**Publishable Summary**

The TOSTODEM – Towards Sustainable Tourism Development Models in the Euro Mediterranean region: a case study of Malta and Sardinia - research project deals with sustainable tourism development models in the Euro Mediterranean region. Particular emphasis has been given to the Euro Mediterranean coastal areas such as Malta and Sardinia, in which tourism industry plays a significant role in terms of tourism arrivals, revenue, employment, skills, etc. The research questions are addressed to identify strengths and weaknesses in Malta and Sardinia tourism performances, in order to give recommendations to public and private stakeholders for improving the sustainability and competitiveness of tourism, and to the identification of innovative tourism good practices. Briefly, the methodological framework is based on a qualitative approach, which adopts methods such as semi-structured interviews with key informants and stakeholders, in-depth interviews, and focus groups.

Basically, the TOSTODEM research project is addressed at:

• renewing the knowledge about the topic of sustainable tourism;

• identifying the strength and weaknesses of the tourism system in Malta and Sardinia;

• providing recommendations for improving sustainable tourism policy and practices in the two chosen areas;

• identifying innovative tourism good practices in the EU areas related, giving particular attention to socio cultural economical offers, for improving the competitiveness and sustainability of the EU tourism industry;

• sharing and discussing the results among tourism stakeholders, both private and public organisations.

Since the beginning, the TOSTODEM research project has been addressed to two strategic achievements for reaching the two mentioned objectives: a recognition of theoretical knowledge concerning sustainable tourism through a literature review; a more practical approach towards sustainable tourism policy, clearly addressed to improving tourism performances in the two chosen territories (Malta and Sardinia), through the collaboration of local stakeholders. The former is aimed to identifying the more useful insights that have been elaborating since four decades of sustainable tourism research studies for providing a theoretical framework to the whole project. Within the literature review on the related field of study that has been realized in the first phase of the project, there emerge abundant productions of concepts and theoretical debates as well as increasing demands for more tools capable to change unsustainable policies and strategies in the destinations, especially by engaging the tourism stakeholders. Following that main insight, the research project has also focussed the attention on tools for managing tourism practices matching the expectation of other strategic achievement: finding out strategies to improve tourism performances in Malta and Sardinia, through the effective collaboration with local stakeholders. The European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) which has been launched by the European Commission represents a useful opportunity for bringing together the tourism sector operators to improve the sustainable management of destinations. For this reason, the TOSTODEM research project is contributing to the ETIS’s pilot project implementation in Malta, which is led by the Institute for Tourism, Travel and Culture of the University of Malta, in the phase of identification of stakeholders and networking activity with the DG Enterprise and Industry.

However, the TOSTODEM research project, has matched its planned expectations, by generating and sharing new knowledge within both tourism stakeholders and general public; promoting awareness for sustainable development issues within the tourism sector networks; building bridges for disseminating the research’s results by additional channels, such as the collaboration with the Fondazione Sardegna Film Commission who will promote the good practices of sustainable tourism that have been studied in the project, through the realization of short films in the two chosen cases study.

The present report is broken down into six parts: Section 1, deals with the conceptualization of sustainable tourism. Starting from the definitions, principles, and different meanings of sustainable tourism, then issues such as the practical implementations of and tools for sustainable tourism are discussed. The study which supports this section, has been conducted having in mind the need to provide a concise framework about the broad literature that academics, policy makers and practitioners have been generated in the past four decades, since the phenomenon became the focus of academic research in the 1980s. In the light of the aims of the TOSTODEM research project, particular attention has been given towards the forms of engagement of local stakeholders, such as the governance approaches, in order to provide useful insights to change the forms of unsustainable tourism into improving and learning processes.

Section 2 describes the state of the art of tourism characteristics in two chosen cases studies, Malta and Sardinia, through the collection and analysis of secondary data (e.g., statistics, documents, reports). The analysis reveals both the similarity, such as the tourism seasonality, and the differences between the two areas – Malta appears more structured in terms of capability to attract and market the tourism markets. First Malta, is a small archipelago in which tourism plays a strategic role in the whole economy, as the share of tourism, 29%, in the total GDP clearly shows. Moreover, beyond the consistent volume of the tourism flows, the importance of tourism can be also seen in the Maltese organizational framework through the presence of a strategic public body such the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) which is the operating arm of the public policy. In Sardinia, tourism plays a secondary role in terms of its contribution to the GDP, volume of tourism flows and revenue generated. The analysis shows that tourism is not considered as a strategic sector by the policy makers: the absence of an effective public framework, the lack of information about numbers and profiling analysis of tourists, the absence of a clear vision for sustainable development tourism in the public policy, reveal the weakness of the sector. However, the two cases studies can be considered as living laboratories for exploring and implementing strategies and tools to improve the sustainable development of tourism.

Section 3 provides the methodological research design of the TOSTODEM project, by exposing the realized in-field research, thanks to which the primary data have been gathered. The research is based on a qualitative approach depending on the type of the research questions. More than measuring effects or impacts within the tourism sector, the project takes a snapshot of the way in which the two chosen destinations deal with the sustainable tourism and generate value. Semi-structured interviews with key informants and stakeholders, in-depth interviews, and focus groups are the methods chosen. In the planned methodological framework it was envisaged the conduction of a survey in order to reach a large number of operators as well as to implement a quantitative analysis, but on doing the investigation, the survey analysis has been changed with a focus group study due to time constrains.

Section 4 presents the research outcomes: the sustainable tourism vision of stakeholders (by using the semi-structured interviews) the analysis of the public policy, and the vision of the tourism both from a supply and demand side. The results emerge from the 42 interviews that have been realized during the period September 2014 and April 2015 which involved different type of stakeholders, as explained in Section 4. This part of the research generates new knowledge about sustainable tourism practices and provides the matter to build new bridges for the improvement of the quality of life of residents and the quality’s experience of tourists. Moreover it shows the SWOT analysis that arose from the interviews with the local stakeholders and the two focus groups sessions that have been realized during the presentation of the partial results.

Section 5 is dedicated to the tourism good practices that have been identified within the in-field research, and investigated through in-depth interviews with the protagonists. The tourism good practices represent positive models of sustainable tourism which deserve to be disseminated not only at local level within the two cases studies, but also at international level, particular in the Euro Mediterranean region. As the section will show, it is strategic to promote the models which demonstrate that the sustainability of tourism is made up by concrete experience of people who take direct responsibility for the social, economic and environmental change.

Section 6 presents the recommendations to improve the tourism system that have been suggested during the in-field research, in order to be shared among different stakeholders: policy makers, politicians, public and private, managers, experts of the sector, no profit operators, etc. Finally the TOSTODEM research project ends with some final remarks which promote and support the efforts for sharing awareness within stakeholders as well as generic public about the crucial challenge of making more sustainable the tourism consumption of the life of human beings as well as the whole living bodies.