

BRANDTour Project

# ACTION PLAN FOR THE BALEARIC ISLANDS

Exchanging best practices for more sustainable tourism



G CONSELLERIA  
O MODEL ECONÒMIC,  
I TURISME I TREBALL  
B AGÈNCIA ESTRATÈGIA  
/ TURÍSTICA ILLES BALEARS

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## List of acronyms

Acronym	Complete name
AETIB	Balearic Islands Agency for Tourism
CAEB	Balearic Confederation of Business Associations
EC	European Commission
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
EU	European Union
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
OP	Operational Programme
ROP	Regional Operational Programme
SETs	“Tourism strategic segments”, i.e. public-private roundtables on tourism in the Balearic Islands coordinated by AETIB
SMEs	Small and Medium Sized Enterprises

## Part I – Introduction

This document constitutes the Action Plan for the Balearic Islands in the framework of the Interreg Europe's BRANDTour project. It presents how the two addressed policy instruments will be impacted and potentially improved, and how the two Actions will support the diversification of tourism services/products with an increase added value and how they can potentially contribute to the de-seasonalisation of the demand while also providing instruments to increase tourism SMEs competitiveness.

This document has been elaborated in cooperation with the regional stakeholder group composed of representatives of the Balearic government, the business sector, tourism SMEs associations, the University of the Balearic Islands and local entities.

In the context of the BRANDTour project, the Agency for Tourism of the Balearic Islands (AETIB) will implement and monitor the Action Plan during 2020-2021. This Action Plan will also be part of the Balearic Islands Tourism Implementation Plan for 2019 (Pla d'Actuació 2019)<sup>1</sup>, which outlines all policies and activities concerning tourism promotion and development done by the Balearic Government in the region, affecting the four islands (Mallorca, Minorca, Ibiza and Formentera). This AETIB Annual Tourism Implementation Plan (Pla d'Actuació 2019) is approved by its Management Board, composed of public and private tourism stakeholders.

The present Action Plan follows the template defined by the Programme manual, although adapted to the local context of the Balearic region. In this sense, the document is structured in five parts. Part 1 presents the introduction, Part 2 provides general information (as required in the template provided), Part 3 sets the policy context, Part 4 describes in detail the Actions envisaged, and Part 5 explains the monitoring and follow up of the actions defined.

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<sup>1</sup> The document can be found at: <http://www.caib.es/govern/rest/arxiu/3702208>

### ***A) National context***

According to figures from the World Tourism Organization, Spain is one of the main tourist destinations in the world. Thus, in 2017 Spain again ranked third worldwide by number of international tourist arrivals (81.8 million international tourists, only behind France and the United States), and second in revenue generated by international tourism (68.0 billion USD, only behind the United States). Within Spain the archipelago of the Balearic Islands is the second most important tourist region of the country (after the region of Catalonia), one of the main tourist destinations of reference worldwide, and one of the main poles of tourism related knowledge. In 2018 the Balearic Islands received 16.583 million tourists (of which 13.86 million were international tourists and 2.723 million national tourists), which generated a total of 16,365.3 million euros in revenue. Within the archipelago, the island of Mallorca is the largest island and the most important tourist destination of the archipelago (72.04% of total tourists received by the archipelago). As in other tourist regions of the world, these important figures have caused the Balearic Islands to present an economy highly dependent on the service sector. It is estimated that the services sector represents 81.7% of the total Gross Domestic Product of the Balearic Islands, and around 76.6% of employment. More specifically, it is estimated that the tourism sector represents around 48% of Balearic GDP (directly or indirectly) and 31.5% of employment. These data show the great importance that the tourism sector represents for the Balearic economy and its society<sup>2</sup>.

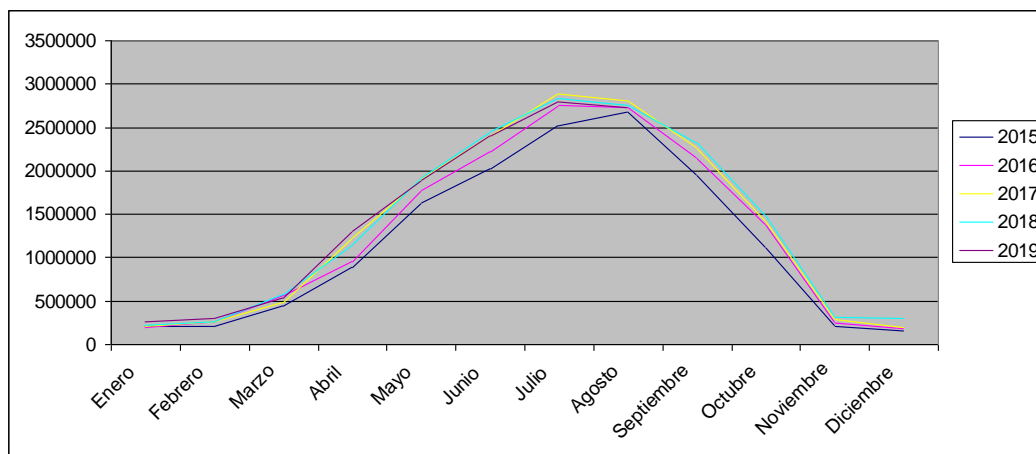
### ***B) The tourism model of the Balearic Islands***

The tourism model of the Balearic Islands is highly focused on mass tourism looking for the traditional combination of sun and beach. This model, pioneered in the Balearic Islands during the 60s and 70s, has been (and still is today) the main market segment of tourism on the islands. Logically, this segment of tourism is highly related to the meteorological conditions of the destination, causing tourists to concentrate mostly during the months of better weather (mainly from June to September). As can be seen in Figure 1, the high seasonal component in tourist arrivals is systematically repeated on an annual basis. In 2018 62.58% of the tourists who visited Mallorca were concentrated in a 4-month period (from June to September - high season), while the mid and low season months (January, February, March, April, May, October, November and December) only received 37.42% of the tourists received in 2018.

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<sup>2</sup>Study from the University of the Balearic Islands (UIB) by Doctors Bartolomé Deya and Francisco Sastre, commissioned by AETIB for BRANDTour project. October 2019

**Figure 1: Monthly tourist arrivals to the Balearic Islands**



Source: Universitat de les Illes Balears (UIB), 2019

This strong seasonal component in the arrival of tourists has important impacts on the economy and environment of the islands. From an economic point of view, the seasonality of tourist arrivals necessarily shifts to the accommodation sector, and therefore to the business sector as a whole. While during the high season (June to September) the percentage of hotels open is around 100% with average occupancy levels of over 95%, the average percentage of hotels open during the low season months (November, December, January and February) decreases considerably, and even more sharply over the past few years. Thus, if in 2008 the number of hotels that remained open in the low season months was 13.7%, in 2018 this percentage is reduced to 7.82%, while the average occupancy rates during this period do not improve, and are reduced from 43.8% to 42.55%. This strong economic seasonality translates into a high percentage of temporary employment contracts and high levels of job rotation, generating important consequences for the islands' labour market (low specialisation of human capital, reduced qualification of workers, problems for the development of professional careers within the company, difficulty in reconciling family and working life, etc.).

As far as the environment is concerned, the seasonality of tourist arrivals also has important effects on the island's natural resources, mainly due to excessive levels of pressure and human congestion during the summer months. The index of human pressure that occurs on the islands on the day of maximum influx of tourists (which generally occurs during the first fortnight of August) has undergone an exponential

evolution in recent years. Thus, while in 2004 this index stood at 1,661,408 people (August 11, corresponding to 7.39 tourists per 10 residents), in 2018 this index increased by 22.75% to stand at 2,039,552 people (August 7, corresponding to 8 tourists per 10 residents). This strong concentration of tourists in the summer months has historically generated important effects on the island's environment, such as the appearance of congestion problems in numerous natural resources (beaches, natural parks, etc.), the destruction of terrestrial and marine ecosystems, the generation of waste and wastewater, an increase in emissions of polluting gases from planes, coaches and rental cars, overexploitation of the island's water resources, etc<sup>3</sup>.

Since 2016, the goal of the Balearic Government is to promote a shift from the current "sun and beach" mass tourism to a more sustainable, competitive, responsible, and quality tourism. The current model had led to seasonality and over-exploitation of land and environmental resources, especially in the June-September period. Thus, two main measures have been put in place for this transition: the Sustainable Tourism Tax and the "*Better in Winter*" strategy.

The Sustainable Tourism Tax aims to compensate for the environmental costs involved in certain tourism activities. From May until the end of October, tourists are charged between 1€ and 4€ per person per night, depending on the type of establishment and the category. Revenue from this Tax is used for specific purposes like: environmental protection, tourism development during the low season, preservation of historical and cultural heritage, scientific research to combat the effects of climate change, social housing, water savings & efficiency, and training and employment.

For its part, the *Better in Winter* marketing strategy was designed to attract tourism in the low season -from November until the end of April. By combating seasonality, it aims to achieve a greater balance of the tourism activity and improve the competitiveness of the sector by putting in value tourism products based on authenticity.

The domestic and international political context also seems favourable for the development of more sustainable, diversified, quality tourism in the Balearics. Internally, the adoption of an ambitious Balearic Law on *Climate Change and Energy Transition* in early 2019 provides incentives for using renewable energies and foresees future bans on diesel vehicles, with clear effects for the tourism sector. Externally, geopolitical instability in North Africa and the Middle East benefited tourism in the Balearic Islands. However, upon the region's return to stability, countries like Tunisia

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<sup>3</sup> Study from the University of the Balearic Islands (UIB) by Doctors Bartolomé Deya and Francisco Sastre, commissioned by AETIB. October 2019

and Egypt could become important competitors. The Balearics need to prepare for this scenario, differentiating its offer and emphasising quality and the environment.

People's attitudes towards tourism are also shifting. 'Experience tourism' and personalisation are now privileged. Environmental awareness and digital skills are on the rise. An increasing amount of tourists do no longer stay in a single location during their holidays, preferring to explore a variety of places. These are all factors that the Balearic tourism sector needs to consider in order to retain and attract tourists in keeping with the new strategic objectives.



## Part II – General information

**Project:** Brandtour

**Partner organisation:** Agency for Tourism Strategy of the Balearic Islands (AETIB), Balearic Regional Ministry of Economic Model, Tourism & Employment

**Other partner organisations involved (if relevant):** N/A

**Country:** Spain

**NUTS2 region:** Balearic Islands

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### Part III- Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
	<input type="checkbox"/>	European Territorial Cooperation programme
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instruments addressed:

- ERDF Operational Programme Balears Region 2014-2020
- AETIB's Implementation Plan (Pla d'Actuació 2019)

This Action Plan addresses two policy instruments. The first one, as outlined in the Application Form, is ERDF Operational Programme Balears Region 2014-2020. The second one is AETIB's Implementation Plan (Pla d'Actuació 2019). AETIB currently counts with an Action Plan for the year 2019 and is in the process of finalising the Action Plan for 2020.

#### **1. ERDF Operational Programme Balears Region 2014-2020**

The actions designed under BRANDTour project address Priority Axis 3 in the Operational Programme: Wellness tourism and quality of life; design, production and internationalization of innovative products and services for wellness tourism and quality of life, based on knowledge and highly qualified human capital. Thematic Objective 3 in the Operational Programme, specifically Priority PI.3D, aims at supporting the capacity of the SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets. This policy instrument intends to keep tourism a top economic activity for the Balearic Islands. It supports the engagement of the public and private sectors to adapt to changes and boost the island's main attractions, and aims to tailor the supply to the constantly evolving tourism market and, above all, to establish a development model based on responsible tourism.

The Regional Operational Programme devotes 4.45% of the total resources to

Thematic Objective 3. Thanks to BRANDTour, tourism-related SMEs are supported through the creation and development of new sustainable products and SMEs' competitiveness is increased thanks to the launching of supporting schemes. These actions encourage the tourist demand and positively contribute to the diversification of the regional tourist offer. Since these new products will enhance the region's tourist resources and unique values with specific products, such as romance activities, they will help to extend the tourist season and, in the long term, shape the demand curve and combat the seasonal nature of the region's destination.

The BRANDTour project Action Plan is meant to have a positive impact on this policy instrument mainly through the implementation of new projects that will contribute to the improvement of Balearic tourism-related SME's competitiveness.

This will be accomplished thanks to the two actions designed:

- Creation of new romance-related tourism products (Action 1); and
- Capacity building and training schemes to tourism-related SMEs (Action 2).

Through the implementation of **Action 1**, new tourism products will be created (linking romance plans with other tourism products) and specialised training will be delivered to the relevant professionals. This will enable the transfer of knowledge to be strengthened thanks to the cooperation between education centres and private companies (most of them SMEs) in the sector. Such collaboration will contribute to the increase in the competitiveness of local SMEs, as intended by the Operational Programme 2014-2020 in its specific Priority PI.3D 'Support to the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to get involved in innovation processes'. This Action is directly linked to Phase 1 of the BRANDTour Project where, as a result of the exchange of good practices carried out, the Agency for Tourism of the Balearic Islands and the regional stakeholders chose to adapt Tuscany's activities related to "romance tourism" to the specificities and the context of the Balearic Islands.

This action will also help to achieve the goal outlined in the Application form 'number of enterprises introducing new products in the tourism market', as the potential combination of tourism products for more attractive romantic plans would give local/regional enterprises incentives for introducing innovative, integrated products in the market.

In parallel, **Action 2** will impact the Operational Programme 2014-2020 by offering and setting up new projects and initiatives on training that will contribute towards building capacity and directly improving SMEs competitiveness in the region (in this particular case, tourism-related SMEs). These new projects will contribute to the attainment of the OP's Specific Objective 3.4.1 and, furthermore, should enable an improvement in the performance of this Priority Axis of the Programme which focuses on the general increase of the competitiveness of SMEs in economy key sectors of the region (such as tourism).

In general, and as stated under PART 1.B of the Action Plan (The Tourism Model of the Balearic Islands), the islands' SMEs suffer from reduced competitiveness, given the low investment in R&D, and reduced presence in international markets. Therefore, actions to tackle these will involve the incorporation of technologies and improved access to funding, in particular in innovative and high added value sectors. The training courses designed through this Action will be specific, rather than generic, and focus on those areas which bring most added value to the sector, directly contributing towards the increase in SMEs competitiveness and internationalisation.

## **2. AETIB's Implementation Plan (Pla d'Actuació 2019)**

Further to the initial Policy Instrument included in the Application Form, this Action Plan seeks to also impact on a second key strategy instrument for the implementation of the regional tourism policy in Balears: The AETIB's Implementation Plan (Pla d'Actuació 2019). This Plan sets up the overall objectives of this key economic sector in the islands as well as the main initiatives to be supported with the ultimate goal of increasing the growth and competitiveness of the sector.

In particular, the Plan contains two clearly marked strategies: the development of sustainability as an element undermining the impacts of tourism activity and improving the region's positioning, and the development of the tourism strategy for the improvement of the international positioning of the Balearic Islands. Each strategy contains among others, the following specific actions:

A) Balearic Islands Tourism Strategy, which includes as objectives:

1. To promote research and improvement of tourist products, technology and the tourist environment.

2. To establish commercial knowledge and communication skills as fundamental elements in the development of the main economic industry of the Balearic Islands, which is tourism.
3. Coordinate the promotion of the different tourist brands of the Balearic Islands, the promotion and articulation of inland and inter-island tourism,
4. The study and analysis of tourist activity,
5. Exercise the powers granted to it by the Statute of Autonomy.

B) Sustainability strategy and management of sustainable tourism tax funds, which has the following objectives:

1. To comply with the control of the execution of the projects proposed by the Commission for the Promotion of Sustainable Tourism and approved by the Governing Council.
2. To approve and process the subsidy and transfer files to the beneficiaries of the projects approved by the Commission for the Promotion of Sustainable Tourism. And follow up, from start to finish.
3. To submit to permanent financial control by the General Intervention of the Autonomous Community.
4. To monitor compliance with the communication plan.
5. To manage the appropriations in section 37 of the CAIB budget, relating to the Funds for the Promotion of Sustainable Tourism.

From the above, **Action 1** will impact the specific policy instrument AETIB's Implementation Plan, helping it to achieve the two main strategic objectives outlined in the Plan: the development of sustainability as an element undermining the impacts of tourism activity and improving the Region's positioning, and the development of the tourism strategy for the improvement of the international positioning of the Balearic Islands.

In concrete and practical terms, the impact of the Action Plan will mainly refer to:

1. The AETIB's Implementation Plan "Internal training schemes", which foresees the provision of specific training for, for instance, innovative management of destinations. With the BRANDTour Action on Romance tourism, the AETIB's

Implementation Plan could be further expanded in subsequent versions of the Plan (in particular the one for 2020) by including new training and capacity building schemes for multiple activities involved in specific romantic tourism options/products, such as the one on weddings.

2. In addition, the activities comprised in Step 3 of this action (promotional activities) are meant to imply some level of impact with regards to Line 6- Communication and Marketing of the AETIB's Implementation Plan by enlarging its scope, including promotional and marketing activities regarding 'romance-related' new tourism products. In other words, through the implementation of the BRANDTour Action Plan, the Balearic Islands will be further promoted as a tourism destination for romance through new platforms, strategically aiming to increase visits in the low season in order to align with the AETIB's objective of combating seasonality and fostering diversification in the tourism offer. Therefore, the existing communication and marketing strategies would be expanded and potentially improved.

**Action 2** will similarly impact directly this policy instrument. In particular, AETIB's Implementation Plan for 2019 includes a specific line of action (Line 3) on training, focused on *'contributing to the continuous training of tourism professionals, so that they can be adapted to the new demands, raising awareness of the tourism sector on issues such as accessibility, sustainability, tourism quality, CSR, gender equality, strategic segments, etc., and promoting a culture of quality service in the Balearic Islands, thanks to a better education'*.

Action 2 of the BRANDTour Action Plan, through the delivery of high quality specific training, will contribute to increasing tourism-related SMEs competitiveness and is therefore clearly embedded within the strategic focus of AETIB's Implementation Plan for 2019 and will be directly included in the coming Plan for 2020. Since tourism is a services-based activity, its overall quality and delivery depends on the human capital of those in charge of providing the service. Therefore, it is a common understanding that increasing tourism-related SMEs' human capital and competitiveness will have a direct positive impact on the quality of the tourism services provided.

As a way of summary on the potential impacts of Actions 1 and 2 of the BRANDTour Action Plan, it is foreseen that the future versions of the AETIB's Implementation Plan (starting with the one which is currently being prepared for the year 2020 by AETIB's officers) will be influenced and will integrate the contents of both Actions in its general Strategy and its framework for action.

This, in other words, will represent embedding in the new Plans the new products and activities developed and tested in the framework of the BRANDTour project Action Plan.

Considering the above, and the background and policy context, and in continuation with the exchange of best practices carried out by the project partners, the full description of the two main proposed actions follow in PART IV of the Action Plan. The design of these actions has been carefully elaborated after the four stakeholder meetings which have taken place in the Balearic region<sup>4</sup>, the exchange of good practices with other project partners in the BRANDTour project, and some further consultations with the relevant actors and stakeholders in the region.

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<sup>4</sup> First Stakeholders Meeting: 11 September 2017  
Second Stakeholder Meeting: 16 March 2018  
Third Stakeholder Meeting: 30 April 2019  
Fourth Stakeholder Meeting: 16 December 2019

## Part IV – Details of the actions envisaged

### Action 1: Romance in the Balearic Islands

#### Background

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This Action is inspired by the practice shared by Tuscany Region, *Love me in Tuscany*. Its aim is to develop an integrated package of romance tourism activities combined with other tourism products, while improving the technical specialisation of professionals in the sector.

#### Lessons learnt from the Tuscany experience

Research in the sector highlighted that weddings were one of the reasons that prompted international tourists to visit Tuscany. The goal was to promote Tuscany as wedding destination at national and international level. The project was divided into 3 parts:

- a) Territorial check for operators.
- b) Innovative brochure which is part of a book of the series "Love me in Italy", whose theme of the itinerary is romantic trip and journeys. The brochure was edited in 2014 in Italian, English and German. And edition of a video made by Florence Convention Bureau for the project: "Tuscany for weddings" and a specific App.
- c) Training and information aimed at Tuscan tour operators and industry professionals to involve them in the creation, promotion and implementation of wedding events. It was carried out in cooperation between Toscana Promozione Turistica and Florence Convention & Visitors Bureau. Additionally, congresses and seminars were organised in Tuscany for wedding planners (WIM Florence and DWP Congress). The training was done through meetings with public and private stakeholders. Similarly, professionals attended specific B2B and B2C fairs and events.

The strategy favoured the collaborations between the 3000 businesses of the supply chain and has led an increase of romantic journeys and weddings events, estimated at 2567 in 2016 (+30.8% from 2014) for a total of 500.000 overnight stays.



*Romance in the Balearic Islands* understands romance tourism broadly, foreseeing a variety of activities: romantic getaways, weddings, renewal of wedding vows, engagement parties, anniversary celebrations, etc. They will be referred as ‘romantic plans’ in this document.

The Balearic Islands are already familiar with romance tourism. In 1965, the regional government launched the campaign *Luna de Miel en Mallorca* (“Honeymoon in Majorca”) to promote the island as a honeymoon destination in the national market. Additionally, the Balearic Island’s official tourism website includes a page devoted to specific tourism options for couples proposing plans such as “going for a swim in a cove, a weekend of agro-tourism, a relaxing spa, concerts and restaurants to please everyone”.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the Balearics clearly constitute a fertile ground for this Action.

Fostering romance tourism could have a significant impact on the region. First, it would benefit a large number of tourism agents: from event planners and organisers to hotels, restaurants and tourist agencies. Similarly, it would attract a wider range of visitors, especially from foreign countries. Moreover, it would contribute to reducing seasonality, as some of its activities are suitable for the winter months. Thus, *Romance in the Balearic Islands* would perfectly fit within the existing *Better in Winter* strategy and bring a big reward in terms of image for the islands.

There is a growing demand for romance tourism, especially from the LGBT community. Important to bear in mind is that most customers come from a medium-high socioeconomic background, who particularly appreciate being offered a personalised experience. Participants tend to stay in four and five stars hotels. Often, the reasons for couples to travel to destinations such as the Balearic Islands include the pleasant weather, the beauty of the landscape and the lower costs compared to other destinations. Occasionally, there are family attachments to the islands (e.g. for Spaniards living elsewhere).

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.illesbalears.travel/es/baleares/pareja>

At the same time, there is an increasing need for more qualified training for tourism professionals. Romance tourism particularly requires high specialisation and keeping up with new trends and developments.

For many years, the most common way for tourist to arrange their holidays in the Balearics was through travel agencies. However, nowadays only 37,8% of tourists visiting the islands resort to travel agencies. In the current circumstances, this percentage is expected to continue lowering.

Therefore, this Action will try to address both the need for more qualification in the sector and to combat the difficulties faced by the travel agencies in the Balearic Islands.

## Action

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The following activities are foreseen for the successful implementation of this Action:

### **Step 1 – Integration of romance plans with other tourism products**

- 1.1 Contact the main tourism stakeholders with a view to establishing partnerships to combine romantic plans with other tourism activities such as wine tourism, luxury (shopping), nature (sunset experiences, excursions), sports (golf, sailing, horse riding), wellness (spa) and culture (guided tours). A mixed experience will appear more attractive than a single one and bring benefits for a wider amount of agents involved.
- 1.2 Liaise with the Insular Councils of Majorca, Minorca and Ibiza and consult them on the most appropriate regional products and activities to combine with romantic tourism. Explore cooperation for tailored tourism promotion for each island.
- 1.3 Conduct research on real estates and charming villas available on the territory to host weddings. Contact owners and seek to establish agreements for cooperation. Produce a list of properties available for romantic plans.
- 1.4 Discuss progress in the implementation of this Action in the framework of regular SETs (public-private roundtables with tourism stakeholders coordinated by the AETIB) and debate any necessary adjustments.

### **Step 2 – Specialised training for tourism professionals**

- 2.1 Consult experts in the sector of romance tourism on the specific knowledge and skills that tourism professionals generally lack. Arrange a brainstorming session with them to agree on the content of courses to be delivered as well as the instructors, costs and timeline.
- 2.2 Involve highly qualified instructors for the delivery of training sessions on romance tourism. They may come from partner organisations (wedding planners), or specialised institutions such as the Escola d'Hosteleria de les Illes Balears (Hospitality School of the Balearics).

2.3 Deliver specialised training for tourism professionals from partner organisations who will be involved in this Action. Face-to-face courses will be preferred, while also offering online options. The low season (from November to March) would be the optimal timing for the delivery of the sessions.

### **Step 3 – Promotional activities**

3.1 Design a communication strategy to promote *Romance in the Balearic Islands*. It should include a consistent methodology for reaching out to target audiences, tailoring messages, coordinating with stakeholders, organising short thematic campaigns on each of the proposed romantic activities, and monitoring performance of communication activities.

3.2 Create a specific website for this initiative, including links to partner organisations. Spanish, English and German versions are advised, as in 2018 nearly a third (28,17%) of all tourists who came to the Balearic Islands were German, and 22,3% were British.

3.3 Create a Twitter and an Instagram account for *Romance in the Balearic Islands* and nurture it with images of the activities/products offered, as well as relevant news. Promote this initiative in AETIB's social media channels and website.

3.4 Design promotional paper brochures and e-brochures in Spanish, English and German. Have the e-brochure available for free download from the *Romance* website.

3.5 Participate in relevant tourism forums, congresses and conventions at national and international level. Use these occasions to hand out brochures and strengthen cooperation with other operators in the sector.

### **Step 4- Appraisal and lessons learnt to inform future developments**

4.1 Consult all the stakeholders involved in the implementation asking for their opinion on the development and delivery of the Action.

4.2 Elaborate a Final Report summarising all the activities undertaken, providing a reflection on lessons learnt and recommendations for improving *Romance in the Balearic Islands*.

### Players involved

The participation of local stakeholders proved crucial for the success of this Action in Tuscany Region. Thus, it will be necessary to involve the business sector (represented by the Balearic Confederation of Business Associations, the Travel Agents Association- AVIBA), tourism SMEs, local and regional entities and the University of the Balearic Islands.

The active engagement of the government of the Balearic Islands –particularly, the AETIB- would also be decisive for the implementation of this Action.

A group of highly qualified instructors will also be involved in this Action for the delivery of specialised training for tourism professionals.

### Timeframe

An estimation of 24 months will be needed for the successful implementation of this Action. The following graph offers a suggested timeline structured in sets of three months (Q: quarter):

**Table 1: Proposed timeline for the implementation of the Action**

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
<b>Step 1-Integrating romance with other products</b>								
Contact with stakeholders and establishment of partnerships mixing romance with other products								
Liaise with Insular Councils to explore potential cooperation								

Research on real estates and villas								
SETs to discuss implementation of the Action								
<b>Step 2- Specialised training</b>								
Consultations on specific needs for romance tourism in terms of training. Identification of instructors and agreement on content and costs								
Development of courses and involvement of instructors								
Delivery of training courses								
<b>Step 3- Promotional activities</b>								
Design of communication strategy								
Development of <i>Romance in the Balearic Islands</i> website and social media channels								
Production of promotional materials								
Participation in relevant forums and congresses								
<b>Step 4- Conclusion</b>								
Final stakeholder consultations								
Final Report								
On-going monitoring and evaluation								

## Costs

Direct costs directly linked to the implementation of this Action will be mainly those referring to the production of promotional materials and the upholding of the training and capacity building seminars. These estimated costs will be the following:

*Production of Promotional Materials: 6,000€*

- Online developments: €1500 (provisional sum for the website, re-directs, Google Analytics dashboard, QR codes, etc.).
- Advertisements and publications: €2,500
- Print products: €2,000

*Upholding of the training and capacity building seminars: 6,000€*

The total estimated costs for this Action are 12,000€

### **Funding sources**

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Funding sources for the development of Action 1 will be provided by a combination of the ERDF Operational Programme and AETIB's own funds.

## Action 2: Increasing tourism competitiveness through private and public cooperation

### Background

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This action is inspired by the Latvian **experience**, the 2014-2020 ERDF Operational Programme in Balears and the **Tourism Agency's Action Plan**, although adapted to the regional context and needs identified in the Balearic region.

#### Lessons learnt from the Latvian experience

In the exercise of exchanging good practices among the partners of the BRANDTour project, Latvia's example of public-private cooperation was chosen as one of the good practices that could be implemented in the Balearic Islands.

To help the SME's in their struggle for tourists, the Latvian government developed a support program from EU funds to boost international competitiveness for tourism SMEs. The programme provided financial (grants) and non-financial (marketing) support to tourism SMEs.

The main objectives of the support programme were:

- To promote Latvia as a sustainable tourism destination
- To increase tourism SME's international competitiveness
- Tourism SME's entry into new external markets

The programme was implemented through 2 main activities: national and/or individual stands and marketing activities.

The good practice within the marketing activities lied in organising media and tour operator exploratory visits. Tourism entrepreneurs as well as associations closely cooperate with the Latvian Investment and Development Agency to organise the programs for visits. Tourism service providers choose to show their products for free, accommodation sector offers to stay with discount, airBaltic issues free airline tickets, restaurants offer free meals or discounts, there are free of charge entrance tickets to museums and tourism sights, tour guides etc.

SMEs are interested in collaborating with the Latvian Investment and Development Agency and offering their products for free because in exchange they receive media coverage or might be included in a tourism route afterwards. Apart from that, tourism professional and regional associations meet with the Latvian Investment and



Development Agency and other tourism professionals on a regular basis, to discuss about the types of marketing activities and tourism markets for the following period. This way the regional marketing activities are carried out in line with SME's needs.

The main stakeholders and beneficiaries of the practice are small and medium tourism enterprises and institutions, tourists and regional destinations.

## Action

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The final design and implementation of this Action will involve the following steps:

### **Step 1: definition of key actors and target groups**

1. Consultations with key actors, especially the SMEs tourism associations and federations, to identify skills gaps and specific needs in training for SMEs operating in the tourism sector in the Balearic Islands.

In order to ensure the appropriateness and effectiveness of the action to be implemented, all relevant stakeholders will be consulted on a one-to-one basis, as their inputs will be used for the specific design and implementation of the training courses.

2. **Definition of target groups.**

After the consultation with all relevant stakeholders and potential beneficiaries, the target groups to which training courses will be directed will be defined. In general terms, the training programmes will be aimed at SMEs working in tourism-related activities, with a particular focus on micro-SMEs (up to ten employees), which comprise the vast majority of the region's enterprises. Some of the providers who could be eligible for these courses are lodging providers, transport providers, restaurant and catering, etc. What exactly is meant by tourism-related sectors and which types of activities are eligible for funding will be defined during the experts' consultation.

## **Step 2: Design and validation of pilot training courses**

### **3. Design of pilot training courses.**

The specific content of the pilot training courses will be drawn from the consultation with the key actors involved, potential beneficiaries, and training experts. Given the existing offer of training for tourism-related SMEs in the region, the training courses designed will be specific, rather than generic, and focus on those areas which bring most added value aimed at increasing SMEs competitiveness and internationalisation.

In terms of content, some of the initial topics that have been put forward by the relevant stakeholders are:

- Amadeus
- Languages
- Customer service
- Online marketing: web promotion design
- Coaching
- Social networks, community manager training...
- Revenue management

Additionally, there will be a topic that can be covered in a transversal way in the pilot courses, which will be related to improving local consumption, circular economy, and other topics with the aim of improving sustainability and reducing the environmental impact of the sector.

The form of delivery of the courses will be ultimately defined after the consultation with all relevant actors, but will probably be a combination of online and classroom-based training, given the initial analysis and study of the region's needs.

### **4. Validation from AETIB.**

The Agency for Tourism in the Balearic Islands and the relevant actors will validate the design and implementation plan for the training courses to be delivered, to ensure common understanding among all relevant players involved and successful delivery.

### **Step 3: Promotion, dissemination and selection of applicants**

5. **Dissemination of training courses among potential beneficiaries**, through the relevant associations and federations to ensure a good reach to all potential SMEs, which may be interested in the training courses provided. This will ensure a good participation rate and number of candidates.

6. **Selection of applicants.**

Local expert SME associations and federations will be in charge of allocating the courses to the SMEs who have applied for them. They will ensure that courses are allocated where they add the most value. Given the variability in the Balearic labour market, these courses should in principle be open to all participants irrespective of their employment status, to ensure they reach all the relevant potential beneficiaries.

### **Step 4: Delivery of training courses and collection of feedback**

7. **Delivery of training courses.**

The form and implementation of the training courses delivered will be defined consulting with experts and adapted to the regional context. Particularly, the training courses will be delivered either online or classroom-based. Timing on when courses take place will also be carefully defined, with an initial preference to avoid delivering courses during the high tourism season. Courses will be delivered by expert specialised organisations.

8. **Collection of feedback.**

Following good practices, in order to be able to capture satisfaction and usefulness of the courses taught, a brief survey will be distributed among participants taking place in the training courses asking them to rate their satisfaction with the courses, how useful they found them and whether they would attend again or recommend the courses. Feedback will be collected and analysed with the aim of improving and scaling up training courses for SMEs in the future.

## Players involved

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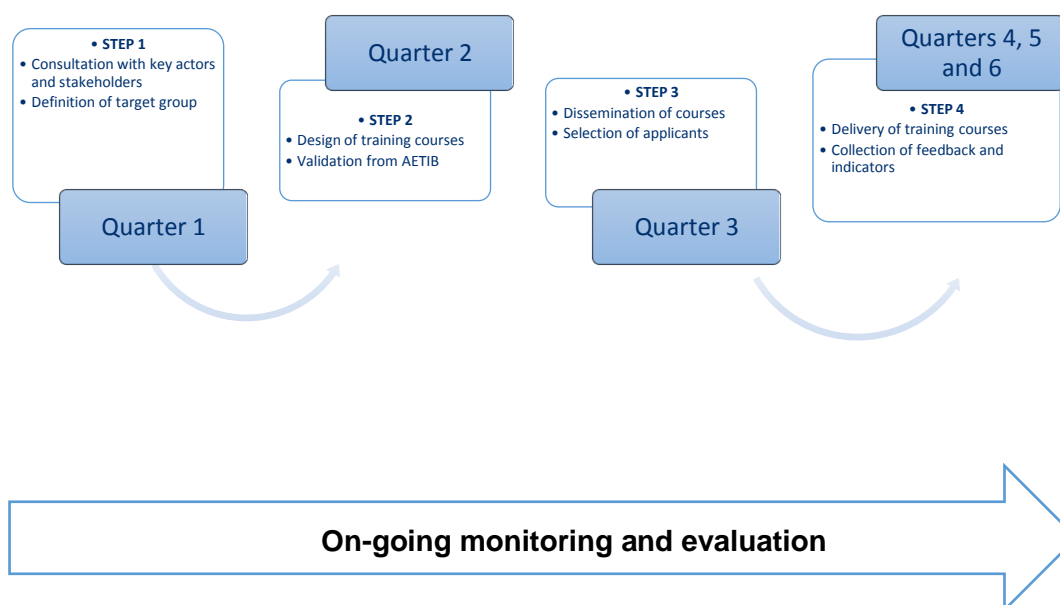
The main players involved in this action are the University of the Balearic Islands (UIB), together with the Federation of Small and Medium Enterprises in Mallorca (PIMEM), the Balearic Confederation of Business Associations, and the Travel Agents Association-AVIBA), to identify specific training needs among eligible SMEs.

The active participation of the government of the Balearic Islands –particularly, the AETIB, and of FELIB (representing local entities)- would also be decisive for the implementation of this Action.

## Timeframe

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This action will be delivered within a year following the approval of the Action Plan. The specific timeframe for delivery of each of the sub-actions will be included in the Action Plan.



## Costs

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The estimated costs for the design and delivery of this pilot action are estimated at 20,000 euros.

## Funding sources

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Funding sources for the training courses to be provided will come from AETIB's allocation.

## 5. Part V – Follow up and monitoring of the Actions' progress

In order to ensure an effective delivery and implementation of the actions contained in this Action Plan, follow up and monitoring activities will be designed, as well as the development of relevant indicators.

Firstly, periodic meetings between the implementing partners to ensure actions are running smoothly and that any identified challenges or obstacles are quickly overcome and addressed in order to avoid unintended consequences. As part of this monitoring process, progress regarding the implementation of these actions will be discussed in the framework of regular SETs (public-private roundtables with tourism stakeholders coordinated by the AETIB).

Secondly, and in addition to the monitoring activities previously outlined, a set of indicators will be defined. These will enable the relevant parties to monitor progress and spot deviations from the envisaged delivery plan so correction measures can be applied in a timely and effective manner. The indicators proposed will therefore be specific, and enable the actions to be analysed in a concrete and measurable way. Following good practice guidelines when developing monitoring indicators, these will be specific, measurable, achievable, replicable and timely. Monitoring and evaluation should observe the relation between the target and projected values and there should be a timely response and there should be schemes to contribute to achieving the target values of the indicators.

A preliminary set of monitoring and output indicators for both actions could be:

### **Action 1: Romance tourism**

- Number of courses given to specific training for agents and providers
- Number of people/agents who have applied for the courses
- Number of people/agents who have attended the courses
- Number of people/agents who have completed the courses
- Number of organised romance events
- Average number of attendees per event
- Average budget per event
- Number of weddings of foreign or non-Balearic national couples

- Number of followers on different social media networks
- Relevant KPIs of thematic campaigns (followers, traffic, subscriptions..)

### **Action 2: Training schemes to SMEs**

- Number of courses given to specific training for agents and tourism providers
- Number of SMEs who have applied for the courses
- Number of SMEs who have attended the courses
- Number of SMEs who have completed the courses
- Average length (in hours) of the courses taught
- Average satisfaction with courses
- Usefulness of courses rated by SMEs/participants
- Likelihood of SMEs/participants to recommend courses

Other indicators such as participants' ranking of their improvement in competencies could be included. The monitoring system will be further developed during the final version of this Action Plan, after definition of the concrete sub-actions that will take place and their validation with the relevant stakeholders.

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**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

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