



ACTION PLAN

Val-de-Marne Tourism Board

River tourism development along Marne river



- January 2022 -



Part I – General information

Project: STAR Cities – Sustainable Tourism for the Attractivity of Riverside Cities

Partner organisation concerned: Val-de-Marne Tourism Board

Country: FRANCE

NUTS2 region: Île de France

Contact person: Camille Chowah, project coordinator

Email address: cchowah@tourisme-valdemarne.com

Phone number: +33 1 55 09 30 70

Part II – Introduction

Since a few years, Val-de-Marne Tourism board has been working on the structuration of the Marne river tourism offer and has built up a partnership of Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) promoting the river. These DMOs are implementing a joint action plan in order to face the challenges of river tourism development in the context of the Greater Paris environment and the post-covid crisis. This group named “Cap sur la Marne” is composed of Val-de-Marne Tourism Board, Seine-Saint-Denis Tourism Board, Paris-Vallée de la Marne Tourist Office, and Marne-et-Gondoire Tourist Office. Closely involved in STAR Cities learning process, this working group has prepared this Action Plan in cooperation with the managing authorities of the policy instrument.

The initial policy instrument is addressed : Regional Tourism and Leisure Development Plan 2017-2021. This year, Val-de-Marne Tourism Board applied for regional funding to develop new activities on the river. Several good practices from STAR Cities will be used for the implementation of this new project which can be consider as a policy change related to the RTLDP 2017-2021 through the implementation of a new project.

In addition, we are addressing the next programming period of the same policy instrument, starting in 2022. Val-de-Marne Tourism Board and the key stakeholders are involved in the elaboration of the next Regional Tourism and Leisure Development. They are trying to influence the managing authority in order to include river tourism as one of the priorities of the next plan.



Indeed, river tourism is a real opportunity to be better develop in the region in the context of the post covid-19 crisis : development of local tourism (staycation), slow tourism and ecotourism trends, etc.

The policy instrument 2022-2026 will be addressed through the implementation of the pilot action “Marne River Tour” approved by Interreg Europe monitoring committee in November 2021. It is also a policy change through the implementation of a new project.

Schedule and methodology to elaborate the Action Plan:

The development of the Action Plan has started just after the 1st STAR Cities learning session in Kaunas in September 2019. Since, several steps have been made :

- First meeting with key stakeholders in January 2019 to collect ideas of actions after Kaunas session
- In July 2020 we presented our schedule for Action Plan preparation to all stakeholders
- 11 February 2021 : Meeting with the team + 1 stakeholder : collecting ideas on Governance & Cooperation
- 12 February 2021 : Action Plan workshop, bilateral discussions with partners and presentation of the draft of Action Plan
- 8 March 2021 : Submission of the 1st draft to the JS in the framework of the mid-term review
- 3 May 2021 : Stakeholder meeting, elaboration of the Action Plan
- 5-6 May 2021 : Action Plan workshop, bilateral discussions with partners and presentation of the draft of Action Plan
- 31 May 2021 : Submission of an pilot action request for the Marne River Tour
- 9 November 2021 : Approval of the pilot action by the monitoring committee
- 17 November 2021 : Stakeholder meeting, finalisation of the Action Plan



Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact: Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
 European Territorial Cooperation programme
 Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instruments addressed :

Regional Tourism and Leisure Development Plan 2017-2021

Regional Tourism and Leisure Development Plan 2022-2026

Further details on the policy context and the way the action plan should contribute to improve the policy instruments:

The Regional Tourism and Leisure Development Plan (RTLDP) determines the specific objectives and financial conditions for tourism development planning in Ile-de-France. The 2 actions presented in this Action Plan intend to influence this policy instrument, one action has already started and address the current plan 2017-2021, the other one address the next strategy 2022-2026 under elaboration.

In the current regional strategy 2017-2021, diversifying Paris region tourism offer is one of the main objectives and the Marne river territory has been identified as one of the priority areas for tourism development. However, river tourism and its related heritage were not identified as a specific potential to be developed and the Regional Tourism Fund, made for the policy implementation, is rarely used to support projects related to river.

River tourism is a real cross-cutting theme for regional tourism development that should be supported by a specific strategy. Along its 700km of waterways, the Region offers cultural tourism, heritage, gastronomy, nature and sports, etc. Administrative limits are crossed by rivers and the Region would be the proper scale for tourism development by developing territorial projects and by involving local and departmental public authorities. Some riverside projects are already undertaken by tourism actors in the Region, but without the relevant coordination and guidelines.

During the last few years, Val-de-Marne Tourism board has worked with the managing authority and implementation body of the RTDLP through STAR Cities stakeholder group to raise awareness of those institutions about the great potential of river tourism. In the post-covid-19 context, river tourism is even more relevant to face the new challenges of Paris destination, as explained above. We do hope that STAR Cities learning process will have influenced the Region vision and lead to a better consideration of river tourism in the next strategy implemented starting in 2022.

The new strategy 2022-2027 will be adopted by vote in March-April 2022. There are 4 priorities already settled and one of them is particularly relevant with Val-de-Marne Tourism Board approach through Marne river development: "Strengthen the diversity of the tourist offer for a better distribution of flows in Paris Region". The managing authorities will involve Val-de-Marne Tourism Board and the other DMOs of the region in the



definition of the new strategy by setting up a “regional steering committee” to ensure a “concerting steering” of the strategy. Local meetings with tourism boards are planned during Autumn 2021 to collect their needs and proposals for the new strategy. Tourism board are also targeted through a call for contributions.

We hope that river tourism will be mentioned in the new strategy, as a way to “Strengthen the diversity of the tourist offer for a better distribution of flows in Paris Region”. We also expect funds, supports and communication tools to help regional stakeholders to develop river tourism offer in the next few years.

Regional Tourism and Leisure Development Plan 2017-2021 > influenced through Action 1 – “Cap sur la Marne” joint marketing strategy

The 1st April 2021, the Standing Committee of the Regional Council of Ile-de-France approved the application of Val-de-Marne Tourism Board to the Regional Tourism Funds. As a reminder, the Regional Tourism Funds is the financial tool of the Region to implement the Regional Tourism and Leisure Development Plan 2017-2021, which is the policy instrument addressed.

After a complicated year in 2020 due to the health crisis, the 4 Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) working along the Marne river have drawn up an ambitious programme for the 2021 spring/summer season. The aim is to offer a diversified and attractive range of activities to promote the cultural and natural heritage and assets of the banks of the Marne: cruises, water sports, events, etc. supported by a large-scale communication campaign. This joint communication campaign for the 2021 programme has been influenced by STAR Cities learning program and transfer of activities. It will be continued and developed in 2022 with the elaboration of a joint marketing strategy, thanks to a mentoring program with another similar cooperative initiative along the Elbe in Hamburg.

Regional Tourism and Leisure Development Plan 2022-2026 > influenced through Action 2 – Organisation of the Marne River Tour

This action has been approved as a pilot action in November 2021. Inspired by the TiberTour and other good practices, Marne River Tour would offer a brand-new experience: discover 50 kilometers of the Marne river near Paris, its cultural and natural heritage, by walking, cycling, boating or paddling.

It would be a perfect opportunity to prove the importance of river tourism development in Paris region by a structured, strong and innovative river route(s) for the time of a weekend. Local authorities will be involved in the organisation and policy-makers will be invited to participate. The organisation will engage a lot of different stakeholders so they would advocate for a better recognition of river tourism in our region.

As shown by the TiberTour or the Big Jump presented during STAR Cities learning sessions, the event format is also a good way to “test” new ideas and convince potential financial partners of the interest of the topic tackled. Without doubt, the Marne River Tour would be helpful for the implementation of new projects in the field of river tourism in the framework of the new regional strategy 2022-2026. Some of the activities in the programme of the Marne River Tour could be become regular activities, also with financial help from the Region



in the framework of the strategy. For example: water sports activities organised by nautical clubs, financment of guided cycle tours, more communication on river tourism, etc.

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

ACTION 1: “Cap sur la Marne” joint marketing strategy

1. **Relevance to the project** *(please describe how this action derives from the project and in particular from the interregional exchange of experience. Where does the inspiration for this action come from?)*

First, this policy change is the results of the discussions and stronger relationship built during the stakeholder group meetings organised in the framework of STAR Cities. While starting STAR Cities, the Val-de-Marne Tourism Board, Seine-Saint-Denis Tourism Board, as well as the Paris - Vallée de la Marne and Marne et Gondoire tourist offices (Marne river DMOs), wished to join forces and signed a partnership agreement to facilitate the emergence of joint projects aimed at developing, enhancing and promoting the tourist offer of the Marne river. These actions also benefit from exchanges of experience with other European cities involved in STAR Cities project. Indeed, STAR Cities project helped a lot to identify challenges thanks to the State of Play, give the opportunity to meet regularly and discuss in a prospective way by preparing the Action Plan (stakeholder groups meetings) and Marne river DMOs had the chance to take part in most learning session to get inspiration for policy improvement.

Another significant step was the online learning session about Governance & Cooperation held in February 2021. During this session Marne river DMOs learnt a lot from other joint strategies implemented in other regions, in particular the Kurs Elbe project implemented by PP5 Hamburg's stakeholders. Kurs Elbe is also a partnership gathering several DMOs working together on river tourism development. In the last past years, Kurs Elbe partners implemented joint actions and in particular they elaborated a joint marketing strategy setted on a common brand. During the thematic workshop on Governance & Cooperation, all participants agreed that "Marketing and communication are an important challenge: how to promote the river as a brand or a destination without making the identity of each DMO disappear?". This challenge is an important inspiration for Marne river DMOs that decided to tackled it in their application request to the Regional Tourism Funds.

Summarise of the main steps:

- 2018: Launching of STAR Cities project and of the key stakeholders group gathering Marne river DMOs.
- 2019: Finalisation of the Regional Assessment of Marne river tourism, first step of STAR Cities project. The need to more unified marketing & communication strategies has been identified as a challenge.



- 2020: Signature of the partnership agreement between 4 DMOs to develop and promote Marne river offer.
- October 2020: The question of the river as a brand popped up during the virtual learning session on Products & Marketing.
- December 2020: Marne river DMOs started to prepare their application to the Regional Tourism Funds to obtain a subsidy to develop new tourism offer along the Marne, supported by a joint communication strategy.
- February 2021: During the virtual learning sessions on Governance & Cooperation, Marne river DMOs were interested by the Kurs Elbe initiative in Hamburg, in particular the joint marketing strategy developed. They also agreed with one of the conclusions of the thematic workshop : rivers should be better promoted as a brand.
- March 2021: After several meetings with their communication officers, Marne river DMOs adopted a common "name" and a logo to be used as a brand: "Cap sur la Marne". This brand has been created because partners agreed that implementating coordinated communication strategies was not sufficient and that a common strategy based on a common identity was needed, as done by the Kurs Elbe initiative.

Next steps ? Marne river DMOs started to develop joint communication tools in 2021 (press release, leaflet, etc) but, as described below in the nature of the action, they would like to go further by drawing inspiration from Kurs Elbe and other cooperation projects along rivers. The main objective would be to develop a strong and collaborative communication and marketing strategy, using the experience of other partners as PP5 Hamburg for example. See below the details of the activities planned.

2. **Nature of the action** (*please describe precisely the content of action 1. What are the specific activities to be implemented?*)

The 1st April 2021, the Standing Committee of the Regional Council of Ile-de-France approved the application of Val-de-Marne Tourism Board to the Regional Tourism Fund. As a reminder, the Regional Tourism Fund is the financial tool of the Region to implement the Regional Tourism and Leisure Development Plan 2017-2021, which is the policy instrument addressed.

The project funded by this grant is as follows: After a complicated year in 2020 due to the health crisis, the 4 Destination Management Organisations (DMOs i.e. tourism boards) working along the Marne river (STAR Cities key stakeholders group led by Val-de-Marne Tourism Board) have drawn up an ambitious programme for the 2021 spring/summer season. The aim is to offer a diversified and attractive range of activities to promote the cultural and natural heritage and assets of the banks of the Marne: cruises, water sports, events, etc. supported by a large-scale communication campaign.



Part of this project has been influenced by STAR Cities learning program and transfer of activities (see explanations below) and this is the marketing & communication part of this project : “Joint communication campaign for the 2021 programme”.

The entire programme of activities developed in 2021 thanks to this regional subsidy will be promoted by a communication campaign conducted by all the partners on the basis of common tools: press releases and files, press conferences, social networks, flyers, etc.

The purpose of this action is to elaborate a joint marketing strategy along the Marne river to better promote the tourism offer and specific joint actions developed each year. Indeed, visitors and tourists are not interested in administrative limits and a common identity would be more effective to communicate on the river Marne as a Destination.

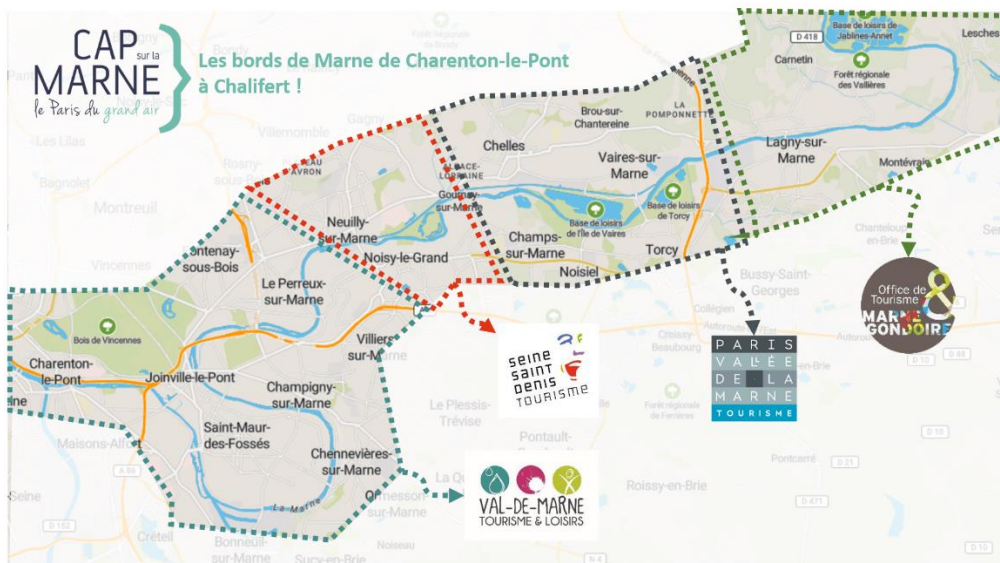
So far, the following ideas are on the table:

- elaboration of a structured marketing strategy,
- creation of a "showcase" website,
- participation to promotion events,
- new communication tools (videos, leaflets, tourist map, etc)

For each of these activities, Val-de-Marne Tourism Board and the Marne river DMOs would benefit from the experience and transfer of knowledge from PP5 Hamburg and their stakeholders. The following learning activities are planned :

- Online bilateral meeting with Marne river DMOs and PP5 Hamburg Metropolitan Region : exchange of experiences and discussion on the basis of good practices in terms of marketing and communication
- Online bilateral meeting with Marne river DMOs and Kurs Elbe GP partners (Hamburg) : exchange of experiences and discussion on the basis of good practices in terms of marketing and communication
- Staff Exchange in Hamburg : study visit with Marne River DMOs to see on the ground Hamburg good practices in terms of marketing and communication, meet relevant stakeholders, etc.

3. **Stakeholders involved** *(please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the implementation of the action1 and explain their role)*



Cap sur la Marne working group is composed of Val-de-Marne Tourism Board, Seine-Saint-Denis Tourism Board, Paris-Vallée de la Marne Tourist Office, and Marne-et-Gondoire Tourist Office. For this joint marketing strategy, these partners will also be supported by the Ile-de-France Tourism Board and Seine-et-Marne Attractivity agency.

4. Timeframe

2021-2022

2021
<p>March 2021: After several meetings with their communication officers, Marne river DMOs adopted a common "name" and a logo to be used as a brand: "Cap sur la Marne".</p> <p>May-October 2021 : Joint communication actions by Marne river DMOs (press release, social media, leaflet, etc.) but without clear and structured strategy.</p> <p>September-November 2021 : Assessment of 2021 communication actions and adoption by Marne river DMOs of a work plan for 2022 including ambitious actions in terms of marketing and communication actions in 2022.</p>
2022
<p>January-March 2022 : Bilateral meetings with PP5 Hamburg and their relevant stakeholders (Kurs Elbe project)</p> <p>May 2022 : Staff exchange in Hamburg to learn from these good practices in the ground. After this staff exchange, assessment of the lessons learnt and adaptation of the communication plan initially planned by Marne River DMOs.</p> <p>March-May 2022 : Elaboration of a joint marketing and communication plan</p> <p>June-November 2022 : Implementation of the marketing and communication</p> <p>November-December 2022 : Assessment of the activities done, recommendations for the future, evaluation of the action.</p>



5. Costs

6000€ allocated for communication actions through the regional subsidy obtained in 2021.

+ human time !

6. Funding sources *(please describe how action 1 will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s) indicated in part II):*

Regional Tourism Fund, financial tool to implement the Regional Tourism and Leisure Development Plan 2017-2021.

ACTION 2 : Organisation of the Marne River Tour

1. Relevance to the project *(please describe how this action derives from the project and in particular from the interregional exchange of experience. Where does the inspiration for this action come from?)*

The idea of the Marne River Tour has been elaborated by Marne river DMOs during stakeholder group meetings organised in the process of STAR Cities learning program.

Val-de-Marne Tourism Board and partners have been inspired by several good practices :

TiberTour (Lazio Region) presented during Products & Marketing virtual session in October 2020: The TiberTour is a 7 days river tour for paddlers, cyclists, walkers, from Umbria to Rome and to the sea (more than 200km). Participants usually come from many European countries. The TiberTour aims to promote sport, nature, tourism through healthy and respectful understanding of the environment; there is no competition.

What we would like to “test” from the TiberTour is :

- By organising an event lasting several days, highlight the role of the river as a connexion through the territories
- Multiple means of transport at the same time : walking, cycling paddling

Barjanka Cycling Race (Ljubljana) presented during Governance & Cooperation virtual session in February 2021 : The purpose of the race, which takes place every year as a part of Franja Marathon, is to present the landscape of the Ljubljana Marshes (a very fragile natural park) starting and ending in Ljubljana center.

We will take inspiration from Barjanka Cycling Race for the organisation of the cycling route.

Let's celebrate the river (Kaunas) presented during the Environment & Sustainability virtual session in April 2021: This community festival is happening along the rivers in Kaunas and Kaunas District since 2020. The



goal of this festival is to develop the dialogue related to the sustainable river tourism forms and activities. River routes are elaborated and followed by paddling with cultural stops, artistic workshops, etc.

We will take inspiration from Let's celebrate the river regarding the artistic program and involvement of local communities.

Val-de-Marne Tourism board team has also been inspired by some of the conclusions of the thematic workshops held during STAR Cities learning sessions :

- Cooperation by implementing joint actions is the main solution to face the fragmented governance of river tourism ;
- Marketing and communication are important challenges: how to promote the river as a brand or a destination without making the identity of each DMO disappear ?
- Sport events are also a tool to promote the region's assets ;
- Pilot actions (test) are successful to convince stakeholders for bigger projects ;
- Use the power of communication of an event to attract a large diversity of public ;
- Small-scale and connected events are a good answer to the post-covid challenges ;
- Events are a good tool to engage stakeholders, involve locals and built a strong storytelling along the river!

2. **Nature of the action** (*please describe precisely the content of action 1. What are the specific activities to be implemented*)

The event will propose 3 river routes to be followed by walking, cycling, or paddling. Those itineraries will be punctuated with cultural/natural visits, food tasting, artistic performances, etc. All the river routes will end at the same place for a festive and friendly happy ending with a cultural program, possibility to relax, drink & food, etc.

Provisional program:

Day 1 : participants will have the possibility to register to 3 river routes, for the entire day.

- Hiking route : 15km, including 2 cultural or natural interventions, 1 food tasting, 2 artistic performances (200 participants)
- Cycling route : 25km, including 2 cultural or natural interventions, 1 food tasting, 2 artistic performances (100 participants)
- Paddling route : 10km, including 2 cultural or natural interventions, 1 food tasting, 2 artistic performances (50 participants)

All participants will meet at the end of the day: concert, drink&food, relax, etc.

Day 2 : same program but the routes will be different ! The objective is to cover the 50km of Marne river during the 2 days, between Chalifert to Alfortville.

Example or hiking routes : from Alfortville to Nogent-sur-Marne during day 1, from Neuilly-sur-Marne to Lagny-sur-Marne during day 2.



The event is not timed like a marathon. The aim is not the sports performance but the discovery of the river and its surroundings.

The event is free of charge for participants.

Complementarity

Val-de-Marne Tourism board and its local stakeholders already experiences the organisation of river tourism activities as boat cruises, cultural walks and water-sports activities. Our local stakeholders organise each year the Summer in the canals festival with a very rich program of boat trips, floatable concert, open-air cinema, workshops, etc. But we have never organised an event allowing the public to travel the Marne river during several days and, above all, using different means of transport.

The main objectives of this project are:

- Promote Marne tourism offer through a sporting and cultural event to attract new visitors
- Valorise the river as a route to be discovered in a sustainable way by walking, cycling or paddling
- Communicate on the river Marne as a destination and a brand

In addition, this project will also contribute to:

- By involving DMOs, local authorities and stakeholders in the organisation, strengthen Marne river local network
- "Test" new activities in an ephemeral way before developing them in the long term as tourism products
- Connect activities, less known places and tourism spots as possible stops for a journey along the river
- Promote soft mobility (walking/cycling/paddling), intermodality and accessibility by public transport, which are also long term challenges for the Marne river territory

Targeted public:

- Local and regional visitors from Ile-de-France region, looking for new experiences and outdoors activities close to home (staycation)
- French tourists, interested to discover Paris off the beaten tracks and in particular through slow tourism

Number of participants expected: 350 participants each day, 700 participants in total.

3. **Stakeholders involved** (*please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the implementation of the action1 and explain their role*)

The different river routes will be elaborated by the DMOs and concerned local stakeholders, in particular the sporting federations of hiking, cycling and paddling. This working group will meet each month to tackle the organisation.

- Coordination by the 4 DMOs : Val-de-Marne Tourism Board, Seine-Saint-Denis Tourism Board, Paris-Vallée de la Marne Tourist Office, and Marne-et-Gondoire Tourist Office



- Working group with hiking, cycling and water sports associations : design and “test” of the river routes, stops program, organisation, marking, etc.
- Support of local authorities for the logistics and communication (county councils and municipalities)
- Participation of all the network of local stakeholders to propose animations, visits, interventions, etc. along the routes (stops)

Indicators of success:

- Number of participants and satisfaction (monitored through a survey)
- Involvement and satisfaction of the working group members and local authorities concerned (debriefing meeting after the event)
- Media coverage of the event, in particular appearances in “new” medias at regional or national level
- Long term effect : perpetuation of river routes to be done by visitors on their own
- New partnership project between stakeholders: networking effect !

Added relevance due to covid19-pandemic: Like most European Capitals, Paris destination is redesigning its tourism strategy following the loss of foreign tourists (which where the main part of tourist attendance). Regional tourism is becoming the main target and that’s also the case of Marne River Tour project. Moreover, nature, outdoors activities, “microadventure”, slow tourism, “like a local” approach, etc. are the new trends growing and perfectly addressed by this project. Finally, this event is think to be a “big” event but in a small-scale basis by connecting places and provide a new experience of the river with the opportunity to meet local stakeholders and experiment new activities in a very authentic way.

4. Timeframe

2021-2022

2021
<p>May-September: Preparation of the Pilot Action request and discussions with the JS. October : Approval of the pilot action. November: Design and schedule of the event with the DMOs partners. December: Identification of other stakeholders (sporting federations and local authorities) to form the working group.</p>
2022
<p>January-June : Organisation of the event during 2 days, through regular meetings and discussion within the working group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting up and meetings with the working group (DMOs + sporting federations + local authorities) to design the event, start the work on river route, scheduling the workplan and allocation of tasks - Transfer of experience from the STAR Cities project partners : online meetings with partners to discuss the good practices identified - Elaboration of hiking, cycling, paddling and boating river routes - Programming of cultural stops, artistic performances, food tasting, etc. through the river routes - Organisation of a festive “happy ending” of the river routes for all participants - Logistic of the event (public procedure for services providers, organisation, etc) - Communication plan of the event : web, media relations, social medias, etc. <p>June-July : Review of the 2022 edition :</p>



- Satisfaction survey launched through participants of the event
- Assessment of the event with partners and stakeholders : debriefing meeting

June-December : Long term development of some activities “tested” during the event

- New hiking/cycling routes available for the public
- Organisation of guided tours, boat trips, nautical activities, etc. inspired by the Marne River Tour

June-December : Preparing the next edition :

- Fundraising for the next edition of the Marne River Tour : search for financial partners and application for subsidies (in particular to the Region)
- Capitalisation and transfer of the project idea to other STAR Cities project partners ? During the preparation of the pilot action request, some STAR Cities partners were interested by the idea of TiberTour and Marne River Tour but not ready to launch such events in their region.

5. **Costs**

66 000€

6. **Funding sources** *(please describe how action 2 will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s) indicated in part II):*

ERDF funds through the approval of the pilot action by Interreg Europe monitoring committee.

Date: 17 November 2021

Name of the organisation(s) : Val-de-Marne Tourism Board

Signatures of the relevant organisation(s): _____