

**LOCAL ACTION PLAN ASSESSMENT
ACTIVITY 3.1.3**
The operative plans revised after 3 years of project

CISP – Via Selinuntina BELICE VALLEY

The economic sector

From the point of view of economic activities, the Belice territory is characterized by its strong agricultural vocation, focused on viticulture and olive growing to such an extent that it can be spoken of as bi-cultural agriculture. As evidence of this, the presence of protection consortia for wine and olive production (both oil and table olives), numerous productions with a denomination of certified origin and the recognition of dedicated districts are reported. The industrial sector has a fairly residual role in the Belice economy, and is aimed mainly at the processing of agricultural products (mainly wine, oil and cheeses): 40% of companies in the sector operate in the agro-industrial sector with a strong concentration in the sector of wine where, however, some of the absolute protagonists can be counted, not only at a regional level (Cantine Settesoli, Cantine Colomba Bianca, Cantina Ermes, Planeta wineries, etc.). The development of the tourism sector in the area is mostly limited to coastal areas and still very tied to the tourist-seaside offer (Marinella di Selinunte, reaches peaks of 350,000 tourist presences per year). In the internal territory, on the other hand, the tourism sector is characterized, with a few exceptions, by a marked agritourism vocation (even if not yet supported by an adequate qualitative-quantitative offer) and in any case by tourism focused on the beauty of the area and its products and on a clientele capable of appreciating both.

The analyzes carried out in the tourism sector (especially in the agritourism sector, rural and nonhotel tourism) have shown a very low and not very specialized level of professional training. Management and organization methods of the more traditional and less managerial type are often used. The professional capacity is therefore too connected to the experiences in the field, precluding the use of innovative elements based on new technologies, also of an IT type, and instead, should be strengthened with a strong transfer of specific technical and managerial skills. All this therefore implies an insufficient ability of entrepreneurs to compete in national and international markets and a limited vocation to innovate. Furthermore, there was little interest in the issue of aggregation and creation of networks, an element that limits the development potential of the tourism system. Consequently, when the nearest Trapani

airport canceled 70% of lowcost flights, a severe crisis caused many bb and farm operators to collapse.

The less known destinations selected to be targeted by the project

Sambuca di Sicilia: Sambuca has a multifaceted soul, it is not, in fact, enclosed in the inhabited area, that compact and white triangle lying above Lake Orange, which can be seen from afar. Its history begins at the top, from the original site of Adranon, founded by the Greeks of Selinunte and destroyed and rebuilt by the Carthaginians; and then continue on the hill where the Arabs founded Zabut > Selinunte. The narrow streets of the Saracen district, the arches that connect the houses of the alleys, the dense network of houses close to each other, but also the toponymy, the surnames, the linguistic uses, bring to mind the Emir Al-Zabut who, founding this fortress inaugurated four centuries of Arab domination. Then, the great church was built over the bastion and Sambuca acquired another soul.

Thanks to the Municipality's investment in promoting the Sambuca di Sicilia brand with initiatives of great media impact, such as the recognition of Borgo dei Borghi, television programs and the campaign for the sale of houses in the historic center for 1 euro, Sambuca has known in recent years ten years of worldwide fame.

Castelvetrano – Selinunte: Castelvetrano is a city with more than thirty thousand inhabitants in the province of Trapani. It extends from the hinterland, at the height of the Trinity lake, to the coast at the mouth of the Selino river, in southwestern Sicily.

Its most famous fraction is Selinunte (Greek Selinos, Latin Selinus) which was an ancient Greek city on the southwestern coast of Sicily. It is known worldwide for its archaeological site, consisting of five temples built around an acropolis. Of the five temples only temple E (the so called temple of Era) has been rebuilt

Gibellina: this was one of those characteristic and splendid centers of the Sicilian hinterland that were devastated by the terrible Belice earthquake of 1968. Its name derives from Arabic (Gebel = Zghir high = small) and means small high. The mayor of the time, Ludovico Corrao, tried to give a strong tourist impulse to the area and to the reconstruction by calling numerous artists to himself; the aim was to focus the attention of Italy and the world on the area by making Gibellina the cultural center of Sicily. One of the artists called by the mayor was Alberto Burri who categorically refused to insert

one of his works in the new urban context of the city and successfully proposed to create a unique work on the territory of old Gibellina, the “Cretto di Burri”.

Menfi: placed on the south-western coast of Sicily, since ancient times was affected by human settlements. landscape around Menfi, ordered by the skillful hand of man, is surprising for the richness of agriculture: vineyards and olive groves alternate rhythmically, interspersed with fields of golden wheat, the purple red of the onion and the dark green of the artichokes.

To the south, the blue of the sea, which laps against some of the most beautiful and unspoiled beaches in the Mediterranean.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

HOW?

Need assessment for the main target areas of the project has been done through literature and context analysis.

THE MAIN NEEDS IN THE AREA

- Need to shift from one day excursion destination to a proper tourism destination
- Need to ween the numerous natural and cultural attraction in the Valley of Belice
- Lack of quality reception services and also need to prolong the active season (now accommodations and services open mainly just in summer season)
- Need for qualified and trained personnel and tourism managers so to be competitive
- Need for luxury services to attract different tourism niches
- Need for adequate connections with neighboring provinces
- Need to foster networks and collaborations between targeted territories and economic operators.



METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

The analysis was conducted by the Local Action Group (GAL Belice-Gibellina).

Strength

- Wealth of Cultural, natural and eno-gastronomic Heritage
- Mild climate conditions the entire year
- Various elements of territorial uniqueness (i.e. Selinunte, natural reserve of Belice, world famous Sicilian wineries)
- Elements of historical and archeological uniqueness
- 2 international airports in less than 100 km
- Competitive pricing

Weaknesses

- Local quality standards are not adequate for international visitors and standards
- Poor knowledge of foreign languages
- Little knowledge of local cultural heritage
- Low knowledge of quality management and monitoring tools (Quality Management Systems)
- Presence of widespread architectural barriers
- Reduced opening hours (if not absent)
- Inadequate infrastructure
- Inadequate road conditions
- Inadequate transport
- Lack of tourist information
- Signage deficient
- Uneven accommodation offer
- Low sensitivity to the particular needs of some users (elderly, children, disabled people, food intolerances, etc.)
- Inadequate tourism auxiliary services
- Fragmented cultural offer
- Limited design capacity
- Difficulty in creating critical mass
- Difficulty operating on the net (strong individualism and limited presence of coordination)
- Lack of long-term vision

Opportunities

- Opportunity linked to an increasing demand for tourism also in its various forms (cultural, accessible, seasonally adjusted, etc.)
- Opportunity linked to economic recovery
- Opportunity linked to the development of a culture of quality
- Opportunity linked to a greater perception of the tourist potential of its territory
- Presence of organizations linked to the promotion of the territory (tourist district, natural, category associations)
- Presence of regional and national public funding

Threats

- Individualism by public structures (relations between the various public structures in the area are not easy)
- Individualism by private individuals (relationships between private individuals)
- Fierce competition from other neighboring tourist centers and not in cases where there is no aim of an "enlarged" Territorial Tourism Development Plan
- Degradation of some areas (stray dogs)
- Consequences related to unsustainable tourism (building abuse along the coast and lack of adequate maintenance of coastal buildings)

OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

The **general objective** of the LAP is to support the creation of an integrated system of greenways (green routes of slow mobility) in the Valley of Belice, revitalizing connections through the ancient Via Selinuntina. Ancient Via Selinuntina is a real highway of the antiquity, built by the Greeks in order to connect the city of Syracuse and its colonies Akrai and Kasmenai, and then continue to Gela and Akragas up to Selinunte.

To achieve this objective a group of institutions is creating a partnership to pursue the following **specific goals**:

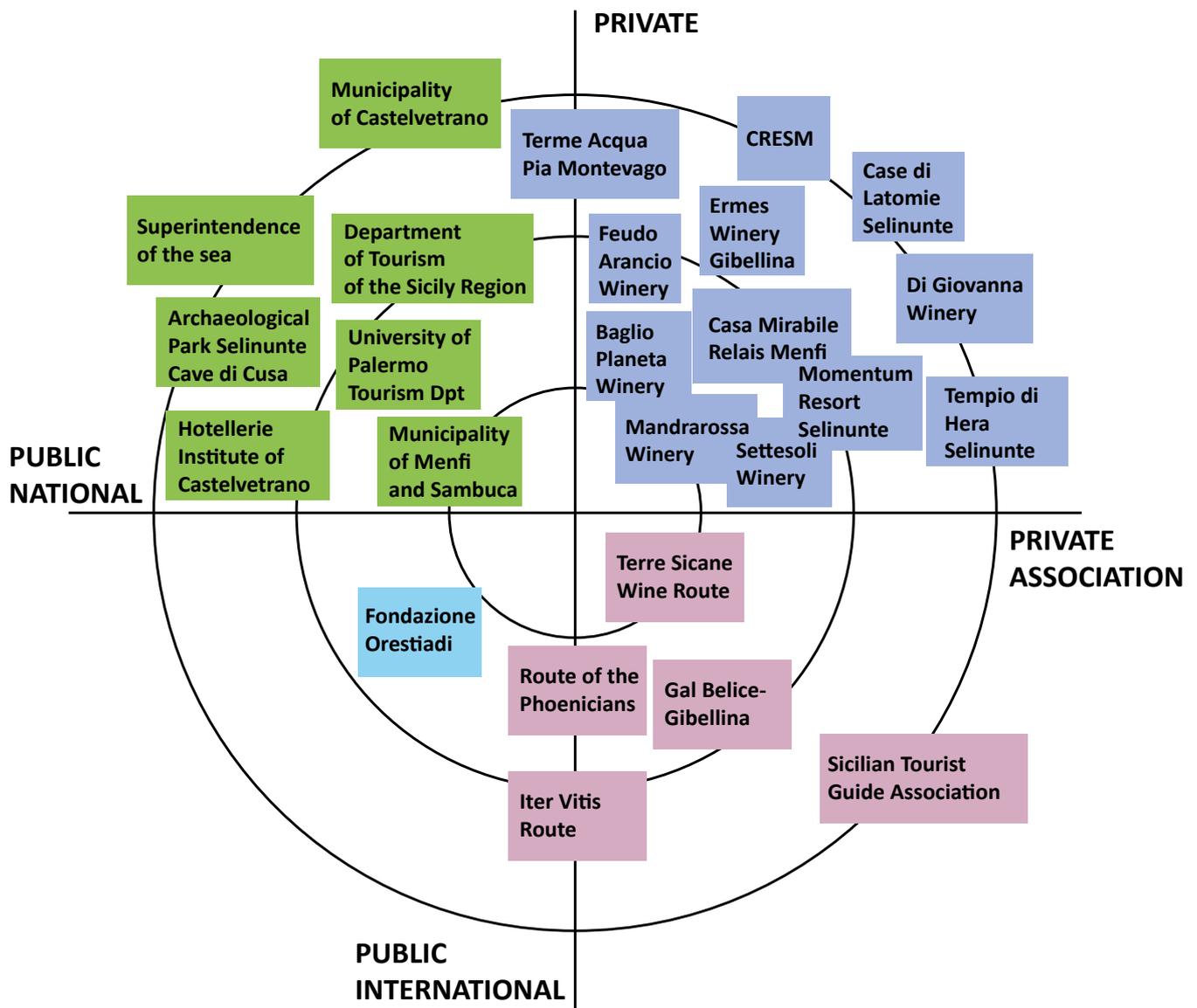
- Promoting this ancient axis of road communication means to regain the central idea that connects now as then Western and Eastern Sicily;
- Developing partnerships within the involved territories, in order to offer services of cultural, slow, responsible, sustainable, experiential and free tourism;
- Developing other paths of sweet mobility that go from the coast to the hinterland through this network of partnerships along the SS. 115, so as to discover the real Sicily, especially the less-known hinterland with its landscapes, identity and intangible heritage;
- Setting up a network of the most important historical cultural and archeological Sicilian sites, most of them already recognized as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO;
- Creating a quality hospitality network along the SS. 115, based on experiential tourism and soft mobility and related services (catering, valorization of typical products, forms of community, experiential and relational tourism, etc.);
- Adopting good practices on sustainability, accessibility, slow, responsible, creative and experiential tourism,
- Implementing Visitor Centre or Living lab located within the route which will serve as showroom for the project and home to initiatives and related activities and meeting point for inhabitants to contribute to the development of tourist strategy in a context of sustainability.

Stakeholders are identified and categorized according to the typology (public national, public international, private association and private business). Further, stakeholders identified are then prioritized according to the level of involvement and proactiveness in collaborating to achieve partner's objectives.

The most involved stakeholders are mainly private for profit, in detail wineries and accommodations. Among the national public stakeholders there are two Municipalities and other Routes active in the Sicilian territory.

At an intermediate level there are again a good number of private business actors, and the GAL of Belice-Gibellina on the non-profit side; on the public side, both national and international, there are a School, University, an Art Foundation and the Regional Department for Tourism.

With a limited level of involvement there are mainly public and private for-business actors, and the Association of Sicilian Tourist Guides.



The stakeholders that we will need to get involved in the future are:

- International buyers and visitors

How we consulted the stakeholders to develop and endorse the LAP

- MoU was adopted between CISP and the Superintendence of the Sea and Tourism Department of Sicilian region for the activities of tourism sector analysis
- Meeting with the two tour operators that will take care of the trainings or other operators and of the test activities for product usability and feasibility.
- SWOT analysis (December 2019)
- Needs assessment with stakeholders (January 2020)
- Meeting between the two cultural Routes present in the Sicilian territory, IterVitis and Phoenician Route to define an operational plan for the first two semester of the project.

How we engaged the stakeholders during the whole project

- Filed trip and first contacts with stakeholders to inform and raise awareness about the project (2019)
- First trainings for students at secondary schools (September 2020)
- First training for private stakeholders on sustainable tourism (September 2020)
- First familiarization trip (September 2020)
- Inauguration of the first interpretation center (September 2020)
- On site and on-line trainings on sustainable tourism (March-July 2021)
- Meeting with potential Sicilian buyers (October 2021)
- CROSSDEV award (October 2021)
- Tour Operator Field Trip April 2022
- Set up of an International Library dedicated to Sustainable Tourism in Sambuca April 2022
- Communication, dissemination, and networking activities throughout all the project.



December 2019

Field trip and first contacts with local stakeholders to sensitize about the project



Dec 2019 - Jan 2020

Swot analysis
Needs assessment



March 2020

Identification of local partnership for training and familiarization trips



Sept 2020

First trainings for students secondary school and private stakeholders

First familiarization trips

Inauguration of the first interpretation center



July 2021

Second and third part of training on sustainable tourism on site



October 2021

B2B with Sicilian buyers
CROSSDEV award



25th Nov 21 - 2nd Jan 22

Stakeholders Training

Main activities planned in the LAP

- Definition of the Local Action Plan as a general framework for stakeholders to work towards sustainable tourism development
- Trainings for managers, operators and service providers to improve the touristic offer along the project areas
- Familiarization trips for operators and media
- Two public events for awareness rising and information about sustainable tourism
- Two interpretation centers to be placed in Menfi and Sambuca as collector of good practices, showroom of local products and practices.
- A b2b event with international buyers to promote the new sustainable tourism products
- A public closing event at the end of the project

Unexpected changes

- Project amendment will allow to have the resources to implement new sub-grants and b2b event with international operators
- Some changes on the locations of some activities and use of the infrastructures according to what was more efficient.
- Communication had a more crucial role than expected, for sure this was also due to COVID and the impossibility to have visitors on site.
- Sambuca and Menfi was very involved, but the inputs gave to Castelvetrano were not enough exploited and the Municipality was less involved than expected.
- Linked to the previous point, of the three steering committees originally planned for the three Municipalities was decided to implement just one with Menfi with the specific aim of supporting the destination for the candidacy for Wine City of the Year.
- The Interpretation Center originally planned in Sambuca was then transformed in a public library. This is because different needs emerged with the work on the ground and involvement of the stakeholders.

Still to do before the end of the project

- finalize the improvement of Palazzo Panitteri with the International Library
- Organize field trips for Tourist Operators and online B2B
- Organize blogger tour in the area
- Organize final local event for dissemination of results

Our future needs towards the sustainability of the LAP

- Subgrants for communication and specific trainings
- Social media and marketing consultancy
- Networking strategy for 2023-2025

The resources needed in order to make this project sustainable in the long-term. i.e. Type of resources (finance, human capital, infrastructure, organizational, marketing,...)

- Investments on infrastructures for slow/soft mobility
- Human capital both in terms of people with good skills in tourism management and of engaged and committed people.

From whom we expect to derive additional resources (e.g.local, visitor tax, project funds etc).

- In kind services from partner municipalities and other Routes (especially in terms of dissemination and visibility)
- RESTART MED! capitalization project already in place and will capitalize among other the CROSSDEV best practices and wil give sub-grants finalized to provide communication and social-media marketing consultancies and other tools for the development of SMEs in the area.

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This document was produced with the financial support of the European Union under the ENI CBC MED Programme. Its contents are the sole responsibility of CROSSDEV and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.



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