XIII European Mountain Convention

Shaping the future of mountain economies

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EmbleMatiC Mediterranean Mountains network & project:

A rethinking tourism practice in the Med hinterland areas

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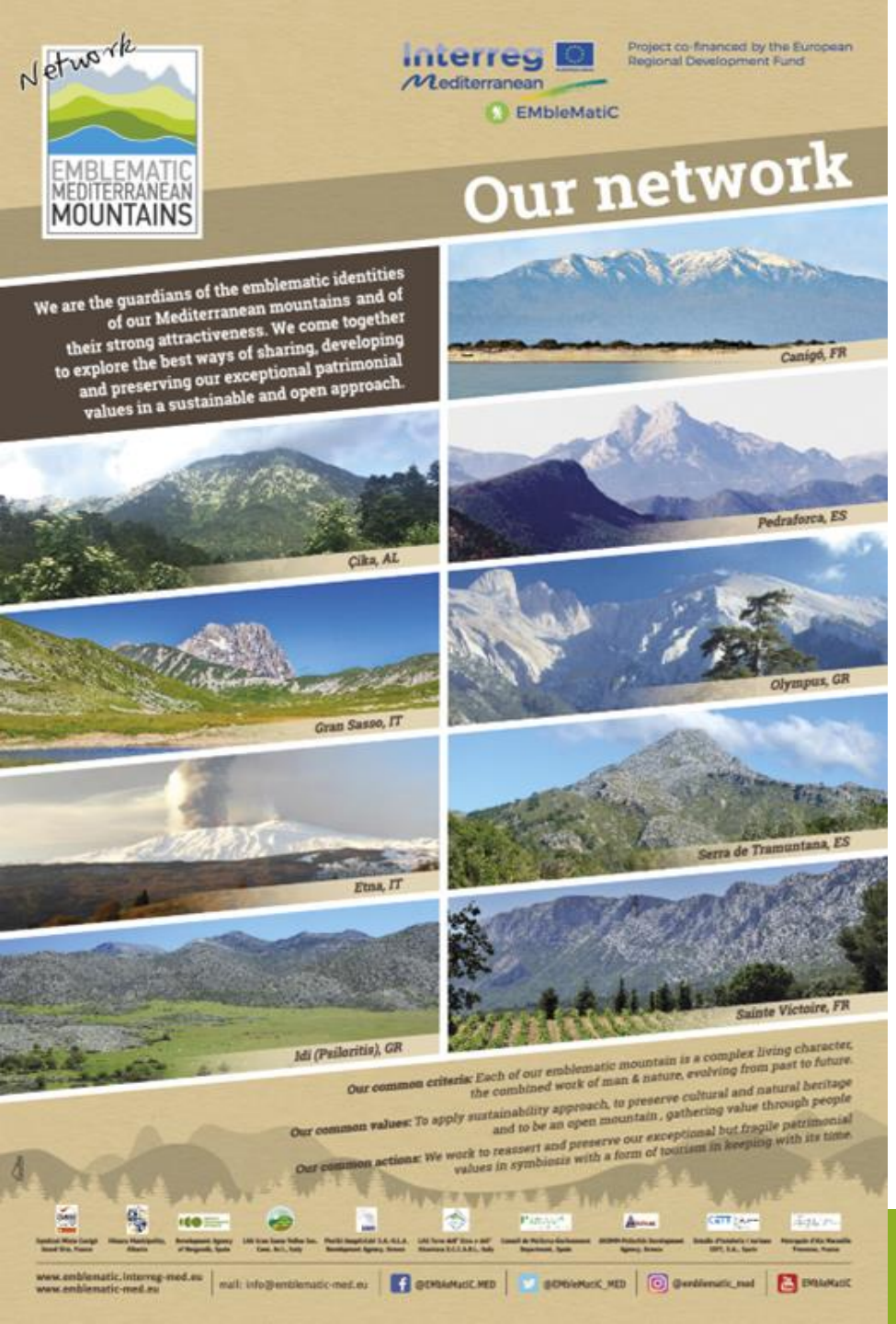
A short introduction....

Background and context



The EMM network is a constellation of Mediterranean mountainous territories.

Over the years, it has become a community to work on common challenges by tackling them through thematic projects…

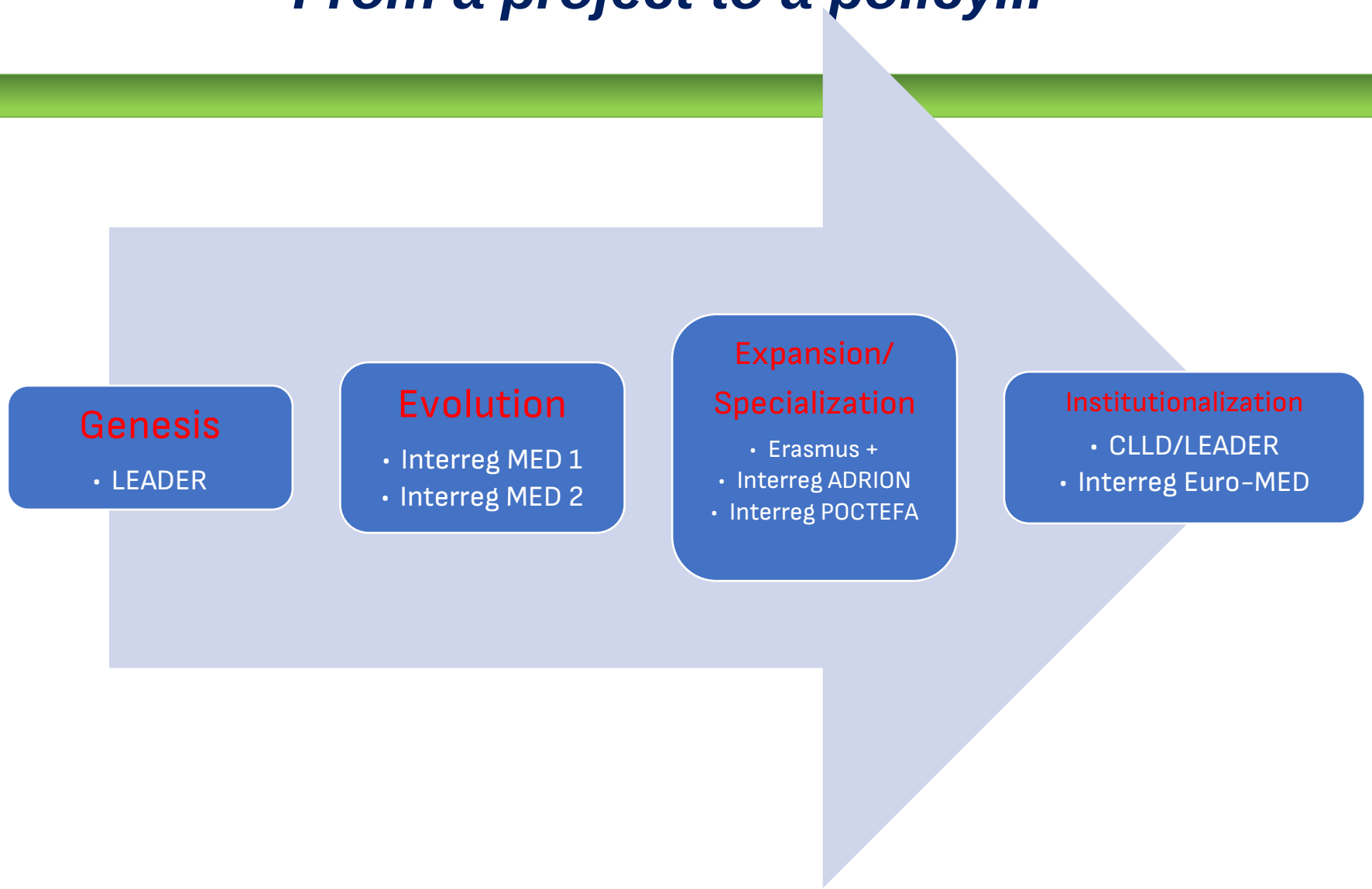
History…

The **Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains Network** was launched in 2013 under the initiative of 3 rural areas working within the framework of LEADER programme, with the following common **challenges** applied in 5 mountains (Canigó, Olympus, Pedraforca, Sainte Victoire, Pirin):

- *Preserving their patrimonial values from endogenous and exogenous threats*
- *Sharing positive experiences and good practices*
- *Increasing their international recognition*

Today **14 mountains** share the network values, and we keep growing!!!

From a project to a policy...



Where are we now…

The Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains network has created several tools for the implementation and development of sustainable tourism products in the rural hinterland of Mediterranean mountains.

These tools are being tested at different levels under several EU funded strategies, having started in 2013 with the EMbleMatiC project (Axis 4, Programme Leader 2007-2013), with the current testing process to be implemented at Lailias Mountain (Greece), under the CLLD/Leader Programme (EMbleMatiC 2 project).

In more detail, the transfer guide and the study on the Emblematic dimension will be adapted by the new area in the effort to define sustainable tourism products (eco-itineraries) with specific predefined attributes and to test the potentiality of entering the Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains network with specific criteria.

Map

www.emblematic-med.eu

The EMM network

Initiative overview

Criteria

Institutional recognition

Power of inspiration

Sustainability and anthropogenic environment

Reputation

Mediterranean cultural identity

Picturesque landscape

Proud local people

Legends and myths

Particular ecosystem

Historic places

What we do?

The Network **values**:

- To apply a global **sustainable** approach
- To **preserve** cultural and natural **heritage** and the experience associated to it
- To be an **open mountain**, gathering value through people, both visitors and locals
- To **cooperate** to transnational and interterritorial projects

Changing resources for tourism

The focus areas are located in the hinterland of very popular touristic coastal areas, and at the foothills of (locally, regionally and, in some cases, nationally and internationally) well-known mountains.

This means that they have been traditionally **set aside** from a critical socio-economic activity during the last century:

to offer an autonomous tourism destination.

Drivers of Change

- Trend towards **environmentally-friendly tourism** and slow tourism.
- Social **demand** for visiting places differently, far away from crowd and standardized tourism.
- Increasing **pressure** to address and to fight negative consequences of coastal tourism.
- **(Public) institutions** investing in and fostering this kind of tourism in the times of enormous challenges of ecological, social and economic nature.
- **Local actors** being conscious of the trade-offs of standard tourism and wish alternative ways to develop (quality > quantity).

ONE AMBITION

To qualify emblematic Mediterranean mountains as coastal destinations of excellence

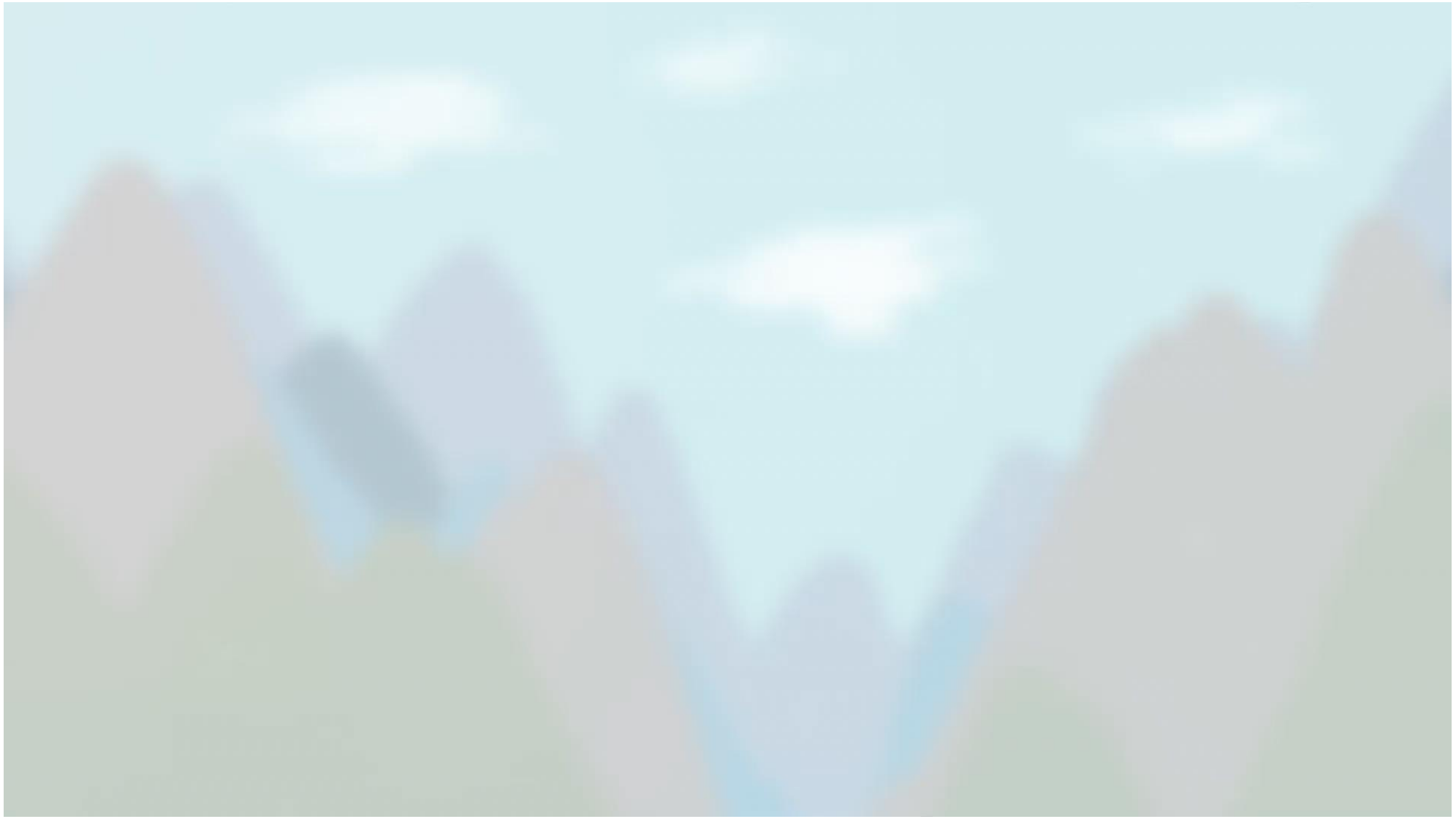
THREE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1 / To rebalance tourism flows and their returns toward a more sustainable and responsible tourism

2 / To co-build and experiment a slow tourism offer located in the hinterland coastal mountainous area

3 / To improve the international recognition of our singularity

EMM IN A NUTSHELL

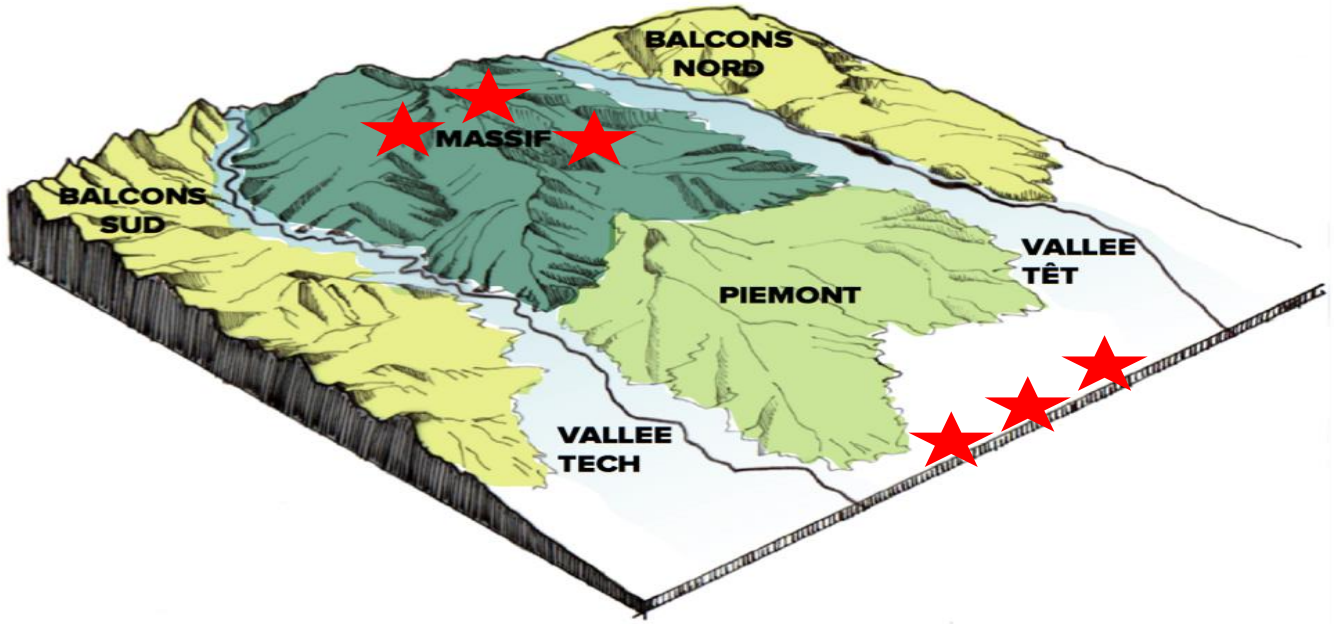


The EMM tourism model....

Results and impact

We suffered from:

UNBALANCED TOURIST FLOWS CONCENTRATIONS



Common issues with:

- **SPACE**

✓coast & summit Vs hinterland

- **TIME**

✓Summer and winter (seasonal peaks)

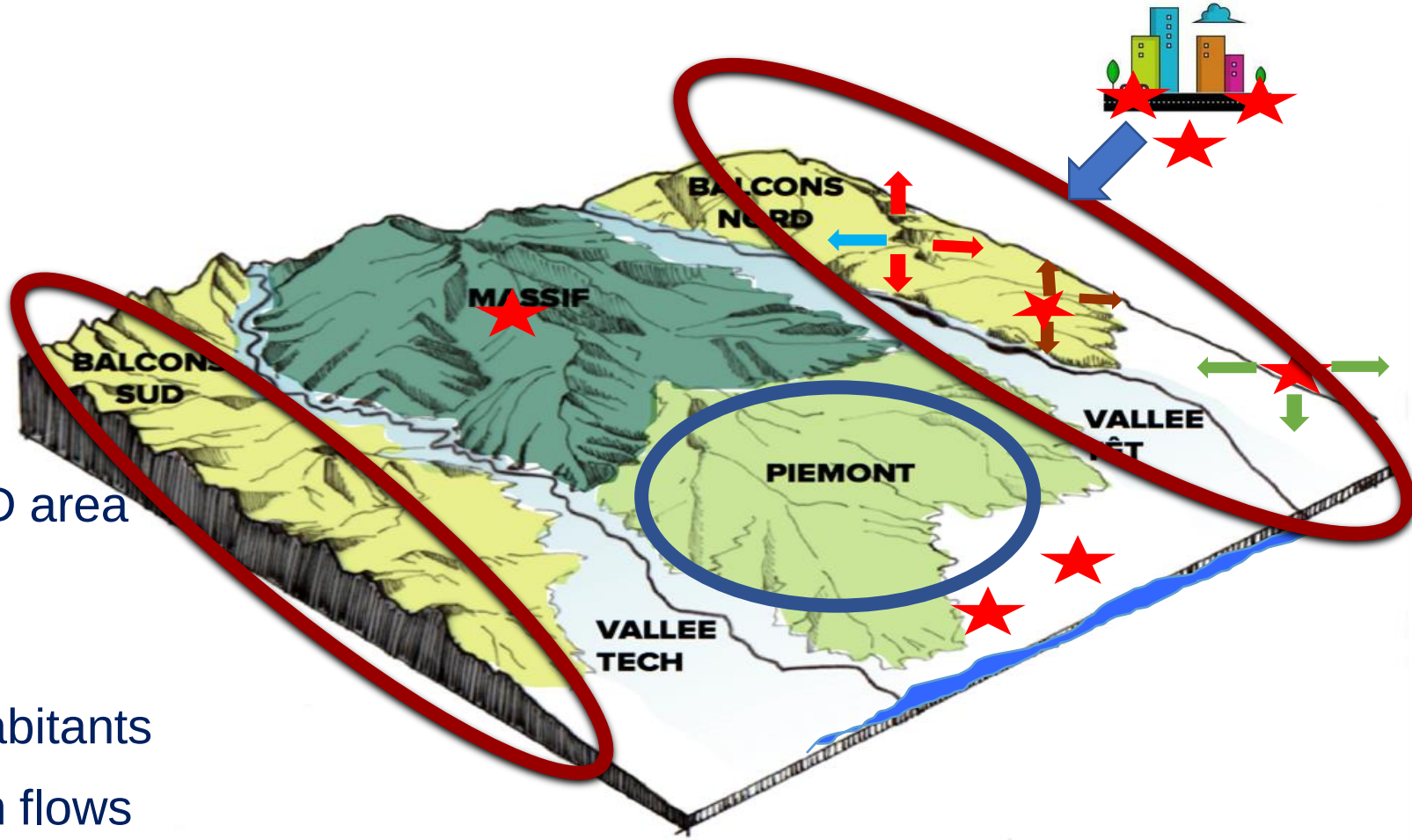
✓short term Vs long term

- **ECONOMY**

✓absence of visitors and economical returns for hinterland

We created eco-itineraries

A NEW SLOW TOURISM OFFER



- Located in the coastal HINTERLAND area
- Based on our IDENTARIANS SINGULARITIES
- Involving LOCAL ACTORS and inhabitants
- Combining more sustainable tourism flows management with valorisation of natural spaces

We conceived a sustainable & responsible slow tourism offer

With our academic partner we co-produced a common Terms of Reference (ToR):

ToR
30
COMMON ATTRIBUTES
applied
on each of
the
eco-itineraries

- WE REBALANCE TOURISM FLOWS
- WE EXTEND SEASONALITY
- WE EXTEND ACCESS
- WE REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
- WE PRIORITISE LOCAL RESOURCES
- WE EDUCATE AND RESPONSABILISE

Each eco-itinerary complies with these attributes:

EXTEND SEASONALITY

- Accessible all year round
- Oriented to coastal and local visitors
- as an alternative complementary activity

LOCATED TO REDIRECT FLOWS

- Located in the foothills of the mountain
- Favouring non-saturated spots

EXTEND ACCESS

- Low to medium difficulty
- Including panoramic view points (with posts or with digital tools)
- Providing interpretation material (local language(s) and English)

PRIORITISE LOCAL ECOTOURISM

- Involving local stakeholders in the design of the itinerary
- Promoting interaction with residents
- Offering local gastronomy (based on seasonal and/or organic products)
- Prioritizing locally owned accommodation

EDUCATE / RAISE AWARENESS

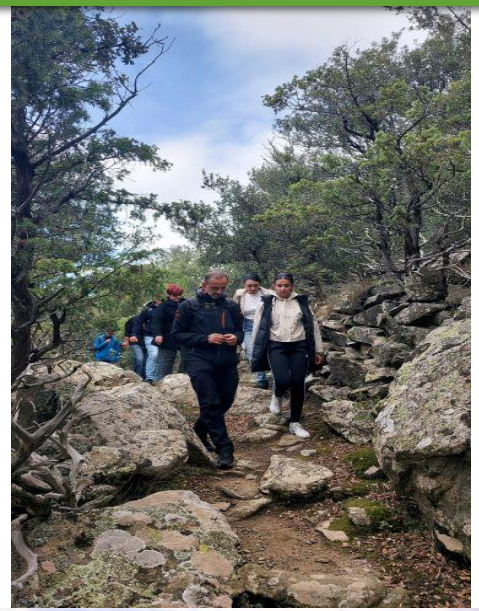
- Including environmental & landscape interpretation facilities/services
- Including visits of cultural heritage sites and monuments
- Offering local guidance services
- Providing a visual and clear document about correct behaviour of visitors in the area
- Promoting under common brand and marketing strategy
- Defining a responsible tourism best practices document (for internal purposes)
- Sharing experiences with other partners of the network periodically

ECO-FRIENDLY

- Non-motorised itinerary
- Public transport option to reach the destination (if not possible, informing about compensation measures adopted to off-set carbon footprint)
- Designing a monitoring plan and indicators to monitor and manage the impact of the itinerary

USE EXISTING: DO MORE WITH LESS

- Optimising existing infrastructures/investments
- Minimising usage of sign-posts by introducing mobile applications
- Providing eco-friendly leisure activities (apart from hiking), e.g. via ferrata mountain biking, cyclo-tourism, paragliding...
- Offering sustainable and eco-friendly picnic services



REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT !

WE TRANSFER

TRANFERABILITY GUIDE

How to create EMBLEMATIC ECOJOURNEYS In hinterland areas

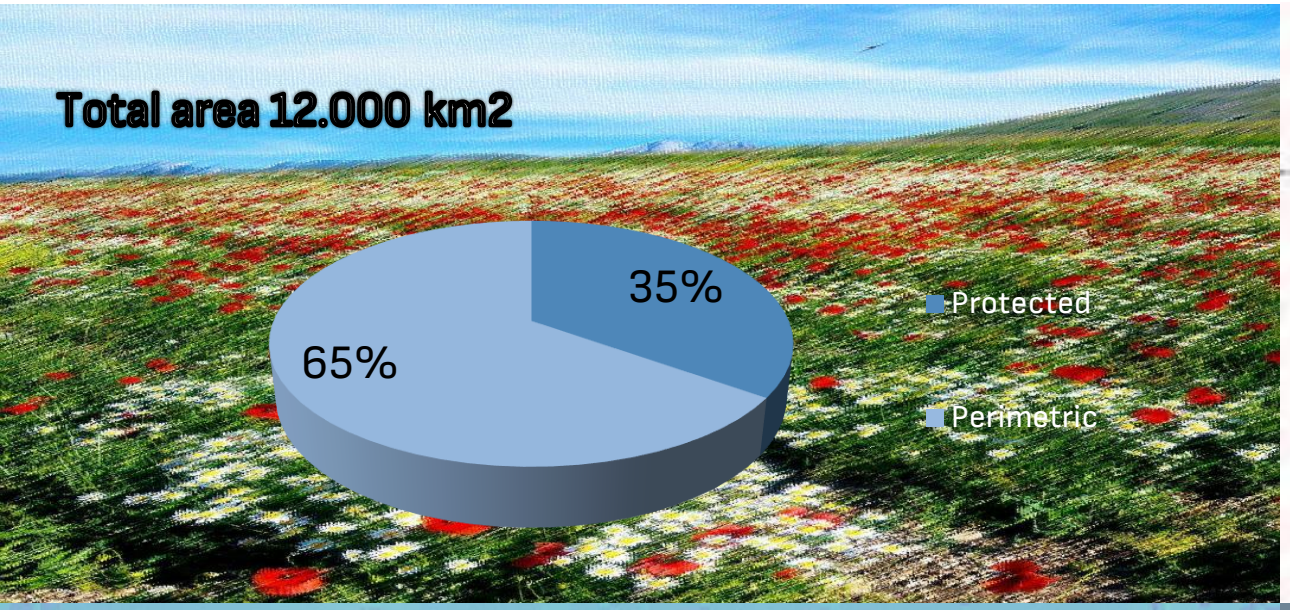
KNOW HOW FROM INNOVATIVE OFFER AVAILABLE TO MORE TERRITORIES TO JOIN EMM NETWORK

The Ecojourneys: from the idea to the product

“routes of experiential tourism across selected places of each mountain area belonging to the Network. The routes contribute to overcome the network’s common challenges (i.e. unbalanced tourist flows between the coastline/mountain summit and the hinterland areas; marked seasonality, absence of economic benefit of the hinterland areas from the touristic activities).”

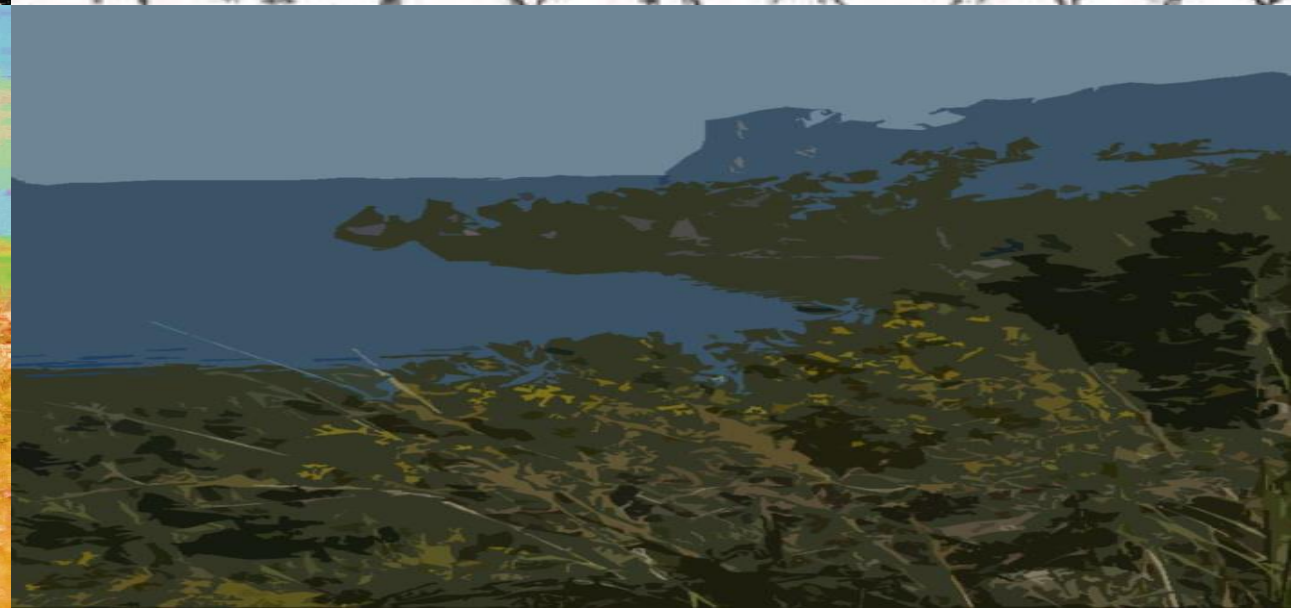
30 hours of local workshops with
180 participants from 86
different organisations

1000 kilometres
and 100 hours
of site visits


Total area 12.000 km2
35%
65%
Protected
Perimetric

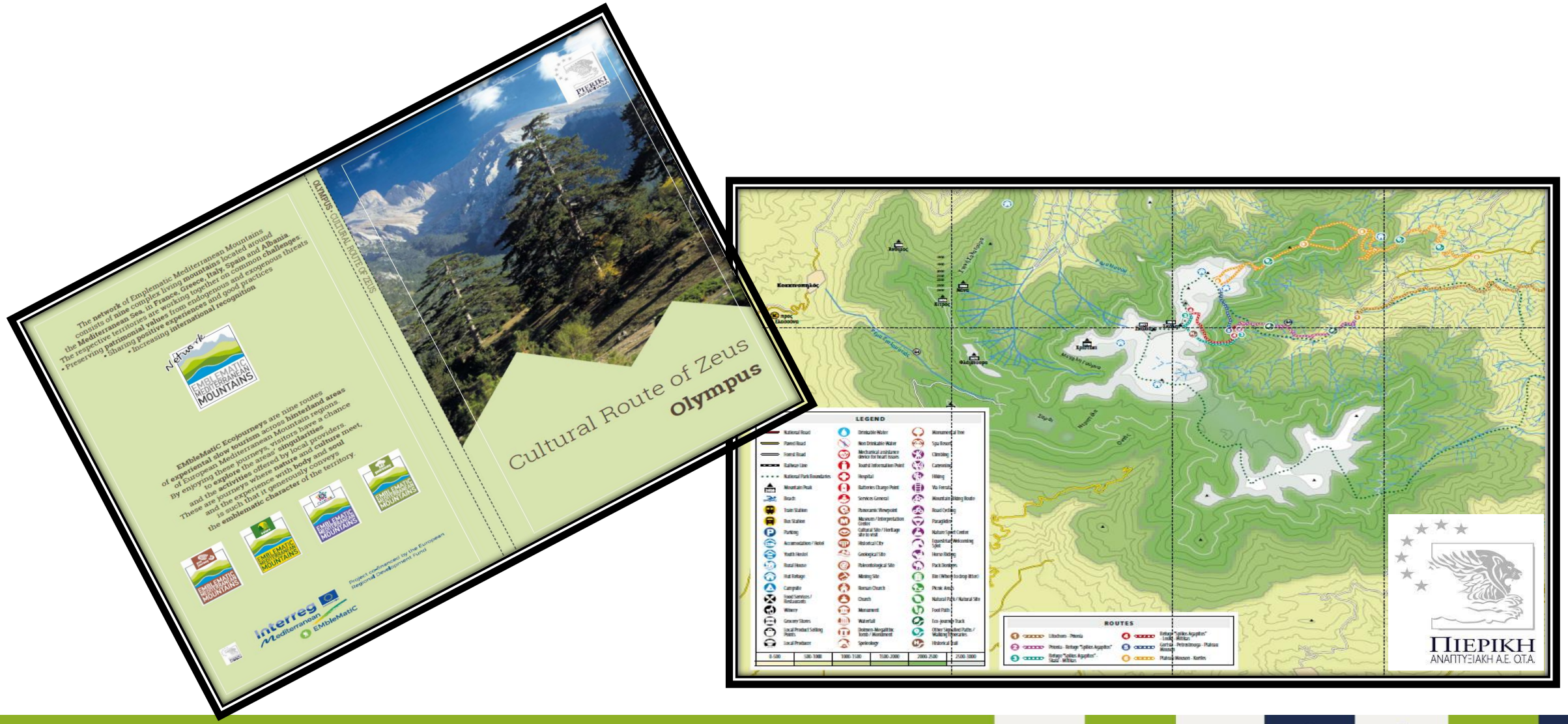
NATURA 2000

Carmine Mazzillo



Design of the itinerary

Creation of a tourism product: the Ecojourneys



The 7 faces of Pedraforca mountain
Agència de
Desenvolupament
del Berguedà

The creation of the eco-journey. From the idea to the implementation

LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVEMENT

- Public / private / NGO (25 meetings in 3 years)

DESIGN OF THE ITINERARY

- From our existent infrastructures, tourism offer and services
- By following the 30 attributes characteristics

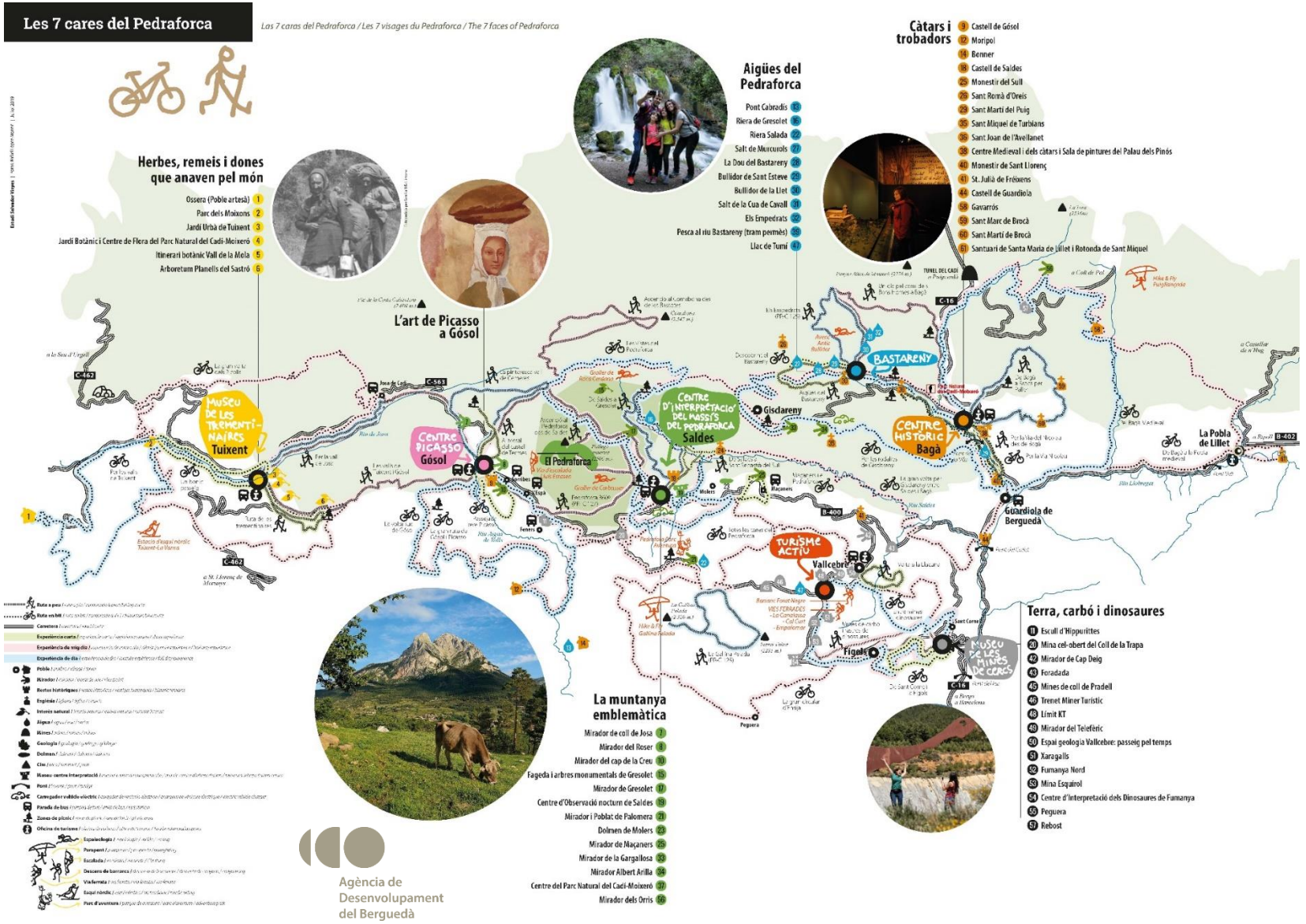
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ITINERARY IN THE GROUND

- Executive projects, investments, authorizations, public procurements, physical works.

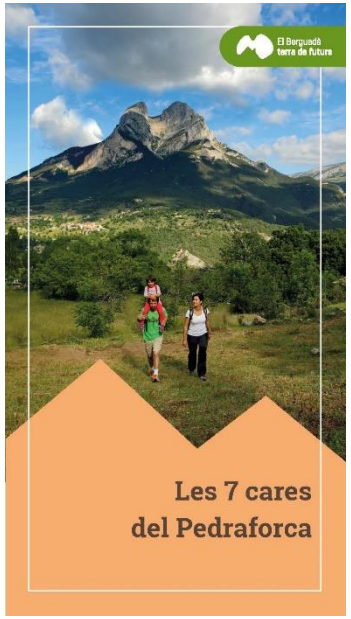
CREATION OF A TOURIST PRODUCT: THE ECOJOURNEY

- Ready to use.
- Create promotional materials: map, guide, website, …

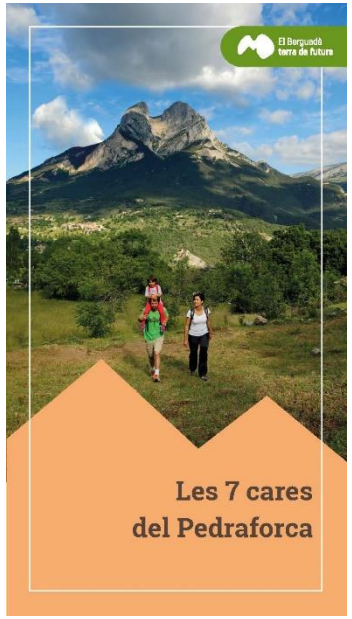
The seven faces of Pedraforca



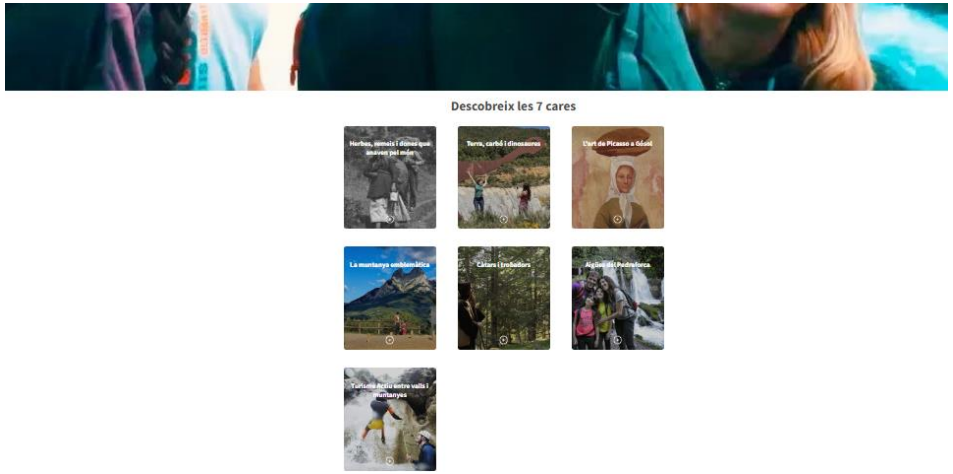
The seven faces of Pedraforca



Map



Guide



Website

Video

Conclusions

Lessons learned & recommendations

Conclusions

- The tourism model promoted by EMbleMatiC projects (to visit hinterland areas between busy coastal areas and crowded mountain peaks) provides an alternative tourism product in non-saturated areas (confronting the health crisis) of affordable but quality elements (confronting the economic crisis).
- For the creation of this model the involvement of all stakeholders is a prerequisite; following a both side model, businesses-destination authorities-residents from supply side and visitors from the demand side.

What are the key messages/policy recommendations?

Planning and organisation of a more responsible and sustainable tourism development model, based on:

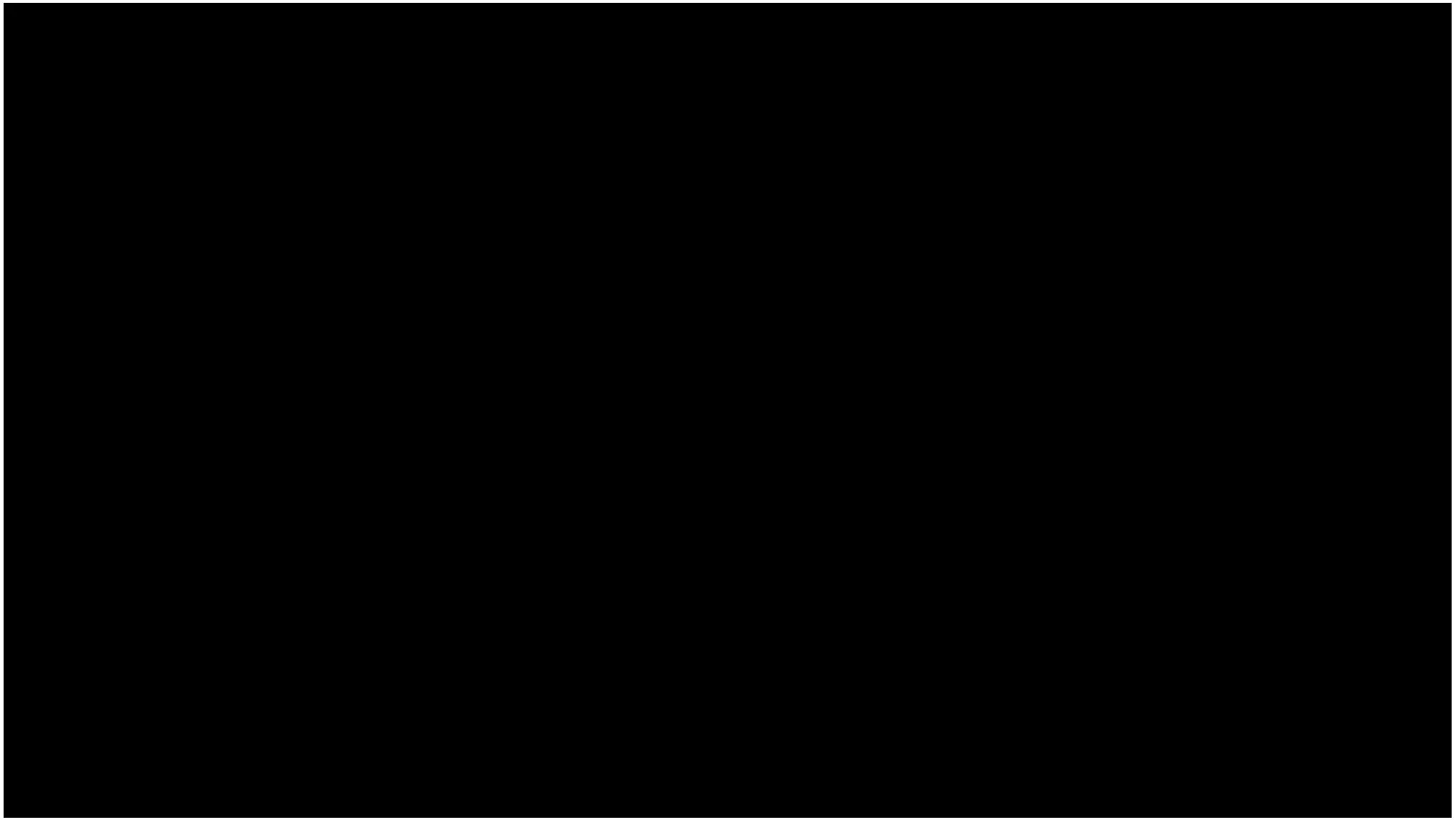
- *geographical rebalancing of visitors flows,*
- *extended seasonality,*
- *reduced environmental impact,*
- *increased local returns,*
- *prioritization of local resources,*
- *educating and responsabilising*

OUR SHARED PRINCIPLES OF ACTIONS TO TACKLE COMMON CHALLENGES

- Operating as a **laboratory**, using transnational cooperation to boost varied local development plans through capacity building activities;
- Being exemplary at **site management**, with a controlled and balanced development, protecting the landscape and the quality of the experience;
- Encouraging **bottom-up approach**, as well as local development carried out by local people;
- Fostering a new touristic economy based on **experience**, being the human and immaterial values of place the major components of our visitors' experience.

Our “labs”

- LEADER: EMM project 2013-2015
  - To preserve patrimonial values from endogenous and exogenous threats.
  - To share positive experiences and good practices.
  - To increase international recognition.
- Interreg MED: Emblematic and Emblematic PLUS projects 2016-2019 2021-2022
  - To create and test a new and radically different tourism offer based on the assets of the hinterland areas of the selected mountains that will be able to offer a sustainable and responsible tourism alternative to both sun & beach tourism and to the mountain summits.
  - To test our transfer guide for the implementation of eco-itinerary for Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains as coastal destinations of excellence.
- ERASMUS+: Y4EMM project 2020-2022
  - To raise awareness of young people to make them aware of the natural and cultural diversity of their environment;
  - To help young people to become drivers of change to better protect their environment and territory nowadays and in the future;
- CLLD/LEADER: EMM2 project 2022-2025
  - To test the criteria of becoming a member of the network, creating a formal network
- IPA ADRION: PROMONT project 2024-2027
  - To improve the quality of mountain biodiversity by protecting/preserving the fragile ecosystems of the mountains from the damages and threats of the human pressure, including massive-seasonal tourism
- ERASMUS+: Low Carbon Tourism for Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains project 2024-2026
  - To train on the green transition of remoted mountainous territories
  - To train on carbon calculating



CULTURE
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Gràcies

Gracias

Thank you

Merci

Ευχαριστώ

NEMOR
NETWORK FOR EUROPEAN MOUNTAIN RESEARCH

RURAL PACT

Ajuntament de Puigcerdà

EUROMONTANA

Generalitat de Catalunya