



**MedStrategy Project - Integrated Strategy for Sustainable
Development of Mediterranean Rural Areas**
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**C3 – TERRITORIES AND INSTITUTIONS:
Diagnosis and ex ante evaluation**

Phase 3 – SWOT Analysis

“Diagnostic Report”



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1. Introduction

1.1 Objective of Diagnostic Report

The aim of this report is to assess and compare the characteristics of the four Mediterranean rural regions (in Italy, Greece, Malta and Spain) participating in the project, in terms of their territorial qualities and governance systems, with a view to identifying the factors encouraging or impeding the formulation, adoption and implementation of integrated sustainable development strategies in these territories. Diagnosing the key issues will assist in addressing them more effectively, resulting in improved governance models incorporating the principles of sustainable development. The report is based on the results of the auto-evaluation undertaken by the Partners, of the territorial and institutional characteristics of their regions, using a “SWOT” methodology and considering the findings of the Framework Documents produced for the four regions. Comparisons between the findings of the analyses in the four partners’ territories have been undertaken, so as to identify the key issues to address and opportunities to target, in the process of developing improved governance methods and planning models towards sustainability.

1.2 Overview of SWOT methodology

The SWOT analysis approach (Strengths / Weaknesses / Opportunities / Threats) seeks to address the question of strategy formation from a two-fold perspective: from an external appraisal (of threats and opportunities in an environment) and from an internal appraisal (of strengths and weaknesses in an organisation).

Strength = a resource or capacity the organisation can use effectively to achieve its objectives (build on strengths)	Weakness = a limitation, fault or defect in the organisation that will keep it from achieving its objectives (eliminate weaknesses)
Opportunity = any favourable situation in the organisation’s environment (exploit opportunities)	Threat = any unfavourable situation in the organisation’s environment that is potentially damaging to its strategy (mitigate the effect of threats)

The model originally stems from the business management literature, where such an analysis has a strategic goal, as it sheds light on external opportunities and threats that can affect the future of a business. The internal analysis of a company’s strengths and weaknesses is in turn intended to highlight certain strategies that the company can exploit, in particular practices that the company needs to correct.

1.3 Scope of SWOT analysis in the context of MedStrategy

The aim of the MedStrategy project is to improve territorial governance of Mediterranean rural areas towards sustainability through an innovative integrated planning model.

Nowadays, public authorities operate in an increasingly multicultural environment and face the need to replace at least parts of their nationally / locally differentiated decision-making processes with global ones.

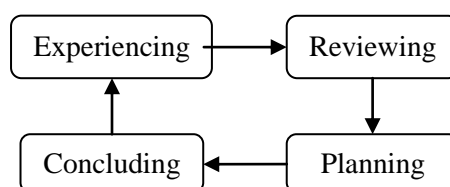
If compared to private organisations, public ones are generally:

- less adaptable to their environment
- more constrained by regulations concerning their operation, their resources and funding
- dependent to a large extent on wider political or administrative relations

Considering the above, efficient planning strategies and programming of the public organisations' activities are of vital importance.

Analogous to the benefits of SWOT analysis for a business strategy, public institutions/ administrations may also use a similar method to outline the internal and external factors that influence their regional planning processes either positively or negatively, in order to improve their planning strategy formation.

Planning strategy formation needs to be a cyclical process, including SWOT analyses, re-assessments, evaluation, and implementation. A continuous learning process needs to take place within regions themselves and their institutional structures:



SWOT analysis in the context of MedStrategy consists of the following stages:

- An analysis of the major trends and problems likely to affect the future of each territory through a consideration of a number of economic, socio-demographic and environmental indicators, in order to get an overview of the key issues the territory will have to face
- External analysis of opportunities and threats: a list of parameters of the environment which are not under the direct control of the public authorities, and which will strongly influence environmental and socio-economic sustainable development

- Internal analysis of strengths and weaknesses: an inventory of the factors that are at least partly under the control of the public authorities, and which may either promote or hinder environmental and socio-economic sustainable development
- Based on the results of the above, identification of key considerations and evaluation of a strategy for improving sustainable development planning in rural areas

Territorial and institutional analyses have been undertaken by the partners, for the four participating Mediterranean rural regions. Subsequently, the partners have carried out territorial and institutional SWOT analyses for their regions using the methodology as earlier described.

The SWOT analyses used a common format that had been previously agreed by the partners, comprising of a number of thematic areas and specific indicators per thematic area. This format was developed in order to facilitate the process of linkage between the institutional and territorial analyses with the SWOT analyses, but also so as to present the results using a “homogeneous” and shared vision of the issues affecting the territories.

In the sections that follow, the format of the territorial and institutional SWOT analyses as well as the diagnostic comparison between the analyses performed by the partners, are presented.

2. Territorial SWOT analysis

2.1 Overview of Territorial thematic areas and indicators

The territorial SWOT analysis was undertaken by the partners, using the following thematic areas and indicators:

Territorial thematic areas	Indicators
Socio-demographic dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population structure and evolution • Education and lifestyle • Employment and Gross Domestic Product
Settlement system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban growth • Quality of urban areas • Transport infrastructures
System of environmental and historic-cultural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protected natural areas and other sites of natural interest • Archaeology, architectural and historic-cultural heritage • Environmental resources
Economic and production dimension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial and traditional craft activities • Agriculture and zootechnical activities and fishing • Tourism / Tourist activities
Territorial services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public transport • School, social welfare, cultural and sporting facilities
Environmental services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste management • Protection and management of water resources • Energy production and distribution

2.2 Comparative analysis between the partners' territorial characteristics

Comparisons between the findings of the SWOT analyses in the four partners' regions have been undertaken, for each of the set indicators.

2.2.1 Thematic area: Socio-demographic dimension

2.2.1.1 Population structure and evolution

Strengths

As a common general trend, there has been a demographic increase in population in the involved regions or in specific areas within those regions. The increase rate varies from small (2% in the AAM region) to significant (up to 35% in coastal municipalities in Italy: Falcone, Oliveri, Gioiosa, Marea and Patti). In some cases (e.g. Malta) the increase is attributed predominantly to young population influx from abroad, particularly from Eastern Europe. Generally, in the areas where significant population increase has occurred, there is also a lower old age ratio in relation to that of other surrounding areas or in relation to the national average. In terms of population density/land availability for the assessed regions, it ranges from low to medium when compared to other regions of the same countries therefore there is potential for further expansion.

Weaknesses

Regional imbalances of population density are observed within the assessed territories, with scarce population in some areas and concentration in other areas, therefore the settlement systems are not evenly developed. For example depopulation of some of the inland areas of the Consortium in Italy reach 40% with the coastal municipalities showing significant population increase and densities higher than the national average. As a general trend there is progressive ageing of population in the assessed territories, consequently a high old ratio, dependency ratio and a higher burden on the social security and health system.

Opportunities

Parts within the territories are becoming more attractive, leading to an increase in population. In some cases this is due to the different way of life (quietness, rural landscape, coastal location) being more appealing; in other cases this is due to changes in the sociocultural model due to the economic crisis, with 'neo-rural' population arriving. To make the rural territories more attractive to the young population, more incentives and job opportunities should be created. There is potential for further expansion in the assessed rural areas as the population density is generally lower than the national averages.

Threats

The progressive ageing of the population is seen as a common threat in the assessed territories, increasing the old age ratio and dependency ratio. Due to the current economic conditions,

opportunities for young people may be limited which could further increase depopulation or reduce arrival of in-migrant population.

2.2.1.2 Education and lifestyle

Strengths

Within the territories, there is a strong awareness of common identity amongst the population, as well as strong social identification with their natural and cultural environment. In some regions (e.g. AAM) there are new educational opportunities arising from the local sustainability challenges on matters such as environment and energy. In other regions (e.g. Malta) there are already high educational opportunities, with a large number of schools and training centres in proportion to the size of the region, and high achieving rates in relation to the national average. The lifestyle in some of the less densely populated areas, results in significantly lower consumption of environmental resources than the national averages.

Weaknesses

In the assessed territories, with the exception of Pembroke, there is generally a low educational level with a high percentage of illiteracy. There is lack of infrastructure and services for school education and professional training, and due to the current economic conditions, many graduates decide to leave the territories. Low educational levels in combination with the high ageing degree result in conservative attitudes, low self-esteem of the rural population and slow uptake of innovation. There is lack of education and awareness on issues related to sustainable development and sustainable tourism. In Malta this is more apparent in the urban localities within the territory, as the rural ones typically attract residents from a middle-class background, which tend to have higher levels of environmental awareness. In Italy and Malta, there is high dependency on private cars in the assessed regions with an increase observed, which may be due to the local increase in population in certain areas. The environmental quality of the road vehicles typically found is inferior to that of the national average, which may partly be due to the lack of environmental awareness or the different lifestyle in the particular regions.

Opportunities

The presence within the assessed regions, of schools, training centres or conference facilities, can favour the increase of education levels and professional qualifications, being an opportunity for social and economic sustainability. E.g. the region of AAM can benefit from the proximity to the University of Crete located in the neighbouring capital of Heraklion and the Science and Technology Park of Crete. These provide good access to higher education, research and technology transfer, which increases the potential for innovation within the economy and for better cooperation between research,

and the trade and tourist industry. In addition, rural population is gradually becoming more aware of environmental issues and lifestyle impacts.

Threats

As a general observation in the assessed regions, there has so far been limited cooperation between universities/research centres, and the private sector, and limited connections between the educational system and the needs of the labour market. It is discouraging that so far there has been low-level of clustering amongst the scientific environments. There is generally lack of awareness with regards to sustainability and ways to reduce energy consumption and air pollution (e.g. use of low environmental impact vehicles, especially for the public vehicles fleet). Adding to that, increased affluence in some areas (e.g. Pembroke) is changing consumption patterns, with the demand for private cars increasing. There is an absence of awareness campaigns for the urban population, about the quality of life in the rural regions.

2.2.1.3 Employment and Gross Domestic Product

Strengths

Due to a considerable part of the population employed in rural activities (e.g. depending on the region: agriculture, rural tourism, trade of local products, accommodation facilities and services etc.) there is a good revenue base and a relatively low unemployment rate. In all the assessed regions, there are sectors where there is further development potential, and there is significant presence of environmental, historical and cultural resources, which, if properly exploited, can offer additional sources of income and employment (e.g. in the AAM, construction of leisure resorts in the area; in Pembroke, shift to high-value-added industrial sectors etc.). Taking part in European projects such as MedStrategy creates opportunities for further local growth and employment. Differing from the other rural regions in this respect, Malta has a well-established governance system, with good credit rating, well established services-oriented economic structure, good social welfare system and a well-established university.

Weaknesses

Due to the current economic conditions, unemployment rises especially amongst the young population; the local labour market often does not have the capacity to create highly qualified jobs, and there may be reluctance of young people to take up traditional activities (e.g. sheep and goat breeding). The skills shortages in certain economic sectors are often due to the poor connection between the educational system and the needs of the local labour market. In some areas there is underemployment in certain periods of the year, as people are occupied e.g. in seasonal agricultural activities. Unemployment may also be worsened by external factors, e.g. the reduction of annual olive

trees crops in Crete may lead to reduction in the market potential of this sector and people employed in it. Unemployment lowers the average income therefore weakening the purchasing power in the regions. The insularity and marginal EU location is seen as an additional weakness in Malta, which has a small internal market.

Opportunities

There are new employment opportunities arising from growing sectors such as organic farming, agrotourism, gastronomic, natural, cultural tourism. New facilities e.g. the Tourist District “Thyrronium Tyndaris - Parco Dei Miti” is an opportunity for an integrated and quality tourist offer that can favour the increase in employment. New infrastructure and equipment (e.g. in PT, dual carriageway, logistics platform, airport) assists in promoting the economy and labour market in the area. Other ways of increasing employment opportunities include: diversification of economic activities, increased trade within the EU and globally, e-marketing and e-business, participation in development programs.

Threats

Due to the current economic conditions, there is as a common trend of increasing unemployment especially among young people. Small/medium enterprises are struggling to survive and the production network weakens. The public/semi-public sector also suffers significant cutbacks. This situation offers limited opportunities for increase in the employment and GDP rates, and it does not encourage entrepreneurship. In addition to the financial constraints, the development potential of the regions is limited by the weak forms of collaboration between companies, institutions and local actors, as well as lack of entrepreneurial dynamism, leading to a weak overall capacity to promote the local products.

2.2.2 Thematic area: Settlement system

2.2.2.1 Urban growth

Strengths

There is a generally low degree of urbanisation in the assessed regions in comparison with their wider territories. This is to some extent due to the presence of high-quality, often protected, natural areas and resources or areas of specific scientific interest. E.g. in Crete, the region of AAM is one of the greenest areas of Crete, with a variety of landscape, biodiversity and sights for observation of rare flora and fauna. In relation to people moving from rural regions to urban areas, the cost of land being cheaper in rural areas could be a positive factor preventing that.

Weaknesses

In parts of the assessed regions, like in the coastal areas of CTN, in San Gwann in Pembroke and in rural towns near Teruel, significant presence of urbanized areas is observed, with increase in the number of dwelling units. In some cases (e.g. CTN) this does not correspond to an increase in population; on the contrary, population shows a decrease and there is a high percentage of vacant dwellings in historic city centres. Weaknesses reported in the region of AAM is the lack of organised political vision for the area and the insufficient awareness both of tour operators regarding the natural/cultural significance of the area, as well as of local society regarding the ecological value of the area. The latter has led to degradation of landscape in some mountainous areas due to overgrazing.

Opportunities

The natural and cultural resources available in the assessed rural areas provide opportunities in relation to their territorial development. There is a growing trend towards new forms of tourism such as ecotourism, which can focus on the special beauty or biodiversity interest of natural resources present in rural areas (e.g. wetland areas, flora and fauna etc.). There is also potential for converting existing unused buildings (such as ex-military buildings in Pembroke, vacant dwellings in historic centres in CTN) to satisfy housing needs as well as touristic demand. The peri-urbanisation occurring in certain areas can lead (through increase in population) to better provision of equipment, public services etc.

Threats

The lack of policies for urban/rural planning is seen as a common threat between all assessed territories. Specific issues include: in Crete, the difficulty in implementing such policies in regions with high value for tourism, therefore the difficulty to coordinate the forest, agricultural and tourism sectors in producing an integrated policy for territorial development; in the CTN, the absence of policies aimed at the recovery of existing building stock, the outdated urban plans and the absence of initiatives aimed at improving buildings' energy efficiency; in Malta, the lack of policies coupled with the potentially corrupt practices in issuing building permits. A further threat, reported in the PT, are the negative impacts of peri-urbanisation that may increase the land prices in rural areas and lead to additional costs to small town councils.

2.2.2.2 *Quality of urban areas*

Strengths

There are varying strengths in the urban areas of the assessed regions. In the AAM and the CTN, there is important cultural and historic/archeological built heritage, adding high quality to the territory and enhancing attraction for tourism. In the CTN, there is good environmental air quality (low levels of pollution). The same applies in general to Pembroke (except the area of San Gwann), where the

limited urban areas are well managed and well served by community services. In PT, due to the second housing phenomenon, a trend for recovering buildings in rural areas is observed.

Weaknesses

The insufficient resources and infrastructure are seen as a common weakness in the assessed areas. There are limited financial resources or funding mechanisms to support rural development within local administrations, which are often economically dependent on wider administrations/general government. The lack of infrastructure (e.g. green areas, urban services, restricted traffic zones, pedestrian areas, cycling paths, air quality monitoring etc.) is an issue which can impact on the quality of life for the resident population and the tourism potential of the territories.

Opportunities

There have been recent opportunities through regional, national or European programs, to increase and improve the quality of urban areas. For example in Greece, there was a national project related to “green roofs”, and one on “green neighbourhoods”, both funding the application of building elements which had a direct impact to the quality of the surrounding areas (air quality, “urban heat island” effect etc.). The development of strategic planning tools for the regions would facilitate them in benefiting from the opportunities that are available.

Threats

The absence of policies and initiatives with regards to urban planning and improvement of urban services is seen as a common threat. Specific tools can be developed such as urban mobility plans, urban traffic plans etc., aimed at improving urban public transport and promoting innovative modes of transport. Also specific policies are needed with regards to enhancing urban green areas. Lack of such policies and tools can lead to traffic generated by urban sprawl, and unsatisfactory environmental standards, as is already observed in some of the assessed areas. Lowering of the public investment towards such policies, considering the economic crisis, is seen as a further threat.

2.2.2.3 Transport infrastructures

Strengths

Transport connections and accessibility are considered to be good in the assessed territories. The AAM is in close proximity (by car or bus) to the port and airport of the city of Heraklion, connected with a number of national and international locations. The CTN has good accessibility through a roads network to the main urban centres in Sicily, as well as to its ports and airports. Some of the coastal municipalities are also served by railway. In the Pembroke region there is an extensive road network connecting the local areas. In Spain, towns and villages in the PT are connected by car, bus and rail to

the nearest urban centres and airports (Zaragoza, Valencia), and there has recently been great public investment to improve the transport infrastructure, by providing a dual carriageway, better train services etc.

Weaknesses

The condition of the transport infrastructure is typically poor in the assessed rural regions, especially with regards to the road network, the condition of which needs improvement in many areas. Railway networks are not in most cases sufficiently developed to represent an alternative to road transport. Relying on road transport to a great extent, creates transport dependency. Transport using roads is subject to natural events such as landslides and geological instability. In agricultural areas, in the event of inability to move using roads, this would create major problems to – amongst others - transportation of people and animals, animal feeds and farm supplies in general.

Opportunities

In all assessed regions there have been initiatives aimed at improving the transport infrastructures. These either includes modernising the existing transport network (AAM), improving the existing public transport system (Pembroke) and constructing new infrastructure e.g. highways, railway tracks, dual carriageways (CTN, PT). Through such measures, opportunities arise for better connectivity between areas, as well as for reduced dependency on private car use with its associated negative impacts (congestion, CO₂ emissions, air pollution etc.).

Threats

The major threat to improving transport infrastructure is the reduction of public investment towards such projects, due the economic crisis. Projects already ongoing are sometimes put on hold or delayed due to the economic conditions and uncertainty. Threats to reducing public transport use have different origins in the assessed territories: for example in the AAM it may be caused by the recent price rise of tickets costs (due to the economic crisis), whereas in Pembroke, the threat is seen as the potential increased future affluence of residents, favouring private car use.

2.2.3 Thematic area: System of environmental and historic-cultural resources

2.2.3.1 Protected natural areas and other sites of natural interest

Strengths

There are areas of significant natural beauty and interest within all of the assessed territories, as well as protected Natura 2000 sites. In the AAM there is a great variety of landscape with rich biodiversity, and sites for rare flora and fauna observation (e.g. protected bearded vulture). In CTN protected

natural areas cover 12% of the total territorial surface. In Pembroke there are a number of Natural 2000 spots within the assessed area, and in PT there are internationally famous paleontology resources.

Weaknesses

The poor capacity to adequately manage in a systematic way the natural areas within the territories is seen as a common weakness. This is due to a combination of factors: a) lack of political vision in relation to environmental protection and enhancement of resources b) lack of tools to use for good management and protection of natural resources (e.g. habitat management regime) b) lack of human and financial resources to develop a territory environmental management group c) lack of awareness / fragmented knowledge, by citizens and local businesses, of the ecological value of their area and its potential.

Opportunities

The most important opportunity arising from the presence of natural areas in the assessed regions, is the potential complementarity between emerging activities such as agro-tourism, and the territories' environmental qualities. It is positive that concepts such as environmental protection and sustainable management of natural resources are becoming increasingly important. Local/regional, national or EU funding programmes related to natural and heritage resources protection, offer a great opportunity to undertake such actions. For example in CTN there is a Territorial Plan for Nebrodi Park and Management Plans for the Natura 2000 sites, both of which aim to ensure efficient protection and enhancement of the environmental resources and habitats.

Threats

There is concern about the future conservation of the territories' environmental values and resources (at social and political level). Due to the economic crisis, there is reduction of public investment on environmental issues such as the protection/enhancement of natural heritage. Added to that, there is lack of specific policies and interventions directed towards enhancing and protecting biodiversity, and ensuring sustainable management. In some cases there is difficulty in implementing such policies in areas of high value for tourism, i.e. in coordinating the agricultural and tourism sectors and producing integrated development plans. Urban / tourism growth, when not regulated properly, can be a serious threat to natural resources, causing disturbance to natural habitats and intensive land use. Gradual extinction of rare flora and fauna due man-made interventions is a further threat to natural areas.

2.2.3.2 Archaeology, architectural and historic-cultural heritage

Strengths

There are significant archaeological, historical and cultural resources within the assessed territories. Within the AAM there are important archaeological sites which one can visit (e.g. the “Minoan Highway”); there are traditional villages with rich cultural and folk traditions, like the production of wine (main source of wealth for the region), celebrated with annual cultural and recreational activities; there are numerous byzantine churches. Within the CTN there is the archaeological site of “Tyndaris” (including ruins of a Hellenistic-Roman settlement, a basilica and an ancient Greek theatre) which is a tourist attraction, both as a museum exposing the history of the area and as a cultural space (summer performances and concerts in the theatre); there is an important religious site (Sanctuary of Black Madonna of Tindari) attracting visitors throughout the year, as well as widespread historical paths crossing and linking the inland areas of the territory. In Pembroke there is a diverse cultural heritage supplemented by a mix of historical attractions and events/festivals, and by buildings of historical value or listed, built by the British.

Weaknesses

As a common observation, the archaeological/cultural sites within the territories are not well managed and their potential is not fully exploited. This is due to a number of factors: a) there is lack of financial and human resources to allocate to the maintenance and development of these sites; they are often unguarded, or in a state of deterioration or abandonment. There is typically absence of experts within local/regional authorities, specialised in the management of cultural heritage and territorial resources, who could develop a management group dedicated to this aim b) there is absence of integrated regional/national plans and policies for the management of environmental, historical and cultural resources and lack of systematic recording of the available resources c) there is lack of awareness of the overriding importance of historical, cultural and ethno-anthropological heritage, of the opportunities that are connected to getting the best benefit from it (e.g. tourism potential) and innovative approaches through which this could be achieved.

Opportunities

It is generally recognised that proper management and development of the archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage within the territories can significantly increase their attractiveness potential (for tourism and recreation) and create new opportunities for activities being a source of income and employment. Government or EU funding programs related to heritage protection and enhancement can also represent opportunities.

Threats

There is concern about the future conservation of the territories' patrimonial values and resources (at social and political level). Due to the economic crisis, there is reduction of the public funds allocated to the maintenance, restoration and enhancement of the archaeological, architectural and historic-cultural heritage sites. There are also fewer incentive mechanisms for private owners, for example to restore their existing buildings. Added to the inadequacy of funds, there is also an absence of integrated territorial policies managing holistically the available resources. These factors result in insufficient activities and interventions aimed at protecting and enhancing the available sites, leading to their progressive degradation. Urban / tourism growth, if not regulated properly, can have a negative impact on preserving the territorial heritage.

2.2.3.4 Environmental resources

Strengths

There is high environmental quality and value within the assessed territories. They are all rural, non-industrial territories therefore there is lower man-made pressure on the environment. In the AAM and CTN there are agricultural areas with natural habitats and high biodiversity. There are protected natural areas in AAM, CTN and Pembroke, presenting great environmental interest. In AAM there is good air quality and Pembroke has excellent climatic conditions with no extreme events.

Weaknesses

Environmental imbalances and hazards caused both by natural phenomena but mostly due to human intervention, are seen as a major weakness in AAM and PT. Such hazards include bushes and forest fires, soil erosion and loss, biodiversity loss, overgrazing causing landscape alterations. Added to these, the lack of awareness and adequate policies and tools, has a negative impact on protecting and enhancing environmental resources. There is lack of awareness by citizens, technicians, administrators and economic operators in relation to environmental sustainability and new opportunities it can present. There are insufficient informational activities, school or training programs taking place, to inform people on environmental resources and their importance, so as to enhance their awareness. There are no specific territorial policies aimed at protecting and preserving the environment, and environmental data / related services and organisations, are not systematically recorded and communicated to people.

Opportunities

Environmental quality is a competitive advantage of the assessed territories, in relation to other regions. The development of new activities such as rural tourism and agro-industry should use the high value environmental resources to the benefit of the regions, and as a defence to the territorial

environmental quality. Creation of new natural resources (such as development of a wetland and completion of a dam in the AAM) can offer new areas of natural beauty for the regions. Implementing (where available) landscape and territorial plans and national/EU policies on landscape and environmental protection will ensure that the available resources are preserved and enhanced.

Threats

Environmental pollution and degradation of resources is seen a potential threat, due to a combination of factors: a) human activities, including arbitrary disposal of wastewater, waste and pollutants in the AAM, uncontrolled illegal activities in the CTN, polluting economic activities in PT, unregulated tourism grown in Pembroke b) potential progressive abandonment of agricultural areas and practices which can lead to reduction of environmental defence, hydrogeological instability etc. c) reduction of public investment in protecting environmental resources, due to the economic crisis d) absence of regulations and plans aimed at protecting and enhancing the environmental value of the territories.

2.2.4 Thematic area: Economic and production dimension

2.2.4.1 Industrial and traditional craft activities

Strengths

The most common activities within the assessed territories, vary: from small units producing handmade crafts or products (e.g. ceramics/pottery in the AAM, agro-alimentary products in PT, small handcraft and local products in CTN) to larger, industrial units (wine production and olive oil production in the AAM). In Malta there is an ongoing shift to high-added-value industrial sectors, and even though the assessed territory is mainly rural, many residents commute to other areas for work in more industrial activities. In the CTN there is also an increasing trend in the number of units and employees in the “Industry” and the “Trade and Services” sectors.

Weaknesses

The absence of an organised vision and territorial plan on how to preserve and develop the local industrial and traditional craft potential presents a significant weakness. There is often lack of coordination and cooperation between the local administration and local producers. There are individual local enterprises, which however do not operate in an associative manner, with the aim to enhance as a whole the commercial availability of their products. In PT there are only few associations, in Malta the market for local traditional crafts is disappearing. Added to that, there is low investment on R&D, but also low diffusion of technology and innovation in the local enterprises. Skills and infrastructure shortages act as limiting factors for growth of small enterprises.

Opportunities

Opportunities for growth of local production and activities could be presented through a) exploring the potential for export of local products (e.g. agricultural products in the AAM) b) developing distinctive local brands for well-known quality local products (e.g. “Aragon’s handmade alimentary” in PT) c) exploring e-marketing and e-business opportunities which could offer access to international markets d) regional/local policies giving incentives and facilitating administrative procedures for local producers, for them to enhance and strengthen the production and marketing of their products e) financial support either through national or EU subsidies, funding small producers whose practices preserve the environment and rural communities, in order to enhance their capacity so that they can survive in the market.

Threats

The economic crisis, creating market pressure on local producers, as well as globalisation and rapid development of emerging economies, is seen as the most important threat to local manufacturing activities. In addition, the uncertainties in the economic climate can lead to unpredictable labour market shifts. The absence of local and regional policies aimed at encouraging and marketing local production activities and enhancement of the capacity of territorial resources, represents a further threat. There is also lack of policies favouring the widespread adoption of environmental management systems or innovative low-environmental impact activities within local enterprises and public administration.

2.2.4.2 Agriculture and zootechnical activities and fishing

Strengths

All the assessed regions have a strongly developed agricultural activity. In the AAM, the main activities and sources of income for the region are wine and olive oil production, poultry exploitation but also rabbits and ovine. In CTN there is a wide range of local agro-food products being produced (e.g. salame of S. Angelo Brolo) and an increase in the number of organic farms. In PT there are significant agrarian activities, with high specialisation production and emphasis on certification of quality. In Pembroke, there are three major types of agricultural activity: the one associated with irrigated land and intensive cultivation of fruits and vegetables, dry land farming and livestock farming (mainly swine, rabbit, poultry and egg production).

Weaknesses

Typically in the assessed regions the agricultural system is mainly based on small to medium scale, directly owned or family businesses. These have low potential for easily adopting new production and commercial strategies, and often they have lack of awareness of the real possibilities related to new

activities e.g. rural tourism, related to innovation and to offering product diversity. In the assessed territories there is typically an absence of adequate structures for the promotion and marketing of the local agricultural products, and there is inadequate development of the industrial sector linked to the transformation of agricultural products. Furthermore, there are weak links of cooperation between entrepreneurs and public administration in defining common strategies for enhancement of local products. A significant decrease in the number of farms and heads of livestock is observed in CTN. Sporadic levels of investment in agriculture and recent influx of imported products perceived to be of higher quality, are seen as negative factors for the region of Pembroke. Scarce diversification and profitability from agriculture are also seen as weaknesses in PT, along with ageing of farmers.

Opportunities

Opportunities for development of the agricultural sector are presented through the growing market for organic farming, and growing demand for high quality products, meeting safety, traceability and certification criteria. Furthermore, there is increasing interest in rural and wine-gastronomic tourism. These activities, linked to agricultural practices, offer opportunities to integrate the skills and income of farmers to new emerging activities. In addition, the rural landscape and heritage, including farmhouses and agricultural facilities, offers opportunities for enhanced enjoyment of the countryside in the rural regions.

Threats

There are a number of underlining threats in the sustainable growth of the agricultural sector in the assessed regions: a) the absence of policies aimed at strengthening agricultural production, promoting technological innovation, and preventing the abandonment of agricultural territories b) the progressive decrease in the prices of agricultural products, making it difficult for small local producers to compete at the same market as cheaper international imported products from emerging economies c) the ageing of the farmers population, not being replaced at the same rates by a younger generation.

2.2.4.3 Tourism / tourist activities

Strengths

There is considerable potential for tourism attractiveness in the assessed territories. The AAM is in close proximity to the airport and port of Heraklion city, which is the main entrance gate to the island of Crete, an international holiday destination. There is increasing interest for tourist excursions in the AAM from various tourist offices in Crete; the region is known for its green and traditional villages, its wine and olive oil production, and it also has a good reputation for eco-tourism. In CTN, the archaeological sites and natural resources are the main touristic attractions. A tourist district has been created (“Thyrrenium Tyndaris – Myths of the Park”). There is also significant demand for religious

tourism, and the region is known for its popular and religious traditions. There is a dense network of routes through which one can exploit the resources of the territory. There has been significant growth in accommodation facilities, mainly in the coastal areas. In PT, there are tourism resources available (Mudejar architecture, paleontology findings) and there is high complementarity between those and other traditional activities (agriculture, services etc.). Malta in general is a well-known touristic destination, and the assessed area in specific, offers tourism attraction due to its rural character, a number of religious festivals occurring, and the availability of high quality accommodation.

Weaknesses

High seasonality of tourism is observed in the assessed regions, with high concentration of tourists in short periods, especially in the summer. There is lack of an organised plan for promoting the specific qualities of the particular rural areas marketing them as touristic destinations. Also, there are no plans aimed at the integration between the summer tourist offer and other environmental, historical, cultural and religious resources available. There is lack of facilities and services supporting tourist activities (e.g. in the AAM there is lack of an information point / structure for visitors). The existing accommodation facilities on offer do not offer diversity, therefore restricting the type of visitors that may opt for them. There is also typically a low level of education and professional expertise in the tourist industry (knowledge of languages, marketing skills, customer service). Finally, unsustainable growth of tourism is seen as a threat, e.g. mass tourism leading to increasing provision of new accommodation units, not designed based on sustainability criteria. Unregulated tourism can lead to urban and rural landscape degradation, noise, congestion etc.

Opportunities

There is significant potential within the assessed territories, for further increasing touristic demand by properly exploring the available environmental and cultural resources. The adoption of regional or national tourism development plans, the benefit from potentially available funding and the implementation of marketing initiatives can increase the opportunities to promote an integrated tourist offer. To increase touristic demand throughout the year, opportunities for diversification of activities should be explored (environmental, cultural, rural, religious tourism etc.), the potential of targeting niche markets (e.g. health or language tourism), as well as the potential of cooperating with other regional or provincial governments to further develop an integrated tourist offer (as happens in PT). There is increasingly more extensive use of the internet by travellers seeking travel destinations, so this is something more emphasis should be given on, to promote the territories' qualities. In the CTN, a further opportunity is identified, of potentially making use of a significant number of unused buildings, to increase tourist accommodation facilities.

Threats

The most significant threat to tourism growth is the absence of policies aimed at improving the quality of tourism and at providing an integrated tourist offer. The tourist offer is currently fragmented, and there is little coordination between different levels of local and regional administration, as well as between public administration and private tourist operators. Due to the economic crisis, there is reduction in the expected number of tourists in the assessed regions. Unregulated growth of tourism can lead to phenomena such as degradation of services.

2.2.5 Thematic area: Territorial services

2.2.5.1 Public transport

Strengths

With the exception of Malta, where the public transport system is new and with a wide network of routes, in the other regions the rural public transport infrastructure is basic. Nevertheless, in the PT there is public support to the rural transport network.

Weaknesses

There is poor infrastructure for public transport and limited connections between areas of the territories. Added to that, the timetables are often not adhered to, causing delays. The weak integration with the urban transport system and intermodality with road network can lead to urban congestion. Furthermore, in the PT it is suggested that the economic viability of the regional transport system is at risk, unless it receives strong public investment.

Opportunities

Better controllability of the operation of public transport can occur if some of the services are managed locally rather than regionally or nationally.

Threats

There is lack of policies and specific tools such as urban traffic plans, aimed at improving mobility management, improving public transport, promoting innovative modes of transport and exploring options such as on-demand schemes. The economic crisis presents an additional threat, as it may in some cases lead to services quality reduction (routes, frequency, personnel) to save on maintenance costs.

2.2.5.2 School, social welfare, cultural and sporting facilities

Strengths

With the exception of Malta, where there are numerous school and sports facilities, cultural events, and highly developed social and welfare services, there are no particular strong points in these fields amongst the other territories. In the AAM the services are basic, delivered with limited resources. In PT, there is a new “Social Action Plan” focusing public investment on social activities for young and for retired people.

Weaknesses

With the exception of Malta, the services and facilities provided are generally considered insufficient for the needs of the resident population and in relation to the tourism potential of the territories. Services are also unevenly distributed, mainly concentrated on specific urban or coastal areas. In certain cases e.g. PT, there is dependence on other administrations in order to support public services. Ageing of the population is a common issue, which leads to an increase in dependent people therefore an increased demand for social and healthcare services. Furthermore, it is difficult to maintain public schools and even harder to offer higher education, in small rural areas with a limited young population.

Opportunities

With the current economic climate, there are limited opportunities presented in increasing investment in social, educational and cultural services. Some initiatives are in place, e.g. in the AAM people with very low income are supported by the social structures of the Municipality; in PT, a new economic sector is developing, related to social attention, focused on the elderly.

Threats

Inadequacy of the provided services (e.g. health services, schools etc.) and facilities reduces the attractiveness of the territories both for residents as well as for tourism.

2.2.6 Thematic area: Environmental services

2.2.6.1 Waste management

Strengths

In Malta there is an integrated waste management system operating well and managed in an efficient way by the national waste management authority. Separation of all waste occurs at source, and recycling of various waste streams takes place at recycling plants. New sewage treatment plants have

been introduced, utilising the latest technologies. With the exception of Malta, in the other assessed territories, there are basic waste management schemes operating, which however are not at a mature stage and could benefit from significant improvements.

Weaknesses

Lack of funding is a limiting factor for the application of efficient waste management strategies. The equipment used may be of old technology and not sufficient to deal with increasing volumes of municipal waste. Furthermore, the rate of recycling is low, which may be due both to inefficient collection strategies and facilities, and to low environmental awareness on the benefits of recycling.

Opportunities

Waste processing technologies have advanced and there is scope for applying new technologies to existing facilities, in order to deal with increasing volumes of waste more efficiently. Information campaigns on environmental issues gradually increase people's awareness, leading to an increase in recycling practices. In rural areas, there is high potential for composting organic waste and reusing the compost e.g. as soil fertiliser.

Threats

There is lack of policies and specific initiatives such as integrated municipal or regional Waste Management Plans, aimed at reducing the amount of waste produced, increasing recycling rates and reducing the volumes of waste sent to landfill. Limited financial and human resources to allocate to the development of such plans can be one of the underlying reasons, as well as lack of political vision on environmental issues.

2.2.6.2 Protection & management of water resources

Strengths

Overall in the assessed regions the quality of water resources is considered to be good, this including (depending on the region) surface water, bathing water (CTN and Pembroke) and underground water. The purification system and the sewerage network are working well in the AAM, and in PT, there is high public investment in improving the water distribution and collection system especially in the smallest villages.

Weaknesses

With the exception of Malta, where water supply meets demand, even in the summer months, in the other territories there are deficiencies of supply observed in the summer, when demand is at its peak due to touristic mobility. Deficiencies are partly due to inefficient water networks with significant

distribution losses. In the CTN, there is insufficient monitoring of the quality of drinking water, which, added to the inefficiency of the water distribution networks, results in lack of confidence regarding quality on the part of the consumers, leading to a widespread use of bottled water. In Malta, as drinking water supply involves the use of desalination plants, it is a CO₂ intensive process.

Opportunities

Adopting water management / protection plans at municipal or regional level would offer opportunities for better monitoring of the quality of water resources and for ensuring resources management. In the Sicilian Region the “Plan for the Waters Protection” includes for monitoring quality of surface waters, underground waters and marine waters. In PT, a “Sustainable Rural Development Plan” has been adopted, promoting efficient water management.

Threats

Lack of funds to maintain municipal wastewater treatment plans is an issue the AAM faces, added to the risk of increasing drought periods occurring in future, due to climate change. In CTN, the biggest concern is the absence of policies by Local Authorities aimed at defining measures to protect water quality, and at improving the water management systems. In Malta, there is an issue with illegally drawn groundwater from the aquifer, leading to higher percentage of water coming from the desalination plants, thus resulting in higher CO₂ emissions.

2.2.6.3 Energy production and distribution

Strengths

Overall in the assessed regions the environmental conditions are favourable for the application of energy saving and renewable energy technologies. The AAM is included in the areas of high wind speeds in Crete, and there is widespread use in Greece of solar collectors for domestic hot water purposes. In Spain there are extensive applications of solar energy and wind power, and there is important public investment on renovating the energy distribution network. In Malta, thermal solar and PVs are increasingly used.

Weaknesses

Even though renewable technologies are increasingly used, there is still heavy reliance on fossil fuels in the assessed territories. There are no proper energy strategies adopted by public administrations, promoting energy conservation and the use of renewable energy. With the exception of Malta, where there are government schemes giving incentives to take up green technologies and people are well informed on them, in the other territories, there is insufficient information of citizens on energy saving good practices, but also insufficient awareness and training, of public administration professionals, on

the opportunities to develop projects and obtain funding for their region, for promoting energy saving practices and cleanest forms of energy. The considerable visual impact of large scale renewable applications, as well as the land availability for their installation, are concerning issues in the AAM and PT.

Opportunities

Constant technological advances in the energy sector offer opportunities for improving the energy production and distribution processes. There has also been in the recent years an increase in the take-up of energy-efficiency practices and RES. This is encouraged by some policies/initiatives adopted in some regions: e.g. in the CTN, regional, national or community incentives for the introduction of innovative energy-saving technologies, RES, and industrial energy distribution networks; in the PT, a Sustainable Rural Development Plan, promoting efficient energy management, as well as promotion of solar energy and wind power; in Malta, government and EU schemes encouraging the adoption of energy saving measures and RES as well as citizens’ information on these issues.

Threats

Absence of coherent local/regional energy policies is a common characteristic in the regions. There are some EU policies, like the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, which have been adopted in different ways by EU countries within national energy regulations, however there are no integrated policies addressing for example, energy-efficiency of household appliances, transport systems, productive activities etc. There is also often lack of significant incentives to adopt energy-efficiency measures in buildings (further to the minimum imposed by regulations) and promote the use of RES. There is the risk of public investment on energy saving and RES reducing, due to the current economic conditions. Added to the above, in certain areas e.g. Greece, there is a constant increase of energy consumption per capita.

2.3 *Diagnosis of key territorial characteristics*

A detailed review and comparative analysis of the participating regions territorial characteristics against the set indicators was undertaken, as presented within the previous section of this report (2.2). Deriving from the analysis, a list of the key *external* and *internal* factors which are likely to *encourage* or *impede* the implementation of integrated sustainable development strategies within the territories has been produced. These factors all relate to territorial characteristics of the regions, some of which are under no direct control of the public authorities (external), whilst others being at least partly under their control (internal):

Factors encouraging the implementation of integrated sustainable development strategies

External factors

- High environmental quality / significant presence of environmental, historical/archaeological and cultural resources within the assessed territories, and sectors with further development potential which can provide opportunities for territorial development. Existence of areas of significant natural beauty, as well as protected Natura 2000 sites. If the available resources are properly exploited, they can offer additional sources of income and employment, for example by increasing touristic attractiveness: e.g. development of new activities such as rural tourism and agro-tourism, developing museums and sites of interest, cultural activities, festivals
- Increasing interest in various forms of tourism and considerable potential for tourism attractiveness in the assessed territories, depending on each region's territorial qualities: e.g. the AAM known for its wine and olive oil production and its reputation for eco-tourism, the CTN known for its archaeological sites and natural resources, the created touristic district, as well as its popular and religious traditions etc. Good access to tourist attractions through proximity to transport hubs and routes networks can increase attractiveness. Growth in accommodation facilities.
- Rural landscape and heritage offers opportunities for enhanced enjoyment of the countryside
- Increasing attractiveness of rural regions, therefore demographic increase in population, which can lead to better provision of equipment, public services etc.
- Generally lower old age ration in the areas of increased population, compared to surrounding areas or national average
- As an average, low to medium population density/land availability in the assessed territories, therefore potential for further expansion and for increasing incentives and opportunities for the resident population, particularly the youth

- Generally low degree of urbanisation, to some extent due to the presence of high-quality natural areas and resources or areas of specific scientific interest
- High environmental quality and value within the assessed territories. They are all rural, non-industrial territories therefore there is lower man-made pressure on the environment: there are generally lower levels of air pollution, presence of natural habitats with high biodiversity etc.
- The lifestyle in some of the less densely populated areas, results in significantly lower consumption of environmental resources than the national averages
- More modern transport infrastructure in recent years (road and rail networks, public transport system etc.) raises opportunities for better connectivity between areas and for reduced congestion, CO₂ emissions and air pollution from private car use
- Good proximity to some educational / training facilities, which can increase citizens access to information, research and technology related to environmental and cultural conservation issues, but also facilitate better links between knowledge centres and the local trade and industry
- New employment opportunities in growing sectors such as organic farming, rural tourism, agro-tourism, eco-tourism, wine-gastronomic, natural, cultural tourism. Opportunities to integrate existing people's skills like farmers, to new emerging activities
- Growing demand for high quality products, meeting safety, traceability and certification criteria
- Increased use of the internet by travellers seeking for travel destinations, so more emphasis should be given on such (and other) ICT applications to promote the territories' qualities
- Scope for applying new or advanced waste processing technologies to existing waste facilities of the territories, in order to deal with increasing volumes of waste more efficiently
- High potential in rural areas for composting organic waste and reusing the compost e.g. as soil fertiliser
- Maintaining and seeking to improve and modernise agricultural practices (e.g. organic crops) is an important factor for the preservation of the landscape and the environmental quality
- Constant technological advances in the energy sector offer opportunities for improving the energy production and distribution processes
- Increase in recent years in the take-up of energy-efficiency practices and RES

Internal factors

- Strong awareness of common identity amongst the local population, as well as strong social identification with their natural and cultural environment
- New educational opportunities arising from local sustainability challenges on issues such as environment and energy

- New infrastructure and equipment assist in promoting the local economy and labour market
- Availability of existing infrastructure in some areas (e.g. existing vacant buildings) which can be converted and used to satisfy new needs (e.g. increased touristic demand etc.)
- Considerable part of the population employed in rural activities (e.g. depending on the region: agriculture, rural tourism, trade of local products, accommodation facilities and services etc.) therefore there is a good revenue base and a relatively low unemployment rate
- Opportunities through participation in local / regional, national or EU programs (such as MedStrategy), to protect and enhance natural and heritage resources, generally improving the territories' quality and attractiveness potential, as well as to create opportunities for further growth and employment in the local society
- The adoption in some of the regions, of water protection / development plans or sustainable policies addressing water use, encourages and promotes efficient water management
- The adoption in some of the regions, of energy-saving policies/development plans, encourages and promotes the use of energy-saving technologies, the use of RES and the improvement in energy distribution networks
- Awareness raising of citizens by some Local Authorities has been undertaken, on energy saving measures and RES
- Good quality of water resources (depending on the region this may include surface water, bathing water and underground water). The purification and distribution systems are generally in good condition in some territories, whilst in others there is public investment in improving the water distribution network especially in smaller areas
- Generally good transport connections and accessibility, to nearest urban centres and transport hubs
- Recent public investment in some regions to improve the transport infrastructure
- Local commercial activities in the regions vary from small units producing hand-made crafts or products (e.g. ceramics/pottery, agro-alimentary products etc.) to larger, industrial units (e.g. wine production and olive oil production in the AAM). In Malta and the CTN, there is an increasing shift towards more industrial activities, with people often commuting to other areas to be employed in the industry sector
- Strongly developed agricultural activity in the regions, which presents a main source of income. Production of local agro-food products and an increase in the number of organic farms is observed
- With the exception on Malta, there are basic waste management schemes operating in the regions, which are not at a mature stage and could benefit from significant improvements. The Malta example can be followed, where there is an integrated waste management system operating well, using the latest technologies, and managed efficiently by the waste management authority. Separation of all waste occurs at source, and recycling of various

waste streams takes place at recycling plants. New sewage treatment plants have been introduced, utilising the latest technologies

- Favourable environmental conditions (sunny climate) for the application of energy saving and renewable energy technologies. Already in the assessed territories there is extensive use of RES such as solar thermal, wind power and PVs.

Factors impeding the implementation of integrated sustainable development strategies

External factors

- Progressive ageing of the population, increasing the old age ratio and dependency ratio, thus also the load on the social security and health system
- Regional imbalances of population density, therefore the settlement systems are not evenly developed
- Generally (with the exception of Pembroke), there is a low educational level in the assessed territories, with a high percentage of illiteracy
- Inadequacy of infrastructure and services for school education and professional training
- Limited opportunities for young people, due to the current economic conditions, which increases depopulation or reduces arrival of in-migrant population
- Low educational levels in combination with the high ageing degree result in conservative attitudes, low self-esteem of the rural population and slow uptake of innovation
- Difficulty in maintain education services, especially offering higher education, in small rural areas with a limited young population
- High dependency on private cars and poor environmental quality of the road vehicles typically found
- Basic condition of the transport infrastructure: the road network needs improvement in many areas, and railway networks are not in most cases sufficiently developed to represent an alternative to road transport. Timetables of public transport are often not adhered to, causing delays and discouraging its use. Transport using roads is subject to natural events such as landslides and geological instability. In rural areas, in the event of inability to move using roads, this would create major problems to – amongst others - transportation of people and animals, animal feeds and farm supplies in general.
- Limited cooperation between universities/research centres, and the private sector, and limited connections between the educational system and the needs of the local labour market, leading to skills shortages in certain economic sectors

- Weak forms of collaboration and clustering in the regions, between companies, institutions and local actors, as well as lack of entrepreneurial dynamism, leading to a weak overall capacity to promote the local products.
- Individual local enterprises do not always operate in an associative manner, with the aim to enhance as a whole the commercial availability of their products
- Absence of adequate structures for the promotion and marketing of local agricultural products
- Low public investment in R&D and low diffusion of technology and innovation in the local enterprises.
- Inadequate development of the industrial sector linked to the transformation of agricultural products
- Scarce diversification and profitability from agriculture
- Decrease in the number of farms and heads of livestock, as well as gradual abandonment of agricultural mountainous areas is observed in some regions
- Influx of imported products
- Skills and infrastructure shortages acting as limiting factors for the growth of small enterprises
- Typically in the assessed regions the agricultural system is based on small to medium scale, directly owned or family businesses. These have low potential for easily adopting new production and commercial strategies, and often they have lack of awareness of the real possibilities related to new activities e.g. rural tourism, related to innovation and to offering product diversity
- Lack of awareness of population with regards to sustainability and ways to reduce energy consumption and air pollution (e.g. use of low environmental impact vehicles). Increased affluence in some areas (e.g. Malta) is changing consumption patterns, with the demand for private cars increasing
- Insufficient / fragmented awareness of the local society, including touristic operators, of the natural/cultural significance of the territories, and their ecological value, leading to practices which may cause degradation of areas
- Increased unemployment, especially among young people, due to the current economic conditions. The local labour market does not have the capacity to create highly qualified jobs, and there may be reluctance of young people to take up traditional activities
- External factors may increase unemployment, for example the reduction of annual olive trees crops in Crete may lead to reduction in the market potential of this sector and people employed in it
- Reduced average income therefore weakened purchasing power in the regions, due to unemployment
- Underemployment in certain periods of the year, as people are occupied in seasonal agricultural activities

- High seasonality of tourism, with concentration of tourists in short periods, especially in the summer
- Insufficiency of facilities and services supporting tourist activities (e.g. adequate numbers and diversity of accommodation facilities, existence of information points for visitors).
- Low-levels of education and professional expertise in the tourist industry (knowledge of languages, marketing skills, customer service)
- Significant cutbacks in the public/semi-public sector, significant financial problems for small/medium enterprises, and weakening of production network, due to the economic crisis. The situation offers limited opportunities for increase in the employment and GDP rates, and it does not encourage entrepreneurship
- Lack of infrastructure (e.g. urban services, restricted traffic zones, pedestrian areas, cycling paths, air quality monitoring etc.) in parts of the regions, can impact on the quality of life for the resident population and the tourism potential of the territories
- Risk of transport services quality reduction (routes, frequency, personnel) due to the economic crisis, to save on high maintenance costs
- Lowering of public investment towards energy saving technologies and the adoption of RES, due to the economic crisis
- Lowering of the public investment towards urban planning policies, due to the economic crisis
- Lowering of public investment towards transport infrastructure improvements, due to the economic crisis
- Reduction in the use of public transport, either due to tickets cost rises (e.g. in the AAM) or due to the potential increased residents affluence (e.g. Malta), favouring private car use
- Risk from peri-urbanisation increasing land prices in rural areas
- Significant presence of urbanised areas in parts of the assessed regions, with increase in the number of dwellings. This does not always correspond to an increase in population and actually there is often a high percentage of vacant dwellings in historic city centres
- Lowering of public investment on environmental issues such as the protection/enhancement of natural heritage, due to the economic crisis. This raises concerns about the future conservation of the territories' environmental values and resources
- Lowering of public funds towards the maintenance and enhancement of the cultural/archaeological heritage, due to the economic crisis. There is lack of financial and human resources to allocate to the maintenance and development of these sites; they are often unguarded, or in a state of deterioration or abandonment, leading to their progressive degradation
- Threat of environmental pollution and degradation of resources due to human activities, such as arbitrary disposal of wastewater, waste and pollutants, polluting economic activities, unregulated tourism growth

- Threat of environmental degradation of resources due to potential progressive abandonment of agricultural areas and practices which can lead to reduction of environmental defence and hydrogeological instability
- Reduction of public investment towards protecting environmental resources, due to the economic crisis. This raises concerns about the environmental degradation of resources
- Environmental imbalances and hazards caused both by natural phenomena but mostly due to human intervention, such as bushes and forest fires, soil erosion and loss, biodiversity loss, overgrazing causing landscape alterations
- Threat to local manufacturing activities due to the economic crisis, creating market pressure on local producers and potentially unpredictable labour market shifts, as well as due to globalisation and rapid development of emerging economies
- Underlying threats for the sustainable growth of the agricultural sector: a) progressive decrease in the prices of agricultural products, making it difficult for small local producers to compete at the same market as cheaper international imported products from emerging economies b) ageing of the farmers population, not being replaced at the same rates by a younger generation
- Risk of reduction in the numbers of tourists in the assessed regions due to the economic crisis
- Limited opportunities to increase investment in social, educational and cultural services, due to the economic crisis
- Services and facilities generally insufficient for the needs of the resident population and in relation to the tourism potential of the territories. Services are often unevenly distributed, resulting in some administrations depending on others in order to support public services
- Deficiencies of water supplies in summer, when demand is at its peak due to touristic mobility, partly due to inefficient water networks with significant distribution losses
- Risk of increasing drought periods in future, due to climate change, which is a threat to water resources availability
- Insufficient monitoring of the quality of drinking water in some areas, resulting in lack of confidence regarding quality leading to the widespread use of bottled water
- Lack of funds to create or maintain municipal wastewater treatment plants and water management strategies
- Lack of funds for the application of efficient waste management strategies. The equipment used may be of old technology and not sufficient to deal with increasing volumes of municipal waste
- Heavy reliance on fossil fuels, despite increasing use of renewable technologies. Lack of national initiatives to take-up green technologies and practices
- Visual impact of large scale renewable applications, as well as the land availability of their installation are potential issues in some regions

Internal factors

- Absence of integrated territorial sustainable development policies, aimed at the synergetic management and enhancing of all available resources within the territory. This often leads to difficulties in coordinating conflicting requirements (e.g. environmental / agricultural policies in areas with high value for tourism etc.)
- Lack of coherent political vision for the territories
- Poor capacity to adequately manage in a systematic way the natural areas within the territories, due to a combination of factors: a) lack of political vision in relation to environmental protection and enhancement of resources b) lack of tools to use for good management and protection of natural resources (e.g. habitat management regime) c) lack of human and financial resources to develop a management group at regional level, of the territory's environmental values
- Lack of an organised plan for promoting the specific qualities of each territory marketing them as touristic destinations. Also, there are no plans aimed at the integration between the summer tourist offer and other potential tourist attractions which can be offered throughout the year, benefiting from the environmental, historical, cultural and religious resources available
- Limited financial resources or funding mechanisms to support rural development within local administrations, which are often economically dependent on wider administrations/general government
- Lack of awareness by citizens, technicians, administrators and economic operators in relation to environmental sustainability and new opportunities it can present (e.g. sustainable tourism and agriculture)
- Insufficient informational activities, school or training programs taking place, to inform people on environmental resources and their importance, so as to enhance their awareness. There are no specific territorial policies aimed at protecting and preserving the environment, and environmental data / related services and organisations, are not systematically recorded and communicated to people
- Absence of awareness campaigns for the urban population, about the quality of life in the rural regions
- Lack of awareness of Local Authorities policy makers and personnel, with regards to sustainability and ways to reduce energy consumption and air pollution (e.g. use of low environmental impact vehicles, especially for the public vehicles fleet, energy conservation in public buildings etc.)
- Absence of (or outdated) policies and specific tools such as green transport plans, aimed at improving mobility management, improving public transport, promoting innovative modes of transport and exploring options such as on-demand schemes. The lack of such plans can lead

to increased traffic generated by urban sprawl, and unsatisfactory environmental standards, as is already observed in some of the assessed areas

- Absence of policies related to recovery of existing buildings' stock
- Absence of coherent local/regional energy policies adopted by public administrations, promoting energy conservation and the use of renewable energy. There are some EU policies, like the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, which have been adopted in different ways by EU countries within national regulations, however there are no integrated policies addressing for example, energy-efficiency of household appliances, transport systems, productive activities etc, considering the priorities and particularities of each region
- Lack of significant incentives given to citizens by public administrations, to adopt energy-efficiency measures in buildings (further to the minimum imposed by regulations) and incorporate renewable technologies
- Insufficient information of citizens on energy saving good practices, but also insufficient awareness and training, of public administration professionals, on the opportunities to develop projects and obtain funding for their region, for promoting energy saving practices and cleanest forms of energy. Absence of a coherent database of energy consumption data on existing projects
- Potentially corrupt practices in the implementation of existing policies (e.g. issuing building permits)
- Absence of specific policies and interventions directed towards enhancing and protecting biodiversity, and ensuring sustainable management of habitats. Difficulty in implementing integrated policies, addressing conflicting requirements
- Absence of regulations and plans aimed at protecting and enhancing the environmental value of the territories
- Lack of systematic recording and communication to citizens, of environmental performance information and related services / organisations within their territory
- Absence of policies and incentives aimed at maintaining and enhancing the archaeological/cultural sites within the territories. These are not well managed and their potential is not fully exploited
- Absence of experts within local/regional authorities, specialised in the management of cultural heritage and territorial resources, who could develop a management group dedicated to this aim
- Lack of awareness of the overriding importance of historical and cultural heritage, of the opportunities that are connected to getting the best benefit from it (e.g. tourism potential) and innovative approaches through which this could be achieved

- Absence of an organised vision and territorial plan aimed at preserving, encouraging and marketing the local industrial and traditional craft potential, local production activities, and how to enhance the territory's capacity
- Lack of coordination and cooperation between the local administration and local producers / entrepreneurs, in defining common strategies for the promotion of local products
- Lack of policies favouring the widespread adoption of environmental management systems or innovative low-environmental impact activities within local enterprises and public administration
- Absence of policies aimed at strengthening agricultural production, promoting technological innovation, and preventing the abandonment of agricultural territories
- Absence of policies aimed at improving the quality of tourism and at providing an integrated tourist offer. The tourist offer is fragmented, and there is little coordination between different levels of local and regional administration, as well as between public administration and private tourist operators
- Lack of policies and specific initiatives such as integrated municipal or regional Waste Management Plans, aimed at reducing the amount of waste produced, increasing recycling rates and reducing the volumes of waste sent to landfill. Limited financial and human resources to allocate to the development of such plans can be one of the underlying reasons, as well as lack of political vision on environmental issues
- Lack of environmental awareness on the benefits of recycling, or inefficient collection strategies and facilities, resulting in low recycling rates
- Absence of policies by Local Authorities aimed at defining measures to protect water quality and improving water management systems
- Risk from not properly regulated urban / tourism growth, to be a serious threat to natural resources, causing disturbance to natural habitats, intensive land use, congestion, noise etc
- Risk from not properly regulated urban / tourism growth, to have a negative impact on preserving the territorial historic and cultural heritage
- Risk from not properly regulated urban / tourism growth, to lead to degradation of services
- Inadequacy of the provided services and facilities in some areas (e.g. health services, schools etc.) reduces the attractiveness of the territories both for residents as well as for tourism
- The social, educational and cultural services provided are in most cases basic, and delivered with limited resources, therefore action plans and initiatives could be developed focusing investment on such facilities

3. Institutional SWOT analysis

3.1 Overview of Institutional thematic areas and indicators

The institutional SWOT analysis was undertaken by the partners, using the following thematic areas and indicators:

Institutional thematic areas	Indicators
<p>The capacity of Local Authorities to cooperate with different levels of government for territorial management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating between different scales of governance • Synergy between the institutions and the political leadership • Support for strategies and action plans aimed at the integrated development and the territorial marketing
<p>The capacity of Local Authorities to foster growth & innovation in a competent, efficient and effective manner</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with the objectives and deadlines expected in the territorial programming • Capacity to use EU funds and specific financial commitments to support the carrying capacity
<p>The capacity of Local Authorities to develop policies, programs and government actions oriented at sustainable development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of the local resources to improve governance oriented at the integration of environmental, social and economic aspects • Decision-making: the reviewing role of stakeholders at national, local and other levels, in relation to the local socio-economic contexts
<p>The capacity of Local Authorities to promote a shared (common) “vision” of sustainable development through the activation of participatory processes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training, education and awareness activities • Promotion of participative processes

3.2 Comparative analysis between the partners' institutional frameworks

3.2.1 Thematic area: The capacity of Local Authorities to cooperate with different levels of government for territorial management

Strengths

Within the assessed territories there are issues on which a local authority has the responsibility and flexibility to develop its own policies (e.g. in the AAM, the municipalities can design General Urban Plans), however in many issues coordination is required between different levels of government (e.g. local and regional, regional and national etc.). In the PT, the establishment of the “Comarcas administration” (which is between the regional and the local administration), makes cooperation on territorial issues between administrations easier. In Sicily, the CTN has a coordinating role of the Local Authorities, for the promotion of Integrated Strategic Plans, and Local Authorities have participated in several territorial strategic programs. In Malta, due to the small size of state and the two-tier system of government, it is easier to approach national government regarding issues of territorial management.

Weaknesses

Bureaucracy and poor coordination between the responsible services / authorities, is a major limitation in successful regional planning, along with insufficient experience at local level. In some cases, e.g. in Greece, there are a number of services (archaeology service, forest service etc.), from which licensing is required before planning for a project can be approved. Often there is poor coordination between different levels of government, as well as between different administrations (at the same level of government). There is also lack of awareness with regards to the opportunities for local development that may arise through territorial planning and through strategic programmes.

Opportunities

There is a strong sense of local identity within the involved territories, which can present an opportunity for better communication between authorities or scales of governance. There are also several EU programmes aimed at enhancing the available environmental, historical and cultural heritage of the regions, therefore there are opportunities presented for coordination and development of regional planning policies, for Local Authorities gaining respect through the valorisation of their local assets, as well as for involving citizens, who constitute public opinion, in the planning process. Administrative decentralisation can make the development of such policies and the take-up of local initiatives easier. However the opportunities for transnational networking e.g. for Mediterranean heritage should also be explored.

Threats

There is often lack of a coherent territorial development strategy, e.g. in Crete there is a land use conflict, with land development permits given for industrial as well as for touristic uses, within the same region. Reduction of public funds lowers the human and financial resources available to local Administrations for effectively implementing regional planning (consulting companies, funds for participatory processes etc.). Also, there is a lack of a “common vision” shared between public and private operators, oriented towards the local development policies. Institutional changes of command can act as a further limiting factor in developing this common vision, as they ruin already established collaborations.

3.2.2 Thematic area: The ability of the Local Authorities in fostering growth and innovation in a competent, efficient and effective manner

Strengths

Local Authorities have the advantage of knowing the territory’s socioeconomic situation, needs, and development potential. They have the capacity to mobilise stakeholders, such as the private sector and citizens on regional planning at local sphere, rather than at national level which may involve additional bureaucracy and potentially complicated politics. As a structure they are flexible enough to team up if required, with local development agencies or energy agencies etc., in order to have sufficient resources to take up and implement projects at local level.

Weaknesses

Reduced funding, resources and personnel competences are the main weaknesses in the assessed regions, in fostering growth and innovation. Limited funding results in limited initiatives being taken in both the public and the private sector, and limited resources to head innovation projects. The available funds are often used for other purposes such as the construction of municipal / local infrastructure. There is typically a lack of technical and professional skills within the personnel of Local Authorities, leading to inadequacy to develop strategic and innovative projects which can attract EU funding, as well as to public distrust.

Opportunities

Opportunities can arise for Local Authorities in the assessed regions, to foster growth and innovation through participation in EU Programmes aiming at enhancing the environmental, historical and cultural heritage. Cooperation of the Authorities with local Universities, Centres of Research and Innovation can assist in capacity building, increasing personnel competences. Transfer of competences from a national or regional level to a more local level would increase the Local Authorities’ potential of taking up innovation initiatives and projects. Involvement of the local communities can further improve capacity building.

Threats

Lowering of public funds available to Local Administrations for regional planning tools and resources (e.g. engaging consulting companies, rural development managers, financing participatory processes etc.) is a significant threat, which often makes the Local Authorities not attracted by the opportunity to implement better regional policies. Furthermore, there is a generally low level of computerisation within some the Local Authorities of some of the regions, which is inadequate to national or EU standards.

3.2.3 Thematic area: The capacity of the Local Authorities to develop policies, programs and government actions oriented at the sustainable development

Strengths

Local Authorities can be the originators for policies and actions oriented towards sustainable development; they have the advantage of knowing the territory's socioeconomic situation, needs, and development potential; they have the capacity to mobilise stakeholders, such as the private sector and citizens, on sustainable regional planning at local level. They can lead by example, in relation to implementing such policies. In all the assessed territories the Local Authorities are thought to have the potential to develop sustainable planning policies, having sufficient experience and demonstration of good practice: for example in 2006, the CTN started the process of Local Agenda 21 with the Drafting of its Environmental Report.

Weaknesses

Local Authorities are perceived as lacking the skills and resources (human and financial) to support the development of policies and programs oriented towards sustainable development. Programs already approved and implemented are not always aimed at producing integrated development strategies and improving regional marketing. In Italy and Crete, there are no projects started yet which aim at achieving Environmental Quality Certification.

Opportunities

Opportunities for Local Authorities to develop sustainable policies and programs can arise through participation in EU programs (such as MED, CIP etc.). The endogenous quality and potential of environmental and cultural resources within the regions represent an element of strength upon which sustainable development strategies can be built. The maintenance and the tendency to improve and modernise agricultural practices (e.g. organic crops) is an important factor for the preservation of the landscape and the environmental quality. Transfer of competences from a national or regional level to a more local level (e.g. case of PT with transfer from regional administration to Comarca's

administration) can increase the Local Authorities' capacity / flexibility to promote sustainable actions and policies at local level.

Threats

Lowering of public funds available to Local Administrations addressed to initiatives, tools and resources to promote sustainable development (e.g. engaging consulting companies, rural development managers, financing participatory processes etc.) is a significant threat. Added to that, there is lack of awareness amongst local administration staff / policy makers, of the potential role, innovative and strategic, that the available regional resources (environmental, historical and cultural) can play in promoting and enhancing sustainable development policies. There are limited qualified human resources and expertise within Local Authorities in matters of sustainable development and policies.

3.2.4 Thematic area: The capacity of the Local Authorities to promote a shared (common) "vision" of sustainable development, through the activation of participative processes

Strengths

Local Authorities, by virtue of their role, can act as the originator of participative processes within the community. In the assessed regions the Local Authorities, having an immediate proximity and awareness of the territories' problems as well as strengths, have the experience and capacity to unite and mobilise the local society and promote a "common vision". Stakeholders are more motivated to participate within such local networks, rather than within national or regional schemes.

Weaknesses

The practice of developing a "common vision" through participatory processes, especially related to regional planning and sustainable development, is still not sufficiently established within the assessed territories, and participatory culture is still poor. The current economic conditions may disincline stakeholders from taking part in participation processes. The mechanisms of drafting Strategic Programs are often not used properly by Local Authorities, to ensure stakeholders participation at planning stage. Furthermore, sometimes stakeholders are not perceived as a surplus/added value to define a shared vision, but as beneficiaries of funding. In some areas, e.g. Malta, the Local Authorities are often too small to act as collaborative networks.

Opportunities

Due to the economic crisis, possibilities may be presented for new beginnings: adjustments and redesign of regional policies, introducing participatory processes. Furthermore, concepts which are relatively new, such as sustainable development and participatory planning, are becoming more

popular, and citizens are mobilised on environmental issues, socioeconomic matters etc. EU programs (such as MED, CIP etc.) give opportunities to include participative processes at planning stage of a programme. If Local Authorities are not of sufficient size to instigate participative processes, they can jointly in consortia or associations obtain the critical mass needed. In the CTN, the recent constitution / establishment of the Tourist District represented an opportunity to start a participative process with local communities in relation to defining relevant development programs.

Threats

Lowering of public funds available to Local Administrations for organizing initiatives such as participative processes, is a considerable threat. Furthermore, there is lack of confidence by the citizens in the institutions, and disappointment as a result of failure of past participatory processes, either badly planned or subjected to political interest. Often, stakeholders themselves such as public administration personnel or private entrepreneurs, have little consideration of the effectiveness of participation processes. In addition, in some cases like in Malta, there is a perception by national agencies that Local Authorities may not have the capacity or resources to develop sustainable policies at local level.

3.3 Diagnosis of institutional framework

A detailed review and comparative analysis of the participating regions institutional frameworks and governance systems against the set indicators was undertaken, as presented within the previous section of this report (3.2). Deriving from the analysis, a list of the key *external* and *internal* factors which are likely to *encourage* or *impede* the implementation of integrated sustainable development strategies within the territories has been produced. These factors all relate to institutional / governance characteristics of the regions, some of which are under no direct control of the public authorities (external), whilst others being at least partly under their control (internal):

Factors encouraging the implementation of integrated sustainable development strategies

External factors

- Strong sense of local identity within the involved territories, enhancing communication between authorities or scales of governance
- Endogenous quality and potential of environmental, historical and cultural resources within the territories, upon which sustainable development strategies can be built
- Administrative decentralisation can make the development of regional policies and the take-up of local initiatives easier
- Transfer of competences from a national or regional level to a more local level can increase the Local Authorities' capacity / flexibility to promote sustainable actions and policies at local level
- Stakeholders are more motivated to participate within local networks and initiatives, rather than within national or regional bodies

Internal factors

- Local Authorities, by virtue of their role, can be the originators for policies and actions oriented towards sustainable development; they have the advantage of knowing the territory's socioeconomic situation, needs, and development potential; they have the capacity to mobilise stakeholders, such as the private sector and citizens, on sustainable regional planning at local level, and on promoting a "common vision"
- Local Authorities can lead by example and act as role models to the local society, in relation to implementing such policies

- In developing sustainable planning policies, there are areas where Local Authorities have sufficient flexibility and responsibilities to develop their own policies, however there are also other areas where coordination is required between different levels of government. This communication and coordination has become easier in some of the regions through the establishment of public administrative bodies having a coordinating role of a number of Local Authorities (e.g. CTN – Inter-municipal Consortium), for the promotion of Integrated Strategic Plans
- As a structure, Local Authorities are flexible enough to team up with local development agencies or energy agencies etc., in order to have sufficient resources to take up and implement projects at local level
- Experience of the involved Local Authorities, as they have participated in several territorial strategic programs
- Opportunities for Local Authorities, through participation in EU programmes aimed at enhancing regional environmental, historical and cultural heritage, for coordination and development of regional sustainable development planning strategies and policies
- Opportunities for Local Authorities developing regional strategies, to gain citizens respect through the valorisation of local territorial assets, as well as through involving them in the planning process
- Opportunities for Local Authorities, through participation in EU programs, to foster growth and innovation
- Opportunities for Local Authorities, through participation in EU programs, to include participative processes at planning stage of their development programmes and policies
- Cooperation of Local Authorities with local Universities, centres of research and innovation can assist in capacity building, increasing personnel competences
- Opportunities can be explored for transnational networking between local/regional authorities e.g. on Mediterranean heritage
- Due to the economic crisis, possibilities may be presented for new beginnings: adjustments and redesign of regional policies, introducing participatory processes. Concepts such as sustainable development are becoming increasingly popular, and citizens are mobilised on environmental issues, socioeconomic matters etc.
- Opportunities should be explored, by Local Authorities not of sufficient size to instigate participative processes, to team up in consortia or associations with other local stakeholders to obtain the critical mass needed

External factors

- Bureaucracy and poor coordination between the responsible services / authorities, before planning for a project can be approved
- Poor coordination both between different levels of government, as well as between different administrations (at the same level)
- Lowering of public funds available to Local Administrations addressed to initiatives, tools and human/financial resources to effectively implement sustainable development and regional planning (e.g. engaging consulting companies, rural development managers, natural and cultural conservation experts etc.)
- Lowering of public funds available to Local Administrations for organizing initiatives such as participative processes
- Reduced funding, resources and personnel competences limit the potential for fostering growth and innovation. Limited funding results in limited initiatives being taken in both the public and the private sector, and limited resources to head innovation projects
- Lack of confidence by the citizens in the institutions, and disappointment as a result of failure of past participatory processes, either badly planned or subjected to political interest

Internal factors

- Lack of coherent territorial development strategies, leading to difficulties in balancing conflicting requirements
- Lack of awareness with regards to the opportunities for local development that may arise through territorial planning and through strategic programmes
- Little consideration, by public administration personnel or private entrepreneurs, of the effectiveness of participation processes
- Lack of a “common vision” shared between public and private operators, oriented towards the local development policies. Institutional changes of command can act as a further limiting factor in developing this common vision, as they ruin already established collaborations
- Generally low level of computerisation within some of the Local Authorities, inadequate to national or EU standards
- Lack of awareness amongst local administration staff / policy makers, of the potential role, innovative and strategic, that the available regional territorial resources can play in promoting and enhancing sustainable development policies

- Lack of technical and professional expertise within the personnel of Local Authorities, in matters of sustainable development and policies, leading to inadequacy to develop strategic and innovative projects which can attract EU funding, leading to inadequacy to support the development of policies and programs oriented towards sustainable development, as well as to public distrust
- Programs already approved and implemented are not always aimed at producing integrated development strategies and improving regional marketing
- In some regions, there are no projects started as yet, aiming to achieve Environmental Quality Certification
- Participatory culture and the concept of a “common vision”, especially related to regional planning and sustainable development, is still not sufficiently established
- The mechanisms of drafting Strategic Programs are often not used properly by Local Authorities, to ensure stakeholders participation at planning stage
- Sometimes stakeholders are not perceived as a surplus/added value to define a shared vision, but as beneficiaries of funding
- In some of the rural areas Local Authorities are often too small to act as collaborative networks

4. Key considerations for forming regional sustainable development strategies in rural Mediterranean regions

Using the SWOT methodology, a diagnosis was undertaken of the territorial and institutional / governance characteristics of the assessed Mediterranean rural regions, and the factors which may be either favouring or limiting the application of sustainable development planning strategies.

Based on the outcome of the analysis, a list of key considerations including possible interventions has been developed, which public authorities should address in order to improve their governance methods and when evaluating and developing their planning strategies and models incorporating sustainability.

Key considerations for sustainable planning strategies development in rural Med regions

Key strategy contents

A sustainable development planning strategy should be an *integrated* territorial strategy adopting a *holistic approach*, aimed at the synergetic management and enhancing of all available resources within the territory.

An integrated territorial strategy in Med rural regions should include policies addressing as a minimum the following key aspects:

- **Energy use (energy-efficiency and use of RES)**
 - Energy saving technologies for new and refurbished buildings
 - Use of renewable and/or low-carbon technologies, depending on the applicability and the particular conditions in each rural area
 - Energy impact of rural activities
 - Energy-efficiency of household and commercial appliances
 - Energy impact from transport

- **Sustainable transport**
 - Green travel plans should be developed, aimed at improving mobility management, accessibility to public transport, to cycling facilities, reducing dependency on car use, promoting innovative modes of transport and exploring options such as on-demand schemes
 - Use of low environmental impact vehicles for public fleet

- **Water management**
 - Policies to protect and monitor water quality
 - Policies to improve water management systems

- **Waste management**
 - Implement integrated municipal or regional Waste Management Plans, considering the needs of each territory, aimed at reducing the amount of waste produced, increasing recycling rates and reducing the volumes of waste sent to landfill
 - Use equipment of modern technology, to optimise efficiency of the process
 - Use municipal composting facilities for material from rural activities

- **Protection and enhancement of environmental, ecological, historical, archaeological and cultural resources**
 - There is a strong presence of valuable resources in the Med rural regions, which planning strategies should seek to protect and enhance, whilst at the same time maximising the development opportunities that the availability of these resources can offer
 - Proper management and development of the territories' resources can significantly increase the regions' attractiveness potential for tourism and recreation and create new opportunities for activities being a source of income and employment
 - Creation of new natural resources can offer new areas of natural beauty for the regions
 - Specific policies and interventions directed towards enhancing and protecting biodiversity, and ensuring sustainable management of habitats. Implementation of landscape / habitat management plans and regimes

- **Touristic development**

Regional tourism development policies should take into consideration:

 - The development of an organised plan for promoting the specific qualities of each territory marketing them as touristic destinations
 - The potential available sources of funding for infrastructure and marketing initiatives
 - The opportunities for diversification of activities (e.g. cultural, religious tourism etc.) and complementarities between tourism and other traditional activities (agriculture, services etc.), in order to increase touristic demand throughout the year
 - The potential of targeting niche markets (e.g. health or language tourism)
 - The potential of cooperating with other local or regional levels of administration, to develop an integrated tourist offer

- Improve mechanisms for cooperation between public administration and private tourist operators
 - Improve infrastructure supporting tourist activities e.g. provide information points for visitors
 - Give incentives for education and training of personnel in the tourist industry (knowledge of languages, marketing skills, customer service)
 - Mechanisms to ensure regulated development of tourism growth, so as to prevent negative impacts on natural/heritage resources and the territories' quality of environment
- **Support and marketing of local rural products and services**
 - Form an organised territorial plan aimed at preserving, encouraging and marketing the local industrial and traditional craft potential and local production activities
 - Give emphasis on quality and environmental certification of services and local products
 - Promote the widespread adoption of environmental management systems or innovative low-environmental impact activities within local enterprises and public administration
 - Explore the potential for export of local products
 - Explore opportunities for e-marketing and e-business opportunities, which could offer access to international markets. Develop ICT applications in order to achieve that
 - Develop distinctive local brands for well-known quality local products
 - Give incentives and facilitate administrative procedures for local producers, for them to enhance and strengthen the production and marketing of their products
 - Adopt policies aimed at strengthening agricultural production, promoting technological innovation, through better cooperation with centres of research and expert consultants
 - Explore financial support opportunities either through national or EU subsidies, funding small producers whose practices preserve the environment and rural communities, in order to enhance their capacity
 - Improve mechanisms for coordination and cooperation between the local administration and local producers / entrepreneurs, in defining common strategies for the promotion of local products
- **Employment opportunities**
 - Proper management and development of the environmental, historical and cultural resources within the territories can significantly increase their attractiveness potential for tourism and recreation and create new opportunities for activities being a source of income and employment
 - Increase participation in national and EU development programs, through which employment opportunities arise

- **Social aspects**

- Develop “social action plans” for the regions, focusing public investment on social, educational and cultural activities in the territories, particularly for young and for retired people
- Provide an adequate territorial distribution of services and activities, to provide equal opportunities to all residents of the region

Awareness raising actions / initiatives

For sustainable planning strategies to be effective in their implementation, all key local territorial stakeholders should be involved in the planning process and initiatives taken by public administrations to raise awareness amongst citizens but also through training of their own personnel, on the key issues and benefits from adopting a sustainable approach.

Awareness raising in Med rural regions, which public administration should focus on, should cover as a minimum the following aspects:

- The triple-axis concept of environmental sustainability (environmental, social, financial)
- The new opportunities sustainable development can present for a particular territory (e.g. sustainable tourism and agriculture)
- The environmental resources available within the rural territory, their importance, the opportunities that can arise by exploiting them appropriately and innovative approaches through which this could be achieved
- The importance of the historical and cultural heritage of the territory, the opportunities that that can arise by exploiting them appropriately (e.g. tourism potential) and innovative approaches through which this could be achieved
- The availability of sustainability related services and organisations in the region
- Energy saving good practices in households and businesses
- Energy saving practices in public administration buildings
- Awareness raising of public administration officials, on the opportunities to develop projects and obtain funding for their region, for promoting energy saving practices and low carbon forms of energy
- Environmental impacts from waste and benefits of waste recycling
- Environmental impacts from transport and benefits from reducing private car use or using low environmental impact vehicles
- Environmental impacts from water use and benefits of water conservation practices
- Environmental performance of the territory against environmental indicators, systematic monitoring of it and communication of results to all relevant stakeholders

Public administrations internal processes

Public administrations have the key role in the formation and implementation of a sustainable development planning strategy for their territory. All levels of personnel within public administration bodies can have a role in the effective implementation of such a strategy.

There are a number of key issues to address within the internal operations and processes of public administrations, with a view to incorporating the principles of sustainability, ensuring the efficient use of their available resources, and improving the “public image” and the communication links between the administrations and the territory’s stakeholders / citizens. As a minimum the issues to address include:

- Form a coherent political vision for the territory and its development through a participatory process with all key public and private stakeholders as well as citizens. Ensure that the “common vision” is reflected in the drafting of a long-term development strategy, which will be irrespective of institutional changes of command, and reviewed regularly on the basis of the results from its implementation as well as the evolution of socio-economic and environmental external conditions. On the contrary what has quite often happened so far is that any strategies which may have been planned for a certain territory become obsolete or radically redefined a few years later when institutional changes of command occur, and targets readdressed often on the basis of political interests and priorities rather than the actual territorial development needs.
- Adopt a participatory planning approach in all cases of territorial strategy formation, and involve, since an early stage, of all relevant stakeholders. This can ensure a better communication between public administration and citizens and assist, through dialogue, in developing a positive “common vision” for the territorial development.
- Develop regional strategic planning tools, to facilitate administrations in better monitoring and managing the available resources and benefiting from the opportunities that are available. Parts of an overall strategic planning tool may include specific targeted tools such as a habitat management regime, a green travel plan, energy consumption and air quality monitoring databases etc.
- Invest in education of all levels of administration personnel, on the contents of the territorial planning strategy and on how they can best contribute to its implementation
- Where resources are available, engage experts specialised in the management of the available resources within the territory: specialists in natural habitats, cultural heritage, archaeological heritage etc. Develop a management group dedicated to this aim.
- Engage adequately trained administration personnel to be monitoring and seeking the potential opportunities that become available through participation of the territory’s regional / local authorities to national or EU funding programmes

- Lead by example acting as a role model for local society, by adopting sustainable practices within the administrations' own practices: e.g. energy-conservation and waste recycling in the administrations' buildings, use of low environmental impact vehicles for the public fleet etc.
- Create a coherent database of energy consumption data on existing public buildings in the territory, and of other high energy consuming activities (e.g. tourist establishments, rural products processing plants, public transport fleet etc.). Ensure systematic recording and update of the database, and communication of information to citizens
- Improve waste collection strategies and facilities within the territory, encouraging the adoption of recycling practices by citizens and businesses
- Adopt environmental management systems (e.g. ISO etc.) in order to optimise all aspects of the administrations operations
- Improve ICT systems used by public administrations and carry out training of personnel on computer use and applications
- Improve coordination and cooperation between the local administration and local producers / entrepreneurs, in defining common strategies for the promotion of local products
- Improve mechanisms for cooperation between public administration and private tourist operators
- Give incentives to citizens to adopt energy-efficiency good practices in buildings (beyond what required by regulations) and incorporate renewable technologies

5. *Conclusions*

There is increased potential within Mediterranean rural regions, for adopting or improving sustainable rural development planning.

Producing and adopting integrated territorial development strategies is a key factor in improving territorial governance. These strategies should take into consideration all the available environmental, cultural, historic resources within the territories and address all aspects of sustainability. The process of planning strategy formation needs to be a continuous learning process, through lessons learnt from its implementation and re-evaluation of its effectiveness and potential areas for improvement.

For an efficient implementation of the planning strategies, the use of all available human, technical and financial resources within public administrations should be optimised and opportunities for additional funding and resources should be actively sought, through participation to national or EU programmes.

Awareness raising both for citizens as well as for public administration personnel, and specialised training of public administration personnel, on sustainability related issues and the benefits these can offer to the territory, is essential in ensuring the effective planning policies implementation.

Finally, involvement since an early stage, of all relevant territory stakeholders in the process of sustainable development strategy formation, using methods such as participatory planning, can ensure a better communication between local administration and citizens and assist, through dialogue, in developing a common positive “shared vision” for the territorial development.

Appendix - Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used throughout the report:

AAM: Archanon-Asterousion Municipality

CTN: Intermunicipal Consorzio Tindari-Nebrodi

PT: Province of Teruel