

Urban Agenda for the EU

Sustainable Tourism Partnership

Draft
Action Plan
Consultation
Report



November 2024





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¹ Pact of Amsterdam, chapter 4, clause 19.

Sustainable Tourism Partnership



Draft Action Plan Consultation Report

A. Introduction

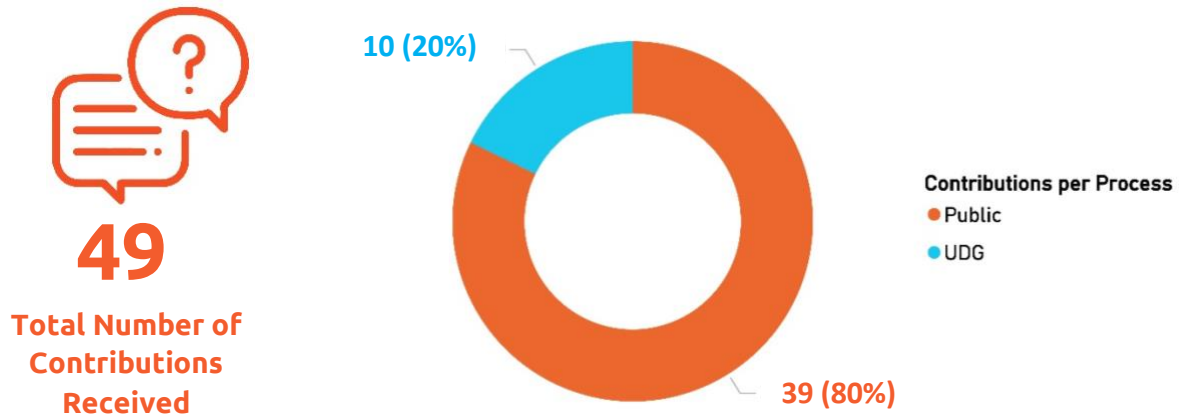
The public consultation process for the **Sustainable Tourism Partnership of the Urban Agenda for the EU Draft Action Plan** was conducted to gather feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, including public authorities, research institutions, DMOs, private organisations related to the tourism sector, and EU institutions. The goal of the consultation was to ensure that the Action Plan reflects the needs and priorities of stakeholders at local, regional, and national levels, while supporting the broader objectives of urban sustainability and touristic development in Europe.

The consultation, **open from June 06 to July 31, 2024**, collected responses through multiple channels, including the **UDG Member States consultation, European Commission DGs Interservice Consultation, and an open public consultation** targeting a broad range of stakeholders. The feedback collected during this process has been analysed to provide actionable insights for refining the Action Plan and ensuring its successful implementation.

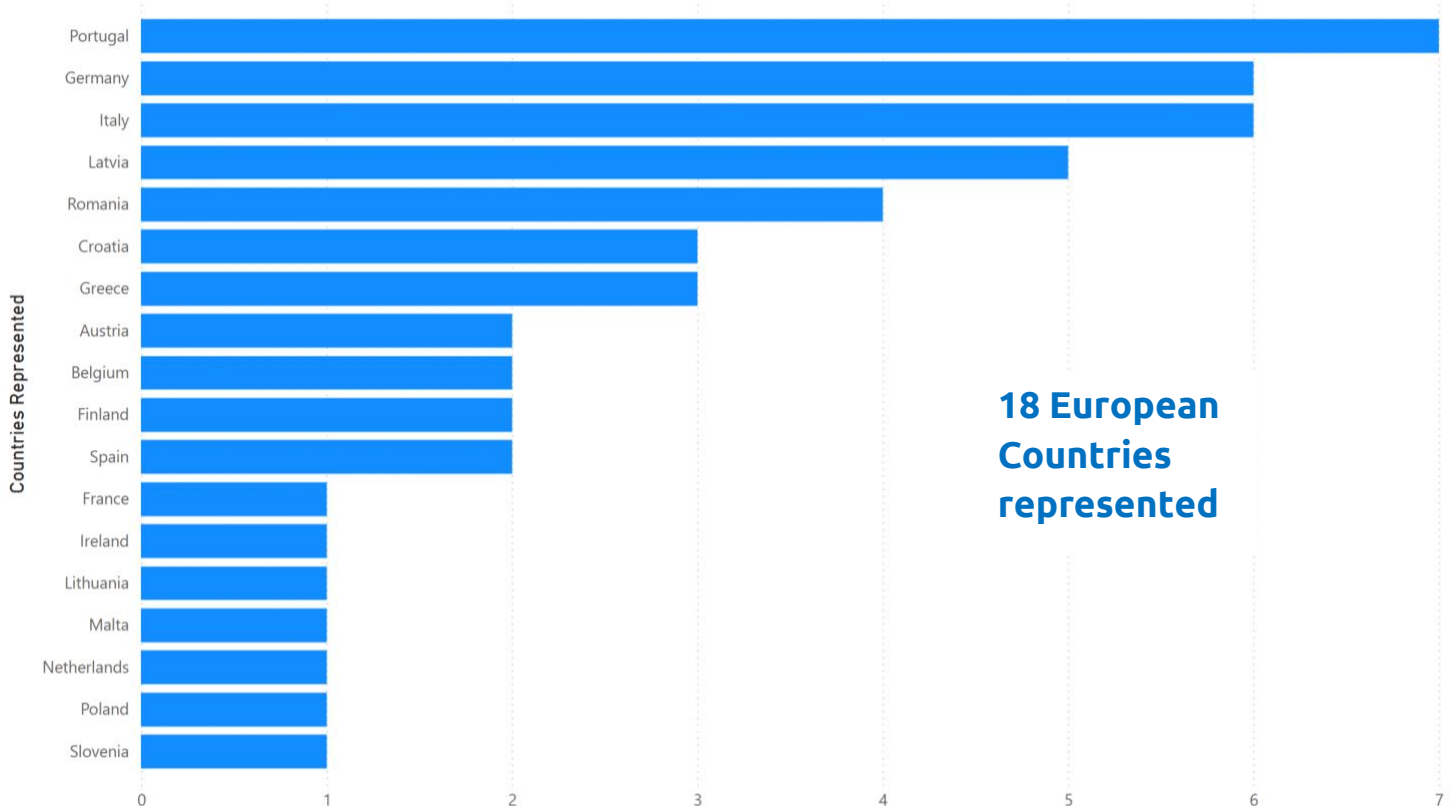
This report summarizes the key themes, stakeholder perspectives, and proposed revisions based on the feedback received, organized around the five main Actions of the Sustainable Tourism Partnership draft Action Plan.

A.1 Overview of the Consultation Process Results

The public consultation collected insights from a diverse range of stakeholders across multiple member states. The following diagrams illustrate the number and type of stakeholder groups who participated.

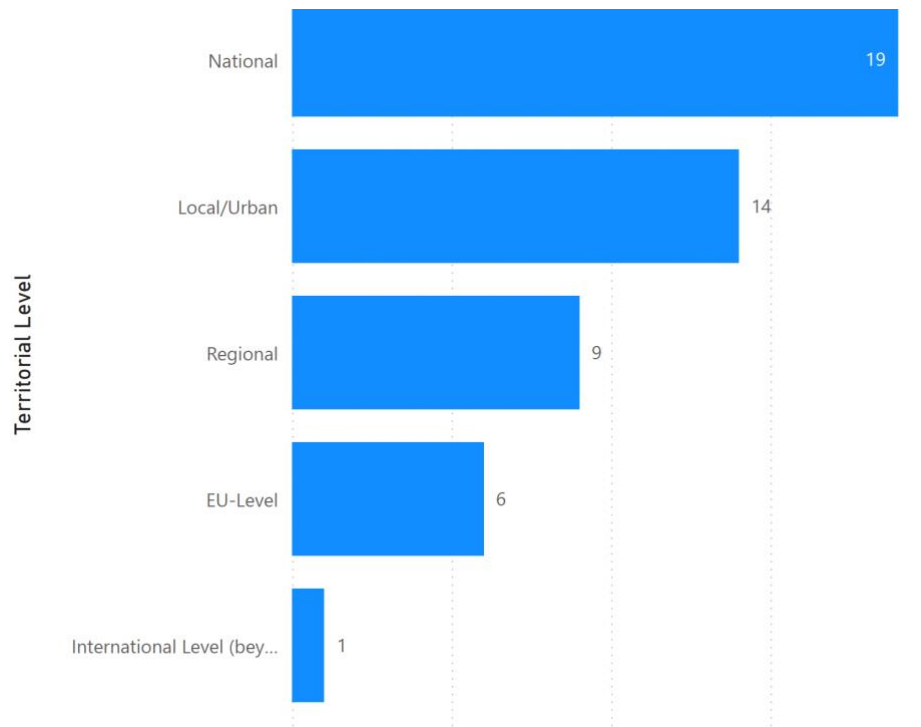


The following diagram displays the distribution of responses received from each country, highlighting the level of engagement across represented member states.

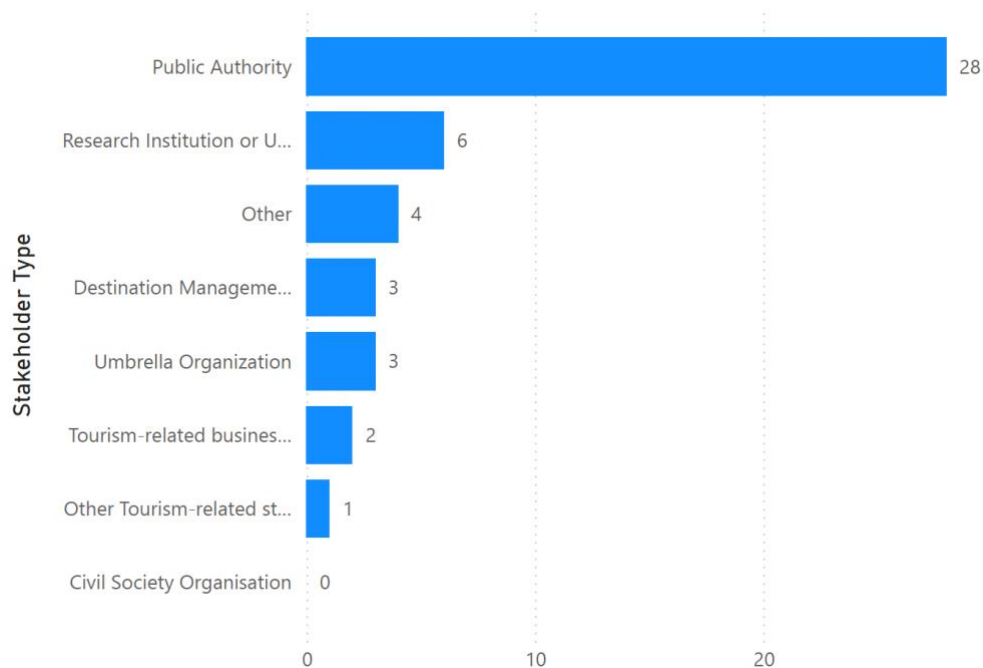


The diagrams below illustrate the distribution of contributions by territorial level and by stakeholder type providing insight into the diversity of perspectives gathered during the consultation.

Number of Contributions by Territorial Level



Number of Contributions by Stakeholder Type



B. Addressing the Feedback of the Consultation Process

B.1 Overall Feedback on the Action Plan

The **Sustainable Tourism Partnership Action Plan** received comprehensive feedback with contributions highlighting key topics and areas for improvement. In summary, while the feedback overall expressed support for the proposed actions, stakeholders identified several opportunities to broaden the scope, increase ambition, and ensure practical, measurable outcomes across the various dimensions of sustainable tourism. Key recommendations centred around strengthening synergies between actions, improving data collection, and monitoring, and ensuring that the economic, social, and environmental pillars of sustainable tourism are addressed in a balanced, cohesive manner.

Key Topics Raised and Revisions

1. Broadening the scope of Sustainable Tourism

A recurring topic in the comments was the need to expand the scope of the Action Plan to address more aspects of sustainable tourism in different scales and levels. Community involvement and the focus on smaller, less urbanized regions were seen as crucial. Many comments emphasized that the Action Plan should provide specific support and insights for rural areas, which play a significant role in tourism's environmental impacts and should be prioritized in sustainability initiatives.

- ⇒ **Revision:** Provision to include in the sample of all research/survey activities localized and community-led strategies that promote sustainable practices **in smaller and less urbanized regions**, identifying gaps and ensuring that these areas are equipped to contribute to sustainable tourism development.

2. Synergy and cross-action collaboration

Another topic was the importance of strengthening synergy between different actions and between the proposed Actions and ongoing strategies/initiatives across all levels. There was a call for more collaborative efforts between the actions, with joint surveys or shared data collection mechanisms to reach broader audiences and streamline processes. Stakeholders also provided the Partnership with inspirational evidence ongoing initiatives/projects that could be interlinked with the proposed Actions during the implementation phase.

- ⇒ **Revision:** The final Action Plan includes a specific section (Integration) which **addresses the inter-complementarity between the Actions and ensures its cross-action cohesion**. Timelines of implementation

are refined to facilitate joint data collection mechanisms. A stakeholders list and a communication strategy will be employed to streamline the contact with ongoing/existing initiatives/strategies.

3. Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

Finally, many stakeholders pointed out that climate change resilience should gain stronger focus within the Action Plan. In particular, they encouraged the incorporation of strategies that focus on adapting to climate risks, such as rising temperatures, floods, and natural disasters, all of which have direct implications for tourism infrastructure and services.

- ⇒ **Revision:** Action 1 is revised by incorporating **a climate resilience framework**, including climate risk assessments, and promoting sustainable infrastructure solutions tailored to the unique challenges posed by climate change in tourism-dependent regions. Also, Action 4 focusing on the **diversification of tourism offer is seen as a key strategy for mitigating environmental impacts** while supporting local economies.

B.2 Action-Specific Feedback

Action 1:

Guidelines for enabling climate-friendly and resilient urban destinations

Stakeholders stressed out the **importance and need for comprehensive guidelines on how tourism destinations adapt into climate urgencies**. Their comments primarily centred on the **practicality of the proposed guidelines**. While many agreed on the importance of guidelines for climate friendly urban destinations, concerns were raised about their **local applicability** emphasising the need to address specific national or local circumstances. Furthermore, stakeholders suggested focusing **on best practices and practical implementation**. Additionally, there was a call for a more **robust dissemination strategy** involving key partners and broader audiences.

Incorporation into the Action Plan:

- ⇒ **Localisation of guidelines:** The guidelines will be adapted to account for national and local variances, ensuring broader relevance and practical implementation across different regions.
- ⇒ **Inclusion of best practices:** Action 1 will incorporate a set of best practices alongside guidelines, offering clear examples of successful initiatives that cities can emulate.
- ⇒ **Strengthening dissemination:** The final text outlines a clear dissemination strategy, identifying concrete channels such as workshops, and collaborations with non-partners for knowledge-sharing.
- ⇒ **Monitoring Phase:** A fourth phase will be horizontally introduced to the entire Action Plan to ensure ongoing monitoring and evaluation, tracking the success of guidelines and their impact on achieving climate-friendly and resilient urban tourism destinations.

Action 2:

Support for Destinations to enable the use of Sustainability Certifications for the SMEs Tourism Transition

Stakeholders provided valuable input on Action 2, emphasizing **the importance of sustainability certifications** for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Many highlighted **the need to simplify certification processes** and make them more accessible, particularly for smaller businesses with limited resources. There was also a call for **financial support schemes to help SMEs achieve certification**. Another key point was the necessity of **showcasing good practices and case studies** to demonstrate the benefits of certifications, along with clear dissemination strategies. Stakeholders stressed the **importance of indicators** that reflect both day tourism and destinations with limited overnight accommodations. Additionally, some emphasized that **peer reviews and community engagement** should extend **beyond project partners** to include other local stakeholders and organizations.

Incorporation into the Action Plan:

- ⇒ **Simplified guidelines:** The Action's output will include streamlined certification guidelines, making them more practical and accessible for SMEs.
- ⇒ **Best practices and case studies:** A collection of best practices will be showcased to guide others, and indicators for day tourism will be developed to better measure sustainability impacts in various destinations.
- ⇒ **Enhanced support systems:** Technical assistance and peer mentorship programs will be incorporated, along with peer reviews involving local stakeholders and tourism associations.
- ⇒ **Dissemination and collaboration:** A robust dissemination strategy will be created to spread knowledge and encourage adoption of sustainable practices among SMEs, DMOs, and other key players.

Action 3:

Developing Competences for Tourism Professionals and Local & Regional Authorities in Digital Touristic Services & Products

Stakeholders emphasized the need for Action 3 to focus on **building comprehensive digital competencies** for tourism professionals and local/regional authorities. Feedback highlighted the importance of **aligning this Action with ongoing EU initiatives**, and ensuring it **leverages existing tools and projects** to avoid duplication. Additionally, there were concerns about the **clarity of expected outcomes**, and a desire to ensure that the digital services and products **reflect local tourism needs**. **Monitoring and sustainability** of the toolkit were also seen as crucial, along with the extension of the survey to **include a broader European audience**. Finally, stakeholders highlighted the value of **integrating training programs** that incorporate best practices, data standards, and digital competencies.

Incorporation into the Action Plan:

- ⇒ **Alignment with existing tools:** The Action will ensure that no duplication occurs by aligning with similar initiatives, leveraging existing EU-level resources.
- ⇒ **Clarified output:** Toolkit: how tourism entrepreneurs can be helped to find their needs and knowledge gaps and connect them with tech companies or service providers to improve their competences in the field of sustainable tourism.
- ⇒ **Enhanced survey reach:** The survey will be expanded to reach more stakeholders within the local context of each Partner, and dissemination efforts will be intensified to ensure a broad, inclusive response.
- ⇒ **Monitoring and KPIs:** A robust monitoring framework will be implemented to ensure transparency and accountability in the outcomes of Action 3 (Toolkit), with regular updates and evaluations based on defined KPIs.

Action 4:

More Resilient and Sustainable Destinations through Diversification of Tourism Offer

Stakeholders **widely supported the idea of diversifying tourism offerings**, emphasizing the importance of creating a range of activities that extend **beyond peak seasons and well-known tourist destinations**. They stressed the need for **geographical distribution, such as promoting rural and mountain areas**, and **incorporating green tourism**, which supports local entrepreneurship and minimizes environmental impact. Feedback highlighted the **value of peer learning activities and the importance of a robust dissemination strategy to engage stakeholders** outside the partnership. Stakeholders also called **for the inclusion of alternative forms of tourism**, such as regenerative tourism and **circular economy practices**. The need for a **monitoring phase to track the success** of diversification efforts was also a recurring theme.

Incorporation into the Action Plan:

- ⇒ **Handbook and case studies:** The Action will produce a handbook containing good practices, recommendations, and case studies on diversification. This will also include examples of alternative tourism models showcasing successful local implementations across Europe.
- ⇒ **Dissemination Strategy:** A comprehensive dissemination strategy will be developed to ensure that findings, tools, and insights reach a wide audience, including stakeholders beyond the partnership. Channels will include workshops, webinars, and promotional videos.
- ⇒ **Recommendations on financial support for new initiatives:** The development of a system of financial incentives can improve to control the trajectories of development of tourist activities in urban areas, balancing the offer across space, time, and activities. This refers, for example, to opportunities leading to the development of new and innovative tourist products and services in collaboration with relevant stakeholders and based on the main destinations' assets.
- ⇒ **Monitoring and Evaluation:** A monitoring phase will be introduced, incorporating indicators and quantitative assessments to measure the success of diversification efforts.

Action 5:

Destinations accessible for all

Stakeholders strongly supported the development of accessible tourism and **stressed the importance of creating inclusive tourist facilities, services, and products**. They emphasized that accessibility should not be limited to physical barriers but **should encompass a broader range of needs, including cognitive and sensory disabilities**. Stakeholders also noted the challenge of balancing accessibility improvements with the **preservation of historical sites**, suggesting that **research into adaptive solutions** for such locations would be valuable. Additionally, there were requests for **financial support and training programs** to help local authorities and tourism operators implement accessibility initiatives effectively. The need for **widespread dissemination of information** and clear accessibility guidelines was also highlighted.

Incorporation into the Action Plan:

- ⇒ **Broad definition of accessibility:** Action 5 adopted a comprehensive approach to accessibility, focusing not only on physical barriers but also on cognitive, sensory, and cultural accessibility. This will ensure a broader and more inclusive set of guidelines and practices.
- ⇒ **Balancing accessibility and cultural heritage:** The Action will include research and case studies on how to adapt historical sites while preserving their cultural significance. This will provide a framework for addressing accessibility challenges in such locations, and when not possible solutions will be sought beyond physical dimension of accessibility.
- ⇒ **Training and Capacity Building:** Training programs will be developed for tourism operators and public authorities, focusing on best practices for inclusive service delivery.
- ⇒ **Inclusive digital solutions:** The use of technology will be emphasized, promoting mobile apps, websites, and digital tools that offer accessible information to tourists with diverse needs. These tools will provide real-time data on accessible destinations, services, and routes.

Action 6:

Strategies on Protection of Local Retail as an Asset of Tourism

Stakeholders emphasised **the importance of preserving local retail in historical centres as a vital element of cultural authenticity and economic vibrancy**. They stressed the need for clear policies that protect local businesses from mass tourism impacts and the over-commercialization of city centres. Feedback also highlighted **the value of community engagement and participatory approaches**, ensuring that local communities benefit from tourism. Additionally, there were calls for **legal frameworks to protect local craftsmanship and limit tourist-focused businesses**. Stakeholders also recommended a **stronger monitoring phase, better dissemination strategies, and closer alignment with Action 4** to ensure a holistic approach to the diversification of tourism products.

Incorporation into the Action Plan:

- ⇒ **Policy advocacy:** The Action will emphasize advocacy for legal protections that safeguard local craftsmanship and diversify tourism offer, aligning with EU legislation on the protection of cultural heritage. This will include working with cities to develop legislation recommendations that protect diversity in local retail.
- ⇒ **Alignment with Action 4:** Action 6 will be closely aligned with Action 4, particularly regarding the diversification of tourism products and creating themed streets or areas that highlight the unique attributes of local businesses while improving the geographical distribution of tourists.

B.3 Synergies and alignment with other initiatives

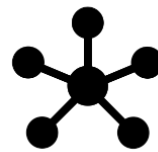
The consultation process revealed several opportunities for synergies and collaboration, with stakeholders suggesting enhanced coordination with existing EU level projects, as well as with initiatives and projects implemented on local level. Some stakeholders named the relevant initiatives and suggested specific contact persons. The Partners **concluded to execute individual communication for the specific needs and focus of each Action and propose the potential collaboration framework.** These synergies will strengthen the Action Plan by ensuring consistency with ongoing frameworks and avoiding duplication of efforts.

C. Conclusion

The public consultation process for the Sustainable Tourism Partnership Action Plan highlighted strong support for its objectives, while identifying several key areas for enhancement. The next steps include finalizing the revisions, establishing collaboration frameworks with ongoing initiatives, and preparing for the launch of the implementation phase of the Action Plan, with a clear focus on dissemination, stakeholder engagement, and monitoring. This will ensure that the Action Plan remains a dynamic and responsive tool for promoting sustainable, inclusive, and resilient tourism across Europe.

ANNEX

Urban Agenda for the EU Sustainable Tourism Partnership Constellation of Actions



Have a look at the dynamic Miro Board Infographic here:
<https://miro.com/app/board/uXjvKqrlGS-A=/>

