



reboot med



Policy recommendations for Mauritania

Deliverable D4.1 : Towards Recovering, Experiencing and Boosting Ecotourism in the WestMed Area



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I. Introduction and main objectives

The REBOOT MED project, "Recovering, Experiencing and Boosting ecoTourism in the WestMed area" aims to foster public-private partnerships to co-define action plans for the blue economy that can revive the tourism sector, as well as to incubate, accelerate, and test new sustainable tourism projects and packages across 10 pilot areas in six Western Mediterranean countries: France (Corsica), Italy, Spain, Tunisia, Morocco, and Mauritania.

The Senegal River delta is an ecologically significant area that has successfully maintained its exceptional natural integrity despite increasing anthropogenic pressures. The Diawling National Park (PND), established in 1991, has been instrumental in the ecological restoration of this degraded region, primarily through the innovative regulation of floodplains. This approach has restored hydrological balance, leading to the rehabilitation of ecosystems and biodiversity.

Furthermore, since its inception, the park has engaged local communities, involving them actively in the sustainable management of natural resources. This inclusive approach has strengthened both the economic and social resilience of these communities.

The PND's involvement in the REBOOT MED project has enhanced the park's visibility and promoted products derived from the sustainable use of natural resources. Through this initiative, the PND has also bolstered the resilience of coastal communities to climate challenges while fostering ecotourism as a driver of sustainable growth.

This document was developed in collaboration with a regional stakeholder group, including representatives from local administrative authorities (head of arrondissement), the Mayor's Office of the commune of N'Diago, local community representatives (artisans, fishers, fish processors, etc.), and civil society organizations (such as the NGO Naforé). It aims to address the necessary political support for diversifying maritime and coastal tourism products through a green, digital, and circular economy approach within the Trarza region and Keur Macéne department, specifically in the commune of N'Diago.

II. Policy framework

This document, developed by the Diawling National Park (PND),:

A. Emphasizes the importance of the Diawling National Park's orientation document, which advocates for necessary improvements to foster the development of ecotourism in the following areas:

1. Maritime security and marine pollution control: By integrating more rigorous monitoring systems and tools to assess the health of marine and coastal ecosystems. Sustainable tourism models ensure more informed decision-making regarding the maintenance of services upon which most development plans rely.
2. Development of maritime business clusters: Through the establishment of maritime business clusters aimed at fostering the growth of maritime enterprises.
3. Development and circulation of skills: The shift towards sustainable tourism would help curb ongoing overexploitation, reduce pollution of coastal and marine ecosystems, and lead to a more balanced distribution of the benefits generated by tourism development.
4. Sustainable consumption and production: Encourages trawlers, fishermen, and local populations to adopt measures to monitor the reduction of plastic bag consumption and marine waste.
5. Conservation and restoration of biodiversity and marine habitats: Organizing seminars and training sessions on the value of ecosystem services provided by tourist destinations.

B. Recognizes and supports the Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity Strategy (SCAPP) 2016-2030, which serves as the fundamental framework for ecotourism activities in Mauritania. In line with a global vision for sustainable growth, this strategy promotes tourism as an economic development lever while preserving the country's natural and cultural heritage. The key objectives of the SCAPP include:

- Increasing the real value added by tourism by 5% starting in 2020, with projections for continued growth in the years to come.
- Expanding accommodation capacity to 10,000 beds to accommodate a greater number of visitors.
- Creating 4,500 jobs in the tourism sector, thus fostering the creation of decent employment.

The strategy also encourages the modernization of tourism infrastructure, strengthening the skills of professionals, and promoting local products to boost tourist demand. In sum, the SCAPP 2016-2030 establishes a critical framework for the development of sustainable ecotourism while preserving the environment and promoting Mauritania's cultural heritage.

C. Commends the National Strategy for Environment and Sustainable Development, which includes ecotourism as a key focus of its policy. Specifically, thematic axis 2.3, dedicated to the protection of animal and plant biodiversity, highlights the importance of promoting ecotourism

in protected areas, such as the Diawling National Park. This strategy addresses the specific concerns of the park in terms of ecotourism development and promotion. By 2030, it aims to develop and implement policies to create sustainable tourism that generates jobs while highlighting local culture and products.

Thus, the integration of ecotourism into the national strategy reflects a strong commitment to combine environmental conservation with economic development, paving the way for better management of natural resources and the promotion of Mauritania's cultural heritage.

- D. Reaffirms the importance of the Diawling National Park's Ecotourism Strategy (2024-2027),** which includes the development of ecotourism for the benefit of local populations as one of its operational objectives. The PND is convinced that tourism and the reception of tourists are key elements for the mission of many protected areas. In its Management and Development Plan (PAG 2023-2027), the PND has specifically allocated its major structural project (2.4) to "the development of a more proactive communication and ecotourism activity," aimed at increasing the park's visibility and improving its operations.

III. Key policy messages

The Diawling National Park (PND) and the stakeholders involved in the drafting of this document hereby:

1. **Support the promotion of sustainable management of maritime economic activities** as well as the preservation of ecosystems and biodiversity, and encourage the support provided by the National Strategy for Environment and Sustainable Development in this regard.
2. **Encourage the valorization of biodiversity** through the recognition of ecosystem service values of tourist destinations, as is done within the PND through its various strategies.
3. **Call for the development and promotion of practices and solutions** to ensure the efficient use of natural resources and reduce the environmental impacts associated with tourism, as supported by the Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity Strategy (SCAPP) 2016-2030.
4. **Advocate for the establishment of a tourism product diversification strategy** through:
 - The promotion of services and tourism products that compensate for the seasonality of the sector and the encouragement of local commercial initiatives that focus on the circular economy, local skills, and traditions;
 - Support for the local economy to facilitate access for local communities to tourism markets by enabling them to sell handicrafts and cultural products.
5. **Encourage the development of public-private partnerships** as has been done in the framework of REBOOT MED and the action plan for the blue economy to revive the tourism sector developed by the PND under the project. This includes:
 - Engaging major tourism investors in discussions on sustainable finance;
 - Involving local private sector actors in designing tourism offers and associated market plans based on alternative and off-season proposals.
6. **Highlight the importance of supporting the valorization of ecotourism in Mauritania** through:
 - The consolidation or establishment of pricing systems and labels that identify good tourism practices, particularly with regard to the creation of decent jobs at the local level;
 - The deliberate integration of funds, principles, and sustainable development goals into tourism investment strategies.
7. **Encourage the implementation of training support** aimed at enhancing the employment of local populations, who are the custodians of Mauritania's traditions and culture, to foster the development of ecotourism and generate direct economic benefits for the territories. This includes:
 - Strengthening the skills of local populations in tourism reception and the management of ecotourism activities to ensure enriching experiences for visitors and guarantee sustainable income;
 - Organizing capacity-building activities in certain regions or local communities to help them establish effective tourism management structures and procedures;
 - Raising awareness and strengthening technical skills and capacities to support sustainable destinations and green tourism services, and promoting the development of marketing plans and communication tools to ensure competitive sustainable tourism.

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