

Interreg
Europe



Co-funded by
the European Union

SLOWDOWN

SLOW TOURISM AND ITS GOOD PRACTICES

European State of Play

SLOWDOWN project (02C0497)
University of Eastern Finland
Marianna Preston & Katja Pasanen
Autumn 2024

“We believe that we can add meaning to life by making things go faster. We have an idea that life is short - and that we must go fast to fit everything in. But life is long. The problem is that we don't know how to spend our time wisely.”
— Carlo Petrini, Founder of the Slow Food Movement

Contents

Introduction.....	3
1 What is Slow Tourism?.....	4
1.1 Why Slow Tourism?.....	4
1.1.1 Mass Tourism and Overtourism in Europe.....	4
1.1.2 Market Developments	6
1.2 Defining Slow Tourism.....	7
1.2.1 Roots of Slow Tourism	7
1.2.2 Aspects and Dimensions of Slow Tourism	10
1.2.3 Definition of Slow Tourism for Interreg Europe project SLOWDOWN	13
2 Slow Travel and Tourism in Europe.....	14
2.1 Slow Travel.....	15
2.1.1 Rail Travel	15
2.1.2 Cycling Mobility	16
2.1.3 European Waterways.....	18
2.2 Slow Tourism.....	20
2.2.1 Approaches to Slow Tourism in Europe	20
2.2.2 Gastronomy and Sustainability.....	21
2.2.3 Accommodation	22
2.2.4 Designing Experiences	23
3 Policy Frameworks and Good Practices.....	26
3.1. Policy Frameworks Affecting Slow Tourism.....	26
3.2 Defining Good Practices.....	30
3.3 Interreg Europe Projects.....	31
3.4 Best Practices in Slow Tourism: Interreg Italy – Croatia: Take it Slow	34
4 Conclusions	36
References	38
Annex 1. Glossary of Terms and Definitions.....	41

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to analyse slow travel and tourism in Europe, as well as initiatives and good practices related to it, to aid the partners involved in the Interreg Europe project SLOWDOWN launched in 2024. The primary goal of the SLOWDOWN project is to enhance local and regional policies to support and develop slow tourism in the project partners' regions. By promoting sustainable tourism practices, the project intends to reduce the environmental impact of tourism and improve the quality of life for local communities. Additionally, the project aims to provide support for local economies by creating opportunities for small businesses and fostering a more balanced and sustainable tourism model. The initiatives under the banner of the SLOWDOWN project, with their contribution to local economic growth and development of more responsible tourism practices, are particularly significant given the challenges faced by the tourism sector, such as overtourism in popular destinations and underutilization of tourism potential in less-visited regions.

Besides the introductory chapter and the conclusion, this report consists of three main parts. The first chapter "What is Slow Tourism?" puts forward an argument on why establishing the principles of slow tourism in the project partners' regions might be necessary. These claims are supported by the statistics and a very brief investigation of market developments. The core of the first chapter lies, however, in the analysis of slow tourism as a research concept. This analysis provides a framework for any potential initiatives and policies and helps the project partners orientate themselves if the boundaries of slow tourism get too obscure.

The second chapter lists slow travel and tourism initiatives and examples in the European context. As described in Chapter 1, slow tourism is a blurry term; the scope of initiatives connected to it is therefore very broad. This is also the main reason for the splitting of Chapter 2 into two sub-chapters, discussing slow travel and slow tourism, respectively. The wide range of examples of projects and initiatives in these sub-chapters was supplied in the hope of sparking inspiration in the project partners and providing them with an overview of the possible directions slow tourism development and practices could turn into, even beyond the scope of the SLOWDOWN-project. If any example piques your interest, it is possible to read further details or contact the responsible platform/organisation through the direct links.

The third chapter is focused on the policy framework and good practices. It draws the definition of good practices from the Interreg Europe Manual. This is enhanced by the listed good practices in the category of sustainable and cultural tourism on the platform. The SLOWDOWN project partners can click on the provided link to the good practice database to look up details of any good practice of their interest. In addition to the Interreg Europe database, a chapter on the collaborative initiative Interreg Italy – Croatia was included, as it contains direct examples of slow tourism initiatives. The Italy – Croatia collaboration lists these as "best practices". It can be assumed that these best practices do not fully comply with the Interreg Europe definition of good practice.

However, they might still provide meaningful insight into the development of slow tourism, nonetheless.

If necessary, you can refer to the glossary of terms and definitions which is placed at the very end of this document. This glossary consists of two parts. Part I defines more general terms related to tourism. Part II defines terms related to the Interreg Europe projects and its platform.

1 What is Slow Tourism?

1.1 Why Slow Tourism?

1.1.1 Mass Tourism and Overtourism in Europe

“In 2023, Europe alone accounted for over half of international tourist arrivals worldwide, with inbound arrivals exceeding 700 million. Such a high influx of visitors has a significant economic impact in the whole region, with the total contribution of travel and tourism to Europe’s GDP amounting to over two trillion euros in 2023.” ([Statista, 2024.](#))

It is indisputable that the tourism industry creates jobs. However, the consequences of tourism-related activities cannot be simplified and reduced solely to their economic impacts. Recently, challenges stemming from mass tourism and overtourism caught the eye of the media. Reading a collection of articles on overtourism and the climate crisis published recently, for instance, in *The Guardian*¹, reveals that the protests of the local populations of predominantly, but not exclusively coastal regions, were sparked by strong anti-tourism sentiments. It could be surmised that this response points to the runaway issues of tourism, which occur due to under-regulation and systemic apathy – the inability of systems on the national, regional or local level to engage in issues which wrack local environments, communities, cultural traditions and decrease the quality of life. Even if not the sole perpetrator, the tourism industry is usually very efficient in exploiting loopholes that are already built into the systems; and then serve as a magnifying glass for the society to face the consequences of these loopholes’ existence at full.

Tourists, viewed as pure consumers who use up or take away local resources, are often accused of depleting the local resources, disrespecting their host environments and littering the destinations wherever they go ([Skopeliti, 2024](#)). Norway learnt this the hard way: after launching a tourism campaign to market itself as a modern outdoor destination based on its population’s “*allemannsretten*” - everyone’s freedom to roam, the state-owned Innovation Norway suspended the campaign indefinitely due to fears of severe damages caused by overtourism ([Nikel, 2024](#)). The next one on the list is

¹ List of articles published in 2024 in *The Guardian* on [Overtourism and the climate crisis](#)

undoubtedly the “Brits Abroad” phenomenon – the infamous reputation which the British visitors earned for themselves by their unchecked, even anti-social behaviour oftentimes caused by their predilection for consumption of mind-altering substances. Despite the stereotype, the British are by far not the only misbehaving nation when abroad. ([Parker, 2024.](#))

Some cities especially popular as bachelor & bachelorette party destinations, react by [campaigns](#), [bans](#) or issuing specifically targeted [public ordinances](#). It is their responsibility to protect their local environments and communities, but acting on this responsibility can prove difficult. Prague City Hall, for instance, issued a ban on beer-bikes in parts of the city, especially its historical centre. The “service” operators appealed against the ban. After losing at the Municipal Court, the case ended at the Supreme Administrative Court with a cassation complaint asking for annulment of this measure. Fortunately for Prague citizens and fans, the Court stood behind the Prague City Hall and upheld the ban. Fighting for their case cost Prague City Hall over one and a half years in time and resources. ([Johnston, 2021.](#))

Recognizing a problem and issuing a ban or an ordinance to address it might be a complex process, but it is merely the first phase. The following step should be designing a plan on how to execute or uphold the regulation, so it actually has some effect. In some cases, this step might prove even trickier than the first one, as shown in the example of Prague. Another take on the same issue is the example of Harry’s Bar in Venice, the premises of which are regularly flooded by the waves created by speed-limit-ignoring speedboats in the Guidecca Canal. The owner Arrigo Cipriani tried to solve this issue by installing “splash guards,” a proposal for which was rejected by the heritage superintendent of Venice. With no other options left, the owner decided to sue local authorities for their inaction to prevent the over-speeding of these boats. Despite installing cameras, navigation in the canal has been increasingly dangerous due to the speedboats which not only cause wave surges but also endanger gondoliers operating small and light gondolas and their customers. ([Guifrida, 2024.](#))

Managing and controlling a set of separate bans or ordinances might prove too complex a task for the underfunded and understaffed bodies of authority. One possible solution is issuing complete bans, as the mayor of Amsterdam did. The [Complete closure of the cruise ship terminal](#) in Amsterdam might solve some of the city’s most burning overtourism issues, but unfortunately, it might not be transferable and applicable everywhere. Barcelona, instead of banning cruise ships, [plans to raise tourist tax for cruise passengers visiting for few hours](#). Despite all the problems the great, ocean-cruising ships cause, they bring in revenues after all. However, the most important factor here is how these revenues are distributed. Do the locations which suffer the most severe negative effects, and their communities, benefit at all? (Burgen; [2024a](#); [2024b.](#))

Central European cities (e.g. Munich, Budapest, Prague), might have the advantage of being inaccessible for great ocean-faring cruise ships; nevertheless, most of the capital cities are traditionally located on major waterways offering river cruises. These do not seem to be an issue; that does not, however, mean these towns and cities are spared from other negative effects of mass tourism and overtourism. Aside from the already mentioned decreased quality of life for the locals and increases in cleaning and maintenance costs caused by rowdy visitors, a closer look at the issues will reveal tourism-related challenges such as gentrification and housing crises, traffic and flow planning and development, increased cost of public services and their management (e.g. police to prevent crime), inability to keep local businesses alive, social inequalities, depletion of water resources, endangering biodiversity, and others. ([Skopeliti, 2024.](#)) These all point towards the existence of mismatches between the social and environmental sustainability of the destinations; and what is enabled by the policies and left un-, or under-regulated.

1.1.2 Market Developments

Two decades ago, Matos (2004) claimed that the lifestyles of people from tourism-generating countries were becoming more and more fast-paced, with them having less time to spare for travelling. Holidays were hence turning into shorter, yet high-intensity-endeavours where the necessity to escape the mundane everyday life in search of the unknown and foreign often went hand in hand with the trends of individualism and hedonism, and to a lesser extent, other megatrends.

When it comes down to the percentage of the adult population (over 15 years of age) participating in tourism, Norway beats all European Union countries with its nearly 90% participation. The most travelling populations within the EU are the Netherlands, Luxemburg, Finland, France, Austria, Czechia and Ireland. Germany takes eighth place; nevertheless, during their international trips for 2022 alone, German residents spent over 85.2 billion euros, making their expenditures the highest in comparison to other European countries. In fact, while representing circa 42 % of the EU population, German and French tourists combined account for almost half (49 %) of total European tourism expenditure. The greatest distinction in spending between these two states is that the Germans spend more in foreign countries, while the French prefer spending on domestic trips. Spain is the most popular country for overnight stays; it might therefore not come as a surprise that their international travel receipts were the highest. ([Eurostat, 2024b.](#))

European tourism statistics for the year 2022 suggest more than half of all undertaken trips by European residents were domestic trips ([Eurostat, 2024a](#)). This trend was already mentioned by Matos (2004) two decades ago when he pointed out the tendency for Europeans to split their holidays into a longer exotic one, and a few shorter ones focusing on domestic, in some cases even local destinations rather than international ones.

The endeavour to improve local and regional infrastructure and connectivity is therefore not to be overlooked; thanks to the preferences of travellers with a slow mindset for soft mobility options, the European slow tourism destinations are accessible mainly for their domestic visitors and, to a lesser extent, European tourists.

1.2 Defining Slow Tourism

1.2.1 Roots of Slow Tourism

The original philosophy underpinning Slow Tourism can be traced back to the [Slow Food manifesto](#) - a pushback against fast food, the industrialized and mass-produced with disregard for its own impacts on human health and the environment. Claims that it was fast food that most consumers preferred were viewed as dismissive of local cultural traditions and the personal rights of all citizens to clean, fair and sustainably produced food, including the humane and respectful treatment of animals. (Heitmann et al., 2011, 115.)

The philosophy accentuating the rights of the people to clean, ethical and individual alternatives spilled into other areas of urban living and citizenship, which gave birth to [Cittáslow](#), the Slow City phenomenon. While advocating for the same rights for all citizens to enjoy local living, this movement did not shy away from harnessing the means of communication and social media globalization brought with it; it used them to its advantage to teach the world about distinctive local traditions and ways of living. (Heitmann et al., 2011, 116.)

The Slow Food, as the philosophical grassroots movement, along with the development of the more structured organization of Cittáslow, builds its manifestos on slow philosophy underpinned by C. Honoré's book *In Praise of Slow*. This line of thought initiated the evolution of the [Slow Movement](#), a cultural movement for slowing down the pace of modern life and creating room for thought in every aspect of the daily lives of humans. (Radstrom, 2011, 94.)

The main foundation of slow tourism is indeed in slow philosophy, which inspired the Slow Movement, Slow Food and Cittáslow. The most notable difference in terms of tourism is the shift from the mass-produced nature and quantity of experiences to their quality; the true quality experiences are hence those which are immersive and deep, based on sharing and (re-) connection. One of the most prominent themes inherited by slow tourism from the grassroots movements is its emphasis on principles of sustainability. (Heitmann et al., 2011, 117-118). Based on the guidelines for policymakers developed by the UN Environment Programme in collaboration with the WTO (2005), sustainable development can be viewed as the coexistence of its three main aspects: social (socio-cultural) equity, environmental protection and economic profitability, without one area overpowering the others (UNEP & WTO 2005).

The dedication of slow tourism to environmental sustainability is reflected first and foremost in its attitude towards travel. If available, soft mobility choices are the

preferred modes of transportation; they help achieve the literal physical slowing down of the speed and pace of movement to take in the surroundings around us, appreciate them, and connect with them. Walking, cycling, and riding a horse or a donkey are not only modes of transport which facilitate immersion and are memorable experiences; they also leave a lower carbon footprint and cause less pollution, noise pollution included. A well-developed and user-friendly public transport system can complement soft mobility and add to the ease of moving around the local areas. (Heitmann et al., 2011, 118-119; Dickinson and Lumsdon, 2010, 189-192). The second big contribution of slow tourism towards environmental sustainability is the appreciation of biodiversity and local natural habitats. Focusing on improving policies that propagate and support natural conservation, and protection is a great starting point for any region which attempts to attract slow tourists. This appreciation of the natural environment can be traced back to the Cittaslow Policies and Goals, presented in Table1.

Table 1. Cittaslow Policies and Goals. Based on Radstrom (2011, 96-100).

Cittaslow Policy	Description	Examples
Environmental Policies	High quality of life in urban areas depends on environmental quality and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - protection of the quality of air, soil and water and pollution control - energy-saving plans - waste management - banning the use of genetically modified organisms, etc.
Infrastructural Policies	Elements of urban and landscape design. Alternative forms of transportation and pedestrian-centric urban design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - plans for reclamation of historical centres - plans for alternative transportation including bike lanes, but also mass transit options - accessibility of public spaces & points of interest - quality green areas - revitalization plans for deteriorating areas - welcoming and friendly commercial areas
Technologies and Facilities for Urban Quality	Holistic approach to policies to create a higher quality of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bio-architecture - electromagnetic field monitoring - noise reduction & colour plan - wi-fi & optical cables installed, etc.
Safeguarding Autochthonous Production	Sustenance of the traditional local industries and all elements connected to the local identity (local context and sense of place)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - organic agriculture development - safeguarding and certification of artisan crafts products and traditional methods of work - collaborating with Slow Food on educational programs - census of trees in the city - promoting & preservice local cultural events, etc.
Awareness	Public education and promotion of the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - help the citizens familiarize themselves with Cittaslow - programs to promote slow philosophy - communicating Slow Food and Cittaslow activities, etc.
Hospitality	Increase liveability. Helps both residents and tourists to feel at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - training courses for tourist information and hospitality - applying international signs - policies to enable access to information and services - preparing slow itineraries - transparency in the pricing of local services

The motive for the increase of the local communities' quality of life – the slow tourism's contribution to social sustainability and equity, can also be found in the Cittáslow policies (Table 1). Whether it is re-directing the resources into infrastructure maintenance (roads and bridges), improved sewage treatment, or developing educational and cultural initiatives such as fairs, festivals and workshops aiding social inclusion, they are all viewed as valuable resources and given respect as symbols of local identity.

From the three pillars of environmental, economic and socio-cultural sustainability, tourism usually emphasizes its economic and environmental impacts. But the socio-cultural dimension is in the case of tourism very prominent, as it includes both, the host and the visitor, the local communities, and tourists. Some variables have implications for both sides, the tourists' quality experiences and the locals' quality of life. These factors are referred to by Carmichael (2005, 130) as dynamic influencing factors:

- type and number of tourists
- type and number of residents
- social exchange relations
- social representations
- type of tourism development

Developing an area into a slow tourism destination while mitigating tourism's negative effects requires strategic regional planning and dedication of the local government bodies to enacting such policies that work for the advantage of the local communities and environments (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2011, 188). Strategic regional planning also, inevitably, means reducing systemic barriers for sole and family entrepreneurs and regional SMEs, creating new markets, preventing capital leakages and helping the local business environments to become more resilient and competitive against multinational corporations. (Conway & Timms, 2012, 73.)

According to Whitehead (2013, 142), degrowth can be applied as the balancing force of sustainable development. The economic growth, which is sometimes the only aspect of development that the private sector, and sometimes even the policymakers, consider, should not ignore the physical limitations of the areas and communities. Every biosphere has only so much capacity to allow for economic activity; every community can put up with only so much social injustice and psychological damage that the run-away economic growth causes. Degrowth is, hence, a concept to ensure the well-being of humans and all other living creatures alike.

As Agapito & Guerreiro (2023, 172) pointed out, it is known that “...*slow tourists are more engaged with places and local people and more attached to the destination than other tourists.*” This could be a way for some destinations to reinvent themselves and promote the growth of their tourism sector in a sustainable way. However, these authors (2023, 172) also point out that attracting more tourists might not only go against

the principles of slow philosophy, as Heitmann et al. (2011) noted but also compromise or completely hamper the sustainable development of the destination.

It is therefore advisable for the destination to choose such promotion strategies, which would be aligned with the values of authenticity of experiences and sustainable development. These could appeal to, and attract, the more responsible tourists with slow mindset rather than the mass tourists. Nevertheless, Valls et al. (2019, 4534) remind us that the economic viability of slow tourism for any given destination is difficult to estimate. While the new “slow” enterprises could be more creative, based on local resources, crafts and arts, or be engaged in the development of new services and technologies supporting slow tourism, they belong to an emerging market.

1.2.2 Aspects and Dimensions of Slow Tourism

Considering the impacts of mass tourism on the destinations, it might come as a surprise that the first attempts at conceptualization of slow tourism came from the demand side – the customers’ perspective. The core of the motivation behind the slow mindset was, hence, identified as the search for deeper, more authentic tourist experiences with a strong emphasis on respectful and responsible behaviour. (Di-Clemente et al., 2014, 33). It can be therefore assumed that this mindset leads to a changed perception, where quality, especially that of experiences, wins over consumerism of larger quantities so characteristic of mass tourism.

Moira et al. (2017, 6) view slow tourism as an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of niche tourism alternatives, such as eco-, fishing and agrotourism, nature tourism, and wine tourism, also known as (o-)enotourism including wine tasting, gastronomic and culinary tourism, industrial heritage tourism, religious-cultural tourism and others. In fact, Serdane et al. (2020, 345-347) conclude that slow tourism is compatible with any type of tourism, as it is principally a specific approach of tourists towards their travels (which is heavily biased towards the experiential dimension), rather than a specific type of tourism.

The combination of sustainable development and the philosophy behind Slow Food & Slow Movement are the predictors of the aspects that differentiate slow tourism from other forms of tourism. Based on the literature analysed by Moira et al. (2017, p. 4), there are four approaches to slow tourism, which have a strong connection to either temporal dimension, spatial dimension, or both:

- the value of time during the trip
- the locality and experiences at the destination
- the means of transport, incl. the travel experience
- the environmental awareness

First and foremost, it is the perception and use of time, in regard to the mode of chosen transport and access to the localities, but also experiences. Slower transport modes

suggest softer mobility choices, which lower the pollution and the carbon footprint, pointing to environmental awareness. Albeit separately, the academics identified four dimensions most relevant for slow tourism; namely the environmental, experiential, economic, and ethical (Serdane et al., 2020, 346). These were re-confirmed by the study authored by Serdane et al. in 2020, who pictured the phenomenon of slow tourism introducing all four dimensions, which were found to have varying degrees of importance. Nevertheless, they are underpinned by the approach the travellers take to their trips, known as the slow mindset. Slow mindset can be, hence, described as the environmentally aware and ethically informed behaviours that the slow tourists exhibit before, during and even after their travels, which has an impact on the quality of their experiences. The main motivation for a slow mindset was thought to be an escape from the everyday stressors and search for more peaceful, slow and quieter time spent away from the hectic and overcrowded places (Serdane et al., 2020, 339).

In non-academic literature, the understanding of the slow mindset is also heavily biased towards the experiential dimension. The physical slowdown is to perceive that there is enough time for connecting with the places the visitors are physically present in, in order to immerse themselves into the culture of the visited places thoroughly. In her opinion piece for *The Adventure*, JoAnna Haugen emphasized the role critical thinking and self-reflection play in developing the slow mindset. Getting past the superficial and passively consumed experiences involves understanding whether what is being perceived is genuine or not. It requires understanding that every place, as every person, has a life beneath what is visible, which can be multi-faceted, rich and sometimes even contradictory and paradoxical. Time is necessary for the traveller or tourist to listen to the stories being told and reflect on them. That way, slow tourism can become a part of the transformative tourism universe. ([Haugen, 2023.](#))

Numerous differences are setting apart mass and slow tourism. The core of these differences lies in promoting slowness – in transport and attitude to life, which has an impact on the mode of travel, length of stay, places chosen and the environmental footprint; immersive, individualized and customized experiences rather than the mass-produced commercialized ones; and focus on the off-beat and local, slow food and beverages instead of standardized hospitality and commoditization ([Güneş, 2017](#)). One of the more concise tables was presented by Moira et al. in 2017 (see table 2).

Table 2. Comparing Mass Tourism to Slow Tourism. Adapted from Moira, Mylonopoulos, and Kondoudaki (2017, p. 5)

Mass Tourism	Slow Tourism
Quick movement	Slow movement
The airplane is the dominant means of transport, mainly charter flights	Use of alternative means of transport, mainly train or bus
Transportation with high carbon dioxide emissions	Transportation with low carbon dioxide emissions
Speed	Slow pace
The trip coincides with the movement	The movement is part of the journey
Visit to numerous tourist attractions	Perceive to local character of the place
Quantifying the visiting areas	Qualifying the tourist experience – maximizing the enjoyment of the destination
Passive tourist	Active tourist
Standardized experiences	Authentic experiences
Standardized food services (catering style)	Local and traditional types of diet
Impersonal acquaintance and low contact with the place and its residents	Substantial contact and real communication with the destination and its residents
Accommodation in commercialized resorts or hotel complexes	Accommodation in small accommodation units
Group options, lack of flexibility	Individual options, flexibility
Hostage – the omnipresence of communication technologies during holidays	Getting rid of communication technologies during holidays
Continuous contact with the workplace	No contact with the workplace

Klarin et al. (2023) created a holistic and integrative framework for slow tourism conceptualization (Table 3). The model captures factors and outcomes on the micro-level (individual preferences and behaviours) and macro-level (broader societal trends and policies), which affect the tourists' motivations to travel, as well as choices of travel modes and other travel practices. The model incorporates spatial (linearity/cyclicity) and temporal (stages from pre-trip planning to post-trip reflection) dimensions of slow tourism while paying attention to other important roots and aspects of slow tourism. This holistic approach also identifies knowledge gaps, which suggest possibilities for future research directions (e.g. the obvious gap in research on operational and organizational phenomena on the meso-level) and gives an account of a balanced and enriching travel experience while mitigating negative impacts on destinations.

Table 3. An integrative conceptualization of slow tourism and travel (adapted from Klarin et al., 2023, 8).

Level	Micro-level	Meso-level	Macro-level
Factors	Personal values Demographic variables Psychological attitudes Habitual behaviours Time sensitivity An Individual's past experience Reference Groups		Political (e.g. policies & regulations) Cultural (e.g. norms & values) Social phenomena (social media, travel bloggers, movies, etc) Technological (travel infrastructure & booking systems)
Dimensions	<p>Spatial Dimension Movement & Locality Destination & en-route</p> <p>Linear facet: Traversing multiple places; multi-location-based tour</p> <p>Cyclic facet: Moving back and forth, Located in a single destination</p> <p>Temporal Dimension Anticipation "Time savouring" rather than "time saving" options Unhurried mode Ongoing features</p> <p>Travel On-site Experience Recollection Revisitation</p>		
Outcomes	Travel Behaviour Travel Experience Travel Identity Travel Satisfaction Future return intention Future referral intention Environmental awareness		Environmental: energy consumption, carbon emissions, climate change, environmental movements Economic: sharing economy (e.g. guesthouses), development of local economy Social: social trends, changes in social norms and values

1.2.3 Definition of Slow Tourism for Interreg Europe project SLOWDOWN

The understanding of slow travel and tourism might differ not only from country to country but also from person to person. In some cultural and academic contexts, slow travel and tourism are synonymous, or used interchangeably, for instance in Dickinson and Lumsdon (2010), who include experiences at the destination into slow travel. This will also be seen in chapter 2.2, where the offer of some German wellness hotels is referred to in German as slow travel. Some contexts emphasize the significance of the journey as an experience in itself, defining slow travel as a “qualitative focus on the

journey travelled” (Conway and Timms, 2012, 71). For Conway and Timms (2012), slow tourism is slow travel which links the experiences during the trip, at the destination and their qualitative reflection, to the benefits these have for the local stakeholders.

As this situation shows, it is important that the definition of slow tourism used in the IR-E SLOWDOWN brings the SLOWDOWN project partners who come from varied historical and cultural environments onto the same page. The core of the definition of Slow Tourism was derived from a variety of academic sources, which include Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010; Manthiou et al., 2022, 2-4; Serdane et al., 2020; Heitmann et al., 2011; Wearing et al., 2012:37; Lowry & Lee, 2016; Valls et al., 2019:4534; and Langford, 2020. The working definition was subsequently adapted to reflect the needs and wishes of the partners and stakeholders during the First Thematic Workshop in Esztergom/Štúrovo on the 18th – 20th of June 2024:

Slow tourism is a pushback against hyper-commercialization and the fast-paced consumption of mass tourism with a focus on quality instead of quantity – not only for travellers, local communities, and policymakers but for businesses alike.

Slow tourism (travelling and developing) requires adopting a slow mindset, which means moving and experiencing at a slower pace. From the travellers' perspective, slowness facilitates fewer, but deeper, more meaningful, and authentic experiences and interactions with the local communities and landscapes, while respecting their ethical boundaries. From the perspective of the businesses, slowness goes beyond quality over quantity; it means changing the orientation from completely for-profit to more-people-than-profit-oriented. It enhances the companies' mission and purpose and allows the companies to align their business activities with values they want to be aligned with, while also earning a living.

Slow Tourism is a sustainable form of tourism that respects cultural heritage, cuisine, traditions, localities and nature. Slow tourism enables the destinations to focus on cooperation with the local stakeholders in order to create those policy changes, which place the protection of the local environments, communities and cultural heritage at their centre, as it considers these strategic, product-building offerings.

2 Slow Travel and Tourism in Europe

As the title of the second chapter of this report suggests, the chapter gives an overview of slow travel, slow tourism and their initiatives in Europe. The chapter is split into two parts. The first one discusses slow travel in Europe, focusing in more depth on the railways, cycling mobility and European waterways. The second part contains the analysis of approaches to slow tourism in Europe, experience design, gastronomy and accommodation.

The examples of initiatives have two reasons for being included in this report: firstly, they are there provide an overview of the current issues and the state of slow tourism in Europe. Secondly, they are there to serve as an example to refer to. The cultural and natural landscape of the SLOWDOWN project's partners is diverse; hopefully,

every partner will find a few inspirational examples elements of which could be transferable to their home regions. The links to the webpages and platforms are in place for better readability, but also to provide contact to any initiatives, platforms or organizations that inspire the project partners who might need further details.

2.1 Slow Travel

Europe, an ideal slow tourism destination due to its connectivity and diversity (Conway & Timms, 2012, 72), witnessed the traction for slow travel being driven by a growing desire for accessible, sustainable and immersive travel experiences. Slow travel is sometimes used as a synonym for soft mobility options, which refer to environmentally friendly and non-motorized modes of transportation, such as walking, cycling, and the use of e-scooters. (Armoogum et al., 2022). European cities have increasingly embraced soft mobility to reduce carbon emissions and enhance urban livability. These initiatives can propose the expansion of pedestrian zones and pedestrian-friendly streets and bike lanes in cities, the introduction of bike-sharing schemes, or subsidies for e-bike purchases (Laval, 2021).

Slow travel in Europe is also visible thanks to bloggers, slow travel enthusiasts and citizen initiatives. The most frequently seen entries are designed as “Top #” recommendations for where to travel and how to get there. [Travlinmad](#) lists over 50 destinations in numerous European countries. In addition to receiving passive inspiration for the next slow trip, [Slow Europe](#) and [Rick Steves' Europe](#) offer extensive exchanges on a variety of travel-related issues. Slow Travel Europe is an initiative led by the [Hidden Europe](#) magazine, which sheds light on the off-beat trails and destinations of Europe while focusing on sustainable travel. The exchanges of practical information on forums reveal yet another important factor in slow travel: accessibility and good connectivity to public transport².

2.1.1 Rail Travel

Rail travel is a cornerstone of slow travel in Europe ([European Commission, 2021](#)). High-speed trains like the Eurostar and Thalys connect major cities, offering alternatives to air travel. [Interrail](#) enables travellers to connect European destinations with its [Global Pass](#). The Global options cover various periods of time with a continuous (15 days – 3 months) or flexi pass (4 – 15 days). For exploration of a single country, the [Interrail One Country Pass](#) is also available. Except for the most popular destinations (Italy, France, Germany, Switzerland, The Benelux and Norway) and the EU countries, this Interrail offer extends also for instance to Turkey, North Macedonia and the United Kingdom.

The regional commuter trains provide access to rural areas, which can be a scenic and relaxed way to explore the continent. The [European Green Deal](#) aims to make rail travel more attractive by investing in infrastructure and reducing travel times. European

² For instance forum entries here: [Base towns in Europe for slow travel - Rick Steves Travel Forum](#)

railways have adapted by enhancing safety measures and promoting regional and cross-border travel. This includes a variety of [good practices](#) (Interreg Europe, 2021):

- Multi-modal trips or cross-border trips. These include options to transport bicycles on certain routes; streamlined and simplified ticketing; or connecting train services with the last-mile buses and making on-demand stops
 - Sweden's [Resplus Ticketing System](#)
 - [Fehmarnbelt Ticket](#) – is applicable between Germany and Denmark to facilitate travel by other means than the car; it can be used for cross-border trains and public transport in the border towns of both countries
 - [Local Link Rural Transport Programme](#) in Ireland serves the inclusion of local communities, public transport bus tables developed in coordination with the railway timetable.
- Packages for tourists, which include train tickets and fees for attractions and pubs/restaurants, Swanage Railway (UK) being one example.
- Historic rail routes, such as West Pomeranian Voivodeship, Poland or Košice, Slovakia

Mark Ellingham, an entrepreneur who founded the Rough Guide travel handbooks and a slow tourism enthusiast, likens slow travel to the Slow Food movement, where travellers can savour the experience. To achieve this, Ellingham believes people should generally travel less frequently by air and stay at their destinations for longer. That way, travellers can immerse themselves in the moment and gain a sense of place by talking to other travellers on the train, or simply watching the landscapes. ([Walljasper, 2006.](#))

2.1.2 Cycling Mobility

The development of cycle paths and routes has been a key focus in promoting slow travel, in which projects funded by the European Union, Interreg Europe included, have played a crucial role. These projects not only enhance urban mobility but also support long-distance cycling and eco-friendly tourism. One of the most ambitious European initiatives is [EuroVelo](#), led by the European Cyclists' Federation. The initiative is based on cooperation with national and regional partners. Its objective is to incorporate smaller cycling routes into a big European network that would enable, among others, long-distance cycling and the development of cycling infrastructure. As recently as June 2024, Velo Baltica, a project where the Baltic coast of Poland is adjusted for cycling, was introduced in a BBC article ([Fedykovych, 2024](#)). Velo Baltica spans over 230 kilometres and offers views of very diverse landscapes, which include historic towns, dunes, and windmills.

Similarly to train travel, the development of cycle paths and routes is frequently a part of greater projects which aim at the development of infrastructure and more sustainable transport options. Such projects might also involve enhancing cross-border regional

cooperation, promoting sustainable management, and/or protecting cultural and environmental resources. [Interreg Europe SWARE](#) is one such project, the objectives of which are strengthening the economic and social cohesion of regions. Despite the main focus being placed on creating a balance between cultural tourism and heritage conservation, it also involves significant efforts to develop cross-border connectivity via cycling. This includes the development of new paths as well as the expansion of the existing cycle paths, examples of which are the cycle paths in the [Pons Danubii region](#).

Another instance of increasing accessibility via the means of improved mobility (especially relevant for towns and cities) is the project [CYCLEWALK](#); while [CYCLING WATERWAYS](#) is dedicated to integrating waterways by developing cycling paths along the rivers, canals, lakes, and other water bodies. Another notable initiative is the creation of [temporary cycle paths](#) in cities like Rome during the COVID-19 pandemic, which have since become permanent fixtures.

The future of cycle path development in Europe seems safe at least for the foreseeable time. A new EU funding regulation, which is a part of the EU Structural Funds, mandates an increase in investment from cities and regions towards sustainable mobility. The 87-billion-euro EU Social Climate fund will be available for the development of cycling infrastructure and bike-sharing schemes from 2026. ([Haubold, 2023](#); [Küster, 2021](#).) Another factor impacting the development of cycling in Europe is the temporary instrument [National Recovery and Resilience Facility](#), which came into existence in 2021 to aid the economic recovery of the EU states under the NextGenerationEU stimulus package. Out of the 648 billion euros which is available for the member states either in grants (357 billion €) or loans (291 billion €)³, 1.7 billion euros was initially dedicated to the development of cycling mobility ([Flottorp, 2023](#)).

Spain, Romania, Slovakia and Belgium benefited from the National Recovery and Resilience Facility's stimulus and committed to improving the cycling mobility conditions in their respective countries. The Spanish government implemented a national cycling strategy with 500 million euros from the Recovery and Resilience Facility, resulting in 1,000 kilometres of cycle paths, 4,100 secure bicycle parking facilities, and enhanced public bike-sharing systems in multiple cities. Romania, with the support of the Romanian Cyclists' Federation, has proposed 120 million euros for over 3,000 kilometres of touristic cycle routes. To commit to this plan, the Romanian government has increased the funding to 247.5 million euros. Slovakia has committed over 100 million euros to cycling under the NRRP (National Recovery and Resilience Plan) framework, with advocacy from Cyklokoalícia leading to a new, positively evaluated methodology for project applications. Nevertheless, the long-term effects are yet to be assessed. Belgium has allocated 400 million euros to enhance cycling infrastructure, with 345 million euros for the Flemish Region, 34 million euros for the

³ [Recovery and Resilience Facility - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

Brussels Capital Region, and 14 million euros for the Walloon Region, focusing on renovations, new pathways, secure parking, and cycle highways. (Flottorp, 2023.)

Similarly, Italy put into action a national-level policy instrument [General Plan of Cycling Mobility 2022-2024](#), the objective of which is creating a National System of Cycling Mobility. 400 million euros have been allocated in the years 2022–2026 for the building of at least 1,235 kilometres of new tourist cycle routes and maintenance works on the already existing paths. Another 200 million euros has been set aside for the development of circa 565 kilometres of new urban cycle routes by June 2026, with a focus on improving connections between railway stations and universities. ([May, 2022.](#))

2.1.3 European Waterways

Waterways offer a unique and tranquil mode of slow travel, allowing to experience Europe from a different perspective. The continent boasts an extensive network of waterways, with major rivers like the Rhine, Danube, and Seine serving as important facilitators of commerce and tourism. These waterways have historically been used for transporting goods, but their slow pace and scenic routes make them ideal for activities like boating, kayaking, and barge cruising, which allow travellers to experience the natural beauty and cultural heritage of Europe at a relaxed pace. Popular routes include the Canal du Midi in France, the Danube River, and the Dutch and Italian waterways and canals, each offering distinct experiences.

EU has committed to pay attention to its waterways as a part of several strategies. The new [Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change](#) cites the development of blue-green infrastructure (rather than grey) as a means of multipurpose and long-term solutions to achieve social, environmental, but also economic advantages while increasing regional climate resilience. Concrete actions, which are aligned with the [European Green Deal](#), might include protecting and restoring wetlands, peatlands, and coastal and marine ecosystems; developing urban green spaces and installing green roofs and walls; and promoting and sustainably managing forests and farmland. EU's [Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#) suggests ambitious nature restoration plans, which include the restoration of around 25,000 kilometres of free-flowing rivers, while [the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy](#) put forward plans to increase the use of waterways for freight transport, 75 % of which is currently transported by European roads.

Several projects across Europe aim to enhance the appeal and accessibility of waterways with an impact on tourism. [The Seine-Escaut project](#) is upgrading a network of inland waterways between France and Belgium to improve connectivity and promote sustainable transport. Similarly, the [Motorway of the Seas](#) project is enhancing maritime routes between Rostock and Hanko, while the BilbOPS project focuses on electrifying key ports in Spain. ([European Commission & ECIEEA, 2024.](#))

Interreg Europe (IR-E), as a policy learning platform, pays great attention to development projects concerning waterways and green-blue infrastructure. Specific information can be found for example in its policy brief [Protection and Sustainable Management of heritage in Coastal and Fluvial Regions](#) (2018) or [Urban Ecosystems](#) (2020). IR-E funds numerous projects scope of which includes the development of waterways in a sustainable manner and their application in tourism with other regions inspiring good practices:

- [WaVE](#) (Water-linked heritage Valorization by developing an Ecosystemic approach) was set up to find solutions for the development of integrated adaptive reuses of water-linked cultural heritage sites in human settlements. 14 Good Practices were registered under this project, one of which is e.g. [Water Museum of Esztergom](#).
- [SWARE](#) (Sustainable Heritage Management of Waterway Regions) project aims to balance the protection and sustainable exploitation of natural and cultural resources in waterway regions. One among the 13 registered good practices is the already mentioned [Network of cross-border bike routes in the Pons Danubii region](#).
- [RIWET](#) (Public-Private Governance of Rivers and Wetlands) is a project initiated in 2024 and includes 12 partners. It focuses on developing long-term governance solutions for rivers and wetlands through public-private partnerships. The project engages local communities, organizations, and landowners to co-design strategies that balance ecological preservation with economic development. So far, it registered seven good practices; one of which is [LOFAR](#), a previously dried-up swamp area in need of natural restoration, which was achieved in collaboration with the Institute for Space Research ASTRON. which saw the area as a good candidate for installation of a new radio telescope.

As mentioned in Chapter 1.1, there is another type of water-based travel in which Europe participates – cruises. The idea behind cruises is to combine visits to multiple destinations without the challenges of booking and travelling to separate accommodations in a short period of time (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010, 161). The Mediterranean is the European cruise market leader, but Northern Europe saw a great increase in ocean-type cruises in 2023 as well ([Statista, 2023](#)). Despite the blooming market, it has to be noted that the idea behind cruises is in stark contrast to a slow mindset. First and foremost, there is no “locality” with its cultural traditions and specific environments to be explored and immersed in; the environment is unique in its borderlessness, but that also means no system of jurisdiction and very low, if any, regulation. There is nobody to take responsibility for, as it became evident during the Covid-19 pandemic when the names of [Zaandam](#) or [Diamond Princess](#) became household names for all the wrong and tragic reasons. Secondly, the experiences are commercial and designed to fit a high number of passengers. Thirdly, cruises certainly do not belong to sustainable practices. Their environmental impacts are great and

widespread social exploitation is rampant due to the mentioned lack of regulation. (Dickinson and Lumsdon, 2010, 161.)

2.2 Slow Tourism

2.2.1 Approaches to Slow Tourism in Europe

Matos (2004) pointed out that slow tourism encompasses Halbert Dunn's original "high-level wellness" concept, which was already in 1959, when Dunn initially promoted it, based on a healthy diet, movement, relaxation and spiritual & cultural renewal. Slow tourism might, hence, take any of these approaches to take a foothold in a region, which can lead to it being perceived differently in other regions. In Germany, for example, as [Deutschland.de](https://www.deutschland.de) depicts it, the focus of slow "travel" is on de-stressing and relaxation of the travellers/visitors rather than on their tight-knit experiences of the local cuisine, culture or traditions. These experiences are offered, but they are generally not regarded as slow tourism. On the contrary, the slow tourism offer can thus include hiking, but even experiences such as yoga, spa or any accommodation without the luxury of an internet connection.

France has embraced slow tourism through its promotion of village tourism. Small, picturesque villages offer an authentic experience of French culture away from the major cities. Visitors can enjoy leisurely walks, local festivals, and interactions with residents, fostering a sense of community and belonging. But France went a step further in the attempt to create a level playing field for slow tourism. [Slow Tourism Lab](https://www.slowtourismlab.com/) was created in 2017 as an informative platform and a toolkit for cooperation for all interested in slow tourism. It is focused on innovation of tourism alternatives in rural areas by assisting all involved stakeholders: the entrepreneurs and start-ups with development and competitiveness; tourism professionals with staying updated with the newest industry developments and with the necessary digitalization; but also tourists in search of specific information. It facilitates the exchange of skills, and know-how and helps forge partnerships.

In other European countries, slow tourism is mainly publicized through tourism bloggers and internet pages of public institutions, tour agencies, or simply enthusiasts, as it is the case of the Slovak webpage "pomalevyety.sk" ("slow trips" in Slovak) which simply yet systematically describes and rates the difficulty of hiking trails located all around Slovakia. The term slow travel is oftentimes understood at its face value, as literally slow travel in the sense of as little activity as possible. This interpretation of "slowness" might give the impression slow tourism is about skipping activities to enjoy "doing nothing". Using this interpretation, the very mass tourism experience of lying on an overcrowded beach could qualify as a slow tourism activity - when slow tourism means the exact opposite, a greater engagement in meaningful activities; as blogger Veronika pointed out in her [blog entry](#), the title of which can be loosely translated as "Where the slow travel begins and where it ends".

2.2.2 Gastronomy and Sustainability

“A gastronome who isn’t an environmentalist is just stupid, and an environmentalist who isn’t a gastronome is just sad.” — Carlo Petrini

The European Union put sustainability at the forefront of promoting tourism through the Sustainable EU Tourism: [Shaping the Tourism of Tomorrow](#) initiative. This program highlights eco-friendly travel options, such as cycling routes, nature reserves, and sustainable accommodations. Some towns and cities are developing strategies and good practices in other ways; the city of Augsburg, for instance, registered a good practice [Augsburg Cup – Reusable To-Go Cup](#) in the IR-E platform. Copenhagen launched [CopenPay](#), which was a collaborative initiative of 24 attractions that promised environmentally aware visitors incentives to keep the city green. Among these were, for instance, cycling to the pub to get a free drink, taking one’s cup from home for a free coffee, or a free boat trip for picking up litter. And based on the webpage, CopenPay will be back in 2025.

One of the cornerstones of slow tourism, the Slow Food movement, encourages travellers to savour local cuisine, visit traditional markets, and participate in cooking classes. As an initiative, it has spread across Europe, promoting sustainable food practices (the principles of good/fresh, clean and fair produce) and supporting local farmers and artisans (Güneş, 2019). The principles of slow food in the scope of tourism mirror the environmental concerns. But what is more, they gain aspects related to social equity and sustainability (Klarin et al., 2023, 6). The sustainable gastronomy approach includes the use of locally sourced and seasonal ingredients. This is reflected in eco-gastronomy, a variant of sustainable gastronomy, where environmental concerns guide ingredient choices, preparation methods, and marketing at every step of the process. Eco-gastronomy could be considered reflective cooking and eating. (Güneş, 2019.)

Another key aspect of sustainable gastronomy from the slow tourism perspective is a large variety of immersive experiences that allow travellers to connect with local food cultures. Among others, the [Slow Food](#) introduces the following:

- Farm Visits/Agrotourism, where travellers can visit farms to learn about organic farming practices, participate in harvests, and enjoy farm-fresh meals
- Hands-on cooking classes with local chefs
- Food and wine guided tours of vineyards, breweries, and food markets which offer a taste of regional specialities and the stories behind them and
- Food festivals and agricultural shows

Traditional cuisines in some European nations are addressed by policy instruments at a national level. [Finland's Food Tourism Strategy 2020-2028](#) believes the experiential road of authentic and unique culinary experiences can contribute to the sustainable growth of the tourism sector while protecting the environment and supporting the local communities. [Spain's National Plan for Enogastronomic Tourism](#) focuses on sustainability, innovation, and stakeholder collaboration through taking advantage of its rich gastronomic and wine heritage.

France, another European country proud of its gastronomy, can boast a number of both official and more informal ways to protect their culinary heritage. The approaches are mainly product-based, as many products are a part of family traditions, traditional agricultural practices and hence local cultures. The policies surrounding France's designations *appellation d'origine contrôlée* (AOC awarded by Institut National de l'Origine et de la Qualité – Inao) and *appellation d'origine protégée* (AOP; awarded by the EU) are designed to protect the geographical origin and production methods of products like wine, cheese, and meat. On one hand, they ensure the quality and authenticity of the produce, while on the other, they pay attention to maintaining their integrity by requiring adherence to strict production criteria. Nevertheless, some local producers choose to work outside the AOC/AOP criteria to avoid restrictive rules and “mass-production” methods, seeking freedom to innovate and greater distinction. Community members passionate about protecting food heritage can get together in the more informal networks called *confréries*; and host and attend numerous events and festivals annually. These networks play a great role in preserving the sense of community and tradition. ([Boyd, 2024.](#)) Similar designation of origin labels (both EU-level and national/regional) can be found in other countries in Europe as well, for example, in Finland there is a label called [D.O. Saimaa](#) and in Italy, there are several labels to indicate the protected food and drink product (DOP, IGP, IG, TSG).

2.2.3 Accommodation

Slow tourism emphasizes a deep, immersive travel experience, allowing tourists to connect with their destinations at a leisurely pace. Accommodation plays a crucial role in this experience, providing not just a place to stay, but also opportunities to engage in the social aspects of slow tourism.

One of the older well-known platforms that combine accommodation options and interacting with local hosts is Couchsurfing. The possibilities it used to offer were plentiful; from hosting a traveller in one's home, recommending the friendliest local guesthouses or other hosts, getting together for a chat over a cup of coffee or another drink, or organizing game evenings, tours, or other events for locals and visitors alike. It was, however, dealt a painful blow by the rise of Airbnb. At present, the platform seems to be locked behind a paywall and the hosts appear to have to pay for letting visitors stay in their own homes. Nevertheless, at present, numerous free and non-profit initiatives which offer options as Couchsurfing once used to do exist;

Bewelcome.org; Couchers.org, [Trustroots](#), or [Welcome to My Garden](#) could be worth a try for an interested visitor. [Servas](#) not only continues the tradition of free hospitality, but it also promotes sustainable travel and meetings. What is more, national (e.g. the Spanish [Pasporta Servo](#)) and international platforms facilitate hospitality among various members of society. [Host a Sister](#) offers a safe option for female slow travellers; [Warmshowers](#) is a global community of touring cyclists who can offer their hospitality to another touring cyclist; and [Lesbian and Gay Hospitality Exchange International](#) connects the members of the international rainbow community. [Hostwriter](#) is an open network connecting professional writers and journalists. The members can host another writer, but the platform is built to facilitate collaboration, networking and providing local contacts. [Staydu](#), originally a German platform, offers options – the traveller can either stay with the host for free, they can offer a service in exchange (e.g. help with gardening, translating documents, etc.) or pay a symbolic sum as recognition of the hospitality offered.

Airbnb has become the more popular choice for slow tourists due to its flexibility and variety of offerings. In theory, it allows travellers to stay in unique, locally owned properties, ranging from city apartments to countryside cottages, catering to a wide range of needs. Nevertheless, Airbnb has also evolved and adapted its policies over time, and the specific requirement for a minimum booking of seven days was gradually phased out as the platform grew. This change was a part of Airbnb's broader strategy to accommodate shorter stays and attract a wider range of travellers ([Palanivel, 2023](#); [Dudovskiy, 2019](#)) However, nowadays, Airbnb seems to be creating issues of its own. There are security and [safety issues](#). Some Airbnb are purely investment apartments; it is unlikely a traveller with a slow mindset would get a chance to talk to their host about what it is like to live in their community and locality at all. Gentrification and increase in housing costs due to tourism apartment rentals, to which Airbnb contributes, are systemic issues which need addressing at the systemic levels. Barcelona is looking to ban apartment rentals to tourists strictly for this reason alone. Sevilla, fighting against its runaway problem with illegal tourist flats, was given the right to cut off the water supply to these flats. ([Burgen, 2024c](#); [Harris, 2018](#).)

2.2.4 Designing Experiences

Apart from the enthusiasts and bloggers who describe their experiences and provide advice for free, some operators also embraced the idea of slow tourism and design experiences based on its principles. They offer immersive and authentic trips to meet various communities in Europe rather than sightseeing in the traditional sense. For instance, [Slow Tours](#) offers a wide range of curated travel experiences across Europe, among which are barge tours, bike & boat tours or food & wine tours. Their tours are characterized by small group sizes, personalized itineraries, and a focus on quality over quantity. [Slow Trips](#) focuses on providing authentic and meaningful travel experiences across nine European regions. A few examples of their activities are creative workshops in regions like Umbria, Italy, where the participants try to co-

produce local arts & crafts, including pottery-making or culinary classes; guided nature and permaculture walks through regions such as Eastern Styria, Austria, allow travellers to learn about local flora and sustainable farming practices, foraging for herbs or tasting fresh locally sourced produce. The Slow Tours and Slow Trips are not the only platforms offering experiences which are aligned with the values of slow tourism. To name a few examples: [Meet the Locals](#) can design experiences not just for the slow travellers, but more importantly, for the whole families. [With Locals](#) offers local guides to discover the destination through the eyes of a local; while [Slow Adventure](#) offers meaningful outdoor experiences; and [Inntravel](#) lets the traveller choose from a walking or cycling holiday, or if they would prefer a winter or a “journey” holiday. Through [Slow Travel Berlin](#), visitors can experience the off-beat tracks and get to know Berlin in-depth also on their own. An interesting addition to this platform are the [seasonal guides](#), which allow the visitors to “seasonally adjust” their experiences of Berlin. Slow Italy provides cultural and culinary tours in Italy. [Slow Travel Stockholm](#) lets the visitors learn about Stockholm through the eyes of a local and enables to buy tickets to various attractions (e.g. ABBA Museum or the Paradox Museum). Their webpage states the organization is currently developing a variety of walking tours and creative workshops.

Another way of increasing awareness about the benefits of slow initiatives is through public events. Since its start in the year 2000, the [slowUp](#) events have become a beloved tradition in Switzerland. This series of events promotes car-free days to encourage people to explore the lakes and other regional scenic spots on bikes, inline skates, or on foot. The slowUp initiative began as a prelude to Expo.02, the Swiss national exposition held in 2002. The concept was simple; it required closing off approximately 30 kilometres of road in scenic areas to motorized vehicles for a day to create a safe and enjoyable environment for non-motorized activities. The first event was a great success, leading to the establishment of slowUp as an annual event. From a single venue, it has expanded to include 18 events held annually across various regions of Switzerland. Each event attracts thousands of participants, with more than 500,000 people taking part each year. The initiative has become a national institution, celebrated for its contribution to promoting healthy lifestyles and sustainable mobility.

Other traditions falling under the umbrella of slow tourism are cultural festivals and pilgrimages. Every country hosts a series of annual festivals that highlight its rich cultural heritage. These festivals can be organized around specific themes and offer a vibrant mix of music, dance, cuisine and traditional crafts. Cultural festivals oftentimes include traditional crafts and cuisine. In addition to sampling traditional food, visitors can participate in workshops or watch performances. Nature heritage festivals are also not uncommon. Fête de la Nature celebrates nature with workshops, guided tours and educational activities annually each May across France. Estonia's Wildlife Day takes place in April; the group activities include nature hikes, bird watching, and educational programmes about nature and biodiversity. The Alpine Flower Festival, held in June in the Tyrolean Alps, focuses on the Alpine flora by organizing botanical workshops, guided hikes and cultural events. Welsh Green Man Festival and Italian EcoFest both

zoomed in on environmental sustainability; but while EcoFest is focused more on promoting green living and eco-products, the Green Man Festival also includes workshops on natural conservation.

Like festivals, every European country has journeys, or at least paths, of faith. The most well-known routes span several countries; the pilgrims may walk for weeks, sometimes months, to reach their destination. This allows travellers to connect with nature, reflect on themselves and their experiences, and engage with fellow pilgrims from around the world. The most famous historic routes are Spain's Camino de Santiago, which finishes in Santiago de Compostela; St. Olav's Way from Norway to Sweden and Finland, or Via Francigena from Canterbury through France and Switzerland to Rome. The Jerusalem Way starts in Austria and finishes in Jerusalem; while when walking on the Way of St. Francis, the pilgrims will not need to leave Italy. The Sufi Trail in Bosnia and Herzegovina represents a meaningful journey in the Sufi tradition. The significance of these routes goes beyond personal; in some [cases](#), the existence of these routes left an impact on places which do not lie directly on them, spreading to the surrounding regions. However, the remote parts of Camino de Santiago and Via Francigena have been known to present serious safety issues for female pilgrims, especially for those travelling alone. ([Kassam & Banfield-Nwachi, 2024.](#))

In 1987, the Council of Europe launched the [Cultural Routes](#). The main objective of this project is to demonstrate how the diverse heritage of various European countries contributes to a shared cultural heritage. The project promotes cultural diversity, cross-border dialogue and collaboration. These cultural routes cover a multitude of themes (architecture, gastronomy, landscape, arts, etc.) and offer activities which are aligned with the values of responsible tourism. As a mark of excellence for meeting the standards of sustainable development, tourism and cultural management, the routes can obtain a certification "Cultural Route of the Council of Europe". At present, there are [48 certified cultural routes](#) spanning over 60 countries.

A similar result of combining the principles of slow tourism with the objectives of natural and cultural heritage protection, albeit on a smaller scale, is the development of thematic routes. A noteworthy case is the Bavarian town of Nördlingen. It is located in a crater, which was left after the impact of the meteorite Ries some 15 million years ago. The impact changed the landscape, and altered living conditions which diversified features of species living in and near it. Nowadays, the whole region is a national geopark with developed hiking, biking and educational geological nature trails. ([DGMod, 2022](#)). In a fascinating turn of events, Nördlingen also [inspired one of the fictional towns](#) in a very well-known manga and anime Attack on Titan. If managed well, the town has a great chance to combine these two unique traits and develop into a beloved destination for the fans without creating mass tourism issues for itself. This may, however, present a great challenge for destinations. Sometimes, the main issue lies with accessibility, while the main attractions of some other destinations might be

too fragmented to become popular on its own. There might also be a mismatch between the type of tourists which regularly choose to visit, and the type of tourists the local stakeholders would actually like to attract. Interreg Europe has also a category of projects addressing some of these challenges. Thematic Trails Trigger – the IR-E [ThreeT](#) project, was focused on underdeveloped destinations with great potential, but lacking resources to improve their accessibility or enhance their visibility. One of the project's good practices, [Eco-Adventures of Sam the Squirrel](#), was designed to integrate less popular and thematically diverse attractions. The project produced many inspiring good practices in Finland, Germany, Italy, Malta, Poland and Romania, which not only include the creation of new trails, but also promotion at marketing fairs.

3 Policy Frameworks and Good Practices

Chapter 3 summarizes the policy instruments mentioned throughout the report and organizes them based on their scope: international/European; national and regional/local. Chapter 3.1 focuses on the international, national and regional/local policy frameworks. What is more, the regional and local policies and initiatives are detectable through, for instance, good practices of the Interreg Europe platform. Chapters 3.2 and 3.3. are therefore focusing more on definitions and examples of these. If you find a good practice which seems to address similar issues your region, or another partner in the SLOWDOWN project, is trying to find a solution for, the links to these examples make it possible to look up the source to find further details. Each good practice registered on the Interreg Europe platform, by design, leads to a local or regional policy instrument.

3.1. Policy Frameworks Affecting Slow Tourism

European policy instruments play a crucial role in supporting slow tourism by promoting sustainability, cultural preservation, and the development of appropriate infrastructure. These instruments ensure that tourism growth aligns with the EU's broader goals of environmental protection and cultural enrichment. Even if none of the instruments specifically targets slow tourism, it is possible to identify the most relevant policy instruments for slow tourism through its aspects and elements, as discussed in Chapter 1. Such policy instrument would primarily address and impact any of the following, or the combination of these:

- Environmental protection (e.g. protection of natural landscapes and biodiversity). Examples of policy instruments include [Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#); with its two flagship directives the [Habitats Directive](#) and the [Birds Directive](#), or the [Water Framework Directive](#)
- Cultural preservation (e.g. maintenance and promotion of historical sites and local traditions). While not an EU policy, UNESCO's [Strategic Action Plan for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention 2012 -2022](#) or [2024-2031 Regional Action Plan of Europe and North America](#) provide an international

framework. An example of an EU framework is [EU Policy for Cultural Heritage](#), with an emphasis on culture and creativity.

- Sustainable infrastructure (e.g. walking and cycling paths, eco-friendly accommodations, public transport, access to information) [Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy](#)
- Economic benefits for local communities (e.g. diversification of farmers), such as [Common agricultural policy](#), which combines most of the listed aspects; or the product-based designations AOC and AOP mentioned in the chapter Gastronomy and Sustainability, which were established (among other reasons) to protect the farmers in France.

The [European Green Deal](#), as a set of initiatives aimed at all three pillars of sustainable development (environmental, socio-cultural and economic) contains all points listed above, and more. But it goes even further; it makes the commitment of the EU block to the transformational change of its economy and society legally binding.

In alignment with the European Green Deal, the [EU strategy for sustainable tourism](#), adopted by the European Parliament in 2021, aims to enhance the resilience, sustainability, and digitalization of the tourism sector. It includes measures such as reducing VAT on tourism services and integrating tourism into broader development plans. The [Tourism Transition Pathway](#) is part of the broader strategy of the European Commission to enhance the sustainability, digitalization, and resilience of the tourism sector. Its main components are green and digital transition, resilience (e.g. crisis management), inclusivity and stakeholder engagement (e.g. co-creation, collaboration and capacity building).

Most European countries formulated [national tourism strategies](#) which are well aligned with the values of sustainable development present in the European framework while taking into consideration the specifications of their national and regional circumstances. These documents provide a policy framework on a national level. Oftentimes, these strategies contain action plans, which, even if not spelled out, facilitate the growth of slow tourism or its elements (e.g. soft mobility development or protection of cultural heritage). In addition to their tourism strategies and plans, some countries prefer to define action plans which break down tourism development into action steps in shorter term (1 or 2 years; e.g. [Austria](#)'s Action Plan, which is anchored in the broader national Plan T – Masterplan für Tourismus; or the [Czech Republic](#)'s Action Plan), while e.g. [Bulgaria](#)'s action plan delineates the country's tourism strategy for over a decade (2014 – 2030). Some countries create more specific plans, such as the above-mentioned.

Due to its special circumstances, Ireland (the Department of the Teoiseach) launched a series of [Shared Island Dialogues](#). These dialogues facilitate collaboration and mutual understanding across Ireland. Apart from tourism, the addressed topics include arts and culture, rural development, health, sports or economic recovery, but also the complex themes of national identity, equality, civil society, environmental issues, media

representation and gender-based violence, to name a few. This initiative can present a workable blueprint for regions with diverse or fragmented communities, or even those where various stakeholder groups hold interests which go directly against each other.

One of the instruments that can bridge the intentions of tourism policy authorities with local businesses, and communities and in the end affect the customers/visitors, are the designations, certifications and labels of excellence. Some of the labels are linked to the European or national tourism policy instruments. As an approach, certifications can be employed in slow tourism to increase the levels of trust and adherence to regulatory standards - they should signal in clear and understandable ways that the products or services are authentic and of excellent quality. When using/applying for certifications, a key issue to take into consideration is to choose a certification that has the same indicators for all and has repeated auditions made by independent parties.

On the European level, the [EU Ecolabel](#) is available for accommodation providers or tour operators. [Green Key®](#) is an international eco-label which awards certification for meeting strict environmental requirements. In addition to these, businesses need to develop policies, and action plans, and engage in educational activities and communication. The [Green Key®](#) is widespread in Europe; it is possible to find service providers with this label e.g. in the Netherlands, Denmark, France, Belgium, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Greece, Portugal and Ireland. [Biosphere](#) certification for destinations, which, in Europe, is popular mostly in Spain and to a lesser degree in Portugal, promotes sustainable tourism practices. [Nordic Swan Ecolabel](#) is a certification for various industries, including tourism, which meet stringent environmental criteria.

On a national level, several European countries developed their own labels. And while none of these is designed specifically for slow tourism practices, each of them contains aspects of sustainable and eco-friendly tourism operations. To name a few:

- [Austrian Ecolabel for Tourism](#) recognizes environmentally friendly and socially responsible tourism businesses, including tour operators, hotels and restaurants.
- The [Sustainable Travel Finland](#) label is awarded for keeping to responsible practices that minimize negative footprint. STF label is aimed at both destinations and tourism companies. In the case of companies, to receive the label, the companies need to go through a seven-step path of which one step is getting an official audited certification (e.g. Green Key, ECEAT, Nordic Swan Ecolabel, Travelife, EMAS or EU Ecolabel) for the company.
- Swiss [Ibex Fairstay](#) certifies accommodation and hotel operators who run their services in environmentally and socially responsible ways.
- German [Viabono](#), besides awarding a variety of certifications for environmentally friendly operators related to tourism and leisure activities, supports the service providers in developing a wider range of more sustainable practices.

National tourism plans and strategies may contain sections that focus on specific regions. There are, nevertheless, also destinations significance of which need a separate, clearly defined and more focused strategy.

- ❖ South Tyrol is a region with specific environmental conditions and habitats. In its [State Tourism Development Concept 2030+](#), this region attempts to combine tourism development and innovation with the preservation of its environmental and cultural beauty and traditions.
- ❖ [Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Strategy 2023–2027](#) takes the sustainable and regenerative approach. It depicts a plan to boost regional tourism by raising awareness of the Hidden Heartlands, which is a brand “stuck” due to the Covid-19 pandemic in the initial phases of development.
- ❖ [The Wild Atlantic Way Regional Tourism Development Strategy](#) (Ireland) is aligned with the slow tourism values by promoting scenic routes, local culture, and sustainable travel practices. Apart from marketing and promotion, the strategy takes into consideration the visitors' experiences while attempting to engage local communities and improve the necessary infrastructure.
- ❖ [Porto's Sustainable Tourism Strategy](#) aims to diversify the city's tourism offerings, expand opportunities, and address the needs of residents, visitors, and other stakeholders in a sustainable way.
- ❖ [Dublin Regional Tourism Development Strategy](#) contains a five-year development plan.
- ❖ City of Amsterdam created its Vision of Tourism of [Amsterdam 2035](#) where they are trying to tackle the lowered quality of life of the locals due to issues in overtourism and the unruly behaviour of certain types of tourists Amsterdam faces.

However, tourism policy instruments do not need to be always developed top-down, derived from the objectives identified nationwide. Henriksen and Halkier (2013) provide insights into the evolution of tourism strategies from local to regional levels in an environment of spatial fragmentation and product conservatism. They present the case of North Jutland and the destination management organization (DMO) “Top of Denmark”. Through network-based collaboration with diverse stakeholders and consensual decision-making, the DMO could start developing regional-level-product initiatives, which ultimately lead to a more sustainable and competitive tourism development in the region. The authors emphasize the significance of creating a cohesive regional identity and leveraging local knowledge to enhance tourism offerings.

In general, the regional and local tourism policy instruments might be more difficult to access for analysis. One way leading to the policies which support of slow tourism is following the Good Practices of the Interreg Europe-platform to their source. These, as markers of successful regional and local policy instruments, are analysed in further detail in the following chapters.

3.2 Defining Good Practices

Interreg Europe is a platform for learning and improving policies through capacity-building activities. At its core lie the partner regions' exchanges of knowledge, experiences and innovative approaches leading to such good practices, which are an inspiration for other regions. Such good practices are exchangeable and transferable; they can be taught by the region which succeeded and learnt by the region that is interested in developing these initiatives as proof of their working policies.

Interreg Europe [Programme Manual](#) (section 3.1.1., p.28) defines good practice as:

“...an initiative related to regional development policy which has proved to be successful in a region and which is of potential interest to other regions. ‘Proved successful’ is when the good practice has already provided tangible and measurable results in achieving a specific objective. Although the Interreg Europe programme primarily refers to good practices, valuable learning also derives from unsuccessful practices. Lessons learnt from unsuccessful experiences can also be taken into consideration in the exchange of experience process”.

There are several conditions which a participating region should meet in order to have their good practice example registered on the Interreg Europe platform. On one hand, as the project is funded by a platform dedicated to the improvement of regional development policies, the good practice should be directly connected to a **public initiative**. It is not impossible for private stakeholders to register their good practices, but they would need to provide evidence that their good practices inspired public policies in some way. On the other hand, the identified good practice should be in a **participating region**.

These requirements can limit the number of good practices which will be allowed to register on the Interreg Europe platform. However, all good practices will be evaluated by the leading partners in their respective projects and the project web admins. Some good practices, which fall short of being officially registered by Interreg Europe, might still be registered by the project's leading partner and published on the project's web pages. Examples of such good practices in slow tourism are listed in Chapter 3.4 as a result of the project [Interreg Italy-Croatia Take It Slow](#).

More information about defining and registering good practices can be found on the [IR-E Good Practice platform](#). This platform also provides good practice-related documents for download, such as the current version of the [Good Practice Template](#) (included also in the Status Quo Analysis as an appendix), and the [instructions for the leading partner on validation of good practices](#). A database of good practices can be found under registered [solutions for policy improvement](#). The search platform includes a map tool, where it is possible to find good practices by country or by type. The respective good practices are also included in the web pages of each project.

The process of validation of good practices starts with the good practice's owner's identification. Once the good practice and its owner are **selected during the knowledge transfer phase** by another participating region for exchange, it should be submitted through an online tool to the leading partner and the project web admin. If no necessary information is needed and the admin approves, the good practice will be published on the project website. The good practice will be subsequently evaluated by an IR-E policy officer. If the policy officer approves, the good practice moves to one of the Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform's thematic experts, who will evaluate it based **on transferability, replicability and relevance to other regions**. If the platform's thematic expert approves, the good practice will be published in the platform's good practice database.

3.3 Interreg Europe Projects

Between 2014 and 2020, Interreg Europe ran multiple projects which resulted in the registration of thousands of good practices. The category of Culture and sustainable tourism alone lists [300 good practices](#) (Figure 1). The latest one so far, [Canals5D](#) (digital reconstruction of important historical and cultural sites of Zuid-Holland) was registered by the SWARE – project (described in Chapter 2.1.3. European Waterways), in November 2022.

Other projects with registered good practices in this category are for instance [RAMSAT](#) (Revitalizing Remote and Mountainous Areas through Sustainable Alternative Tourism), which registered for instance a good practice in [Alma Vii village](#) – a destination for cultural tourism in Transylvania or the development of the [Bucium community through cultural tourism](#). Project [CHRISTA](#), which ran from 2016 until 2023, has 23 good practices listed on its web page; it would appear that all 23 practices went through the platform's validation process and contributed to the 300 good practices in cultural and sustainable tourism.

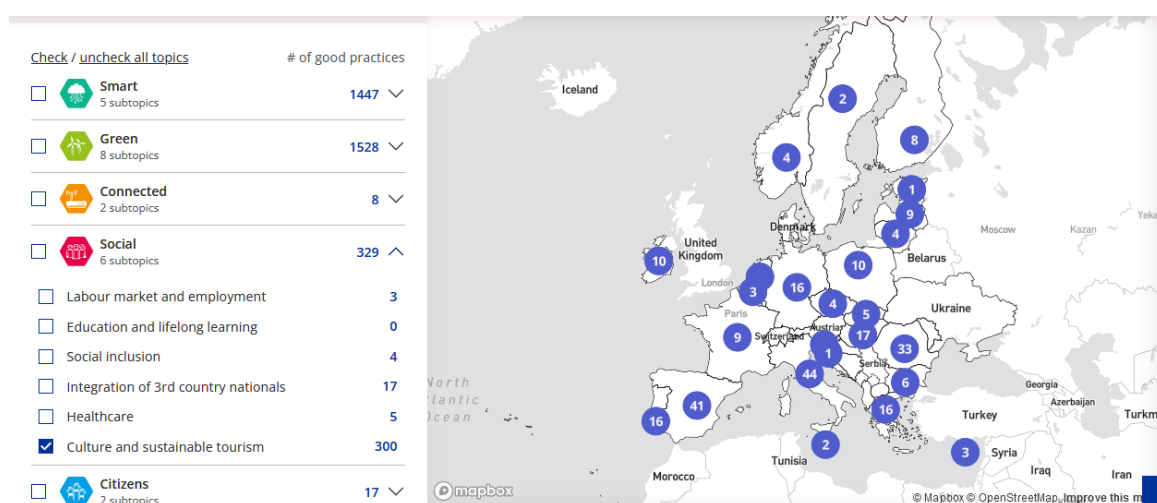


Figure 1. Good Practices (IR-E) in Culture and Sustainable Tourism ([link here](#))

Additionally, there are 733 good practices listed as green initiatives in the categories of circular economy (500), water management (36), and biodiversity conservation

(197), which have a high overlap with the scope of slow tourism. Additional 308 best practices were registered between 2018 and 2024 for zero-carbon urban mobility, which could inspire slow mobility initiatives.

If the registration of good practices in the scope of tourism suggests success in turning initiatives into public policies, Italy has been the most successful European country. A variety of Italian regions implement policies based on initiatives promoting cultural and sustainable tourism, supported by the promotion of the circular economy, zero-carbon urban mobility programs, and conservation and preservation of biodiversity. Projects [IMPACT](#), [HERICOAST](#), [CHRISTA](#), [SWARE](#), [EPICAH](#) and others produce numerous good practices. Other European partners are also catching up. Both Spain, with its - so far - 41, and Romania with 33 good practices registered in the cultural and sustainable tourism category, are very active participants in the knowledge and experience exchanges leading to plentiful proofs of policy improvement. Hungary has seventeen good practices, Ireland with ten, while France and Latvia have nine under their belt – numbers which will hopefully increase also thanks to SLOWDOWN project.

Sibiu has undertaken several initiatives in the promotion of sustainable tourism, which created an excellent foundation for slow tourism. These include the “[Sustainable Tourism Actions in Romania \(STAR\)](#)” project, the Green Entrepreneurship 3.0 program, or experiences from hosting Eurorando 2021 (European meeting of ramblers). What is more, in 2019, Sibiu was named the European Region of Gastronomy, with its [local breakfast](#) initiative mentioned in the [EUREGA](#) project. In the scope of the CHRISTA project, the region amended its policies (Development Strategy for Sibiu County for 2012-2020), financing instruments to support projects that preserve heritage and promote sustainable activities. Nevertheless, Sibiu might engage in insightful dialogues on how to further slow tourism in its rural areas with, for instance, the Emilia-Romagna region, thanks to their experience with [IR-E Rural Growth](#). This project, which was aimed at increasing the competitiveness of SMEs in the rural visitor economy sector led to the launch of a Leader call specifically for tourism SMEs in the Po Delta area. This resulted in 15 approved projects aimed at supporting slow tourism in the Po Delta area while increasing the competitiveness of SMEs in the rural visitor economy sector. The projects focused on enhancing existing services, promoting new business activities related to local products and crafts, and supporting agro-tourism. Additionally, “Touristic destination Po Delta – Realisation of promo commercial actions” was developed, with the goal of increasing visitor numbers through collaborative projects among local operators in various sectors. This project also included training programs for stakeholders and the development of a digital platform to integrate and promote quality visitor services.

France has by tradition a very strong policy framework in place that protects the rural communities, the farmers, and the local produce (see e.g. the report chapter Gastronomy and Sustainability). These might be relevant for the project partners such as Galway, Riga or Amiens, if they wish to strengthen the cultural aspects of slow

tourism in their region. Nevertheless, thanks to this advanced development of the cultural aspects in France, there might be other areas of slow tourism development, for example, soft mobility on or around the waterways, that the project partner Amiens might find more inspiring. An example to look at in this regard could be the policy instrument Regional Tourism and Leisure Development Plan 2017-2021 (Ile de France), which was addressed in the IR-E project [STAR Cities](#) (Sustainable Tourism for Attractivity of Riverside Cities). One of the implemented changes was “Cap sur la Marne,” a joint marketing strategy, which promotes cultural and natural heritage along the river Marne through diverse activities and includes a large-scale communication campaign. Additionally, the “Marne River Tour” pilot action offered new experiences of exploring the Marne by walking, cycling, boating, or paddling, with cultural and natural visits along the routes.

While the partner region of Murcia can be very resourceful for the SLOWDOWN partners by the way it leverages its cultural and natural heritage, encourages innovative solutions like the [Greenways](#), or engages its stakeholders, the region also faces challenges such as resource constraints or infrastructure gaps. Along with the climate change adaptation strategies, these are, in fact, the more common themes among the project partners. In this respect, our partner from Galway might have some useful insights. Ireland is a very robust partner when it comes to a variety of solutions, for example, digitization in tourism, sustainable tourism, smart energy systems, accessibility and social inclusion, as mentioned in Chapter 3.1 (e.g. the inclusive framework of the Shared Island Dialogues). The following examples might provide some ideas on how to tackle at least some of these points:

- The climate resilience is being addressed for instance by [IR-E ADAPTO](#), which was launched in May 2024. The good practices will be registered as the project progresses.
- The Puglia Region, inspired by lessons from the [Green Pilgrimage](#) project, decided to create a network of public hostels along the Via Francigena to support slow tourism. The project was named “TheRoute_net - Thematic Routes and Networks”. It focused on developing a structured regional strategy to strengthen slow tourism and cultural paths, including modifications to regional laws to facilitate the construction and management of hostels. One of the objectives was that these hostels meet European standards, which would support the economic and legal framework for slow tourism in Puglia.
- The good practices registered in the scope of the project EPICAH (Effectiveness of Policy Instruments for Cross-Border Advancement in Heritage) could be interesting especially for the partner Ister-Granum, as they are operating alongside the Hungarian-Slovakian border. As an example, one of the addressed policy instruments was the “European Territorial Cooperation Bavaria-Czech Republic 2014-2020”. One of the projects developed under this instrument was “Together for our region,” the aim of which was to enhance cross-border cooperation by encouraging proactive coordination, data analysis,

and long-term strategic planning, strengthening relationships and regional development across various territories and organizations. The second new project developed, the Czech-German pilgrim route “The Route of Jan Hus” had an objective of promoting cross-border cultural and natural heritage, diverting tourists from over-tourism areas, and supporting environmentally friendly travel in economically challenged localities.

- [Local Flavours](#) project might have answers for those partners, whose regions are trying to cope with the lack of resources and fragmentation. One of the inspiring good practices registered in the scope of this project worth looking at might be the [Lake Saimaa tourism destination cooperation](#). Lake Saimaa, located in Eastern Finland, has significant tourism growth potential but was fragmented into multiple regions and municipalities with separate policies. In 2013, a cooperative effort began, leading to the creation of the “Lake Saimaa Purest Finland” brand and joint tourism promotion campaigns with Visit Finland, which targeted international markets. The “Saimaa Treaty” was renewed for 2020-2025, establishing an association to develop strategy, online presence, and joint ownership of intellectual property rights, with practical work carried out by partner employees in cities and municipalities.

3.4 Best Practices in Slow Tourism: Interreg Italy – Croatia: Take it Slow

[Take it Slow](#) was a project funded by the European Regional Development Fund, the goal of which was the development of slow tourism in Italy and Croatia. It produced examples of best practices (they are referred to as best practices in this project, as opposed to the IR Europe understanding of good practices) in various categories in both Italy and Croatia.

As was pointed out in Chapter 1, slow tourism encompasses a variety of niche tourism alternatives. It is therefore not surprising that best practices established by these countries in the scope of this project were divided into ten sub-categories: accessible tourism, adventure, business, and cultural tourism, eco-tourism, experiential tourism, gastronomy, rural, slow and sustainable tourism. The boundaries between these categories are blurry; most of the ten best practices listed under the category of slow tourism could have been also classified as cultural, eco- or sustainable tourism practices. The category of slow tourism lists 10 best practices, as seen in Table 4 ([see also brochure](#)).

Table 4. Good Practices - Take it Slow.

Good Practice/ Owner	Type	Description	Contact
Miloš Winery (Croatia)	private sector	Organic winery with a wine cellar that is more than 500 years old	www.milos.hr
Ciprian Daniele/ Bilancia di Bepi (Italy)	private sector	Stilt house located in the Foci del Stella River Regional Nature Reserve	bilanciadibepi.wordpress.com

Coop La Chiusa / Stazione di Chiusaforte	private sector	The historic railway station transformed into a community building with a café, wi-fi, gallery and a bike rental & repair shop	www.stazionedichiusaforte.it
Amici dell'hospitale/ Hospitale di San Tommaso	private sector	Historical pilgrim shelter and a venue for artistic and cultural activities	www.hospitalesangiovanni.wordpress.com
Associazione Cercivento: una Bibbia a Cielo	associations	"An Open Air Bible". artworks placed on the walls of public and private houses	en.unabibbiaacieloaperto.it
Camping Marecchia Piscina da Quinto	private	"At breakfast with the elderly" – biking from a camp combined with the breakfast hosted by elderly locals who share the local legends and stories	www.campingmarecchia.it
Compagnia del Montefeltro	associations	Promo-marketing products to promote the quality tourism offer	www.compagniadelmontefeltro.it
Marche region	public	Marche Outdoor – discover the region by bike	www.marcheoutdoor.it
Serapia soc. Coop. A r.l/	private	Cycling tours, hiking and trekking in nature	www.cooperativaserapia.it
Soo. Coop. Gaia Environmental Tours Education And Events / Slow Experiences	private	Environmental tours, organizing of educational workshops and events	www.coopgaiatours.it

Six of these best practices are registered by entrepreneurs and family businesses operating on the principles of the private sector, while three are run by associations. Even if the project was completed in 2020, information about their services and activities in the respective regions is still available via their web pages. This is, however, not the case with the best practice Marche Outdoor - Discover Le Marche by bike, the responsible body for which is the public sector.

This situation highlights another issue: the viability of initiatives introduced and listed as best practices. The post-Covid-19 changes in the market landscapes and demand shifts strained sole/small enterprises and family businesses. This could be in most cases overcome by diversifying and developing more flexible business models. The associations are dependent on sponsors and grants; long-term planning is only possible if they secure substantial external funding. The public sector's initiatives are under scrutiny every time the local, regional or national political actors change, which sometimes means abandoning sustainable practices to which slow tourism initiatives belong.

To achieve durability of results, each participating region must clearly define realistic policy improvements that address local issues. These improvements should demonstrate the project's capacity to meet its objectives. The follow-up phase allows for additional time for the regions to develop and implement action plans, or to monitor

the initial effects of policy improvements. (Interreg Europe, 2023⁴.) Another mechanism built in Interreg Europe is the process of validation of good practices. Those good practices which make it through the validation process fully and register with the platform rather than just at the project's own websites have a greater chance of achieving longer-lasting effects of their policy improvements.

4 Conclusions

The main goal of this report was to deepen the Interreg Europe funded SLOWDOWN project's partners' understanding of the concept of slow tourism, and slow travel and tourism initiatives in Europe in a holistic way. One of its main focuses was the analysis of the policy framework in support of slow tourism. The result of this analysis shows that very few, if any, policies address the development of slow tourism directly. However, the blurry nature of slow tourism as a concept gives the SLOWDOWN project's partner regions freedom to build upon those policies, which are aimed at any pillar of sustainable development (environmental, social/socio-cultural and economic), depending on their region's needs. Hopefully, each SLOWDOWN partner will find at least a few inspiring, yet relevant, examples to develop slow tourism in their area.

Tourism depends for its existence on external factors. The hospitality industry, transportation, and the communication industry, to name a few, are vital for the success of tourism, but so are also both the travellers' and residents' attitudes towards tourism. The tourism industry is also facing global challenges like climate change and biodiversity loss. In this context, the shift from "awareness" to true responsible actions in tourism, by the destinations and by the visitors, is needed rapidly. (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010; Sampaio et al., 2024; Mihalic, 2020.)

Interreg Europe SLOWDOWN project is one of the ways the project's partner regions can take action towards more sustainable tourism. Slow tourism is attractive for travellers, as it provides a richer, and more fulfilling experience. For destinations, slow tourism can offer more sustainable ways to sustain the vitality of the regions. It can reduce the strain on infrastructure and resources while helping to preserve the environment and cultural heritage. Tourists who have adopted a slow mindset are, according to research (Serdane et al., 2020), ready to spend more for more immersive, authentic, eco-friendly and ethical options. There are, however, also voices pointing out that the readiness to invest more in their trips is one of the most fundamental myths of tourism. In reality, people might not be prepared to spend more, if there are other options. (McKercher & Prideaux, 2014.) This is one of the challenges the partner regions need to tackle. The other challenge concerns the number of tourists: how many slow tourists are just right; how many are too many?

⁴ Durability of the project's results, found in the Interreg Europe 2021 – 2027 Programme Manual Version 3, from December 2023. (Section 3.3.5., p.56)

Dickinson and Lumsdon (2010, pp. 176-192) explore the future of slow travel and paint a picture of possible future scenarios. The shift of tourism from its high-carbon footprint, resources-depleting and environment-degrading mass version to a more sustainable one depends not only on a paradigm shift but on concrete actions. The governments, especially on local and regional levels, need to collaborate with businesses and communities to facilitate the planning and development of slow tourism policies. Some of the most frequently applied policy instruments to shift toward more sustainable tourism practices are infrastructure investments supporting sustainable travel modes of travel (bicycle lanes or improvements of sustainable urban mobility options). There is an anticipated shift in tourist preferences towards more meaningful and immersive travel experiences. This could be a signal for the communities to evolve their community-based tourism initiatives. Businesses should innovate not only to improve their resilience in the rapidly changing world but also to apply business models that prioritize sustainability. Slow travel and tourism can be one solution as they offer opportunities for economic benefits for both local communities and businesses. (Dickinson & Lumsdon, 2010.)

References

- Agapito, D., & Guerreiro, M. (2023). Designing accessible tourism experiences: Slow, sensory and smart framework. *Enlightening Tourism. A Pathmaking Journal*, 13(1), 167–198
- Armoogum, J., Garcia, C., Gopal, Y., Borgato, S., Fiorello, D., Maffii, S., Mars, K.-J., Popovska, T., Schlemmer, L., Vincent, V., Bogaert, M., & Gayda, S. (2022). New mobility patterns in European cities: Task A executive summary. European Commission. <https://transport.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-12/2022%20New%20Mobility%20Patterns%20in%20European%20Cities%20Task%20A%20Executive%20summary.pdf>
- Boyd, C. (2024, November 13). *Defend the product: How the French keep their artisan food culture alive*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2024/nov/13/defend-the-product-how-the-french-keep-their-artisan-food-culture-alive>
- Burgen, S. (2024a, August 21). 'Elitist and opaque': Barcelona residents oppose America's Cup and related tourism. *The Guardian*.
- Burgen, S. (2024b, August 26). 'It's about money': Doubt over America's Cup benefits in tourist hotspot Barcelona. *The Guardian*.
- Burgen, S. (2024c, August 26). Seville council can cut off water supply to illegal tourist flats, court rules. *The Guardian*.
- Carmichael, B. A. (2005). Linking quality tourism experiences, residents' quality of life, and quality experiences for tourists. In G. Jennings & N. Nickerson (Eds.), *Quality tourism experiences* (pp. 21–38). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780080455778-11>
- Conway, D., & Timms, B. F. (2012). Are slow travel and slow tourism misfits, compadres or different genres? *Tourism Recreation Research*, 37(1), 71–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2012.11081689>
- DGMod. (2022, January 10). The Nördlinger Ries impact crater. *Digital Geology*.
- Di Clemente, E., Hernández-Mogollón, J. M., De Salvo, P., & Campón-Cerro, A. M. (2015). Slow tourism: An alternative model for local and tourist development. In *Sustainable performance and tourism: A collection of tools and best practices* (pp. 23–37).
- Dickinson, J., & Lumsdon, L. (2010). *Slow travel and tourism*. Earthscan.
- Dudovskiy, J. (2019, September 2). Airbnb business strategy: A brief overview. *Business Research Methodology*. Retrieved from <https://research-methodology.net/airbnb-business-strategy-a-brief-overview/>
- European Commission. (2021). Mobility strategy. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0789>
- European Commission. (n.d.). Recovery and Resilience Facility. Retrieved from https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/eueconomyexplained/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en
- European Commission & European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (ECIEEA). (2024). Waterborne transport for a green future – A synergy info pack by CORDIS. Publications Office of the European Union. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2830/197331>
- Eurostat. (2024a, January 5). *Domestic tourism trips peak in December*. Eurostat. <https://europa.eu>
- Eurostat. (2024b, November 21). *Tourism trips of Europeans*. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Tourism_trips_of_Europeans
- Fedykovich, P. (2024, June 23). Europe's underdog leader in slow travel biking. *BBC*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20240623-europes-underdog-leader-in-slow-travel-biking>
- Flottorp, M. (2023, July 27). Taking a look at Europe's commitments to cycling infrastructure. *We Love Cycling*. Retrieved from <https://www.welovecycling.com>
- Gufridda, A. (2024, October 1). Harry's Bar owner sues Venice city council over waves from speeding boats. *The Guardian*.
- Güneş, S. G. (2019). Eco-gastronomy, tourism and sustainability: The rise of sustainable restaurants in the world. In K. Weirmair & C. Mathies (Eds.), *Erasmus International Academic Research Symposium on Educational and Social Sciences* (pp. 67–84). İzmir. Retrieved from Research Gate.
- Harris, J. (2018, February 12). Profiteers make a killing on Airbnb – and erode communities. *The Guardian*.
- Haubold, H. (2023, March 17). A new European source of funding for cycling: The EU Social Climate Fund. *European Cyclists' Federation*. <https://ecf.com/news-and-events/news/new-european-source-funding-cycling-eu-social-climate-fund>
- Haugen, J. (2023, September 28). Ditch the bucket list: Travel deeper with a 'slow mindset'. *Adventure.com*. <https://adventure.com/travel-deeper-slow-mindset/>

- Heitmann, S., Robinson, P., & Povey, G. (2011). Slow food, slow cities and slow tourism. In P. Robinson, S. Heitmann, & P. Dieke (Eds.), *Research themes for tourism* (pp. 114–127). CAB International.
- Henriksen, P., & Halkier, H. (2013). From local promotion towards regional tourism policies: Knowledge processes and actor networks in North Jutland, Denmark. In J. M. Bryden, & K. B. Refsgaard (Eds.), *Rural development: Knowledge and expertise in governance* (pp. 25-42). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315872070-2>
- Honoré, C. (2005). *In praise of slow: How a worldwide movement is challenging the cult of speed*. Orion Books.
- Interreg Europe. (2021). EU year of rail: Good practices. Sharing Solutions for Better Policy. <https://www.interregeurope.eu/find-policy-solutions/stories/eu-year-of-rail-good-practices>
- Interreg Europe. (2023). *Interreg Europe 2021 – 2027 Programme Manual* (Version 3).
- Johnston, R. (2021, July 26). 'A humiliation to the city': Prague court rejects beer bike operators' complaint and upholds ban. *Expats.cz*.
- Kassam, A., & Banfield-Nwachi, M. (2024, November 11). Women on pilgrimage routes like the Camino de Santiago face sexual harassment. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/nov/11/women-pilgrimage-camino-de-santiago-sexual-harassment>
- Klarin, A., Park, E., Xiao, Q., & Kim, S. (2023). Time to transform the way we travel? A conceptual framework for slow tourism and travel research. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 46, Article 101100. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2023.101100>
- Küster, F. (2021, October 14). New EU funding regulation creates cycling investment opportunities worth billions of euro. *European Cyclists' Federation*. <https://ecf.com/news-and-events/news/new-eu-funding-regulation-creates-cycling-investment-opportunities-worth>
- Langford, S. (2020, January 8). What is slow business? Slow values and work. *Simplicity From Scratch*. <https://www.simplicityfromscratch.com/what-is-slow-business/>
- Laval, S. (2021). Transport and urban mobility: Trends and challenges. In: *Climate Chance Observatory: Global synthesis report on climate action by sector*. [https://www.climate-chance.org/en/comprehend/global-synthesis-report-climate-action-sector/In: Global Synthesis Report on Climate Action by Sector \(pp.79-84\). https://www.climate-chance.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/bs2021_en_transport_trend_urban.pdf](https://www.climate-chance.org/en/comprehend/global-synthesis-report-climate-action-sector/In: Global Synthesis Report on Climate Action by Sector (pp.79-84). https://www.climate-chance.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/bs2021_en_transport_trend_urban.pdf)
- Lowry, L. L., & Lee, M. (2016). CittaSlow, slow cities, slow food: Searching for a model for the development of slow tourism. *Travel and Tourism Research Association: Advancing Tourism Research Globally*, 40.
- Manthiou, A., Klaus, P., & Luong, V. H. (2022). Slow tourism: Conceptualization and interpretation – A travel vloggers' perspective. *Tourism Management*, 93, Article 104570. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2022.104570>
- Matos, R. (2004). Can slow tourism bring new life to Alpine regions? In K. Weirmair & C. Mathies (Eds.), *The tourism and leisure industry: Shaping the future* (pp. 93–104). The Haworth Hospitality Press.
- May, T. (2022, August 8). Italy launches its first general plan of cycling mobility. *Future Transport News*. <https://futuretransport-news.com/italy-launches-its-first-general-plan-of-cycling-mobility/>
- McKercher, B., & Prideaux, B. (2014). Academic myths of tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 46, 16–28. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2014.02.003>
- Mihalic, T. (2020). Sustainable-responsible tourism discourse: Towards 'responsustable' tourism. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 111, 461-470. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2014.12.062>
- Moira, P., Mylonopoulos, D., & Kondoudaki, E. (2017). The application of slow movement to tourism: Is slow tourism a new paradigm? *Journal of Tourism and Leisure Studies*, 2. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2470-9336/CG>
- Nikel, D. (2024, August 28). Norway suspends outdoor travel campaign after overtourism protests. *Life in Norway*.
- Palanivel, V. (2023, November 10). Airbnb growth strategy: How it attracts and retains 150M users. *QoreUps Academy*. <https://research-methodology.net/airbnb-business-strategy-a-brief-overview/>
- Parker, B. (2024, March 29). Amsterdam's patronising 'rules quiz' is right to treat us like idiots. *The Independent*.
- Radstrom, S. (2011). A place-sustaining framework for local urban identity: An introduction and history of Cittaslow. *Italian Journal of Planning Practice*, 1(1), 90–113. https://www.cittaslow.org/sites/default/files/content/news/files/7864/ an_introduction_and_history_of_cittaslow.pdf

- Sampaio, C., Sebastião, J. R., & Farinha, L. (2024). Hospitality and tourism demand: Exploring industry shifts, themes, and trends. *Societies*, 14(10), 207. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc14100207>
- Serdane, Z., Maccarrone-Eaglen, A., & Sharifi, S. (2020). Conceptualising slow tourism: A perspective from Latvia. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 45(3), 337–350. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2020.1726614>
- Skopeliti, C. (2024, August 13). Drunk visitors, rocketing rents and homogenised cafes: Living in Europe's tourist hotspots. *The Guardian*.
- Statista. (2023). Top global cruise destinations by passenger volume 2023. *Statista*. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1104727/top-global-cruise-destinations-by-passenger-volume/>
- UNEP & WTO (2005). *Making tourism more sustainable*. A guide for policy makers. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/561577>.
- United Nations & World Tourism Organization (Eds.). (2010). *International recommendations for tourism statistics 2008 (IRTS 2008)*. United Nations.
- Valls, J.-F., Mota, L., Vieira, S. C. F., & Santos, R. (2019). Opportunities for slow tourism in Madeira. *Sustainability*, 11(17), 4534. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su1117453>
- Walljasper, J. (2006). Air travel is killing the planet. https://www.alternet.org/2006/10/air_travel_is_killing_the_planet
- Wearing, S., Wearing, M., & McDonald, M. (2012). Slow'n down the town to let nature grow: Ecotourism, social justice and sustainability. In S. Fullagar, K. Markwell, & E. Wilson (Eds.), *Slow tourism: Experiences and mobilities* (pp. 36–51). Channel View Publications
- Whitehead, M. (2013). Editorial: Degrowth or regrowth? *Environmental Values*, 22(2), 141–145. <https://doi.org/10.3197/096327113X135815617250>

Annex 1. Glossary of Terms and Definitions

This glossary consists of two parts. Part I defines more general terms related to tourism. Part II defines terms related to the Interreg Europe projects and its platform.

Part I: Tourism Terms

Sources: Unless noted otherwise, [Glossary of tourism terms | UNWTO](#); and United Nations & World Tourism Organization (Eds.). (2010). International recommendations for tourism statistics 2008. (IRTS 2008). United Nations. [Link to the publication](#)

Slow Tourism: Definition for the SLOWDOWN-project

Source: various academic sources; finalized during the first Interregional Thematic Workshop in Esztergom/Štúrovo on the 18th – 20th of June 2024

Slow tourism is a pushback against hyper-commercialization and the fast-paced consumption of mass tourism with a focus on quality instead of quantity – not only for travellers, local communities, and policymakers but for businesses alike.

Slow tourism (travelling and developing) requires adopting a slow mindset, which means moving and experiencing at a slower pace. From the travellers' perspective, slowness facilitates fewer, but deeper, more meaningful, and authentic experiences and interactions with the local communities and landscapes, while respecting their ethical boundaries. From the perspective of the businesses, slowness goes beyond quality over quantity; it means changing the orientation from completely for-profit to more-people-than-profit-oriented. It enhances the companies' mission and purpose and allows the companies to align their business activities with values they want to be aligned with, while also earning a living.

Slow Tourism is a sustainable form of tourism that respects cultural heritage, cuisine, traditions, localities and nature. Slow tourism enables the destinations to focus on cooperation with the local stakeholders in order to create those policy changes, which place the protection of the local environments, communities and cultural heritage at their centre, as it considers these strategic, product-building offerings.

Cultural tourism: Cultural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination.

These attractions/products relate to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual and emotional features of a society that encompasses arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries and the living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions. ([Glossary of tourism terms | UNWTO](#))

Destination (main destination of a trip): The main destination of a tourism trip is defined as the place visited that is central to the decision to take the trip. See also purpose of a tourism trip (IRTS 2008, 2.31).

Ecotourism: Ecotourism is a type of nature-based tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to observe, learn, discover, experience and appreciate biological and cultural diversity with a responsible attitude to protect the integrity of the ecosystem and enhance the well-being of the local community.

Ecotourism increases awareness towards the conservation of biodiversity, natural environment and cultural assets both among locals and visitors and requires special

management processes to minimize the negative impact on the ecosystem. ([Glossary of tourism terms | UNWTO](#))

Education tourism: Education tourism covers those types of tourism which have as a primary motivation the tourist's engagement and experience in learning, self-improvement, intellectual growth and skills development. Education Tourism represents a broad range of products and services related to academic studies, skill enhancement holidays, school trips, sports training, career development courses and language courses, among others. ([Glossary of tourism terms | UNWTO](#))

Eno-tourism (wine tourism), as a sub-type of gastronomy tourism, refers to tourism whose purpose is visiting vineyards, and wineries, tasting, consuming and/or purchasing wine, often at or near the source. ([Glossary of tourism terms | UNWTO](#))

Gastronomy tourism: Gastronomy tourism is a type of tourism activity which is characterized by the visitor's experience linked with food and related products and activities while travelling. Along with authentic, traditional, and/or innovative culinary experiences, Gastronomy Tourism may also involve other related activities such as visiting the local producers, participating in food festivals and attending cooking classes. ([Glossary of tourism terms | UNWTO](#))

Innovation in tourism: Innovation in tourism is the introduction of a new or improved component which intends to bring tangible and intangible benefits to tourism stakeholders and the local community, improve the value of the tourism experience and the core competencies of the tourism sector and hence enhance tourism competitiveness and /or sustainability. Innovation in tourism may cover potential areas, such as tourism destinations, tourism products, technology, processes, organizations and business models, skills, architecture, services, tools and/or practices for management, marketing, communication, operation, quality assurance and pricing. ([Glossary of tourism terms | UNWTO](#))

Rural tourism: Rural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's experience is related to a wide range of products generally linked to nature-based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyle/culture, angling and sightseeing. Rural tourism activities take place in non-urban (rural) areas with the following characteristics:

- Low population density;
- Landscape and land use dominated by agriculture and forestry; and
- Traditional social structure and lifestyle

([Glossary of tourism terms | UNWTO](#))

Same-day visitor (or excursionist): A visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound) is classified as a same-day visitor, if his/her trip does not include an overnight stay at the destination ([IRTS 2008, 2.13](#)).

Tourism destination: A tourism destination is a physical space with or without administrative and/or analytical boundaries in which a visitor can spend an overnight. It is the cluster (co-location) of products and services and of activities and experiences

along the tourism value chain and a basic unit of analysis of tourism. A destination incorporates various stakeholders and can network to form larger destinations. It is also intangible with its image and identity which may influence its market competitiveness. ([Glossary of tourism terms | UNWTO](#))

Tourism product: A tourism product is a combination of tangible and intangible elements, such as natural, cultural and man-made resources, attractions, facilities, services and activities around a specific centre of interest which represents the core of the destination marketing mix and creates an overall visitor experience including emotional aspects for the potential customers. A tourism product is priced and sold through distribution channels and it has a life-cycle. ([Glossary of tourism terms | UNWTO](#))

Tourist (or overnight visitor): A visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound) is classified as a tourist (or overnight visitor) if his/her trip includes an overnight stay (IRTS 2008, 2,13).

Travel/traveller: Travel refers to the activity of travellers. A traveller is someone who moves between different geographic locations, for any purpose and any duration (IRTS 2008, 2.4). The visitor is a particular type of traveller and consequently, tourism is a subset of travel.

Visitor: A visitor is a traveller taking a trip to a main destination outside his/her usual environment, for less than a year, for any main purpose (business, leisure or other personal purpose) other than to be employed by a resident entity in the country or place visited (IRTS 2008, 2.9). A visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound) is classified as a tourist (or overnight visitor) if his/her trip includes an overnight stay, or as a **same-day visitor** (or excursionist) otherwise. (IRTS 2008, 2.13).

PART II: Interreg Europe

Source: [Interreg Europe Programme Manual, 2023](#)

Interreg Europe (IR-E PM section 2.1, pp.11-13)

The Interreg Europe programme is part of the European Territorial Cooperation goal of EU cohesion policy for the 2021-2027 programming period. It is part of the 'interregional cooperation' strand of Interreg ('strand C'). This strand differs from cross-border and transnational cooperation for the following main reasons:

- ♦ Programme area: IR-E includes all 27 EU Member States, Norway, Switzerland, and 7 EU candidate countries, allowing organizations from these areas to participate
- ♦ Programme rationale and the territorial needs it addresses: unlike the cross-border and transnational programmes that address broader geographical or specific regional issues, Interreg Europe helps local and regional public authorities improve their regional development policies by sharing and adopting successful practices from other regions.

The overall *objective* of the IR-E programme is:

- To improve the implementation of regional development policies, including Investment for jobs and growth goal programmes, by promoting the exchange

of experiences, innovative approaches, and capacity building in relation to the identification, dissemination and transfer of good practices among regional policy actors.

Good Practice (IR-e PM section 3.1.1., p.28)

In the context of Interreg Europe, a good practice is defined as an initiative related to regional development policy which has proved to be successful in a region and which is of potential interest to other regions. 'Proved successful' is when good practice has already provided tangible and measurable results in achieving a specific objective. Although the Interreg Europe programme primarily refers to good practices, valuable learning also derives from unsuccessful practices. Lessons learnt from unsuccessful experiences can also be taken into consideration in the exchange of experience process. Examples of good practices can be found in the good practice database on the programme website at <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policy-solutions/good-practices>.

Pilot Action - Interreg Europe (IR-E PM section 3.2.1.2, p.32)

A pilot action is an implementation-related activity dedicated to testing a new approach to public intervention. This is usually the transfer of a successful practice from one region to another, but it can also be a new initiative jointly designed by the project. The ultimate objective of a pilot action is that, when it is successful, it is ultimately integrated into the policy instrument addressed and therefore contributes to improving it. Examples of pilot actions can also be found on the programme website (www.interregeurope.eu).

Region/Regional Development Policy (IR-E PM section 1.1., p.8)

'Region' refers to any territory represented by a public authority. Depending on the issue addressed and the characteristics of the territories involved, it can relate to any of the different administrative levels that contribute to regional development (e.g., municipality, city, county, province, region, country). In projects, the number of 'regions' involved is the same as the number of policy instruments addressed. 'Regional development policy' refers to any policy developed at local, regional and, when relevant, national levels.

DISCLAIMER AND COPYRIGHT

This document is prepared for, and addressed to, the partners and staff of the Interreg Europe project SLOWDOWN as background material to assist them in their project work. The content of the document is the sole responsibility of its authors, and any opinions expressed herein should not be taken to represent an official position of the project partners or Interreg Europe.

Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorised, provided the source is acknowledged and the leading project partner is given prior notice and sent a copy.