

# Interreg Europe DETOCS Project Newsletter 4

## Exchange of Experience Event in Crete

On 23-24 October 2024, the project consortium & stakeholders of the Interreg Europe [DETOCS - DEcarbonising the TOURism Industry Post Covid-19 Support](#) project gathered at the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania (MAiCh) in Crete, Greece, for the 4th Interregional Exchange of Experience Event & Steering Group Meeting. Representatives from the eight partner regions convened to exchange best practices, discuss progress, and explore collaborative actions for decarbonising the tourism sector.



The event featured insightful presentations on regional success stories, highlighting innovative approaches to energy efficiency in tourism. The Region of Crete, the University of Malta, and Thermopolis shared strategies for reducing carbon footprints, offering valuable lessons for replication across different contexts. A Good Practices Open Forum followed, where case studies from Slovenia, Italy, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Finland, and Hungary showcased initiatives such as energy audits for guesthouses, renewable energy communities, and geothermal heating solutions.

Study visits provided participants with a first-hand look at sustainable tourism practices in Crete. One notable site was an eco-friendly resort implementing energy-saving solutions and circular economy principles. The event concluded with a Steering Group Meeting, where partners reviewed project milestones and discussed future collaborative outputs, including the DETOCS thematic guidebook on sustainable tourism strategies (coming soon!).

By fostering knowledge exchange and cross-regional cooperation, the 4th Exchange of Experience Event strengthened the DETOCS project's mission to support the tourism sector's green transition. [Read more about the event & study visits on our website.](#)

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### Upcoming News

Next partner meeting and Exchange of Experience Event to take place on 21-22 May 2025 in Campobasso, Italy

### Project Budget

Total Budget: €1,980,883.00  
Interreg Funds: €1,567,416.40

### Timeline

01 March 2023 – 31 May 2027



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DETOCS



### Joint Thematic Guidebook

The DETOCS project is preparing a Joint Thematic Guidebook to support the decarbonisation of the European tourism sector. A project outcome overseen by the **Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania (CIHEAM MAICH)**, the guidebook will provide practical solutions, from energy efficiency measures to innovative approaches like virtual tourism, tailored to different climates and business types.

The guidebook will be translated into national languages and made available online to help policymakers and tourism stakeholders drive sustainable change. It will be officially launched at the Final Energy Efficiency Event in Bulgaria, featuring study visits and policy discussions.

Stay tuned for the release on the DETOCS project website!

## Regional Updates

The DETOCS project consortium consists of 13 project partners and 1 advisory partner from 9 different European countries. Project partners from Slovenia, Greece, Malta, Finland, Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary and the Netherlands have continued to make progress in identifying good practices for sustainable tourism.

### Slovenia

In Slovenia, DETOCS Lead Partner, **Local Energy Agency Spodnje Podravje (LEASP)**, has highlighted the “One-Stop-Shop (OSS)” for renewable energy as a DETOCS-endorsed best practice, showcasing how centralised support can accelerate renewable energy investments. Established to address administrative complexity and lack of clear information, the OSS streamlines processes for individuals, businesses, and municipalities. Managed by Borzen and supported by 36 advisory offices, the OSS provides free expert guidance, reducing bureaucracy and boosting investor confidence. In its first phase, it aims to deliver 1,400 advisory sessions, with 60% of advised investors expected to proceed with projects.



*(Above) LEASP works with their regional stakeholder group to identify good practices for sustainable tourism in Slovenia*

The local contact point in Ptuj, active since June 2024, has already provided over 80 consultations, reflecting strong demand. Inspired by this success, DETOCS partners MAICH and the Municipality of Campobasso are exploring pilot actions based on the OSS model to facilitate renewable energy investments in their regions.

By combining institutional backing, expert support, and digital tools, the OSS offers a blueprint for expanding renewable energy services across Europe.

### Greece

The fourth regional stakeholders' meeting in Crete was held virtually on 12 December

2024, bringing together representatives from municipalities, hotel associations, chambers of commerce, hotel owners, and academic institutions. Discussions focused on regional energy challenges and three proposed good practices: an online platform for climate change monitoring, municipal support for local energy projects, and electric transport initiatives in Chania.



*(Above) A snapshot of the Euphoria Hotel in Crete, where DETOCS project partners & stakeholders toured in October 2024 on study visit for excellence in sustainable tourism*

The **Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania (CIHEAM MAICH)**, as the technical partner, and the **Region of Crete**, as the policy maker authority, work together to ensure lasting results of the DETOCS project, leading ultimately to relevant, impactful policy change. MAICH is also leading the development of the “Joint Thematic Guidebook,” which will serve as a key resource for DETOCS in the next two semesters.

### Malta

Following strong Maltese participation in the 4th Interregional Meeting in Chania, Crete, in October 2024, Malta held its fourth regional stakeholders' event on 18 February 2025. The meeting focused on identifying and discussing good practices relevant to Malta, while also reflecting on insights gained from partner regions in Chania.

Several potential good practice examples were identified during the event—which clearly set the scene for Malta's first identified DETOCS Good Practice Example to be endorsed by Interreg Europe and published on the Policy Learning Platform.

This initiative, called GUEST—which you can read about [here](#)—engages guesthouse owners by providing sponsored energy audits to help them understand their energy consumption, implement simple energy efficiency measures, and access funding for renewable energy solutions in their establishments.

*(continued on page 3)*



The University of Malta and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Tourism (pictured above) work together to deliver excellent project results within the Interreg Europe DETOCS project.

## Finland

On 6 February 2025, the DETOCS partners from Finland — **Thermopolis Ltd.** and the **Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia**— hosted the fourth Regional Stakeholders’ Meeting in Seinäjoki, focusing on responsible tourism businesses in South Ostrobothnia. The meeting exceeded expectations, showcasing numerous tourism operators who have recently taken significant steps towards promoting sustainable practices. Several companies have achieved environmental certifications such as Ekokompassi and Green Key and are engaged in the Sustainable Travel Finland programme.



During the meeting (pictured above), the first good practice from South Ostrobothnia was presented: the South Ostrobothnia Tourism Forum. This permanent collaboration model strengthens the tourism development efforts by bringing together entrepreneurs and tourism developers in the region’s tourism and service sectors.

The Regional Programme of South Ostrobothnia is currently being updated, with a new version expected to be approved by the end of 2025. Spring 2025 will be a critical time for influencing the content of this programme. To facilitate this, a workshop will be held in April 2025, inviting tourism operators to provide their input and suggestions for the Regional Programme. This will be an opportunity to gather valuable feedback to

ensure that the themes and aims of the DETOCS project are better reflected in the updated policy. Additionally, the workshop will serve as a platform to introduce good practices from other partners, such as the GUEST project from Malta, and to initiate the development of new projects in South Ostrobothnia.

## Italy

The **Municipality of Campobasso** hosted their fourth regional stakeholder meeting in February in Campobasso to present key initiatives for sustainable tourism. The primary proposal is the creation of a Territorial Energy Community (TEC) to promote renewable energy use and energy self-sufficiency.

Another key action is the introduction of a ‘Carbon-Free’ classification system for businesses and public administrations, encouraging participation in renewable energy projects. Additionally, ME&ENERGY One-Stop Shops will support local businesses in their energy transition efforts.

These actions align with national sustainability policies and are complemented by sustainable mobility initiatives, including electric vehicle fleets and expanded charging infrastructure, aimed at improving regional transport and tourist accessibility. Together, these efforts will position Campobasso as a leader in sustainable tourism development.

## Bulgaria

The On 21 November 2024, the fourth meeting under the DETOCS project took place at the Council Chamber of Burgas Municipality, coinciding with a session of the Advisory Council on Tourism to the Mayor of Burgas.

The event (pictured below) brought together a wide range of stakeholders, including representatives from **Burgas Municipality**, municipal enterprises, and various standing committees. Other participants included leaders from the Burgas Regional Tourist Chamber, the Burgas Regional Tourist Association, and the Bulgarian Association for Climatic Treatment and Health Tourism. The **Regional Energy Agency of Pazardzhik (REAP)** joined online.



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## DETOCS Good Practice Brochure

We are excited to announce the new **DETOCS Good Practice Brochure** (coming August 2025), which will showcase sustainable tourism practices from each of the 8 partner countries across Europe. This brochure will highlight the most relevant good practices identified by all partners, offering valuable insights into efforts made across different regions.

The purpose of the brochure is to share these inspiring examples with regional stakeholders, providing opportunities to learn from each other and adopt best practices for a greener tourism industry. All partners will print and distribute the brochure to their local stakeholders, ensuring widespread access to these innovative solutions.

### What to Expect?

- Examples of sustainable tourism solutions from 8 countries
- Best practices in energy efficiency, waste reduction, and eco-conscious travel ☐
- Real-life examples from local tourism operators, hotels, and destinations
- A chance to adopt practices relevant to your region for a more sustainable future

You can look forward to this valuable resource, designed to inspire and support sustainable tourism across Europe, coming by August 2025!



How can virtual tourism help decarbonise the Dutch tourism industry?

Within the DETOCS project, the Municipality of Middelburg is exploring the role of virtual tourism in decarbonising the tourism industry. Virtual tourism, which includes technologies like AR and VR, allows people to experience destinations digitally without travelling. This approach helps reduce emissions, supports accessibility, and can reduce mass tourism.

The Municipality of Middelburg is specifically looking into how virtual tours, like exploring the 17th-century *Kuiperspoort* (pictured above) could be a sustainable solution for tourism.

The city aims to use virtual tourism as a tool for promoting more eco-friendly tourism practices within the DETOCS project.

During the meeting, the key objectives and progress of the DETOCS project were presented, along with an introduction to the Long-Term Programme for Promoting the Use of Renewable Energy Sources and Bio-fuels for the period 2021–2030, which is set to be updated through the project. Experts also shared impressions and best practices from the region of Chania, Crete, where energy-efficient solutions have been implemented in tourist sites. Discussions focused on how similar approaches could be adapted to local conditions in Burgas and surrounding tourist areas.

This meeting laid the foundation for strengthening cooperation and fostering the implementation of energy-efficient and sustainable practices in Bulgaria's tourism sector.

### Hungary

Hungarian stakeholders of the DETOCS project gathered on 13 February 2025 at the DámPont Ecotourism Visitor Centre for the “Sustainable Tourism in the Central Danube Region” event, hosted by **Central Danube Development Agency Nonprofit Ltd. (CDDA)**.

After opening speeches from Ferenc Porga, Mayor of Tamási, and Zsuzsanna Sándor-Majoros, Technical Director of CDDA, Eszter Mimi Kocsis, International Project Manager, presented the progress of the DETOCS project.



Júlia Nagy, Managing Director of Innotime Hungary Ltd, shared insights on sustainable tourism opportunities in Hungary. This was followed by a tour of the DámPont site, which recently earned the “Good Travel Seal” certification, demonstrating how sustainability can be integrated into tourism.

The event also featured an interactive workshop discussing how sustainable tourism can help transform settlements, attractions, and accommodations into sustainable tourist destinations. One key finding from the meeting was the need for a behaviour change from both customers and service providers.

Achieving this requires transparent, measurable monitoring systems for sustainability, supported by education. Based on lessons from the DETOCS project, the Tourism Management System outlined in Hungary's Operational Programme should be revised to include sustainability and behaviour change as key components. This will ensure that sustainable tourism principles are embedded within the region's future tourism strategies.

### The Netherlands

A workshop on sustainable tourism development took place on 12th November 2024 in Middelburg, Netherlands, in collaboration with Impuls. The event focused on making tourism more sustainable, particularly in historic buildings that require special attention due to their protected status.



(Above) A workshop in collaboration with Impuls, held in Middelburg on the 12<sup>th</sup> November 2024. The workshop explored energy-saving solutions for historic tourist buildings while preserving their heritage value.

Bringing together tourism entrepreneurs, policymakers, and sustainability experts, the workshop explored energy-saving solutions while preserving cultural and architectural integrity. Participants applied the Theory of Change method to develop strategies for energy efficiency, water conservation, and waste management.

Key actions discussed included mobilising stakeholders, leveraging subsidy programmes, and strengthening networks between tourism businesses and sustainability experts. The economic benefits of sustainability, such as cost savings and attracting eco-conscious tourists, were also highlighted.

Moving forward, the **Municipality of Middelburg** will develop a brochure with practical sustainability measures for tourism businesses. This initiative aligns with EU climate goals and showcases how historic sites can integrate sustainability while maintaining their heritage value. Middelburg sees the brochure as a good practice that can be

replicated in other EU regions.

## Why DETOCS?

The Interreg Europe **DETOCS - DEcarbonising the TOURism Industry Post Covid-19 Support** project aims to support the recovery of EU tourism infrastructure sector following the Covid-19 pandemic, amidst the energy crisis, in a sustainable and low carbon way. In doing so, DETOCS complies with EU long-term policies for the decarbonisation of the economy. During the project implementation, good practices for sustainable tourism will be identified and exchanged amongst partner regions in Slovenia, Greece, Malta, Finland, Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary and the Netherlands; meanwhile, project partners will aim to improve related policy in their regions through capacity building in the participating regions and the adoption of policies proven to be successful in other regions.

DETOCS contributes to EU Cohesion Policy, and specifically to the **"Policy Objective 2 (PO2): A greener, low-carbon Europe"**, as it promotes clean and sustainable energy transition of tourism infrastructure. The four-year DETOCS project has a total budget of **€1,980,883.00**, with **€1,567,416.40** provided by Interreg Funds.



### Check out our DETOCS project video!

Watch our project video for a glimpse into who we are and what we are aiming to achieve.

[Watch the DETOCS project video](#)



### 5th Exchange of Experience Event of the DETOCS project

The 5th Exchange of Experience Event of the DETOCS project partners & stakeholders will take place on **21-22 May 2025** in **Campobasso, Italy**, hosted by the Municipality of Campobasso. The two-day programme will feature workshops, study visits, and strategic planning sessions, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange for a more sustainable tourism industry.

### Contact

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## Project Partnership



GREEN

### Local energy agency Spodnje Podravje (SI) - Lead Partner

Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania - CIHEAM MAICh (EL)

Region of Crete (EL)

University of Malta (MT)

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Tourism (MT)

Thermopolis Ltd. (FI)

Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia (FI)

Municipality of Campobasso (IT)

Regional Energy Agency - Pazardjik (BG)

Burgas Municipality (BG)

Central Danube Development Agency Nonprofit Ltd. (HU)

Middelburg Municipality (NL)

The European Institute for Innovation-Technology (DE)



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