The project in a nutshell

The historical centers of the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, as custodians of a large part of the material and immaterial cultural heritage of this geographical region - certainly the largest and most diversified “basin” of cultural offer in the world - have a potential for tourist attraction which is still largely unexpressed. Tourist development has indeed mainly affected coastal areas and even when has involved coastal cities, historic centers have rarely benefited from it. Moreover, quite often, the exogenous character of tourism investments has meant that not only did local communities not benefit from the economic returns coming from tourism, but they suffered its negative consequences such as the expulsion from historic centers, the increase in cost of living and the loss of identity.

Not infrequently, in fact, “turistification” of city centers was accompanied by a mystification of places and of their identity values with negative effects on both local populations and the same tourist attractiveness of city centers, since tourists travel more and more to experience “authenticity” of places. Future of Our Past aims at promoting an alternative model of tourism development in the historic centers of the Mediterranean Sea region, which is based on the involvement of local communities, the respect for the identity values of place and the reduction of the environmental impact of tourism. By virtue of a large and qualified partnership on the three shores of the Mediterranean Sea Basin made up of universities, research institutes, companies and development agencies, the project works for developing an integrated set of pilot actions in a first group of historical centers, making them the first “ring” of an international chain that will hopefully get to involve more and more Mediterranean cities and making its biggest attractive asset (its cultures) become central again.

The main objectives

Enhancing the set of resources and skills of HC, so that tourism could become the strategic axis of a development model focused on the involvement of local communities.

Networking HC and their activities, so that they share experiences and develop joint initiatives for tourism and culture, as an expression of an economic, social and cultural integration of the Mediterranea Sea area.

The Historic Centres Involved

- Alexandria, Egypt
- Beirut, Lebanon
- Bethlehem, Palestine
- Cordoba, Spain
- Monastir, Tunisia,
- Valletta, Malta,
- The historical centres of inner Amalfi Coast: Furore, Scala Tramonti

The mission

The mission of the project is to make HC of the Mediterranean Sea area become the cornerstone of a sustainable TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

- Focused on local communities
- Respectful of local cultural values
- Able to value the set of forms and ideas of territories, by preserving the environmental qualities of the surrounding areas.
Main Actions
The project foresees both local actions to promote sustainable tourism development of the involved historical centers and transnational actions aimed at networking these actions and developing synergistic links among them.

Territorial Actions
- Strategic Plans for a sustainable, community involved tourism development of historic centers;
- Smart utilities/multimedia tools for a conscious use of the cultural heritage of historic centers;
- Scattered hotels to value built heritage of historic centers and actively involve local community;
- Service Centers/information point for guiding people to a sustainable (aware) use of city centers;
- Media utilities for the promotion of tourist supply and the local network management;
- Sustainable mobility for tourists and residents.

Transnational Actions
- Mediterranean network: creation of a network for the networking of HC and their local communities and for the strategic coordination of activities promoting tourism;
- Dissemination events: organizing events aimed at spreading knowledge of the network and of its cultural and tourist offer;
- Supranational incoming agency: for the integrated promotion of Mediterranean HC tourist offer through the development of specific holiday packages.

"This publication has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union under the ENPI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of Società Geografica Italiana Onlus and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union or of the Programme's management structures. "The European Union is made up of 28 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders".

"The 2007-2013 ENPI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme is a multilateral Cross-Border Cooperation initiative funded by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). The Programme objective is to promote the sustainable and harmonious cooperation process at the Mediterranean Basin level by dealing with the common challenges and enhancing its endogenous potential. It enhances cooperation projects as a contribution to the economic, social, environmental and cultural development of the Mediterranean region. The following 14 countries participate in the Programme: Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Palestinian Authority, Portugal, Spain, Syria, Tunisia. The Joint Managing Authority (JMA) is the Autonomous Region of Sardinia (Italy). Official Programme languages are Arabic, English and French".