

Interreg Europe DETOCS Project Newsletter 6

Exchange of Experience Event in Burgas

On 8–9 October 2025, partners and stakeholders of the **DETOCS – DEcarbonising the Tourism Industry Post Covid-19 Support** project gathered in Burgas, Bulgaria, for the 6th Interregional Exchange of Experience Event and Steering Group Meeting, hosted by the Municipality of Burgas. The meeting combined policy learning and field visits, offering partners a hands-on look at innovative local approaches to decarbonising tourism and improving energy efficiency.



The Policy Improvement Workshop, “From Plans to Action: Implementing Green Tourism Policies”, facilitated by Advisory Partner Elfi-Tech, focused on the real-time implementation of regional policy improvements. Partners shared updates on their policy instruments, highlighting progress, key challenges, and transferable solutions—from energy communities and university-SME cooperation to one-stop-shop initiatives and awareness campaigns for sustainable tourism.

Study visits showcased Burgas's pioneering energy initiatives, starting with the Energy Community Burgas, launched in 2024, where a 420 kWp solar installation supplies renewable energy to public facilities. Participants also explored the Energy Office Burgas, a hub supporting citizens and SMEs with energy assessments, funding guidance, and efficiency advice. The visits concluded with a solar-powered tourist boat tour and a stop at the Chengene Skele tourist complex, where renewable energy solutions are tailored to local tourism infrastructure. The event closed with updates on Action Plan progress and upcoming project milestones, as partners prepare for the DETOCS final conference next year in the Netherlands. Through continuous learning and collaboration, DETOCS remains committed to driving policy change and sustainable energy transitions in tourism across Europe.

[Read more about the event & study visits on our website.](#)

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DETOCS



(Above) South Ostrobothnia, Finland

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Upcoming News

The final conference of the DETOCS project is set to take place in Autumn 2026...stay tuned!

Project Budget

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

Timeline

01 March 2023 – 31 May 2027



Joint Thematic Guidebook— Now Available

The DETOCS project has finalised its Joint Thematic Guidebook, a practical resource designed to support the decarbonisation of the European tourism sector. Led by the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania (CIHEAM MAICh), the guidebook brings together actionable solutions—ranging from energy-efficiency measures to innovative approaches such as virtual tourism—tailored to diverse climates, tourism profiles, and business needs. The guidebook is now being translated into all DETOCS partner languages and will soon be available online to ensure broad access for policymakers, tourism businesses, and stakeholders working towards more sustainable destinations. The Joint Thematic Guidebook is now available on the **DETOCS Project Library**.

Pictured above is the Dominican Monastery in Ptuj, one of the region's central cultural and historical landmarks featured in the guidebook.

Regional Updates

DETOCS partners are advancing sustainable tourism good practices across Europe. Read on for the latest insights!

Slovenia

DETOCS project activities in Slovenia, supported by **Local Energy Agency Spodnje Podravje (LEASP)**, have contributed to an important shift in the implementation of the Local Energy Concept (LEC) of Ptuj City Municipality. Through interregional learning and exposure to good practices—especially during the study visit to the Kuortane Olympic Center in Finland and examples from Middelburg—local stakeholders gained clear insight into how sports infrastructure can benefit from renewable energy systems while respecting heritage and operational needs. This has inspired Ptuj to expand its LEC investment planning by including the Mladika Sports Hall, which initially had not been foreseen as an energy project.



A 129 kW solar PV installation (*pictured above*) was subsequently planned for the hall, representing a €151,000 investment. The project became part of a broader €1.9 million municipal application for national subsidies for PV systems on public buildings. Approximately €1.5 million was approved, including a 60% subsidy for the sports hall, granted in February 2025. This support enabled implementation to begin in spring 2025, with full operation expected by the end of the year. Once completed, the PV system is projected to cover up to 93% of the hall's annual electricity demand, generating estimated yearly savings of €4,400.

The inclusion of the Mladika Sports Hall as an additional renewable energy investment highlights how DETOCS learning positively influenced local planning. By helping identify new opportunities and providing practical evidence from other regions, the project supported Ptuj City Municipality in strengthening its shift toward renewable energy and broadening the scope of its LEC.

Greece

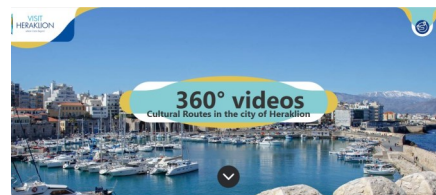
Through DETOCS exchanges, stakeholders in Crete explored the potential of virtual

tourism and digital cultural heritage, helping align the Regional Operational Programme Crete 2021–2027 with emerging digital transition priorities.

Building on these insights, the Municipality of Heraklion implemented two initiatives—Interactive Heraklion and the Digitisation and Display of Archives of the Vikelaia Library—demonstrating how DETOCS has reinforced regional priorities in digital tourism and sustainable cultural heritage. Interactive Heraklion develops digital infrastructure to present and promote the city's cultural heritage to global audiences, while the Vikelaia Library digitisation project enriches the library's archives and strengthens virtual, educational, and conference tourism.

These initiatives are expected to bring significant benefits to the region, including economic growth through expanded virtual and cultural tourism, new business opportunities, and increased investment in digital innovation. Environmentally, they reduce the need for physical travel and lower carbon emissions, supporting sustainable tourism practices. Socially and culturally, they enhance global access to Heraklion's heritage while promoting its history in innovative ways.

The next steps for the Region of Crete include further improving the policy instrument to support tourism businesses in enhancing energy efficiency and reducing carbon footprints, ensuring continued stakeholder engagement, and maintaining close cooperation with the Regional Managing Authority to secure future funding under the relevant Priority Axis. The **Region of Crete** works closely with its fellow Cretan partner, the **Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania (CIHEAM MAICh)**, to deliver project results with a lasting impact.



Malta

Following the finalisation of the SWOT and PESTLE Analysis Report on the Decarbonisation of the Tourism Sector in Malta, an Eisenhower analysis, prepared by DETOCS partners from the **University of Malta**, identified three priority issues from the 94

(continued on page 3)

SWOT points. These key challenges have directly informed the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Tourism's policy improvement plan, aimed at enhancing data availability, policy coordination, and stakeholder engagement to decarbonise the tourism sector.

First, it was highlighted that there is a significant lack of comprehensive data on Malta's current decarbonisation performance, particularly regarding hotels and other major contributors within the tourism sector. Without a clear baseline, it is difficult to set measurable and realistic decarbonisation targets. Understanding the main sources of emissions is essential to developing an effective carbon-reduction strategy. Second, policies falling under different ministries and authorities are not always well aligned or synchronised. Third, there remains limited support from the corporate sector to accelerate the implementation of decarbonisation policies.



(Above) Local stakeholders discussing Malta's draft policy improvement measures

To address the first issue, the **Malta Tourism Authority (MTA)**, under the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Tourism, has launched a Technical Support Instrument (TSI) project to develop Tourism Sustainability Indicators—including energy benchmarks—in line with the Malta Tourism Strategy 2021–2030. The project has also introduced Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA), an internationally recognised framework for assessing tourism's economic impact. The National Statistics Office is responsible for data collection. Together, the TSA and TSIs offer detailed insights into economic performance, resource use, waste generation, and community well-being, and align Malta's approach with global best practice through collaboration with the OECD.

To tackle issues two and three, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Tourism has drafted a policy improvement action plan to be implemented by February 2026. A new webpage will be hosted on the Ministry's website, providing a centralised hub for tourism stakeholders to access information on existing financial support schemes for energy-efficiency investments and co-financed projects. The site will also feature practical guidelines and tips for energy-saving measures, helping to stimulate greater engagement from tourism operators.

Finland

In April 2025, Finnish DETOCS partners in the **Region of South Ostrobothnia** held a workshop for regional stakeholders of the DETOCS project. The timing of the workshop was strategic, as the South Ostrobothnia Regional Programme was undergoing revision, with the updated version scheduled for completion by the end of 2025.

The draft of the revised programme was open for public review and comments until 3 November. At its meeting on 17 November 2025, the Regional Board considered the feedback received and discussed the resulting adjustments to the regional strategy. On 1 December 2025, the Regional Assembly approved the updated regional programme.

The revised regional strategy for South Ostrobothnia emphasises tourism as a key driver of vitality and economic growth. Feedback on the draft welcomed this stronger focus on tourism and underlined its importance for the region's future. Municipalities noted that tourism helps sustain rural services, creates jobs, and strengthens the regional image, while UNESCO Global Geopark areas were identified as crucial for promoting sustainable tourism.

In response, the Regional Council reaffirmed tourism's role within its smart specialisation framework. The strategy also links tourism to regional branding and attractiveness, aiming to increase visitor numbers and support local entrepreneurship.



Italy

The sixth DETOCS stakeholder exchange took place on 8–9 October in the Municipality of Burgas in Bulgaria, bringing together all project partners alongside several local stakeholders. The **Municipality of Campobasso** was represented by Mr. Renato Colonna of MDM greEngineering srl and Mr. Alessandro Di Lallo of GAL Molise scarl. During the meeting, the representatives of Campobasso presented the Strategic Plan of the Molise Region. This plan builds on the Cohesion Agreement between the Molise Region and the Italian Government, which identifies key interventions for territorial development in

From Good Practices to Policy Improvements

The Interreg Europe DETOCS project aims to transform tourism into a greener, low-carbon sector by fostering collaboration and the exchange of innovative solutions across Europe.

Throughout the project, **good practices** for sustainable tourism have been identified and shared across Slovenia, Greece, Malta, Finland, Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary, and the Netherlands. These range from geothermal heating and energy communities to regional sustainability strategies and virtual tourism initiatives, providing practical examples of how tourism's environmental impact can be reduced in diverse regional contexts.

A key feature of DETOCS is the link between these good practices and policy improvement. Insights gained from peer learning and study visits are actively used to refine regional and local policy instruments.

By demonstrating what works in practice, DETOCS supports municipalities and managing authorities in adopting evidence-based policies that promote energy efficiency, decarbonisation, and sustainable tourism.

Regional stakeholder boards, thematic seminars, and joint workshops ensure that both policymakers and tourism operators are engaged in shaping these improvements, helping regions implement practical measures while fostering organisational and individual learning.

To learn more about the specific policy instruments targeted by our DETOCS partners, visit [this dedicated page](#) on our website.



DETOCS Good Practice Brochure

We are delighted to present the DETOCS Good Practice Brochure, published in June 2025, which brings together inspiring sustainable tourism initiatives from all 8 partner regions across Europe. The brochure highlights practical examples of energy efficiency, waste reduction, eco-conscious travel, and other innovative solutions implemented by local tourism operators, hotels, and destinations. Its aim is to provide regional stakeholders with concrete insights and guidance to adopt and adapt best practices in their own areas, fostering collaboration and driving the transition toward a greener, more sustainable tourism sector.

All partners have distributed the brochure locally to ensure broad access, and it is also available in the **DETOCS Project Library** alongside other tools and reports designed to support and inspire sustainable tourism across Europe.

alignment with the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) and EU funding frameworks. The Molise ERDF ESF+ 2021–2027 Regional Programme, with a budget of around €400 million, supports actions designed to enhance business productivity and employment quality, place environmental protection and resource efficiency at the forefront of policy development, and reduce territorial disparities by strengthening sustainable urban strategies and supporting the National Strategy for Inland Areas.

Within this programme, particular emphasis is placed on improving the environmental performance of businesses, promoting energy efficiency and circular economy practices, advancing sustainable urban mobility, and supporting the development of energy communities and urban green infrastructure. Another core regional priority focuses on creating a sustainable, climate-resilient and smart mobility system that better connects the territory.

The presentation also introduced the wide-area strategy of Campobasso, which involves 15 municipalities working together to enhance the attractiveness and innovation potential of the region. A central element of this strategy is the promotion and establishment of energy communities, which are expected to bring environmental, economic and social benefits to local territories. For this reason, the Municipality of Campobasso expressed its intention to join the GAL Molise Energy Community, together with the other municipalities within the wider area. This shared commitment reflects the broader ambitions of the DETOCS project, which aims to support regions in developing more sustainable, resilient and forward-looking approaches to tourism.

Bulgaria

The **Municipality of Burgas** in Bulgaria has been working to address rising energy costs in its tourism and sports facilities and low public engagement in sustainable energy. As a major seaside destination, the city's municipal swimming complex hosts national and international tournaments and is highly energy-intensive. To address this, the Energy Community Burgas was launched, combining renewable energy, energy efficiency, and citizen involvement.

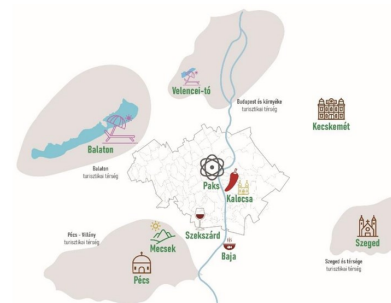
Over €220,000 was raised by citizens, SMEs, and institutions to install a 400 kWp photovoltaic system on the swimming complex, finalised in summer 2025. Smart monitoring will enhance energy efficiency and reduce consumption, demonstrating how clean energy can power prominent public infrastructure and strengthen Burgas's green tourism image.

The initiative involves the Municipality of Burgas, local businesses, citizens, and NGOs, offering a scalable model for other municipalities. Estimated annual savings are 479 MWh (€13,240) with reductions of approx. 169 tonnes of CO₂, showcasing how energy communities can support sustainable tourism while engaging the local community.

Hungary

Meanwhile in Hungary, The Regional Tourism Management System (RTMS), responsible for ensuring coordinated, sustainable and competitive tourism in the region, is now contributing to an important national initiative to strengthen the sustainable tourism ecosystem. The project is coordinated by the Ministry for National Economy, together with the Balaton Development Council and the Tokaj Wine Region Development Council.

Its main activities include regional surveys and research, a knowledge-sharing conference to present results, and the definition of future strategic collaborations. All activities will build on the outcomes of the DETOCS project and the policy recommendations developed through it.



In addition, **CDDA Nonprofit Ltd.** has recently launched a regional identity study focusing on tourism. This research explores the region's identity-shaping values and assets that are directly connected to tourism. Sustainability, along with the insights gained through the DETOCS project, plays a central role in this work.

The Netherlands

On 3 September 2025, the **Municipality of Middelburg**, together with the Sustainability Team and Impuls Zeeland, hosted a stakeholder meeting at the Zeeuwse Bibliotheek to strengthen sustainability in the local tourism sector. The event brought together 28 participants—including entrepreneurs, municipal staff, and sector representatives—to share best practices and discuss practical approaches to energy efficiency and sustainable operations.

Entrepreneurs presented real-life examples ranging from low-cost interventions to innovative technological solutions, sharing challenges, costs, and measurable benefits. This was followed by a structured debate on scaling sustainable practices, exploring energy-saving measures, subsidies, digital solutions such as virtual tourism, and collaboration opportunities between businesses and authorities. Peer learning emerged as a key theme, with participants highlighting the value of seeing practical examples to build confidence and inform decisions.



The meeting also contributed to shaping Middelburg's tourism policy, centred on: Energy efficiency and CO₂ reduction, particularly in historic buildings; visitor flow management, including virtual and digital tourism; and balancing tourism growth with liveability for residents.

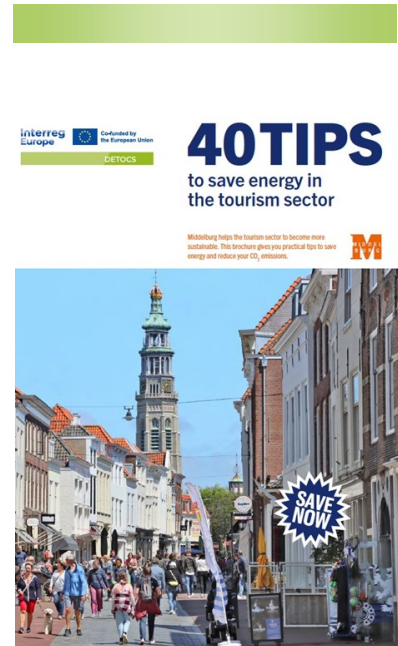
The Municipality of Middelburg published a [public reflection](#) on the event, highlighting the positive engagement and the growing momentum behind sustainable entrepreneurship in the region. By fostering dialogue between entrepreneurs and policymakers, the event reinforced Middelburg's integrated approach to sustainable tourism and demonstrated the value of regional collaboration within DETOCS.

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.

Throughout the project, partners from Slovenia, Greece, Malta, Finland, Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary, and the Netherlands identify and share best practices in sustainable tourism. These practices range from improving energy efficiency and self-sufficiency to introducing innovative, low-carbon tourism models such as virtual tourism. In addition, partners work to strengthen regional policies by facilitating capacity-building initiatives and encouraging the adoption of strategies proven effective in other regions. The project also supports tourism operators in adapting to the current energy situation by helping them reduce energy costs, increase operational efficiency, and implement renewable energy solutions. By showcasing real-world examples and providing guidance on policy and practice, DETOCS empowers stakeholders to make informed decisions that drive sustainable development and resilience in the tourism sector.

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.



You're Invited! DETOCS Final Conference in Middelburg

In Autumn 2026, the DETOCS project will host its final public dissemination event in the Netherlands, coinciding with the last project partner meeting. The event will bring together executives, policymakers, and stakeholders from all participating regions to showcase regional achievements and project results.

Stay tuned for more details!

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Project Partnership



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)

