

REvitalization of Sustainable Tourism Across Regions in The MEDiterranean

RESTART MED!

A retrospective of Tunisian tourism policies and
challenges of mainstreaming sustainability

Tunisian Sustainable Tourism
Conclusions of policy meetings and
workshops

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Context

The objective of this document is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the underlying logic behind the strategies implemented, the key areas of development for tourism in Tunisia, the role of sustainability in these strategic areas, the various actors involved in the strategic planning of tourism, as well as the consideration of environmental, socio-cultural, and economic aspects of tourism. By exploring these topics, this investigation aims to provide insights into the obstacles in mainstreaming sustainability in tourism policies and to identify potential areas for improvement, particularly in regards to sustainable tourism practices. This investigation will be conducted through a combination of interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders in the tourism industry.

I. Workshops and meeting description

Table 1. A description of officials-meetings and workshops

	Territory/o rganisation	Date	Location	duration	Number of participants	objectives
Meeting 1	Ministry of Tourism and Crafts	09 mars	Ministry of Tourism and Crafts	2H	The General Director of international cooperation	Learning more about the politics, projects and strategies that are priorities for the ministry
Meeting 2	ONTT	9 mars	ONTT	2H30	10 directors of different departments	Understanding the institutional perspective regarding sustainable tourism and raise awareness of projects in this field
Focus group 1	Destination Ben Arous	10 mars	Hôtel El Mechtel Tunis	3H	6 Local tourism stakeholders	-Identifying the positive and negative aspects of the public strategy in sustainable tourism in the destination -Developing main strategic lines and priority actions for the destination
Focus group 2	Destination Tabarka	11 mars	Hôtel Itropika	3H	8 Local tourism stakeholders	
Focus group 3	Destination Medenine		Online	3H	3 Local tourism stakeholders	
Focus group 4	Destination Gabes	17 mars	Hôtel l'Oasis	3H	9 Local tourism stakeholders	

II. Report of officials-meetings

Meetings and interviews with officials of the ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts (MTH) and the National Tourism Office (ONTT), were conducted on the 9th of March 2023.

The objective of these meetings is to be informed about the strategies of the Ministry of Tourism, to assess the importance given to sustainable tourism in the Ministry's policies, to know about ongoing projects and their sustainable dimension, and to understand the official discourse regarding deficiencies and gaps in public policies related to sustainable tourism.

III.1. Interviews procedure

Firstly, we had a meeting with the Director General of International Cooperation at the Ministry, Ms. Mouna Mathlouthi. She was recommended to us as a key person to provide the information we needed.

The interview was held in the office of Ms. Mouna Mathlouthi on 9th march, 2023, from 9h30 to 11h30 and was started by a presentation of the Restart Med project by M. Sami Dhouib from WWF.

The discussion was carried out with a semi-directive interview guide (Appendix n°) the topics covered include

- the global vision of the ministry of tourism,
- the inclusion of sustainability in tourism politics,
- the projects and actions implemented in the framework of the international cooperation,
- and the challenges posed by sustainable development of tourism.

Subsequently, the same day, a focus group with executives of different departments was organised in ONTT. 10 participants were present. The departments involved are Heritage and environment, markets, investments and products and promotion. The interview lasted 2H30. The participants refused to have the interview audiotaped, so detailed notes were taken.

The topics addressed during the interview cover:

- Representations of sustainable tourism
- Projects and actions in sustainable tourism carried out the last years.
- Obstacles impeding sustainable tourism development.

III.2. Results of the interviews

- **The concept of sustainable tourism and its place in relation to other tourism products**

The concept of sustainable tourism is confusing for a majority of ONTT executives who ask for clarification of the definition of this type of tourism. Some assimilate it with outdoor activities in nature such as mountain, sea, lagoons, national parks, etc. Others are more aware of the economic dimension and the need to involve locals and "citizen" tourists to create a dynamic in the region, consume local products, and buy souvenirs made by local artisans.

The Ministry prefers to use the terminology of sustainable tourism as a complementary rather than alternative form of tourism since even beach tourism can be sustainable. However, this issue remains unclear and there is no framework for a common vision. This is mainly due to the legacy of the years when beach and tourist accommodation were the only products to be promoted and encouraged.

Some participants estimated the share of sustainable tourism to be between 5 and 10%. The Heritage department estimated it to be 7%, while others in the Market department believed that these figures were not realistic and that we were below 5%. For the Ministry, beach tourism remains a draw while forms of sustainable tourism are complementary for other target groups.

- **Policies for sustainable tourism and the establishment of a national strategy for sustainable tourism**

For the Ministry, sustainable tourism projects are all developed within the framework of international cooperation projects. These include the Tounes Wijhatouna program of GIZ and Expertise France, the Visit Tunisia project of USAID, and the DMO project of Switzerland Contact.

In these projects, the Ministry is heavily involved in directing specific strategies such as choosing destinations to work on or developing strategic axes such as branding or marketing campaigns. The role of the Ministry is also to connect international

cooperation with relevant actors and institutions, facilitate networking, ensure transparency and fairness in tenders and funding beneficiaries.

The best achievements under these projects are the Dahar DMO and the culinary, cinematographic, and UNESCO routes. The projects are progressing at a rate of 70% for Tounes Wijhatouna, Switzerland Contact has completed its DMO mission, and Visit Tunisia is only in its first year, so it cannot yet be evaluated.

ONTT has, for its part, focused on taking initiatives in sustainable tourism through:

- Promoting intangible heritage and setting up projects to classify them as UNESCO heritage sites: pottery of Sajenane and ECharfia of Kerkena.
- Implementing pilot projects on four archaeological sites to improve development funded by the AFO
- The “*Tounes LIK*” campaign to encourage and promote domestic tourism
- Developing specifications for alternative accommodation
- Financial support for festivals
- Rehabilitation of three national parks funded by the World Bank
- Preparing a file for the Geopark in the Tatouine region for registration in UNESCO list

However, the participants recognized that these actions are punctual, and there are many problems of commercialization, actions ‘implementation, and marketing to promote these projects as complementary products to beach tourism.

The Ministry and ONTT insist that the will to implement sustainable tourism policies can only be institutional and that the private sector and civil society must cooperate to realize this will without being bound by a logic of profitability at the expense of sustainability.

They are fully aware of the limits of their intervention and are frustrated. They believe that their hands are tied by the public authorities, who should give them more autonomy.

- **Obstacles impeding the development of sustainable tourism in Tunisia**

According to MHT and ONTT, the main obstacles to implementing sustainable tourism policies include:

1. **The complexity of obtaining authorizations from various ministries and local authorities:** The tourism industry is subject to a range of regulations and requirements that are enforced by multiple government bodies and local authorities. This can make it challenging for private actors to obtain the necessary authorizations and permits, particularly if there are conflicting

- priorities or unclear guidelines. Simplifying the authorization process and improving coordination between government bodies and local authorities could help to address this obstacle.
2. **Bureaucracy that creates communication problems between private actors and the government:** The bureaucracy associated with government regulations and procedures can create communication problems between private actors in the tourism industry and the government. This can lead to misunderstandings, delays, and missed opportunities for collaboration. Developing clear communication channels and improving the transparency of government decision-making processes could help to overcome this obstacle.
 3. **Dependence on external funding sources:** Sustainable tourism development often requires significant investment, and private actors may be dependent on external funding sources to finance their projects. This can create a level of uncertainty and instability, particularly if funding sources are unreliable or subject to changing priorities. Finding ways to promote local investment and provide more stable funding sources could help to address this obstacle.
 4. **A gap between proposed private sector projects and current legislative frameworks:** Private actors in the tourism industry may propose projects that are not compatible with existing legislative frameworks, which can create barriers to sustainable tourism development. Ensuring that legislative frameworks are flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances could help to address this obstacle.
 5. **A complex value chain with multiple actors, which can deter private initiatives:** The tourism industry involves a range of actors, including hotels, tour operators, transportation providers, and local communities. This can create a complex value chain that can be daunting for private actors who want to initiate sustainable tourism projects. Simplifying the value chain and providing support and guidance to private actors could help to overcome this obstacle.
 6. **The absence of an autonomous body directly attached to the government to quickly decide and implement actions:** The absence of an autonomous body that is directly attached to the government and can quickly make decisions and implement actions can create delays and uncertainty for private actors in the tourism industry. Establishing such a body could help to address this obstacle.
 7. **The issue of closed hotels and struggling private businesses:** The tourism industry has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, and many hotels and private businesses have had to close or are struggling to stay afloat. This can create challenges for sustainable tourism development, particularly if there are limited resources available to support recovery efforts. Finding ways to support struggling businesses and promote recovery in the tourism sector could help to address this obstacle.
 8. **Private actors who prefer to work in an unequal system:** Some private actors in the tourism industry may prefer to work in an unequal system, where they can

take advantage of cheap labor and other resources. This can create barriers to sustainable tourism development, particularly if it undermines efforts to promote social and environmental responsibility. Finding ways to incentivize sustainable practices and promote a level playing field could help to address this obstacle.

9. **The legacy of the old beach resort-focused strategies:** The tourism industry has traditionally been focused on beach resorts and other leisure activities, which can create environmental and social challenges. Changing this focus and promoting more sustainable forms of tourism, such as cultural and nature-based tourism, could help to address this obstacle.

III. Report of regional focus groups

Four focus groups were conducted in four regions, namely Ben Arous, Tabarka, Médenine, and Gabes, with stakeholders from the private sector, public sector, and civil society. These stakeholders include regional tourism commissioners attached to the ministry, officials from the General Directorate of Forests (DGF), executive directors of DMOs, international cooperation experts, tourism professionals, or members of associations proposing tourist activities. These focus group took place during two weeks in March.

III.1. Focus group procedure

An email invitation was sent to the main stakeholders in sustainable tourism in the region to invite them to participate in the focus group.

During the focus group, a description of the project Restart Med was provided by Mme Imen Khemiri, Project Officer, WWF North Africa. Then the consultant presented the objectives and expected outcomes of the focus group.

The overall objective of the focus group is to conduct a deep and participatory reflection with key stakeholders in sustainable tourism to prioritize the strategic axes of the national policy on sustainable tourism. In particular, it aims to:

1. Identify the positive aspects of the national strategy for sustainable tourism
2. Recognize the gaps and obstacles in implementing a sustainable tourism strategy in the governorate
3. Pool ideas to develop priority strategic axes.

The expected outcomes are:

- Fostering awareness of advancements in national strategies for sustainable tourism
- Establishing connections among various stakeholders to collectively reflect and find solutions to common challenges
- Identifying priority strategic axes to be developed by public authorities.

After an icebreaker activity that allowed the participants to get to know each other and relax the general atmosphere, each speaker was given the floor to express their views on the examination of sustainable tourism policies.

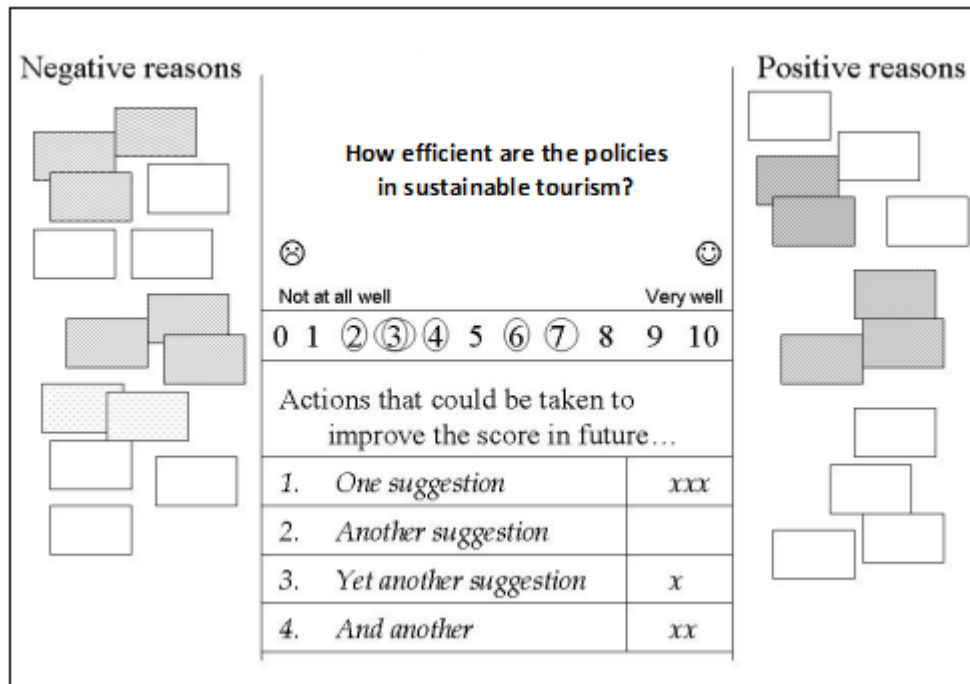
To structure the debate, the H method was used¹.

The H method is often used in group settings where multiple perspectives need to be considered and where there is a need to prioritize ideas or actions. It is a useful tool for generating ideas and engaging participants in the decision-making process.

The H-method activity is designed for small groups consisting of 4-8 individuals and consists of five steps. Firstly, each participant rates a question individually on a scale of 1 to 10. Next, they provide reasons for their rating, both positive and negative, in writing. The group then discusses these reasons together and groups similar points. Afterward, participants suggest actions that could improve the rating in the future, and finally, the group votes to rank the suggested actions.² The total duration of the exercise is between 50 minutes and 1 hour.

¹Guy, S. & Inglis, A. (1999). Tips for trainers: Introducing the 'H-form' – a method for monitoring and evaluation. PLA Notes, 34, 84-87. Retrieved 27 June 2006 from http://www.iied.org/NR/agbioliv/pla_notes/pla_backissues/documents/plan_03415.pdf

²Hunsberger, Carol and Kenyon, Wendy (2008) "Action planning to improve issues of effectiveness, representation and scale in public participation: A conference report," Journal of Public Deliberation: Vol. 4 : Iss. 1 , Article 1. Available at: <https://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/vol4/iss1/art1>



Negative reasons

How efficient are the policies in sustainable tourism?

☹ Not at all well Very well ☺

0 1 ② ③ ④ 5 ⑥ ⑦ 8 9 10

Positive reasons

Actions that could be taken to improve the score in future...

1. One suggestion	xxx
2. Another suggestion	
3. Yet another suggestion	x
4. And another	xx

Figure 1: an illustration of a completed H-Diagram form³

The instructions provided to the participants during the focus group were as follow:

- **Step 1:** Using a pen of a different color for each delegate, mark your individual score on the line between 0 and 10 in response to the question "How effectively are the public involved in policy development?" Time allocated 1 minute.
- **Step 2:** Each individual should take three sticky notes and write a positive reason for their score on each note. Stick these on the right side of the paper under "Positive reasons". Five minutes for this task.
- **Step 3:** Take three more sticky notes and write a negative reason for your score on each note. Stick these on the left side of the paper under "Negative reasons". Five minutes for this task.
- **Step 4:** Each group should read out their positive and negative reasons in front of all the participants. Other reasons could be added and criticized during the discussion. You have 30 minutes for this task.

³Hunsberger, Carol and Kenyon, Wendy (2008) "Action planning to improve issues of effectiveness, representation and scale in public participation: A conference report," Journal of Public Deliberation: Vol. 4 : Iss. 1 , Article 1. Available at: <https://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/vol4/iss1/art1>

- **Step 5:** Consider whether your individual score has changed. Using the same colored pen as before, mark your new score on the line between 0 and 10 and join your two scores with an arrow. This task should take one minute.
- **Step 6:** Each individual in turn should suggest ONE action that could be taken to improve the score in the future. One person should write these actions below the center line in a grid format with an empty box to the right. You have five minutes for this task.
- **Step 7:** Each person has three votes to show which actions they think would be most effective. You can distribute your votes evenly or cluster them in support of one action, depending on which actions you think are most effective. You have three minutes for this task.

III.2. Results of the interview

III.2.1. *Different models but common challenges*

The results of the different focus groups reveal different realities in terms of products and activities offered in each region. In each region, a dominant sustainable tourism model has been identified.

- A model of adventure and sports tourism in the region of Ben Arous
- A model of discovery, nature and fishing tourism in Tabarka
- A model of slow tourism based on soft itinerancy and nature observation in Medenine,
- And an adventure and camping tourism in Gabes.

In the territories of Ben Arous and Gabes where tourism is not well developed, innovative and more sustainable tourism activities struggle to gain legitimacy. In the contrary, in Tabarka and Medenine where tourism is well established, it is difficult to break away from the stereotypes of traditional seaside tourism and adopt a logic of small-scale tourism.

A/ Results synthesis from Focus group in Ben Arous

Territory	A face-to-face focus group gathering 6 participants from the region (Launching focus group)
Date	10 th of March 2023 from 9 o'clock to 1 pm
Description	<p>Were present to this focus group</p> <p>Mr. Saleh Kassem, CRT Tunis South</p> <p>Mr Anas Sabbegh, CEO DOIT</p> <p>Ms Kholoud Kaabi, CEO IDWEY</p> <p>Mr. Nelson Rois-Saez, manager CLIMB'IN</p> <p>Mr. Jmem Atef, president of ASME (Association Mountain sports and ecology)</p> <p>Mr. Anouar Ben Younes, treasurer ASME</p> <p>Local stakeholders of Ben Arous mobilized in this focus group represent different actors including the territorial ministry authority, startups, entrepreneurs and associations.</p> <p>The workshop revolved around: Brainstorming, Exchanges and participatory methods.</p> <p>Two groups were formed to reflect on the positive reasons on one hand, and the negative reasons on the other hand, that underlie the effectiveness of sustainable tourism policies in the region.</p> <p>The reasons why sustainable tourism policies is evolving positively</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A beginning of commitment from authorities in sustainable tourism

- A growing awareness of the importance of integrating sustainability into tourism activities
- Promotion of sustainable tourism in several destinations in the interior of Tunisia
- Authorities are communicating with civil society and private sector actors
- Attraction of donors and funders
- Regional Tourism Commissioners allow for greater proximity with regional actors
- Encouragement of investment in sustainable tourism activities
- State subsidies have increased from 8% to 30%

The reasons why there is obstacles in mainstreaming sustainability tourism policies

- The region's environmental situation and cleanliness are deplorable.
- Complicated regulations
- Non-eco-responsible behavior of citizens and tourists
- Lack of coordination between civil society actors
- The legislation results in a shortage of local guides
- Lack of marking and signage in hiking trails
- A shortage of sustainable projects on a large scale
- Insufficient legislative framework
- Low budget for innovative tourism activities
- Absence of a global vision
- Weak implementation of planned actions
- Disconnection of the MHT (Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts) from on-the-ground issues
- Dependence of MTH policies on the FTH (Tunisian Federation of Hotels) and FTAV (Tunisian Federation of Travel Agencies)
- The MTH and ONTT (National Tourist Office of Tunisia) are out of step with market trends.

	<p>Suggested measures to improve the efficiency of sustainable tourism (ranked in order of votes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a specific legal framework for sustainable tourism activities: hiking trails, rural lodges, etc. • Creating a multidisciplinary and inter-ministerial commission for problem-solving and decision-making. • Centralizing information and obtaining authorizations for professionals and entrepreneurs through a one-stop-shop. • Establishing a regional database of actors operating in sustainable tourism. • Organizing sustainable tourism conferences. • Enhancing digital communication on sustainable tourist destinations and activities. • Improving accessibility to tourist destinations by improving transportation. <p>Participants' feedback:</p> <p>The stakeholders feel like they have been going around in circles for a number of years and are beginning to get impatient with the authorities' laxity in bringing their recommendations to life. Recommendations that they have repeated over and over during endless meetings and debates organized, among other things, as part of international cooperation projects.</p> <p>Important key terms:</p> <p>Moving towards action/ Legislative framework/ Gap in visionsSlowness/ Administrative heaviness/ Local commitment</p>
<p>Quotes</p>	<p><i>"The approach to tourism has changed, but the authorities have not understood and find themselves particularly out of step with start-ups. They are tied to a legislative framework that prevents them from recognizing new and innovative activities and ideas." (Anas Sabbegh, ceo, DOWIT)</i></p> <p><i>"There is a chapter called "Environment and Cleanliness", and it is impossible to have sustainable tourism without these two elements. As a CRT, I take pictures of the state of dirtiness of a circuit or an archaeological site. Sometimes I am heard, but most of the time I am ignored... Who will take care of this problem? Is it the municipalities, the Ministry of Culture, or the Ministry of Equipment??? It's a coordination problem." (Salah Kassem, CRT Tunis South)</i></p>

B / Results synthesis from Focus group in Tabarka

Territory	A face-to-face focus group gathering 8 participants from the region of Tabarka.
Date	11 th of March 2023 from 9 o'clock to 1 pm
Description	<p>Were present to this focus group</p> <p>Ms. Nacyb Allouchi, president of Association Rayhane</p> <p>Ms. Taboui Hayet, présience association Sidi Bouzitoun</p> <p>Mr. Imed Tenlci, Fisherman, General Directorate of Agricultural Production</p> <p>Mr. Ali Dellai, Regional Agricultural Development Office (CDRA, Tabarka district)</p> <p>Mr. Foued Hasnaoui , academician and researcher in Tabarka Sylvopastoral Institute</p> <p>Mr. Noureddine Azizi, General Directorateof Forests.</p> <p>Mr. Iskander Rekik, CTO-CMO, Dar El Ain</p> <p>Ms. Fadwa Slouli, student ENSTAB (The National School of Advanced Sciences and Technologies of Borj Cédria).</p> <p>Local stakeholders of Tabarka mobilized in this focus grouppresent different actors including entrepreneurs, associations, representative of the ministry of agriculture and university.</p> <p>The focus group revolved around: Brainstorming, Exchanges and participatory methods.</p> <p>Two groups were formed to reflect on the positive reasons on one hand, and the negative reasons on the other hand, that underlie the effectiveness of sustainable tourism policies in the region.</p>

The reasons why sustainable tourism policies is evolving positively

- Taking a step towards listening to the stakeholders
- Openness to collaborate with other ministries
- Creation of a cell for sustainable tourism projects
- Recognition of the existence of sustainable tourism
- Reform of the legislative framework for alternative accommodation
- Engagement of regional stakeholders
- Implementation of certain actions such as maps for nature guides
- Promotional efforts for sustainable tourism activities in fairs and exhibitions
- Awareness campaigns for domestic tourism "Tounes lik"

The reasons why there is obstacles in mainstreaming sustainability in tourism policies

- Legislation is very outdated compared to the reality on the ground;
- there is no prioritization of ecology;
- Ministerial monitoring is not in line with international trends;
- Lobbying is carried out by hotel and travel agency federations;
- There is no strategy for sustainable tourism;
- Limited accessibility to protected areas;
- Poor coordination between public institutions;
- Laws are not adapted to professional activities;
- There is a huge lack of knowledge about sustainable tourism activities
- There is a poor understanding of legal texts by supervisory ministries and professionals;
- Unethical appropriation of programs designed by local actors by travel agencies;
- Ineffective management of protected areas.

Suggested measures to improve the efficiency of sustainable tourism (ranked in order of votes)

- Develop a participatory strategy for sustainable tourism at the national level
- Establish a legislative framework in favor of sustainable tourism activities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a federating organization for sustainable tourism enterprises • Carry out a awareness campaign on sustainability issues for stakeholders • Make ecologically valuable locations accessible in a rural, natural and wild perspective • Design a legal framework for pescatourism activity • Change and adapt the legal framework of protected areas. <p>Participants' feedback:</p> <p>A lot of anger and a sense of pessimism was expressed during the focus group. The stakeholders believe that the institutions are not ready to adopt a sustainable tourism strategy until the political and democratic environment is favorable.</p> <p>Important key terms:</p> <p>Managing protected area/ pescatourism/ coordination/ authenticity/ unethical behavior</p>
Quotes	<p><i>"The Ministry of Environment is developing its own ecotourism strategy, and the Ministry of Equipment is doing the same. It is necessary to bring together these various actors to avoid wasting time developing strategies and action plans. Although this may be a difficult effort, it is important to work together to achieve a joint national and local strategy for ecotourism and sustainable tourism.."(Foued Hasnaoui , Tabarka Sylvopastoral Institute)</i></p> <p><i>"...sometimes, interventions occur where they should not, and it is not necessary for the National Tourist Office (ONTT) and the Ministry to intervene in the product design process since it is not their role. They should rather act as facilitators and regulators, as we, as local stakeholders, are more familiar with the ground." (Iskander rekik, Dar El Ain).</i></p>

C / Results synthesis from Focus group in Medenine

Territory	A face-to-face focus group gathering 3 participants from the region of Tabarka and 1 in depth interview
Date	3 th of April 2023 from 10 o'clock to 1 pm online (the first focus group scheduled on the 16 th March was postponed because of the low number of present participants). The 16 th March One in depth interview conducted
Description	<p>Were present to the online focus group</p> <p>Mr. Hichem Mahouachi, CRT Djerba-Zarsis</p> <p>Mr. Faïçal GHZAIEL, president Association Ilij pour l'Environnement Marin</p> <p>Mr. Sami ABDELJAOUED Association Ilij pour l'Environnement Marin</p> <p>In depth interview:</p> <p>Ms. Hiba Ben Krima, Association Djerba Insolite</p> <p>Despite our efforts to mobilize different stakeholders from Medenine, few people were motivated to participate.</p> <p>The focus group revolved around Brainstorming and exchanges.</p> <p>The reasons why sustainable tourism policies is evolving positively</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies are being oriented towards sustainability as beach tourism is no longer viable. • Regional tourism representatives are cooperative. • There is a strong demand for sustainable tourism activities both domestically and internationally. • Actors are being heard on the regional and local levels.

- There are many project opportunities within the framework of international cooperation.
- The dynamic created by associations and guesthouses is changing the image of the island.

The reasons why there is obstacles in mainstreaming sustainability in tourism policies

- Centralization of decisions that strangles new project holders
- Legislative framework that does not evolve at the same pace as new projects
- Bureaucracy
- Difficulty in directing investments towards niche projects such as pescatourism
- Heavy and complex administrative procedures involving multiple stakeholders
- Poor management of RAMSAR zones
- Ecological problems in the region
- Image associated with mass beach tourism clichés
- Conflict between associations and travel agencies
- Lack of support for local handicrafts.

Suggested measures to improve the efficiency of sustainable tourism (ranked in order of votes)

- Finding a framework for collaboration between associations and travel agencies with a win/win approach
- Repositioning the destination of Djerba towards experiential and cultural tourism
- Creating a communication plan to help stakeholders promote their activities
- Supporting startups and associations through the Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts
- Creating a clear process for obtaining authorizations from relevant institutions
- Operationalizing the public-private partnership in the management of historical sites and monuments

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working on a legal framework for guesthouses that have been installed illegally (representing 90%) • Establishing a participatory project management plan in the region • Involving the local community • Adopting a plan for the conservation of fragile and degraded ecosystems. <p>Participants' feedback:</p> <p>The participants expressed a certain weariness with the complex procedures for obtaining permits and the acrobatics they must go through to carry out their activities. They believe that it is time to reposition the region's offer towards greater diversification by integrating cultural activities, nature discovery activities, and activities based on local communities.</p> <p>Important key terms:</p> <p>Ecosystem conservations/ destination image/ community and culture based tourism/ bureaucracy/</p>
Quotes	<p><i>"We're not going to eliminate beach tourism, but it's important to focus on cultural and community tourism to preserve artisanal know-how. There is a demand for this type of activity, especially from international tourists. They no longer want to be passive; they have become more active during their travels."</i>Hiba Ben Krifa, Djerba Insolite)</p> <p><i>"The alternative tourism is gradually evolving and we must work hand in hand to succeed together in the challenge of sustainable tourism. We are not in competition with travel agencies, everyone can benefit and we can complement each other"</i> (Faycel GHZAIEL, president Association Jlij pour l'Environnement Marin)</p>

D / Results synthesis from Focus group in Gabes

Territory	A face-to-face focus group gathering 9 participants who operate in the region of Gabes
Date	17 th of March 2023 from 9 o'clock to 1 pm
Description	<p>Were present to this focus group</p> <p>Mr. Mohamed Amine Berriche, Swisscontact</p> <p>Ms. Dorra Ben Guiza, Association Gabes Action</p> <p>Mr. Abdelkader Chaabane, Swisscontact</p> <p>Mr. Mohamed Sadak Dabbabi, Président FTAAD (Authentic Tourism Federation Destination Dahar)</p> <p>Mr. Said Boubchir, treasurer ACNS Chenini (Association for the Preservation of the Chenini Oasis)</p> <p>Mr. Habib Belhedi, Kenza Residence, Chenini</p> <p>Mr. Faouzi Majdoub, president Cultural & Alternative Tourism Commission, FTAV</p> <p>Ms. Akermi Lamia, Special tour (travel agency)</p> <p>Mr. Guederi Bechir, CRT Gabes</p> <p>Local stakeholders of Gabes and experts mobilized in this focus group represent different actors including associations, federations representative of the ministry and professionals.</p> <p>The focus group revolved around: Brainstorming, Exchanges and participatory methods.</p>

Two groups were formed to reflect on the positive reasons on one hand, and the negative reasons on the other hand, that underlie the effectiveness of sustainable tourism policies in the region.

The reasons why sustainable tourism policies is evolving positively

- A growing awareness among authorities of the importance of integrating sustainability
- A willingness to change and efforts to promote sustainable tourism activities
- Sustainable tourism is integrated into scientific research and university education
- The emergence of a new generation of leaders who support sustainable tourism
- A beginning of collaboration between the private and public sectors
- Support from donors
- International expertise bringing new concepts
- The emergence of a new outdoor tourism culture among young people
- Support from organizations and associations
- Grants and funds for the protection of tourist territories.

The reasons why there is obstacles in mainstreaming sustainability in tourism policies

- Heavy administrative machinery/
- Bureaucracy that blocks innovative initiatives
- Absence of evaluation measures for previous tourism policies
- Lack of leadership and political weight to guide state policies towards sustainability
- Empty promises without actions despite a favorable context
- No vision of sustainable tourism, just opportunism and trend-following
- Too much entropy, authorities are not making progress in sustainable tourism
- CRT inspectors are not trained in sustainability
- False policy of decentralization in the regions
- The Ministry of Tourism is the neglected child of the ministries

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tunisians do not recognize themselves in their country • Participatory decision-making can hinder quick decision-making • A trend towards supporting the hotel industry • Too many stakeholders in sustainable tourism • It is a sector that has been stagnant for a long time. • Delay in the legislative framework. <p>Suggested measures to improve the efficiency of sustainable tourism (ranked in order of votes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a task force with the five ministries (Tourism, Agriculture, Interior, Environment, Transport) • Establish a fund for sustainable tourism under the authority of the State • Develop exceptional statutes respecting the specificity of each region and activity • Free up private initiative/ • Revise the regulatory framework • Integrate young people into strategic thinking • Raise awareness among citizens, local communities, and professionals on sustainability. <p>Participants' feedback:</p> <p>The participants were frustrated with the obstacles that prevent sustainable tourism from taking off and occupying the place it deserves. There was a lot of clarity in the speeches of the participants who remained optimistic about the future of sustainable tourism in Tunisia despite everything. It is necessary to apply the right approaches and adopt a clear methodology shared by all stakeholders and act quickly to achieve it.</p> <p>Important key terms:</p> <p>Stagnation/ opportunistic policies / fictive decentralisation/ international expertise</p>
Quotes	<p><i>"The questioning of old policies is slow. Public policy is a tentacled animal, not a single person or head, as there are many ministries, administrations, and policy poles that interfere with each other. Then there is the fear of making mistakes that leads to immobility and status quo. That's why it's a "I don't take risks" mentality" (Faouzi Majdoub, Cultural & Alternative Tourism Commission, FTAV)</i></p>

	<p><i>"A state policy is developed in state chambers with experts who take into consideration all the economic, social, budgetary, and human resources aspects of the state. However, I feel that we are creating too much entropy, expending a lot of energy for nothing, without producing any concrete actions or measures on the ground, and with a lot of interference resulting in nothing palpable on the ground. We do not have a clear roadmap. For tourism, there are two aspects: a political aspect and a technical aspect. You cannot work on the technical aspect alone if you are not politically supported."</i> (Mohamed Amine Berriche, Swisscontact)</p>
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