alive both material and non-material cultural assets, and stay proud of who they are.

For visitors, this type of tourism is attractive because it offers real, meaningful experiences they can't get in busy destinations: meeting locals, learning traditional skills, tasting homemade foods, hearing unique stories, and discovering places that feel genuine and welcoming. It gives travellers what many seek nowadays: connection, authenticity, slow moments, and unique memories.

Valuable sustainable cultural experiences turn unique local assets into authentic experiences.

Examples of potential models for sustainable initiatives in rural and small communities ↓

CULTMED


Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

Infographic 1: Types of sustainable cultural tourism initiatives in rural and small town settings examples.



Sustainable Cultural Tourism Initiatives in Rural and Small Communities

- #### 1 Community-led Craft Workshops



Residents invite visitors to learn local crafts such as weaving, pottery, basket-making, traditional mask carving, or embroidery—taught directly by elders or artisans.
- #### 2 Local Producers'-led Food Experiences



Local farmers, shepherds, or beekeepers guide visitors through traditional food production: olive oil pressing, cheese-making, herb collecting, or cooking family recipes.
- #### 3 Revival of Seasonal Rituals and Festivals



Communities re-energise local festivities, seasonal rituals, harvest celebrations, and ancient ceremonies, sharing stories and practices that unite locals and visitors in respectful, community-led celebration.
- #### 4 Storytelling Trails and Local Myth Routes



Locals create guided or self-guided trails where visitors discover legends, folk tales, symbolic landscapes, and ancestral pathways.
- #### 5 Digital Storytelling and Local Memory Projects



Villages document songs, recipes, historic sites, old crafts, and personal stories, turning them into apps, QR pathways, or small exhibitions, to preserve memory while enriching visitor experience.
- #### 6 Creative Tourism Networks




A group of local creators: artists, cooks, writers, musicians, craft makers, collaborate to offer participatory experiences, e.g. music, food & craft night market or Make-Your-Own Souvenir Hub.
- #### 7 Community Cooperatives Restoring Heritage Buildings




Residents come together to restore abandoned homes, barns, mills, and workshops, turning them into guest rooms, small museums, ateliers, or cultural spaces that both preserve heritage and generate income for the community.
- #### 8 Regenerative Heritage Walks and Activities




Locals lead small group volunteer activities where visitors participate in e.g. restoring terrace walls, replanting native gardens, or documenting community memories, engaging, but also contributing to preserving and restoring culture.
- #### 9 Heritage-based Gastronomy Routes



Clusters of villages or producers link their traditional foods into a route - wine, honey, cheese, olive oil, herbs, heritage dishes etc. offering tastings, storytelling, and demonstrations.
- #### 10 Micro Festivals of Intangible Heritage



Small-scale events centred on music, dance, oral traditions, or village customs, celebrating living culture and promoting it among residents and visitors.

 Co-funded by the European Union
Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

Download the infographic [HERE](#).

As you see, there are multiple ways to use cultural assets and turn them into valuable sustainable cultural tourism initiatives that we will explore further across the module. It usually starts from small grassroot initiatives and grows into more complex tourism offering with time.

This is exactly where the story of Casa da Lúcia begins, with a village facing challenges of decreasing and aging population, eroding traditions and fading of traditional sources of income.

Case 1: The Artisan House That Sparked a Creative Tourism Hub

In a quiet coastal village between olive groves and the sea, stood a traditional Alentejo house everyone called *Casa da Lúcia*. Lúcia was the last master weaver in the area, known for the vibrant textiles she had woven since she was ten. Her cloths carried the colours of the land - ochre from the cliffs, deep blues from the ocean, greens from spring fields.

As years passed and young people left for cities, weaving became a fading art. Lúcia however kept weaving, not for income, or recognition, but to keep her grandmother's patterns alive. Her loom was her comfort, her connection to the past long gone and a way to enjoy quiet time.

One morning, a passing traveller asked Lúcia if she maybe could show him how she makes her fabrics. Despite being surprised anyone cares, she agreed. As the traveller tried to pass the shuttle between threads, she realized sharing and passing on her craft felt to her as joyful as weaving!

Word has spread among slow travellers and cultural explorers: *"In this village, you can learn real weaving, not a demonstration, but the real thing."*

Soon, other artisans noticed. A potter opened her courtyard to visitors. A baker invited people to learn kneading techniques passed down through generations. An elder fisherman began offering storytelling sessions about traditional nets, tides and ocean adventures.

Within two years, the village had quietly transformed into a creative tourism hub. Not with big investments or marketing campaigns, but through local talent, hospitality, and authenticity.

Visitors stayed longer, ate in local taverns, bought handmade crafts, and, most importantly, created relationships and opportunities that made the village feel alive again.

The local school invited Lúcia to teach part-time. The municipality supported artisans with micro-grants. In opposition to earlier years, more and more young people got inspired by the change in the area and returned home after getting external education to start small creative or tourism and hospitality related businesses.

Tourism didn't extract value; it **activated dormant cultural resources**, strengthened personal pride, and generated gentle, steady income. The heart of it all remained Casa da Lúcia, where a single loom and simple human curiosity and openness to connect became the

CULTMED

Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

spark that reawakened a community's creative soul.



Sustainable cultural tourism is not about large campaigns or chasing trends. It is about using what your community already has, its traditions, stories, crafts, food, and landscapes, to create authentic value. It can be as simple as a basic 5 step-model:

1. Start from what already exists

Identify everyday activities, agricultural practices, culinary or artisanal traditions that can be shared with visitors without altering their meaning.

2. Begin with small-scale pilot experiences

Test simple activities, such as local guided tours, small workshops, or seasonal events, before developing more structured offerings.

3. Involve the community from the beginning

Consult residents, local associations, and cultural groups to ensure that tourism reflects community values.

4. Integrate culture and nature

Many rural traditions are closely linked to the landscape, agriculture, and biodiversity. Experiences should therefore connect cultural heritage with the natural environment.

5. Monitor and adapt

Collect feedback from residents and visitors to continuously improve activities and ensure they remain sustainable over time.

CULTMED

Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

When applied well, sustainable cultural tourism offers practical ways to address common challenges faced by rural and peripheral communities:

- Depopulation & loss of vitality - Small, locally led activities, such as workshops, hosting, guiding, or creative experiences, can create income and purpose, especially for young people. This makes staying or returning more attractive and helps bring life back to the community.
- Loss of Traditions and Cultural Erosion - By turning traditions into shared experiences, communities can keep them relevant and valued. Cultural tourism encourages collaboration between generations and allows tradition and innovation to evolve together, without turning culture into a performance.
- Economic Reliance on a Single Activity - Adding tourism-based micro-activities (crafts, food experiences, heritage walks, small events) diversifies income and spreads opportunities across residents, without replacing existing livelihoods. It helps bring new income opportunities and, if managed well, decrease dependence on seasonal activities.
- Infrastructure gaps - Sustainable cultural tourism works with what already exists, small groups, local spaces, simple setups. At the same time, gradual visitor interest in destinations can support improvements such as better signage, restored buildings, improved access by public transportation or improved digital access.

Watch [the video](#) to learn more about the link between sustainable cultural tourism and its impact on challenges of rural and peripheral communities.



















Small rural communities rarely have the resources to compete with big tourism destinations. But they don't need to, and in fact, for their own good, they should not. Their strength lies in what is uniquely theirs - stories, crafts, festivals, landscapes, and ways of life shaped over generations. That is exactly why sustainable cultural tourism works: it transforms **local identity** into **local opportunity** while keeping the community firmly in the driver's seat.

Sustainable cultural tourism works for small communities exactly because it is not designed for mass appeal. It works best when communities attract visitors whose expectations, behaviour, and values align with local culture, pace, and sustainability goals. One of the most

CULTMED


Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

important decisions a community can make is not how many visitors to attract, but **which visitors to welcome. Who is the type of visitors, we want to see more and interact with in our community?**

Visitors We Want	Why They Fit Sustainable Cultural Tourism	Visitors to Avoid / Be Cautious About	Why They Create Challenges
 Slow Travellers	Stay longer, spend locally, reduce pressure on infrastructure. Build relationships with hosts.	 Mass / High-Volume Tourists	Disrupt daily life, overwhelm small spaces, reduce quality of experience. Focus on short stays, bring strain on services and little to no local connection.
 Cultural Explorers	Interested in traditions, stories, and people. Help preserve intangible heritage.	 "Checklist" Tourists	Focus on 'viral' photos and quick visits. Low engagement and limited local benefit.
 Experiential Learners	Participate in workshops (crafts, food, farming). Support knowledge transfer and local skills.	 Passive Observer	May be drawn to 'poverty/peripheral-lifestyle safari'-type experiences - observing local life without engagement and understanding, which can undermine dignity and create one-sided, extractive interactions without real value.
 Eco-Conscious Travellers	Respect nature, accept low-impact conditions, support environmental protection.	 Resource-Intensive Tourists	Expect high water, energy, or infrastructure use, i.e. high-volume festivals etc. put too much pressure on local supply - unsustainable in most rural settings.
 Respectful & Adaptive Visitors	Adapt to local customs, rhythms, and limitations. Strengthen trust and positive exchange.	 Demanding / Non-Adaptive Visitors	Expect the destination to change for them putting pressure on culture and lifestyle change.
 Community-Oriented Visitors	Value local ownership, buy local products, support small businesses.	 All-Inclusive / External-System Tourists	Use services of external operators, for local visits, exploiting resources without benefiting local businesses.
 Curious & Open-Minded Visitors	Appreciate simplicity, authenticity, and learning.	 Luxury-Driven Visitors (in fragile contexts)	Demand high-end standards that may require changing architecture, culture, or scale.
 Off-Season / Flexible Travellers	Help reduce seasonality and stabilise income across the year.	 Peak-Only Tourists	Concentrate pressure in short periods making stress on community and environment, often in critical for community-life

CULTMED

Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

			cycles moments.
 Small Groups / Independent Travellers	Easier to manage, more personal interaction, lower impact.	 Party / Entertainment Tourists	Noise, behaviour conflicts, and misalignment with community values.
 Value-Driven Travellers	Choose destinations based on meaning, sustainability, and authenticity.		

How do you target the right visitors?

Describe experiences clearly and honestly, avoid the temptation to oversell

→ “Simple family homestay, no Wi-Fi, shared meals”

Highlight values, not just activities

→ “Respect for traditions and local rhythms required”

Use storytelling instead of mass marketing

→ Attract those who resonate with your identity

Set expectations early

→ The right visitors will self-select

Remember - clarity filters visitors better than restrictions!

Now, that you are more familiar with the concept of sustainable cultural tourism, its forms and benefits share that knowledge with key stakeholders in your environment. Use the provided content to introduce your local community to the concept and its benefits. You can introduce it within community activities or a dedicated event.

Reflection challenge:

In the next section you will learn how to challenge the participants to engage in activities for defining cultural assets and envisage different ways to translate them into sustainable cultural tourism models that could benefit the local community and visitors. Before you move on think or invite your participants to consider a few aspects of the community readiness:

1. Community mindset and motivation

- Does your community **want** to share aspects of its culture, traditions, food, stories, or landscapes with visitors? (Think about openness, values, and willingness and not specific assets.)
- Are there people in your community who might be interested in (or open to consider) welcoming visitors, teaching something, guiding, or hosting an activity? (You don't need to list names, just consider if interest exists.)
- Does your community generally prefer small-scale, slow, respectful forms of tourism over large or fast development approaches?

2. Local challenges that could be addressed and targeted by initiatives and strategies.

- Which local challenges do you think sustainable cultural tourism could help ease that are key barriers for long term well-being of your community?

Choose one or two: a. depopulation, b. youth leaving, c. lack of opportunities, d. fading traditions, e. abandoned buildings, f. weak local economy, g. low visibility of local products, h. declining community life, i. fragile landscapes, j. limited mobility or services, k. lack of identity or community pride, l. other ? (specify)

- How this type of tourism could help in your context?

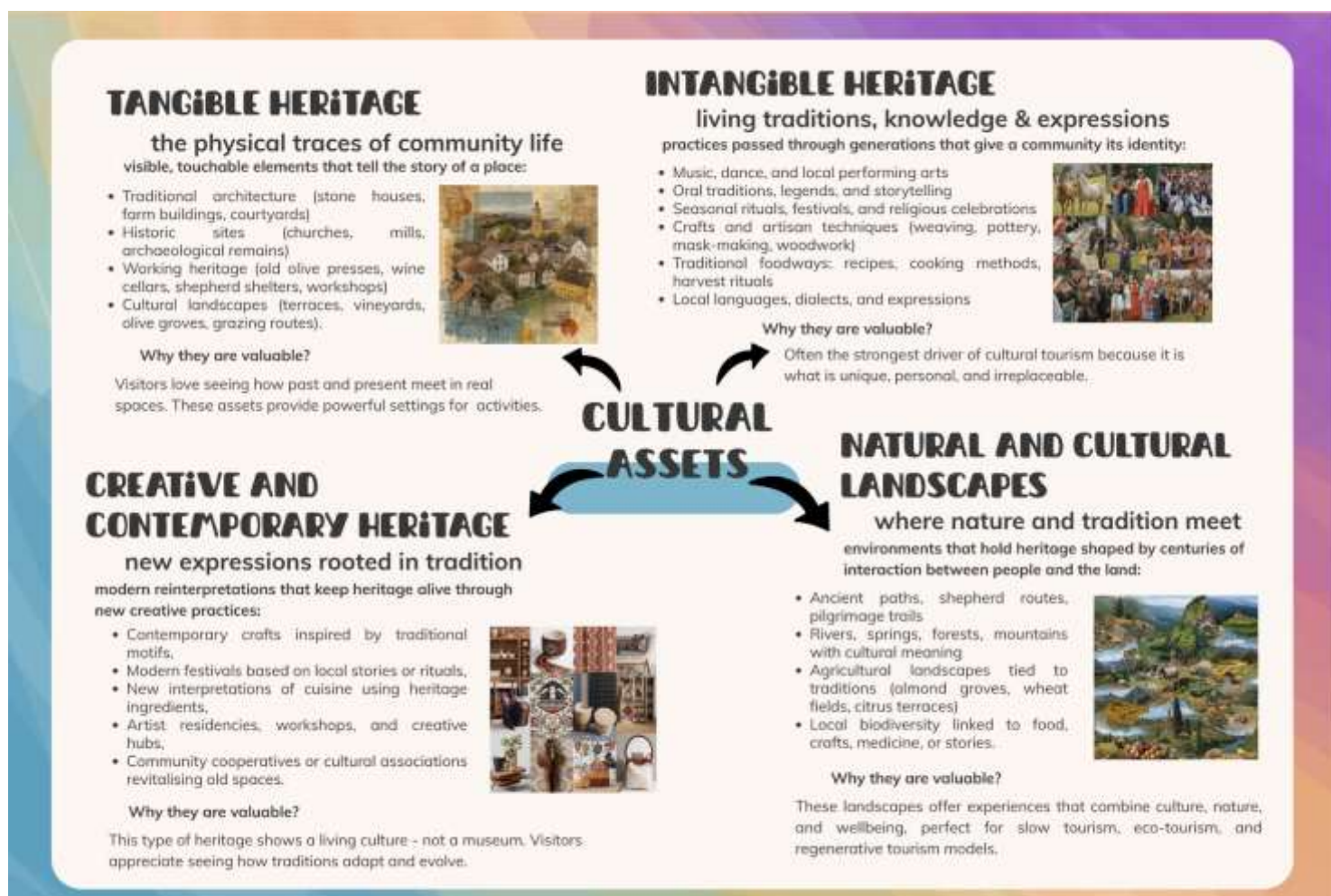
3. Current state

- Are there currently any tourism, culture or creative activity that are harmful to our community and could benefit from being redefined toward more sustainable, community and local environment friendly model?

2.2. Identifying and capitalising in a sustainable manner on local heritage

Sustainable cultural tourism can grow from almost any element of a community's identity, as long as it is **meaningful to locals, authentic, and respectfully shared**. In rural and small communities, heritage is often richer and more diverse than people realise. The most valuable assets usually fall into four interconnected categories:

Infographic 2: Categories of cultural heritage in the heart of sustainable cultural tourism



Download the infographic [HERE](#).

Possessing relevant cultural heritage and being open to share it in a sustainable way with others is just the first step to turning culture into an asset and tool to overcome challenges within rural and peripheral contexts. In the next stage, the module will guide you through the process of mapping assets, actors and opportunities related with sustainable cultural tourism in your environment. You can start the mapping with your own vision, but inviting people with different knowledge and perspectives will help you build more comprehensive view of the reality and opportunities.

Implementation exercise 1.

Identifying cultural assets and translating them into sustainable tourism experiences - GUIDELINES FOR HERITAGE MAPPING & CO-CREATION ACTIVITIES

This tool will support you in implementation of community mapping workshops where

different agents with local voices come together to map the cultural, natural, and creative resources of a village or region and look for different strategies to capitalize on them.

Exercise guidelines:

A. Purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify tangible and intangible heritage• Understand local values and sensitivities• Build shared ownership of tourism development• Reveal hidden or forgotten cultural assets• Strengthen community participation and trust	B. Who to invite <p>Aim for a balanced group of 8–25 people, including different actors across the groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elders and tradition keepers• Youth representatives• Artisans and craftspeople• Farmers, shepherds, producers• Local tourism/hospitality actors• Cultural associations and NGOs• Municipality or parish representatives• Business owners, cooperatives• Interested residents• Aspiring entrepreneurs
C. Materials Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maps (printed or hand-drawn)• Coloured stickers or markers• Flipcharts and post-its• Photos of local heritage (if available)• Large table/tables or open walls

Step-by-step implementation process

Step 1. Warm-up: “What Makes Our Place Special?” – proposed time - 10 minutes

Ask participants to think and share one thing that represents their community’s identity. This activates local memory and sets a positive tone.

Step 2. Mapping tangible heritage – proposed time - 15 minutes.

Divide participants in smaller groups +/- 3-5 participants and ask to take 10 minutes to identify:

- historic buildings
- mills, workshops, warehouses
- old paths, springs, viewpoints
- agricultural landscapes
- heritage trees or farms
- other relevant interest points

You can use post-it or a simple board or sheet of paper or a village/map outline.

Follow up: ask participants to think and mark “*which physical places tell our story?*”. Ask each

group to explain which places and why each of the groups selected.

Following this exercise introduce the participants to the [Infographic 2 – Categories of cultural heritage in the heart of the sustainable cultural tourism](#) or introduce each category in a short presentation. Underline the relevance and value of the intangible cultural assets and invite participants to the follow up exercise (step 3).

Step 3. Mapping intangible heritage – proposed time - 15 minutes.

Follow up with identifying *what practices or knowledge make us who we are?*:

- festivals, rituals, seasonal events,
- local crafts, artisanal skills,
- legends, oral histories, songs,
- cooking traditions,
- dialect words or expressions,
- other.

While tangible and intangible assets are in the heart of the cultural initiatives, it's the people that are the key to their authenticity and successful engagement with visitors. Follow up with turning the group attention to the custodians of cultural assets and those that have the potential to contribute to embedding them into valuable experiences (step 4).

Step 4. Mapping people and community assets – 10 minutes.

Identify key actors. *Who holds cultural knowledge here? Who should be actively engaged into implementing cultural experiences to keep them authentic and locally owned?*

- Artisans,
- home cooks,
- storytellers,
- young creatives,
- farmers & producers,
- associations,
- others.

Follow up with a dedicated artisan & producer scan for identifying economic potential and to map artisan skills and local products that could become experiences.

Step 5. Mapping skills and their tourism application potential – 15 minutes.

1. List all craftspeople, producers, cooks, makers and other holders of traditional knowledge. Try to involve as many of them in your sessions as possible.
2. For each try to define (ask the present ones and discuss in groups for those that are not present but could bring valuable input):
 - skills they could teach,
 - stories behind their craft,
 - willingness to host visitors.
3. Rank feasibility:

- high (ready for experiences),
- medium (needs support/training),
- low (only suitable for documentation/protection).

This step can especially contribute to understanding the ways to directly engage visitors and capitalize on live culture and traditional skills.

👉 **Pro tip!** Depending on settings or capabilities, this session can include break for field exercise where participants can visit and interview local holders of those skills – i.e. if the workshops are hold in small village/town during working hours of the local craftsmen and the access is easy; or a follow up activity for collection of this information before moving on to a planning stage.

Many traditions are closely linked to the calendar, and local celebrations can play an important role in attracting interest and increasing the visibility of small communities. They can also help reduce seasonality. For this reason, seasonal rituals, celebrations, and special occasions should be included in the mapping process.

Step 6. Include cultural calendar mapping – 5-10 min

Draw a 12-month calendar and identify seasonal rituals, food cycles, and community events. Add: harvests, local celebrations, religious events, seasonal food traditions, craft cycles. Remember to include niche, potentially dying rituals, and those coming from marginalized groups in your community.

Identify moments suitable for:

- micro festivals,
- workshops,
- themed experiences.

Sustainable cultural tourism looks not only to protect and promote relevant culture and foster benefits for local community. It looks to ensure that community values are respected in the process of sharing cultural experiences with visitors. To help your community understand what they want to keep out of the visitors experiences and where their boundaries of respectful and inclusive experiences are, follow up with the next question.

Step 7. Mapping feelings and sensitive spots – proposed time - 15 minutes.

Invite participants to list or mark areas that are:

- culturally sacred,
- environmentally fragile,
- socially sensitive.

Think carefully about what should be protected before promoted?

When developing tourism experiences, it is essential to fully respect local traditions, cultural practices, and religious beliefs. Some activities, rituals, or spaces may have a spiritual or identity-related significance that should not be turned into tourist attractions. Consider:

CULTMED

Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

- Are there traditions which should not be shared with visitors? Would participation of visitors in some traditions could be offensive or inappropriate? Are there rituals or celebrations that should remain private? How can we ensure that visitors understand and respect local cultural norms? What boundaries should we set to prevent excessive commercialization or the trivialization of traditions?

Think also about marginalized groups in your community.

Encourage participants to consider - "Are there marginalised groups in our community whose voices, spaces, or cultural practices need special care or protection?"

That may include families living in isolated areas, minority groups, elders, people with disabilities, or individuals who may be affected differently by tourism. The aim is to ensure the process is inclusive and respectful of everyone's needs.

Wrap up the session with summarizing the mapping process.

2.3. Capitalising in a sustainable manner on local heritage - Designing Sustainable Tourism Experiences

THREE POTTERS, THREE PATHS

In one village, three potters shared the same clay, the same tradition, and the same workshop wall.

But when visitors began showing interest, each imagined a different way to welcome them:

- João offered "A Slow Pottery Day", a calm, hands-on session where visitors shaped clay while listening to village stories.
- Marta created an "Eco-Pottery Walk"—a short forest and village trail explaining where clay used to be collected, and showing different forms of clay expression present in the area.
- Lila launched an "Expressive Clay Studio"—a playful session for making tiny pieces, including DIY souvenirs inspired by local patterns.



Three different personalities. Three different models. All equally meaningful, all rooted in tradition, all respectful of community values.

Their story shows a key truth: Sustainable cultural tourism does not require one "perfect model."



Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

It thrives when people share what they know, in a way that feels natural to them. When they use a bit of creativity to see traditional activities as a center of new experiences.

This section will help you and your community design such experiences in your environment.

2.3.1. Moving from mapping to experiences

In the previous section, you mapped your local cultural assets. Now it is time to translate those insights into viable tourism experiences. In practice, this translation often happens either through small, on-the-ground initiatives led by individual craftspeople or community groups, or through more centralised planning by public authorities. However, the best results are achieved when different actors and perspectives are brought together. Below, you will find structured guidelines for co-creation activities, which serve as a natural follow-up to the work introduced in Section 2.2.

Implementation exercise 2:

Experience Design Lab: Turning Assets Into Experiences

STAGE I. Selection and defining the asset and its potential.

Step 1. Prioritisation

Present a brief summary of the mapping session and its consolidated results, showing all identified ('nominated') assets, either as a map or a poster with categorised elements. Ensure that all key assets are included - crafts, stories, buildings and other structures, skills, rituals, places, food, and traditions. Provide each participant with small stickers and ask them to place one or two stickers next to the assets they consider most valuable and/or urgent to include in sustainable cultural tourism planning.

Guide the selection process with a question:

Which of our mapped assets offers a story, skill, or place that we want to promote and could offer an authentic experience to visitors?

Introduce 3 selection criteria:

- **Cultural relevance**. Is this meaningful to the community?
- **Visitor interest potential**. Would respectful visitors find this unique, engaging, or immersive?
- **Feasibility & protection**. Can this asset be shared without harming culture or environment?

The prioritization process will help keeping the exercise focused and achievable.

Step 2. Clarifying the story

Divide participants into small groups (+/- 3-5 participants), each group taking on one of the most selected assets. Ask the groups to clarify information about the asset using 3 guiding questions:

1. Why does this matter to our community?
2. Who carries this knowledge?
3. What emotion, memory, or tradition is attached to it?
4. What would make visitors feel connected?

That will help keep in mind the original significance of the asset during the planning process and inspire authentic experiences rather than creating 'products without soul'.

💡 Example: Imagine that participants selected a basket-weaving tradition in Step 1. This practice is closely linked to the natural environment (through the collection of local reeds), as well as to community life (with women gathering to weave and share stories). The patterns often symbolise the village, and the baskets themselves are used in harvests and celebrations. For visitors, this can offer a meaningful, hands-on experience that is authentic, symbolic, and intergenerational, while also sharing the stories behind the craft, its connection to nature, and its relevance in today's sustainability practices.

STAGE II. From Ideation to Prototyping.

Invite participants to design a quick action plan. *What small actions can be developed around the chosen asset with minimal time and resources to build visibility and momentum?*

Start from reminding participants about key pillars of sustainable cultural experiences: authenticity, cultural value, sustainability and mutual benefits.

Infographic 3. Key pillars of sustainable cultural experiences

What Makes a Tourism Experience 'Sustainable' and 'Cultural'?



Download the infographic [HERE](#).

Experiences can take many different forms, such as craft workshops, guided walks, seasonal community events, food tastings, creative tourism activities, and much more.

[The Infographic 1](#): Types of Sustainable Cultural Tourism Initiatives in Rural and Small Town Settings can serve as inspiration when brainstorming possibilities.

However, it is important for participants to remember that the best experiences are those that reflect the true spirit, values, and personality of the community. Sustainable cultural tourism is not about copying models from elsewhere, but about creating activities that feel natural, meaningful, and rooted in local identity.

Encourage participants to think openly and creatively: new ideas, unique combinations, and fresh interpretations of tradition are also welcome, and essential. Innovative approaches that remain respectful of culture and community can lead to some of the most memorable and impactful visitor experiences.

Step 3. Start with a quick ideation exercise.

Ask each participant to grab 3 post-its. Ask them to write one idea per post-it, answering: *"What small thing could we do with this heritage asset that visitors would love and our community would feel proud of?"*. Keep time very short. Encouraging fast, instinctive ideas without overthinking.

This creates a pool of ideas before judgment or planning begins. Place them onto a joint paper sheet.

Follow up with challenging participants to think about creative ways to engage the asset.

Step 4. Creative approach to traditional assets

Push participants to reimagine traditions, history and culture in fresh, respectful ways. Ask groups to reframe the asset using creative prompts:

- What if this tradition was shared through taste?
- What if this could be experienced outdoors or indoors (opposite to initial asset)?
- What if youth introduced it in a modern way?
- What if we linked it to a season or ritual?
- What if we turned it into something visitors make and take home?
- How can we make it into group or individual activity (opposite to the original asset)?



If participants struggle to generate ideas, you can support them by presenting examples that combine or reinterpret traditional practices in creative ways, such as:

- Weaving and food experience - weave a small breadbasket and taste local olive oil and jams,
- Remixed weaving products – young artisans reinterpret old patterns on baskets, and integrate weaving elements as a part of design of home décor and fashion pieces,
- Nature & weaving experience – collect reeds or natural fibres in the landscape, learn about local ecosystems and seasonal cycles, and create a simple woven item using those materials,
- Live music nights with weaving presentations where young artists turn traditional songs sung by weavers and tells related to weaving tradition into modern tunes while local producers offer tasting boards with local products.

Add ideas coming from participants to the ideas pool.

Step 5. Designing the experience

Ask participants to provide characteristics of good practices in sustainable cultural tourism. Ask *“What does a tourism experience need in order to protect and promote our culture, nature and heritage, help our people, and offer something meaningful to visitors?”*

Collect answers from participants and wrap it up with the good practices characteristics.

Table 1. Elements of good practices in sustainable cultural tourism:

1.	It brings direct benefits to local communities. It:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generates economic opportunities for local communities (jobs, entrepreneurship). - Ensures fair revenue sharing with local stakeholders. - Prioritizes locally owned businesses and services to keep income within the community. - Avoids reliance on external operators or large chains that extract profits without reinvesting locally. - Supports the development of sustainable business models that empower local entrepreneurs and ensure profitability.
2.	It fosters cultural preservation and respect:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protects and promotes local cultural heritage (traditions, language, sites). - Involves locals in showcasing and educating visitors about their culture authentically. - Reinvests part of the profits into preserving cultural assets and practices. - Does not negatively impact local lifestyle and life quality.
3.	While focusing on local community and cultural preservation and promotion factors it does include sustainable use of resources:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimizes environmental impact (waste reduction, energy efficiency). - Supports conservation efforts, reinvesting in protecting natural and cultural assets. - Encourages businesses to adopt eco-friendly practices that align with sustainable tourism principles.
4.	It takes place in line with community objectives and not against the local community will:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involves community members in decision-making and tourism planning. - Promotes inclusive participation, ensuring benefits reach marginalized groups. - Encourages community ownership or co-management of tourism enterprises.
5.	It provides a high-quality visitor experience:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offers meaningful, immersive, and respectful cultural experiences for travelers. - Educates tourists about the culture and sustainability of the

<p>destination.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Includes opportunities for tourists to directly contribute to community projects or sustainable initiatives.
<p>6. It translates to economic or social benefits for local community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supports locally owned, self-sustaining enterprises that create lasting economic benefits. - Facilitates capacity-building programs for local entrepreneurs to run successful tourism-related businesses. - Establishes diversified income streams for communities (e.g., combining tourism with crafts, farming, or eco-services). - Encourages reinvestment of profits into the community or local development projects.
<p>7. Includes measures of monitoring and is conducted in a transparent way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tracks and reports on the economic, cultural, and environmental impact. - Continuously improves based on feedback from the community and travelers. - Implements metrics to evaluate the profitability and sustainability of local businesses involved.
<p>8. It is transferable and scalable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrates a model that can be adapted to benefit other communities.

With that knowledge, ask each group to select one idea from the pool that they believe has strong potential to become a good practice in sustainable cultural tourism in their community. Using this idea, invite them to sketch a visitor journey.

Ask participants to divide a sheet of paper into 4–6 boxes, each representing a stage of the experience (e.g. arrival, welcome, main activity, special moments - such as storytelling, tasting, or making, complementary elements, and ending). Then ask each group to visualise how the experience unfolds for the visitor from start to finish.

For each phase participants should define:

1. Step-by-step journey,
2. Who leads it? (e.g. authentic host – Ana the weaver, local youth as assistants),
3. What do visitors do? (e.g. observe, learn, make, taste, walk),
4. Where does it happen? (e.g. courtyard, workshop, field, trail, garden, tavern),
5. Why is it meaningful? (e.g. weaving experience of weaving mini-coaster and hearing different patterns stories - revives a fading craft; connects generations; visitors learn a

real skill and local culture embedded engaging and cheerful stories).

Step 6. Quick prototyping

Each group invites a participant(s) from other group(s) to take the role of a visitor(s). The group members act as hosts. Participants role-play the experience taking “visitors” through every step of the journey. Depending on the type of experience, this can involve either simulating the activity in practice or describing it step by step.

At the end, the ‘visitors’ provide feedback on strengths, areas for improvement, and potential challenges. For example: visitors may need a sample pattern before weaving; there may be insufficient shade (suggesting a need for a tent or a different time of day); or the story may be engaging but too long, requiring a shorter and more accessible introduction.

Step 7. Red and Green Flags.

Ask all participants to analyse each experience in terms of its potential and value as a sustainable cultural tourism initiative. Encourage them to consider all aspects of the experience (see Table 1. Elements of good practices in sustainable cultural tourism), with particular attention to visitors appeal and community and environmental benefits and risks.

👉 You can use the guiding questions:

On the visitor side: *“Why would a visitor choose this experience?”, “What makes it unique to our place?”, “What emotion will they leave with?”.*

On the community side: *Who benefits? How do we involve youth? Does it help preserve our culture or tradition? Could it inspire new small businesses? Does money flow into community, not out? Could this activity put pressure on natural or cultural resources?*

Prepare a sheet to collect the feedback in 2 categories:

GREEN FLAG	RED FLAG
Authentic	Requires large investment
Entertaining	Trespassing on private areas belonging to residents not interested in engaging with the activity
New income stream potential	Might attract mass tourism rather than authenticity seeking respectful cultural tourists
Protecting dying off tradition	Does not account for the need to protect environment during the experience
Community led	Put at risk scarce resources in the village
Easy to implement and sustain	Etc.
Engaging people across generation	
Etc.	

This exercise will allow identifying the strong and weak point of an idea to redesign it accordingly.

2.4. Key trends and skills supporting effective sustainable cultural tourism implementation

While authenticity and originality are the heart of sustainable cultural tourism, it is equally important to understand how tourism is evolving and what visitors increasingly look for. These broader trends do not replace local culture, they simply help communities design experiences that are culturally rooted and aligned with emerging traveller motivations.

Across Europe and the Mediterranean, many visitors are shifting away from quick sightseeing and mass tourism. Many seek slower, more meaningful encounters, local food and crafts, opportunities to meet real people, and experiences that feel honest, respectful, and connected to place.

Sustainable cultural tourism fits this shift perfectly. By understanding a few current tourism trends and developing complementary skills helping deliver meaningful experiences among local actors, communities can shape offerings that satisfy both local values and visitor expectations.

2.4.1. Key Trends in Sustainable Cultural Tourism Experiences

There are many new developments in tourism that can be capitalized on within the models of sustainable cultural tourism in rural areas, small towns and peripheral regions. Below are examples of three major experience models that are growing in relevance and that naturally complement cultural tourism in small communities.

A. Slow Tourism



Why it fits rural cultural tourism?

- Encourages overnight stays and repeat visits,
- Reduces environmental pressure,
- Strengthens relationships between visitors and locals,
- Makes small experiences (a workshop, a walk, a home meal) more attractive.

Practical examples

- A half-day pottery session instead of a quick demonstration,
- A village “day with a farmer” experience,
- Storytelling evenings that encourage visitors to linger.

B. Eco-Tourism and Nature-Culture Blends



Why it fits rural cultural tourism

- Strengthens pride in local landscapes,
- Preserves biodiversity and agricultural heritage,
- Adds value to activities already practiced by residents,
- Attracts visitors who prefer low-impact, meaningful travel.

Practical examples

- Heritage walks combining landscape-related stories and legends with cultural stops,
- Regenerative activities: path cleaning and restoration, terrace maintenance, orchard planting, culture inspired orientation runs in nature,
- Herb-collecting walks ending with a local cooking activity.

C. Experiential & Participatory Models



Why it fits rural cultural tourism

- Highlights crafts, skills, food traditions, and stories,
- Generates income through small, hands-on activities,
- Supports intergenerational transmission of knowledge,
- Makes visits memorable and personal.

Practical examples

- Bread-making with a village baker,
- Traditional weaving or wood-carving workshops,
- Music, dance, or storytelling circles,
- Seasonal micro-festivals or culinary events.

How to use these trends in practice?

Encourage participants to ask themselves: *"Which of these models naturally fits our assets, personality, and community values?"*

The goal is not to copy trends, but to place local heritage within formats that visitors understand and appreciate, while keeping control and meaning in local hands.

2.4.2. Key Skills for Sustainable Cultural Tourism

Strong cultural tourism experiences depend on more than ideas and cultural assets. They require skills across the community. These skills don't need to be perfect or extremely professional. They just need to be developed step by step.

Below are the essential skill areas that support successful, respectful, and sustainable initiatives.

Infographic 4. Skills for sustainable cultural tourism

KEY SKILLS FOR SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL TOURISM

Sharing culture sustainably doesn't require perfection. But right skills will help transform local heritage into authentic visitor experiences that honour local heritage and bring culture and places to life.

Key areas

<p>CULTURAL INTERPRETATION & STORYTELLING</p> <p>The ability to communicate meaning simply and respectfully. Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telling stories connected to objects, landscapes, and traditions • Explaining the "why" behind cultural practices • Sharing emotion, not performing or exaggerating 	<p>HOSTING, HOSPITALITY & VISITOR CARE</p> <p>Hospitality in rural areas is simple and human, based on warmth and authenticity. This often sets it apart from urban tourism. Skills include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making visitors feel welcome, • Giving clear guidance, • Providing shade, water, rest, or comfort, • Offering boundaries kindly when something is private or sacred.
<p>EXPERIENCE DESIGN & FACILITATION</p> <p>Clear, well-structured experiences make activities enjoyable for visitors and easier for hosts to deliver. Skills include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structuring the experience with a simple, logical flow • Making activities attractive, engaging, and able to generate fair income • Blending culture with nature, food, crafts, stories, or daily life • Creating hands-on participation moments • Managing timing and group dynamics • Ensuring safety, respect, and accessibility 	<p>COMMUNITY COLLABORATION & CO-CREATION</p> <p>Tourism becomes stronger when actors collaborate rather than work alone. Skills include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating between artisans, farmers, guides, and associations • Combining experiences into routes or seasonal events • Negotiating roles and responsibilities respectfully
<p>BASIC COMMUNICATION & VISIBILITY SKILLS</p> <p>Ability to ensure clear and honest communication rather than marketing. Skill include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describing experiences simply and accurately • Setting clear prices and schedules • Responding politely to messages • Using basic digital tools when possible 	<p>SUSTAINABILITY & SAFEGUARDING AWARENESS</p> <p>Hosts must understand how to protect their culture, environment, and community wellbeing. Skills include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising fragile or sacred elements • Limiting group sizes • Defining respectful visitor behaviour • Ensuring fair compensation for local knowledge • Protecting nature during activities

Download the infographic [HERE](#).

The skills needed for sustainable cultural tourism are closely aligned with the European Commission's [GreenComp framework](#) (European Sustainability Competence Framework). GreenComp defines key competences that support individuals and communities in contributing to sustainability transitions. In this module, these competences are translated

into practical skills that can be developed through real-life tourism activities in rural and peripheral communities.

2.5. Beyond a single product – conclusions on sustainable cultural tourism strategies for rural areas and peripheral regions

Sustainable cultural tourism grows step by step. It does not require large infrastructure, big investments, or complex products. It begins with simple, authentic actions: a craft demonstration, a seasonal tasting, a short storytelling walk, a revived ritual. These first, easy-to-implement experiences are essential. They allow communities to test ideas, build confidence, engage new actors, learn what visitors appreciate most, and what works for local community.

But while starting small is the sustainable way to go, the long-term goal is bigger: to gradually develop a diverse, year-round offer that is not dependent on one season, one festival, or one source of income. When communities expand their experiences across seasons - spring herb walks, summer craft evenings, autumn harvest rituals, winter cooking workshops, they strengthen their resilience, attract respectful visitors throughout the year, and reduce pressure on local resources. Learn more about using the sustainable cultural tourism to reduce sustainability [↓](#).



This module has prepared you to guide that journey. Throughout the activities, you learned how to:

- Understand the foundations of sustainable cultural tourism and its relevance for rural and peripheral regions.
- Identify cultural assets (tangible, intangible, natural, and human) that can inspire respectful tourism experiences embracing and promoting your cultural roots.
- Facilitate community mapping, prioritisation, co-creation, and decision-making processes.
- Translate heritage into authentic experiences through structured ideation, visitor-

CULTMED

Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

journey planning, and quick prototyping.

- Use key trends, as slow tourism, experiential tourism, regenerative tourism, and nature–culture blends, to design offers that resonate with today's travellers while remaining deeply rooted in local values.
- Strengthen the essential skills among community actors: storytelling, hosting, collaboration, facilitation, environmental sensitivity, and entrepreneurial thinking.

The future of sustainable cultural tourism in rural areas and peripheral regions depends on exactly these capabilities:

>> the ability to see value in what already exists,

>> the courage to experiment,

>> and the commitment to protect culture while welcoming visitors in meaningful ways.

As your community develops and refines its ideas, remember:

- Authenticity is your strongest asset.
- Small is powerful when it is meaningful.
- Seasonal diversity builds resilience.
- Valuable visitors appreciate connection over consumption.
- Good tourism strengthens identity rather than reshaping it.

Do you want to test your understanding of the module key concepts?

Check your understanding joining a short quiz game: [HERE](#).

To see how sustainable cultural tourism in rural and small-town settings can look in practice and get inspiration check initiatives across Europe recognized as best practices in the area:



- On using sustainable cultural tourism to keep traditions and traditional craft alive and promote local pride in sustainable manner - Best Practice: [Zalipie Art Village, Poland](#)

-On using sustainable cultural tourism for village revival - Best Practice: [A Model Village for Sustainable Cultural Tourism, Kalopanayiotis, Cyprus](#)

-On using intangible heritage to bring life to peripheral regions - Best Practice: [Friday 13 - The Night of The Witches - Montalegre, Portugal](#)

Is your community still seem to you too small or too remote for trying to build the sustainable cultural tourism model? Think again. The model works well in the most remote communities across the world, as long as you focus on unique, authentic value and visitors that look for something special.

Case Study: How Raja Ampat Became a Model for Community-Led Sustainable Tourism through Stay Raja Ampat

“What if tourism could protect paradise instead of consuming it?”

In one of the most remote and biodiverse marine regions in the world, the islands of Raja Ampat faced a familiar paradox: growing global interest from travellers, combined with highly limited infrastructure, fragile ecosystems, and communities at risk of being excluded from tourism benefits if international chains were to dominate development in the region.

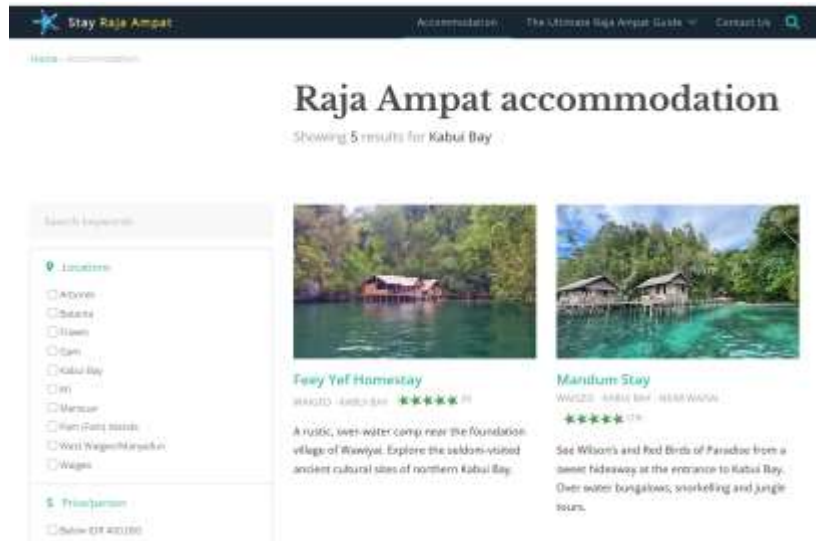


Rather than allowing external investors to take control, a different model emerged - **Stay Raja Ampat**, a locally rooted initiative that transformed tourism into a tool for community empowerment, cultural preservation, and environmental protection.

[Stay Raja Ampat](#) is a local homestay association that provides a platform linking homeowners and visitors in a highly remote island context, where transport connections are limited, basic services are often lacking, and digital connectivity is very low. In a region where communities have traditionally relied on fishing and face challenges such as limited economic opportunities, risk of external exploitation, and increasing pressure on natural and cultural resources, the association supports indigenous communities in developing sustainable, locally owned tourism.

It connects travellers with a network of simple homestays, guides, and local service providers, while ensuring that tourism benefits remain within the community. Instead of replicating major booking platforms, Stay Raja Ampat operates as a community-driven initiative and a key access point to accommodation in the region. It provides a simple booking system that

prioritises locally owned homestays, access to clear information and setting transparent expectations, as well as mediates communication whenever necessary.



Beyond booking, the organisation sets shared standards, such as minimum requirements for accommodation, sanitation, food hygiene, cleanliness, and environmental impact, in a context where formal standards are absent. It monitors quality and supports social, environmental, and economic goals, including conservation, cultural preservation, and community livelihoods. It also provides guidance and capacity building to help local families prepare their homes to welcome visitors, while maintaining traditional ways of living, building, and hosting. This makes community-based tourism feasible in such a remote context.

By coordinating local actors and reinvesting its income into community development and environmental initiatives, Stay Raja Ampat functions not just as a booking platform, but as a collective community-led system for managing sustainable tourism in the region.

While large booking platforms are slowly entering the space, Stay Raja Ampat offers what they cannot easily replicate: authentic, place-based experiences, strong local connection, and direct economic and sustainable development benefits for residents. At the same time, the platform acts as a key intermediary, helping visitors navigate remote conditions (such as limited infrastructure, communication barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and unrealistic expectations), while supporting hosts in managing expectations and improving service quality.

CULTMED

Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean



By clearly communicating the realities of staying in a remote environment (where communities may live without constant electricity, refrigeration, or internet access), Stay Raja Ampat attracts visitors who value authenticity and are willing to adapt. This naturally filters out high-volume or expectation-driven tourism. The initiative operates with a mission-led approach, focusing on authenticity,

trust, community benefit, and long-term sustainability.

Sustainability and Cultural Preservation

The model reinforces environmental stewardship and cultural integrity by directly linking community income to environmental quality and cultural authenticity.

Because income depends on healthy ecosystems and preserved traditions, communities are encouraged to:

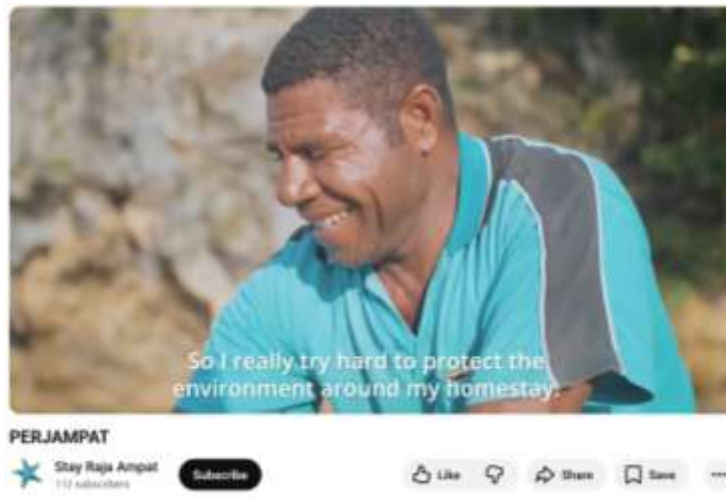
- protect coral reefs
- avoid overexploitation of marine resources
- maintain cultural practices

Visitors come specifically for healthy reefs and authentic local life, meaning that environmental protection and cultural preservation become economically beneficial rather than restrictive.

To strengthen this, Stay Raja Ampat reinvests part of its income into marine-protection, awareness-raising and education among homestay owners and their communities (to learn more watch the video [📺](#)).

CULTMED

Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean



Moreover, to be part of the network, homestays are expected to reflect traditional building styles, materials, and techniques, as well as local ways of living (food, daily rhythms, social life). This is prioritised over Western accommodation standards or standardised hotel models. Cultural identity is therefore preserved through the continuity of everyday life, while visitors are encouraged to adapt to local conditions rather than the opposite.

Because accommodation is mostly family-owned and small-scale, and construction is limited by the remote location and regulatory constraints, overall capacity in Raja Ampat remains naturally low. Even with growing global interest, this helps prevent overcrowding and reduces environmental pressure, supporting a balance between tourism, community life, and nature.

Why the Experience Feels Unique

While visitors are often attracted by Raja Ampat's exceptional natural heritage, the homestay model offers a level of cultural immersion that is difficult to replicate:

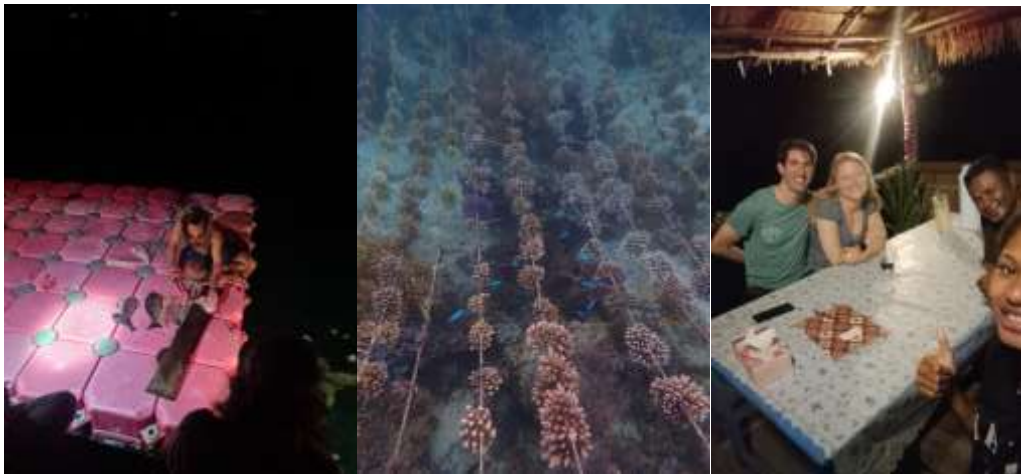
- **Culture is not “performed”. It is lived.** Visitors are integrated into daily life – eating local food and following local diet and schedules, observing routines, and joining simple activities. While the lack of formal tourism training could be seen as a limitation, it ensures that interactions remain genuine and often unexpected. Culture is experienced as it naturally happens, not as a curated product.
- **The environment is part of the experience.** The extreme remoteness - limited electricity, no Wi-Fi, and simple housing, encourages visitors to slow down and engage more deeply with nature and community life.
- **Knowledge is shared informally.** Hosts are not trained guides, but they possess deep knowledge of the marine environment, traditions, and local stories, which they share naturally in everyday interactions.
- **Relationships replace service delivery.** Visitors are by default treated as temporary members of the community. Conversations, knowledge exchange, and connections

CULTMED

Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean

happen spontaneously, creating emotional engagement rather than transactional experiences.

- **Simplicity enables connection.** Without packaged entertainment, strict schedules, or modern distractions, visitors become more open to interaction and participation. The experience becomes co-created rather than delivered.



In this model, value does not come from professionalization. It comes from proximity to real life. Because conditions are basic and clearly communicated, the model attracts visitors who are curious, adaptable, and motivated by authenticity. These visitors value connection over comfort and are willing to engage with the realities of remote community life.

What Can Other Communities Learn?

The value of sustainable cultural tourism does not lie in creating something entirely new, but in organising and coordinating existing local assets, even if extremely limited, in a sustainable way:

- Start with what already exists (homes, skills, traditions)
- Build networks of small local providers, not large infrastructure
- Use clear communication to attract the right visitors
- Keep decision-making and benefits within the community, avoiding external service providers, whenever possible
- Grow gradually and intentionally, not rapidly
- Focus on what is unique. Avoid copying neighbouring destinations or following mass tourism trends.

Learn more about Stay Raja Ampat and its work at:

<https://www.stayrajaampat.com/ultimate-raja-ampat-guide/news/raja-ampat-homestay-association/>

Do you want to test your knowledge of sustainable cultural tourism before you go?

[Try the Cultmed Interactive Activities](#) 



3. ANNEXES

Glossary of Terms

Sustainable cultural tourism - tourism that creates opportunities for economic development within local communities, enhances local culture, and protects and preserves the heritage and authenticity of the destination. Its ultimate goal is to balance the needs of visitors seeking meaningful experiences with the needs of local communities — ensuring that tourism strengthens, rather than erodes, local identity and long-term sustainability.

Best practice in sustainable cultural tourism - an initiative that benefits local communities, preserves and respects cultural heritage, and uses resources responsibly, while being community-led, financially fair, and providing high-quality, meaningful experiences for visitors. It ensures that tourism supports local livelihoods, empowers diverse community members, protects fragile cultural and natural assets, operates transparently with ongoing monitoring, and offers a model that can be adapted or scaled to other communities. **See more Table 1.**

Key Resources

Candeloro, G., Tartari, M. (2025). *Heritage-led sustainable development in rural areas: The case of Vivi Calascio community-based cooperative*. Elsevier. [PDF] Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264275125002203>

CultMED (2025). *CultMED Best Practices Report*. Available at cultmed.eu

Duxbury, N. (2019) *CREATIVE TOURISM IN SMALL CITIES AND RURAL AREAS :LESSONS FROM THE CREATOUR PROJECT, PORTUGAL*. [PDF] Available at: <https://estudogeral.sib.uc.pt/bitstream/10316/87529/1/Creative%20tourism%20in%20small%20cities%20and%20rural%20areas.pdf>

EYRACADEMY (2015) *Developing Sustainable Rural Tourism*. [PDF] Available at: <https://www.euracademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Thematic-Guide-1.pdf>.

Grammalidis, N., Grammatikopoulou, A. (2024) *Smart Participatory Methodologies for Sustainable Cultural Tourism*. [PDF] Available at: https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-51038-0_35.

Rural Pact Support Office (2025) *Sustainable rural tourism – Highlights Report*. Available at: https://ruralpact.rural-vision.europa.eu/index_en.

Sumanapala, A., Gamage, N. (2024) *Promoting Sustainable Rural Development Through Community-Based Tourism*. [PDF] Available at: https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/122229/1/MPRA_paper_122229.pdf.

Yanan, L., Ismail, M. and Aminuddin, A. (2024) *How has rural tourism influenced the sustainable development of traditional villages? A systematic literature review*. Elsevier. [PDF] Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S240584402401658X>

Interactive Activities

#	ACTIVITY TYPE	LINK	QR CODE
1	Training Video 1	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDoxmCVaqQA	
2	Training Video 2	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3f6KjBqAI4	
3	Educational Games	https://cultmed.eu/educational-games/	
5	Interactive Quizzes	https://cultmed.eu/interactive-activities/	

CULTMED

Sustainable Cultural Tourism
on the Mediterranean