

LOCAL ACTION PLAN

Country: Spain

Pilot area: Les Garrigues

1. Introduction

This document is a project-level **Local Action Plan (LAP)** and compiles the main conclusions from the:

- Med Pearls Research Study on Slow Tourism International Trends and Innovations
- SWOT analysis of the Med Pearls Mediterranean Action Area
- SWOT analysis of *Les Garrigues*.
- Mapping of Natural and Cultural assets of *Les Garrigues*.

The aim of the LAP is to provide context, background and guidance to the local DMCs to align their proposals to the requirements of the Slow Tourism approach and the needs and specificities of the project pilot areas.

The LAP is based on the Med Pearls project findings after its first year of implementation and needs to be backed-up by local and regional public and private stakeholders to ensure a long-term impact.

2. About the Med Pearls project

Tourism is a key driver for the development of local economies in the Mediterranean, directly contributing to 7.7 million jobs and indirectly to 20 by 2012 (according to the Joint Operational Programme SWOT analysis of the ENI CBC MED Programme). Projections are really promising, especially in fields like ecotourism or other forms of sustainable tourism. The outstanding variety and richness of cultural & natural assets throughout the region is a competitive advantage compared to other destinations.

Nevertheless, some barriers are undermining the possibilities of utilizing its full potential and of increasing its contribution to local development in a sustainable way. The mainstream model deployed so far relies too much on 'sun & beach' offer, characterised by being large-scale & low-cost, with a lack of innovation, diversification & reinvestment of profits into local economies, while causing high environmental pressures. Situation worsens because of a demand shift caused by political instability. To address these challenges, Med Pearls' approach proposes an alternative model based on 4 pillars to reposition the area as a quality destination for Slow Tourism (ST):

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- i) Deseasonalization (taking advantage of the exceptional weather conditions);
- ii) Diversification (developing new tourist products & experiences for niches & new segments based on Slow Tourism and valorising the rich existing heritage);
- iii) Innovation (introducing ICT & digitalisation to bolster the most promising tourist product ideas coming from local MSMEs);
- iv) Local economy development (by supporting Slow Tourism, around 66% of the trip costs from packages remain in local destinations (as estimated by the ATTA 2014 Snapshot), thus at local stakeholders, while in mass tourism packages up to 80% of travellers expenditures go to airlines, hotels or other international companies, according to UNEP).

Med Pearls will work towards the integration of the Mediterranean diversity into a top quality & single brand for Slow Tourism, guaranteeing similar experiences to visitors based on regions' values & lifestyle.

Based on the above, the Project Objective is to internationally position the Mediterranean as an integral destination of quality and excellence for Slow Tourism by accelerating innovative initiatives built from public & private cooperation.

Med Pearls project is co-financed by the European Union under the European Neighbourhood Instrument cross-border cooperation program "Mediterranean Sea Basin" 2014-2020 (ENI CBC MED). It started on 1st September 2019 and has a duration of 36 months (until 31st August 2022). It counts on an overall budget of 3.015.132 EUR, which are co-financed at a 90% rate by the ENI CBC Med program.

It includes the following project partners:

- Lead Beneficiary: Spain: Catalan Tourist Board
- Project partner 1: Egypt: Confederation of Egyptian European Business Associations
- Project partner 2: Greece: Municipality of Thessaloniki
- Project partner 3: Jordan: Discovery Travel & Tourism LLC
- Project partner 4: Italy: APS Mediterranean Pearls
- Project partner 5: Palestine: Palestine information & communications technology incubator
- Project partner 6: Palestine: Palestine Wildlife Society
- Project partner 7: Egypt: Alexandria Chamber

More information is available at: <http://www.enicbcmed.eu/projects/med-pearls>

3. About Slow Tourism

➤ Definition of Slow Tourism

Although there is not a single definition, Slow Tourism is a type of tourism that:

“Sensitizes demand and supply of ethical values, allows to get possession of time again, relieves anxiety and stress caused by hectic paces, allows the guests to be back in tune with themselves and whatever surrounds them, creates a new form of awareness thanks to a deeper and involving experience and thus emphasizes sustainability, responsibility and eco-friendliness”.

According to some authors, it can only be called “Slow Tourism” if it satisfies six dimensions, both from the point of view of supply and demand. These are:

- Time
- Slowness (opposed to “time is money”)
- Otherness (sphere of relationships between individuals with different opinions, beliefs, knowledge and cultures)
- Authenticity
- Sustainability
- Emotion

To roll-out this LAP in the pilot area, it is strongly recommended to use the main findings and conclusions from the Med Pearls “**Research study on Slow Tourism international trends and innovations**” which can be downloaded from this [link](#); specific information on the Slow Tourism concept is given on pages 9 to 11.

➤ General Aspects of a Slow Tourist profile

As far as the slow tourist profile is concerned, information of interest can be found in the chapter “Conceptualization and Trends on Sustainable and Slow Tourism” of the before mentioned study.

In the following table a comparative profile of the slow tourist, in contrast to that of the “mainstream” tourist is presented.

	Slow Tourist	Mainstream Tourist
Inspiration	From travel books to Internet	Internet
Reservation	By phone or e-mail (for a more direct contact) but also Internet	Internet booking engines but also email
Use of tour operators	Only if not avoidable	Yes
Destination info & maps	From travel guides (paper) to smartphone	Smartphones or tablet
Taking pictures	Analogic camera, if possible – smartphones	Smartphones

Use of social networks to communicate trip or pictures	Growing trend	Yes, in every case
Personal attitude towards destination, people, and environment	“Disconnection” from the everyday world and full “connection” to the destination	Permanent connection with the everyday world (smartphone) and little (or none) connection with destination.
Apparel and clothes	Soft and essential. Probably buys local clothes at destination	Heavy (unnecessary apparel), bought and brought from origin
Means of transport to destination	Preference for alternative means of transport mainly train or bus. Also shared transport, environmentally friendly, and hurry-free...	Preference for low cost airlines and/or exclusive use vehicle
Means of transport in destination	Public transport, shared, environmentally friendly, and hurry-free...	Those that allow quick movement e.g. exclusive use vehicle
Accommodation	Local housing and/or small, friendly, and familiar business	Major hotel franchises
Meals	Local & traditional cuisine / eco-friendly foods and beverages	Fast food, hotel food, international food
Agenda	Flexible agenda or none.	Everything is within a programme
Activities	Prefers direct contact with nature, and/or local population. No intermediaries	Fully intermediated. Minimum contact with local population.

➤ **Check list to develop a Slow Tourism product**

This check list is available at the document “**Criteria and requirements to create Slow Tourism packages**” prepared specifically for the Med Pearls project with the aim to support the creation of Slow Tourism packages and experiences that are highly attractive to Incoming Travel Agencies and Tourists.

The document can be downloaded from the Med Pearls website, specifically from the following [Link](#).

The criteria are classified in the following sections: transport, accommodation, activities and food. In addition, there is a section devoted to general aspects such as the ones related to the package itself or the DMC or Incoming Travel Agency offering the package.

For a tour package to be considered Slow, it should meet a minimum of compulsory requirements. It is considered that a Slow Tourism package has to be coherent and balanced, so compliance with a minimum of 40% of requirements in each category is recommended. The more requirements the package meets, the more “Slow Tourism philosophy” will be. Each category details the minimum requirements to be met.

4. About the Pilot Area

Les Garrigues was selected for being one of the territories in Catalonia with a lower number of visitors but with distinct resources and elements to enhance slow tourism. The area has an interesting mix of rural areas combined with natural environments and small towns with their own character. The county has also unique resources, be it at the level of natural, cultural and intangible heritage, or an arrange of local producers producing local crafts and gastronomic products. Such as olive oil, which is one of the main products produced and the area is renowned for.

In terms of tourism infrastructure, the area has growing potential with a varied accommodation offer that combines both hotels, apartments and smaller establishments that fit the slow tourism philosophy. Such as rural houses and lodges, summer camps facilities or motorhome parkings integrated in the area. Furthermore, the area also offers visitors mobility options to move inside the destination through more eco-friendly and sustainable options such as public transport, bike renting and hiking routes.

Last, but not least, the area also offers events and activities throughout all the year that are respectful in representing the culture of the territory, as well as tourism activity providers that fit the slow tourism interests. Some examples are gastronomy and wine tourism, agrotourism, nature and active tourism providers, and ecotourism services. The main highlights of the region are the all the providers, attractions and services related to olive oil tourism.

5. SWOT of the pilot area

STRENGTHS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Product of acknowledged quality: extra virgin olive oil from Les Garrigues. - Well-preserved rural landscape with unique steppe habitat species in Catalonia. - Existence of rural cultural heritage that is becoming more and more interesting (dry stone walls, vaulted huts, etc.) - Outstanding archaeological heritage: the Vilars d’Arbeca Site and the Cogul Cave Paintings. - Unique museum spaces: Espai Macià, the Mirador de les Garrigues, the Center for the Culture of Oil of Catalonia, the Oil Museum, among others. - Protected natural areas, most notably the: Mas de Melons. - Unpolluted and not eroded territory - Quality of life, tranquillity and friendly contact from the inhabitants - The charm of the villages - Local cuisine and typical products (kidney-shaped bread, “orelletes”, “panadons”, etc.) - Les Garrigues PDO is one of the best known in Catalonia and the oldest food designation in Spain (it is 40 years old). - Some wineries, restaurants and accommodation in Les Garrigues are included in the Lleida-Costers del Segre Wine Route and within the Costers del Segre PDO. - PDO Pear of Lleida
WEAKNESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Significant aging of the population. - Constant loss of population over the last 10 years. Exodus of young people who do not find job opportunities in the region (loss of talent). - Lack of infrastructures adapted to sustainable mobility, e.g. charging points for electric vehicles and bicycles, bicycle parking lots, etc. - Limited internal connection by public transport. - Connectivity with train, only in the north of the county. - Very divided region in terms of road communications. - Lack of directional and interpretive signage to move around the territory. - Very poor internet connection in some villages and areas. There is no fibre optic connectivity in almost any village of the County.

- Existence of two very different realities within the same region: the northern Garrigues (irrigated and well connected) and the southern Garrigues (dry and more isolated).
- Aged and uncompetitive agricultural sector with low level of added value of agricultural products.
- Difficulties to commercialise the main agricultural product: oil, by some cooperatives.
- Non-performing and weak operational structure of the PDO Les Garrigues. Not exploited for tourism.
- Weak public-private cooperation for a tourism strategy. Feeling of lack of public support by private sector.
- Lack of tourist accommodation in the region, especially rural hotels and / or that including food service/restaurant to be able to structure tourist products and packages. (e.g. Few accommodations include breakfast service). Little predisposition to renovate abandoned houses for tourism.
- Very few restaurants and many of them do not serve local products.
- There is no variety for gourmet tourism.
- Decrease in the commercial fabric of many towns. Many services and facilities for visitors are closed on weekends.
- There is a significant lack of "Les Garrigues" brand in terms of tourism included for Catalonia visitors
- Lack of language skills by tourism agents
- Low appreciation of the own local heritage. Lack of tourism sector awareness by the local population. Lack of knowledge of the traditions and culture around the Oil by the young people.

OPPORTUNITIES

- New tourist accommodation is being created: a new hostel in La Granadella or a number of tourist apartments
- Number of visitors growth for about 5 years.
- Position Les Garrigues within the tourist markets as an oil-tourism destination. Oil tourism has a lot of room to grow.
- Create eco-tourism and nature tourism products around protected natural spaces.
- Create an offer of active tourism activities around the Albagés Reservoir.
- Attract new population: families looking for an environment with quality of life or young farmers escaping from economic crisis.
- Improving internet connectivity would mean more jobs and business opportunities.
- Improving the productivity of the lands that will benefit from the new irrigation coming from the Segarra-Garrigues Canal.
- Existence of an Oil PDO that could bring together the sector and be a joint and stronger promotional mechanism.
- Explore joint experience initiatives between oil and winery cooperatives (e.g. Garrigues Emprèn, S.L.) or oil and fruit cooperatives; or the event Forum Verge Extra (storytelling of the territory through the oil and olive trees).
- New business initiatives are flourishing to create new experiences: creation of slow long-distance cycling routes, 185 kms; initiatives related to wineries, etc.
- Road communication could be worked on for Slow experiences.
- Growing perception that tourism can be an instrument for local development
- Motorhome spaces linked to wineries or others, attract international tourism all year round.
- Take advantage of the Barcelona Brand (e.g. become the "Tuscany of Barcelona") and take advantage of the proximity to the Priorat and Terra Alta counties with more visitors.
- Product creation for renewable energies (biomass), sustainable products (corn as a basis for biodegradable elements, ..)
- Incorporation of "vaulted" sheds into the offer of "slow" experiences. More than 1000 catalogued in the region. It could be slow hosting if this complies with regulations.
- Interest of visitors to live and share activities with farmers, etc.
- Future common brand of "Agro-tourism in Catalonia"
- Recovery of wooded sidewalks in the Urgell Canal. 300km of "green" trail
- Formalize a table of tourism public representatives in the County to work more coordinated

THREATS

- The general aging of the population plus the exodus of young people are a serious threat of depopulation. Difficult situation of schools close to closure in small villages.
- Deficiencies in technology are a brake to bring new companies and professionals to the County. And make villages less attractive to new populations or local young people.
- Loss of services as a result of the population decline: medical and nursing services, post offices, schools, shops, etc.
- Risk of land abandonment due to a lack of generational change among the peasantry.

- Oil tourism does not currently have any specific support program from the public authorities.
- Loss of land property by the people of Les Garrigues if these are sold to external big companies that take advantage of the new systems of irrigation being put in place.
- Risk of damaging the traditional landscape of the County if the practice of large intensive irrigation agriculture is established.
- Lack of continuity of the PDO Les Garrigues if the new Oil producers do not see the interest in joining the PDO.
- Tourism and Urban planning laws, which are more designed for big cities, add extra complications to certain tourism initiatives in the County.

6. Main cultural and natural assets of the pilot area

Regarding cultural heritage assets, Les Garrigues stands out with historical and archaeological sites like the Moros del Cogul cave (UNESCO) and the Iberian fortress of Els Vilars, and museums such as the Oil Museum of Catalonia. In regards to intangible heritage the region is proud to have a strong oil production and gastronomic culture represented in many festivals and festivities (like with the Olive Oil Fair and the Mostra Gastronòmica), and different popular Catalan music festivals and traditions (Trobada de Gegants, Grallers I Correfocs, La Granadella festival, etc).

On the other hand, regarding natural heritage the main assets could be considered: the Cogul Caves, the Setta de Llena mountain range, the Els Bessons Natural area, the almonds trees flower blossom and different nature routes at La Granadella.

7. Key tourism players (stakeholders) in the pilot area

The main tourism stakeholders in the area, that are also in charge of promotion, are the Patronat de Turisme de les Terres de Lleida (Terres de Lleida Tourism Board), the Oficina Comarcal de Turisme (County Tourist Office) and the Consell Comarcal de les Garrigues (the county government body).

8. Slow Tourism proposal in the Pilot Area

Below, some of the main experiences and products that can be identified as activities related to slow tourism:

- Hiking and routes around areas such as the Albagés Reservoir.
- Olive-oil tourism experiences providers and activities.
- Cyclo-tourism routes and bike-renting activities.
- Wine and gastronomic experiences in local cellars, restaurants and food producers.
- Bee keeping activities.
- Ecotourism activities.

9. Insertion of the Pilot area in the Med Pearls network

➤ SWOT of the Med Pearls Mediterranean Action Area

Besides the individual SWOT analysis conducted in each of the 13 Med Pearls Pilot Areas, further analysis has led to a global SWOT for the Mediterranean Action Area. In line with the project objective, the main goal is to internationally position the Mediterranean as an integral destination of quality and excellence for Slow Tourism, and hence the whole region is to be promoted and commercialised as a single tourism destination.

Thus, the Med Pearls SWOT analysis for the Mediterranean area is the following one:



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STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Well-established brand / destination name. - Tourism resources richness: cultural heritage, museums, archaeological sites, natural resources, landscape, unique flora and fauna. - Rich rural landscape in proximity - Rich local / traditional production - Diverse environment: financial, social and natural (biodiversity) - Variety of natural resources - Local cuisine which can be further enhanced - Strong and wide local market - Location, proximity to major urban centres and markets - Transportation alternatives - Proximity to well-known sites / established destinations - Access to organized health services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited number of visitors due to insufficient tourism campaigns and / or low popularity - Shortage of specialized products providers (niche tourism) - Shortage of certified tourism service providers - Limited (or no) access to tourism information offices - Insufficiencies in urban infrastructure - Insufficient language and ICT skills - Insufficiencies in technological and digital tools and infrastructure - Limitations in disabled people accessibility - Inadequately funded local transportation - Limited accommodation options
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raise public awareness on slow tourism and sustainability of tourism sector in general - International initiatives to promote and fund alternative / mild forms of tourism - Create new eco-tourism and slow tourism products - Strong mindset from population to accept further investments on tourism - New website for promotion - Potential development of new integrated itineraries and programs for activities and actions on slow tourism area - Potential traditional local festivals in an organized integrated schedule - New integrated market for local products - Structural capacity for further investments on accommodation infrastructure - Creation of new gastronomical contexts - COVID-19 – mass tourism restrictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unorganized, excessive competition among local entrepreneurs - Incomplete tourism market which leads to potential price imbalances and unfair wealth dissemination - Bureaucracy in various tourism actions and tourism initiatives - Constant economic crisis' phenomena in various sectors and activities (lack of resources and professionals in some instances)

➤ Strengths and opportunities in common with other Med Pearls Pilot Areas

Once the Med Pearls project concludes, a network of 26 Slow Tourism products or “Pearls”, enhanced by ICT technologies, will be put in place and enrich the Mediterranean tourism offer. These new Pearls will share common values across 6 countries. They will be inter-connected through shared elements like gastronomy, landscape, traditions, fauna, flora, etc. which link the different territories of the Mediterranean.

Additionally, they will all propose experiences based on the Slow Tourism concept, thus ensuring similar tourism experiences to people willing to visit the area. Since the Pearls have been developed following a common methodology, the resulting outcome will be standard experiences in 6 different countries but adapted to local realities.



This approach allows working as a network and facilitates the exploration of win-win approaches like 'cross-selling strategies'. In fact, Med Pearls will allocate significant efforts to train the DMCs behind the Pearls to design and implement a cross-selling strategy and thus commercialize the 26 Pearls in all the 6 project countries.

➤ **Med Pearls actions to support promotion and commercialization of the Pearls**

Med Pearls foresees to roll out different actions to support the promotion and commercialization of the 26 new Slow Tourism products (Pearls) created in the fringes of the project. These actions have its own separate budget and will be managed by project partners, who will be acting as focal points in each country.

Thus, this section describes these tools and instruments that will enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of the Pilot Areas and the 26 pearls.

Med Pearls will draft a **Promotional & Commercialization Plan** that will guide both project partners and tourism destinations in the preparation and implementation of all the promotional and commercialization activities that will support the international positioning of the Mediterranean.

This plan will be fed by the findings of two research studies, the 'ST international demand. Data base of specialized operators' and the 'Guidelines on Most Innovative Practices on promotion and commercialization'.

The promotional and commercialization items are described below:

○ **Med Pearls Online Platform**

The Med Pearls Online Platform is a cross-border tool to inform, promote & commercialize the Mediterranean as a Slow Tourism quality destination. The platform will inform about the Slow concept, about the 6 project countries and 13 destinations (stressing its main cultural & natural heritage assets) and about the 26 Pearls. Visitors interested in purchasing one of the holiday packages linked to a Pearl will be redirected to the DMC in charge of managing the Pearl and proceed with the booking process. Additional digital actions will complement the Platform in positioning the Med Pearls tourism offer.

○ **International exhibitions**

Med Pearls will identify key international tourism exhibitions in which the Mediterranean and the 13 destinations should be promoted. Business missions combining representatives from the project partners and from the DMCs managing the Pearls will be organised, travelling to these exhibitions to gain international visibility, get in touch with tourism operators, DMOs, etc.

○ **Fam & Blog trips**

Delegations of specialized tour operators, journalists, bloggers, etc. will be arranged so as they can visit the Med Pearls destinations and meet with the local stakeholders, notably the DMCs managing the Pearls. These visits will be coordinated by the project partners, possibly combining different countries in one single trip.