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NaTour4CChange

D.3.8.1 Marketing and Communications Strategy/Plan for Climate Action

The Consortium:

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Project Overview

The Mediterranean region is one of the most vulnerable hotspots in the current biodiversity and climate crises, warming 20% faster than the global average and being the second biodiversity hotspot in the world. The increase of severe climate events is also likely to influence the choice of destinations and time to travel for its over 510 million inhabitants. The effects of climate change will put additional pressure on already strained ecosystems and vulnerable economies and societies, with Tourism being one of the most affected economic sectors.

The recent Transition Pathway for Tourism and the Glasgow Declaration are building a global momentum for Climate Action in Tourism, but policymakers and destinations need support to better develop efficient CCM and CCA policies using ecosystem-based approaches (EbA) and improved multi-level governance structures, including robust planning and ensure the long-term engagement of the private sector and citizens. Indeed, ecosystem-based management is considered a good practice to effectively deal with these threats as it considers the different stakeholders and factors affecting ecosystems and the mechanisms involved, in order to find solutions.

NaTour4CChange builds on and capitalises on successful experiences at the Mediterranean and global level to test solutions for increasing the resilience of coastal destinations in the Mediterranean. The project will aim to set common methods to allow participating regions to assess their tourism-related CCA and CCM priorities, and take climate action via plans and strategies, supported by cooperative governance.

In coastal destinations, cross-sector teams will deliver specific tourism climate Action Plans, focusing on CCA, where Nature-based Solutions (NbS) will be tested to ensure their feasibility. At the same time, innovative destination marketing and communication approaches will engage private stakeholders, visitors, and residents in climate action.

The project will also ensure cross-fertilisation among participating regions and destinations, to achieve common methods and to compare the different tested plans and solutions, leading to lessons, best practices, and policy.

Glossary

Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) means anticipating the adverse effects of climate change and taking appropriate measures to prevent or minimise the damage they may cause, or to take advantage of the opportunities that may arise.

Climate Change Mitigation (CCM) means making the impacts of climate change less severe by reducing the sources of emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) into the atmosphere or by improving the storage of these gases.

Ecosystem Services (ES) are the benefits that an ecosystem brings to society and that improve people's health, economy, and quality of life.

Ecosystem-based Approaches (EbA) focus on managing biodiversity and ecological systems in a holistic way to maintain and enhance ecosystem services benefits and functions.

Nature-based Solutions (NbS) encompasses all actions that rely on ecosystems and the services they provide to respond to various societal challenges such as climate change, food security, resource management, or disaster risk.

1. Introduction and Context

The present **Marketing and Communications Strategy/Plan for Climate Action** is developed within the framework of the NaTour4CChange project and concerns the pilot destination **Zakros–Koufonisi**, with particular emphasis on Kato Zakros and Xerokampos, where the pilot NbS was implemented.

NaTour4CChange aims to strengthen the climate resilience of Mediterranean coastal tourism destinations through climate action planning, cooperative governance, ecosystem-based approaches and the implementation of NbS. Within this framework, marketing and communication are not treated only as tools for destination promotion, but also as instruments that can influence visitor choices and behaviour, support CCA measures and strengthen the involvement of residents, tourism businesses and local stakeholders.[1]

The pilot destination is in eastern Crete, within the administrative boundaries of the Municipality of Sitia and the Sitia UNESCO Global Geopark. It is an area of high natural and cultural value, including Natura 2000 sites, coastal ecosystems, geological formations, archaeological heritage and traditional agricultural landscapes. Tourism remains relatively small-scale and is mainly linked to nature, hiking, cultural heritage, beaches and local authenticity.[2] Despite the relatively low tourism pressure compared with other areas of Crete, the destination is highly exposed to climate-related pressures. Rising temperatures, declining precipitation, prolonged drought, water scarcity, invasive species, soil degradation, erosion and desertification risks affect the natural environment and, in the longer term, may also affect the quality and attractiveness of the tourism experience.[3]

This Strategy builds on the existing outputs and translates their findings into applied communication priorities, target behaviours, messages, channels and campaigns. Behaviour change factors are taken into consideration.[4] A central element of the Strategy is the communication of the pilot NbS implemented in the Zakros area. The intervention included the planting (and drip irrigation system) of approximately 500 shrubs and trees in four planting zones in Kato Zakros and Xerokampos, using varieties selected for their suitability to drought, heat and coastal exposure.[5]

The communication potential of this intervention, which aims to improve vegetation cover, support biodiversity, strengthen soil stability and enhance resilience to drought, salinity and land degradation, is particularly important. Rather than presenting CCA as an abstract concept, the pilot action provides a visible and locally grounded example of how nature can contribute to destination resilience. Communication can therefore connect a clearly identified climate challenge with a concrete local response and with specific actions that visitors and local stakeholders can support.

[1] NaTour4CChange : Application Form, Version 8.0, Project Euro-MED0200735
[2] D.3.4.1: Destination Zakros–Koufonisi Tourism Climate Action Plan.
[3] D.3.3: Technical Report Destination
[4] See Annex 1:Figure 1
[5] D.3.5.1: Pilot Destination Zakros–Koufonisi NbS Report

The Strategy also contributes to the implementation of the **Destination Tourism Climate Action Plan D.3.4.1**, which promotes the long-term transition of Zakros towards a climate-resilient, nature-positive and low-impact tourism model that protects environmental and cultural assets while strengthening local participation.[6]

Policy and sustainability alignment. The Strategy is also consistent with the European Green Deal, which places climate neutrality, resource efficiency and the protection and restoration of biodiversity at the centre of the EU green transition.[7] For tourism, NaTour4CChange links this policy direction to reducing the sector's environmental footprint, strengthening sustainability and competitiveness, and using education and awareness to support sustainable development. In this Strategy, these priorities are translated into practical communication on water conservation, protection of sensitive and restored areas and awareness of NbS. The Strategy also contributes to the **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[8].**

The overall communication approach is therefore based on a simple progression:

awareness → understanding → action

The aim is not only to inform visitors and stakeholders that the destination is vulnerable to climate change, but also to make clear **what they can do differently** to contribute to its protection and resilience. [9]

2. Climate Risks and Communication Implications

Based on existing Nature4Change Deliverables including the findings from the implemented NbS, the communication strategy focuses on three climate-related priorities:

1. drought and water scarcity;
2. soil erosion, land degradation and biodiversity pressure;
3. extreme heat and visitor comfort.

This focused approach is consistent with the official project guidance, which recommends concentrating on a limited number of climate risks and priority behaviours to ensure feasibility, consistency and measurable impact. [10]

[6] D.3.4.1: Destination Zakros–Koufonisi Tourism Climate Action Plan.
[7] European Commission (2019): The European Green Deal, COM(2019) 640 final
[8] United Nations (2015): Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/RES/70/1. (See Annex 2.Figure 2)
[9] A schematic overview of the strategic process is in Annex 3:Figure 3.
[10] Pilot Site Climate Communication Plan Instructions

2.1 Drought and Water Scarcity

Eastern Crete, and particularly the wider Sitia area, is characterised by low rainfall, prolonged dry periods and increasing pressure on available water resources. These pressures become more intense during the summer period, when temperatures rise and water demand from tourism and local activities increases.

Water scarcity is not only an environmental issue. It affects local communities, agriculture, tourism businesses and the quality of the visitor experience. The destination climate assessment identifies drought and water scarcity as major pressures affecting both natural systems and local economic activities.[11]

From a communication perspective, the issue requires careful framing. Messaging focused exclusively on shortage or crisis may create unnecessary concern or negatively affect destination perception. [12]The desired behaviour is not a vague commitment to sustainability, but the adoption of simple water-saving practices by visitors and tourism businesses.

2.2 Soil Erosion, Land Degradation and Biodiversity Pressure

Prolonged drought, reduced vegetation cover, strong winds and high temperatures increase the risk of soil erosion and gradual land degradation in the destination. These pressures are particularly important in a destination whose tourism identity depends strongly on landscape quality, biodiversity and natural character.

This climate challenge is directly connected to the NbS implemented under NaTour4CChange. The planting of drought-resistant and locally suitable plant varieties was designed to improve vegetation establishment, soil stability, water retention, landscape quality and biodiversity-supporting functions. [13]

The communication challenge is therefore two-fold:

- explain in simple terms **why the planting intervention was implemented**;
- encourage visitor behaviour that protects the intervention and surrounding areas.

The NbS Report explicitly identifies visitor-related damage and pressure on planted areas as risks that must be addressed through protection measures, visitor information & monitoring.

The desired behaviour is therefore clear: ***Visitors should respect planted and sensitive areas, remain on designated routes and avoid damaging vegetation.***

[11] D.3.3: Technical Report Destination
[12] The recommended approach is therefore positive, practical and place based as you will see in Section 5.
[13] D.3.5.1: Pilot Destination Zakros–Koufonisi NbS Report

2.3 Extreme Heat

Increasing temperatures and more frequent periods of extreme heat represent an additional challenge for tourism in Crete. These conditions may affect guests' comfort and safety, particularly during hiking, archaeological visits & outdoor activities in exposed coastal areas.[14]

Communication about extreme heat should avoid alarming language and focus instead on practical guidance that helps visitors adapt their behaviour.

Relevant guidance may include:

- visiting outdoor sites during cooler hours;
- carrying sufficient water;
- using shaded routes where available;
- avoiding intensive outdoor activity during peak heat periods
- wear comfortable shoes and hat

Table 1. Climate Risks and Communication Implications

Climate Risk	Tourism Impact	Communication Sensitivity	Communication Need	Priority Behaviour
Drought and water scarcity	Pressure on local water resources, tourism businesses and visitor experience	Avoid creating an image of a destination facing crisis or shortage	Promote responsible water use through positive, practical messaging	Reduce unnecessary water consumption
Soil erosion and land degradation	Degradation of landscape quality, biodiversity and natural assets	Visitors may not immediately understand the link between climate change and landscape degradation	Explain the role of the pilot planting intervention and its benefits	Respect planted areas and remain on designated routes
Extreme heat	Reduced visitor comfort and possible health and safety risks	Avoid alarming or discouraging messaging	Provide practical guidance for safer and more comfortable visits	Adjust timing and conditions of outdoor visits

[14] D.2.5.1: Regional Strategy for Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Region of Crete

3. Strategic Communication Objectives

This Strategy concentrates on a limited number of priority actions that are relevant to the local context and can be reinforced consistently across different communication channels.

Strategic Goal

To use destination marketing and visitor communication to strengthen the climate resilience of Zakros–Koufonisi and the greater Eastern Crete area by increasing understanding of local climate pressures and CCA actions, encouraging responsible water use and the protection of planted and climate-sensitive areas, and enabling local tourism actors to reinforce these behaviours consistently throughout the visitor journey.

Extreme heat is treated as a supporting seasonal communication theme rather than a third primary behavioural priority. Seasonal communication will provide practical guidance on timing, hydration, shade and breaks during periods of high temperatures.

1. The **first objective** is to encourage visitors and tourism businesses to use water more responsibly, particularly during the summer period when pressure on local water resources is highest. Communication should make water scarcity understandable without presenting the destination in a negative or alarming way. Messages should emphasise that water is a valuable local resource and that simple individual choices can contribute to reducing unnecessary consumption.

The desired change is:

From: water use without awareness of local conditions
To: conscious and responsible water use during the stay

2. The **second objective** is to encourage visitors to respect the planted areas created through the pilot NbS and, more broadly, sensitive natural areas within the destination. NbS intervention depends not only on plant survival, irrigation and maintenance, but also on limiting visitor-related damage. The NbS Report identifies trampling, vehicle access and other forms of visitor pressure as risks that require protection measures, monitoring and visitor communication.[15]

The desired change is:

From: moving through natural areas without understanding their sensitivity
To: following designated routes & actively avoiding damage to vegetation & restoration areas

[15] D.3.5.1 : Pilot Destination Zakros–Koufonisi NbS Report

3. The **third objective** is to strengthen the role of local tourism businesses, guides and other visitor-facing stakeholders as communication multipliers (influencers).

The Manual underlines the importance of local businesses, guides and community actors in reinforcing climate-related messages through social proof, direct visitor interaction and place-based storytelling. Consistent messages delivered by trusted local actors can help turn general awareness into practical behaviour.[16]

The desired change is:

From: fragmented or occasional sustainability communication
To: consistent and coordinated communication of a small number of practical climate messages

Through these objectives, sustainable actions will be easy to understand, visible, locally relevant and reinforced at the moment when visitors make decisions.[17]

4. Target Audiences

A manageable number of target groups are selected. Those most directly connected with the two main behaviour changes identified above and those able to influence visitor decisions during the travel experience.[18]

4.1 Visitors to natural, coastal and cultural sites

The primary audience is visitors who interact directly with the natural and cultural environment of the destination, since their behaviour directly affects trails, planted areas, beaches, vegetation and other sensitive sites.

For example:

- nature-oriented visitors;
- hikers;
- beach bathers;
- archaeological and cultural sites' fans;
- independent travellers exploring Kato Zakros and Xerokampos.

The objective is not to place additional restrictions on the visitor experience, but to make responsible behaviour part of the experience itself.

4.2 Local tourism businesses and guides

[16] D.1.8.1: Manual on Destination Marketing and Communication for Climate Action
[17] Find examples of desired behaviour in Annex 4:Table A and proposed indicators in Section 9.
[18] Pilot Site Climate Communication Plan Instructions

The second priority audience includes tourism front-liners. Sustainable behaviour is more likely to be adopted when visitors see it modelled and reinforced by local businesses, guides and residents.[19] Visitor-facing tourism actors include :

- accommodation providers;
- restaurants and cafés;
- local guides;
- tour operators;
- activity providers;

other businesses that communicate directly with visitors.

4.3 Supporting audiences

A) Locals, schools, community organisations

B) Sitia Municipality, the Sitia UNESCO Global Geopark and environmental or cultural organisations

Schools are particularly relevant for long-term environmental awareness and local ownership, while public and environmental bodies are important for ensuring scientific accuracy, institutional consistency and continuity.

Table 2. Priority Audiences and Behaviour Focus[20]

Audience	**Importance**	**Main Communication Priority**
Nature, coastal and cultural visitors	Direct interaction with sensitive environments and planted areas	Responsible water use and protection of sensitive areas
Tourism businesses and guides	Direct contact with visitors and strong influence on visitor choices	Reinforce common messages and model responsible behaviour
Residents, schools and community actors	Support local ownership and long-term awareness	Participation, education and amplification
Municipality and Geopark	Institutional and environmental role	Coordination, credibility and consistency of messages

[19] D.1.8.1: Manual on Destination Marketing and Communication for Climate Action
[20] Primary audiences are highlighted in green

5. Core Messages and Narrative

The Brief: The communication narrative should reflect the identity of Zakros Eastern Crete as a destination where nature, cultural heritage and local life remain closely connected. Climate action should not be communicated as a separate technical subject, but as part of the effort to preserve the qualities that make the area distinctive.

The Style: positive, place-based and solution-oriented communication, supported by real local actions. Messages should combine awareness of the challenge with a clear sense of agency: visitors should understand both **WHY an issue matters** and **WHAT they can do about it**.

For Eastern Crete, this approach is particularly suitable because the destination already provides a tangible example of CCA through the planting intervention implemented in Kato Zakros and Xerokampos. The intervention can therefore become the central example through which the broader concept of climate resilience is explained to visitors.

5.1 Overall Narrative

The proposed story-telling is based on a simple idea: *Eastern Crete, is shaped by a demanding natural environment. Protecting its landscape means learning to live, visit & act with that environment rather than against it.* GR *Η ανατολική Κρήτη, έχει διαμορφωθεί από ένα ιδιαίτερο φυσικό περιβάλλον. Η προστασία του τοπίου της σημαίνει να μαθαίνουμε να ζούμε, να επισκεπτόμαστε και να δρούμε σε αρμονία με τη φύση, όχι εις βάρος της.*

The destination should not be presented as fragile in a way that creates fear or discourages visitors. Instead, communication should highlight that its natural character has value precisely because it has remained relatively undisturbed and that maintaining this character requires responsible choices. The communication narrative follows four inter-connected steps:[21]

The place
Eastern Crete, and particularly Zakros and Xerokampos, is characterised by dry landscapes, coastal ecosystems, wetlands, traditional agricultural areas, archaeological heritage and a strong relationship between people and nature.

The challenge
Increasing heat, drought, water scarcity and land degradation place additional pressure on these natural systems.

The response
Local and regional actors are taking practical CCA measures to improve resilience, including the planting of drought-resistant and locally suitable plant varieties in selected areas.

The visitor's role
Visitors can contribute through simple actions: respecting planted and sensitive areas, remaining on designated routes and using water responsibly.

[21] D.1.8.1 : Manual on Destination Marketing and Communication for Climate Action

5.2 Tone of Communication[22]

- **Positive:** focus on what visitors can do rather than on prohibitions.[23]
- **Simple:** avoid technical climate terminology in face-to-face communication with guests
- **Local:** connect local voices & examples as a form of social proof of Eastern Crete
- **Practical:** every message should have a Call-of-Action.
- **Credible:** communicate actual actions & verified results, instead of general green claims

5.3 Core Communication Messages used consistently across communication channels.

Table 3. Core Communication Messages[24]

Priority	Core Messages	Desired Behaviour / Role
Landscape protection	*Enjoy the landscape without leaving a mark.* *Απολαύστε το τοπίο χωρίς να αφήσετε το αποτύπωμά σας.*	Respect natural areas, signs and physical borders
Planted areas	*Give nature room to grow. Stay on the designated path.* *Δώστε στη φύση χώρο να αναπτυχθεί.* *Παραμείνετε στην καθορισμένη διαδρομή.*	Avoiding trampling and entering planted zones. No vehicle access in sensitive areas where restrictions apply. Staying on designated paths & access routes.
Water	*Water is precious here. Use it with care.* *Εδώ το νερό είναι πολύτιμο.* *Χρησιμοποιήστε το με σύνεση.*	Avoiding/Reducing unnecessary water consumption. Responsible water usage.
NbS awareness	*Nature is part of the solution.* *Η φύση είναι η λύση.*	Understand purpose & benefits of NbS and support local climate action. Protecting sensible and planted areas.
Extreme heat	*Enjoy the outdoors at its best: choose the cooler hours, carry water, take regular breaks.* *Απολαύστε τη φύση στα καλύτερά της:* *επιλέξτε δροσερές ώρες, έχετε μαζί σας νερό, κάνετε τακτικά διαλείμματα.*	Practical guidance during periods of extreme heat. Adapt timing and conditions of outdoor visits.

[22] D.1.8.1: Manual on Destination Marketing and Communication for Climate Action
[23] Behaviour Change Wheel framework (Michie et al., 2014)
[24] For the Vision Board go to Annex 6:Figure 5.

6. Communication Channels and Touchpoints

Communication should accompany the visitor throughout the journey. Repetition and consistency are preferable to developing many different sustainability messages, particularly given the project's recommendation to focus on one or two priority behaviours. The project guidance recommends integrating climate communication before the trip, on arrival, during the stay and after departure. For Zakros, the most appropriate approach is to use existing communication channels wherever possible and strengthen them with a small number of consistent climate messages.[25]

6.1 Pre-trip light introduction to the destination's environmental character through:

- Region of Crete and destination-related websites;
- Municipality and Geopark digital channels;
- social media;
- accommodation websites and booking information;
- tour operator and guide communication.

Content:

- short stories about the planting intervention; responsible visitor guidance; seasonal heat advice; information on the natural and protected character of the area; simple water-saving messages.

Example:

You are visiting one of Crete's most distinctive natural landscapes. Help us keep it that way: respect sensitive areas, stay on marked routes and use water with care.

Επισκέπτεστε ένα από τα πιο ιδιαίτερα φυσικά τοπία της Κρήτης. Βοηθήστε μας να το διατηρήσουμε έτσι: σεβαστείτε τις ευάλωτες ζώνες, ακολουθήστε τις καθορισμένες διαδρομές και χρησιμοποιήστε το νερό με σύνεση.

6.2 Arrival practical guidance messages at consumption Touchpoints like accommodation reception areas; visitor information points; Geopark information material; local tourism businesses; printed visitor material.

Example:

Welcome to Hiona-Eastern Crete. Explore freely, tread lightly and use water with care.

Καλώς ήρθατε στην Χιώνα στην Ανατολική Κρήτη. Εξερευνήστε ελεύθερα, κινηθείτε με σεβασμό και χρησιμοποιήστε το νερό με σύνεση

[25] Pilot Site Climate Communication Plan Instructions

6.3 On-site tools during Stay[26]

- small interpretive signs;
- directional signs and visual cues;
- clear marking of sensitive areas;
- QR codes;
- maps;
- guided walks;
- communication by local guides and businesses.

Example of Core message around the planted areas:

Please stay outside the planted area.

Παραμείνετε εκτός της φυτεμένης ζώνης.

Example of supporting explanatory guidance:

These trees were selected to withstand dry and coastal conditions and

to support a more resilient landscape.

By keeping outside the planted area, you help them grow.

Τα δέντρα αυτά επιλέχθηκαν ώστε να αντέχουν στις ξηρές και παράκτιες συνθήκες και να συμβάλλουν σε ένα πιο ανθεκτικό τοπίο.

Παραμένοντας εκτός της φυτεμένης ζώνης, τα βοηθάτε να αναπτυχθούν.

6.4 Post-visit communication reinforcing the destination's identity & encouraging visitors engagement and awareness evaluation through: social media posts showing the development of the planting areas; short updates on monitoring results; visitor surveys; photographs showing seasonal changes; invitations to share responsible travel experiences.

Example text:

Thank you. Small actions during your visit support the future of this landscape.

Σας ευχαριστούμε. Η οικολογική σας συνείδηση στηρίζει το μέλλον αυτού του τοπίου.[27]

[26] D.1.8.1: Manual on Destination Marketing and Communication for Climate Action
[27] Visitor Communication Journey and Key Touchpoints can be found in Annex 5: Table B, Figure 4.

7. Key Campaign Actions

Two focused and realistic campaigns are proposed. The first is directly linked to the NbS and landscape protection, explaining CCA, while the second addresses responsible water use as a daily behaviour directly linked to one of the destination's main climate challenges.[28]

Table 4. Campaigns' Summary

Campaign	Main Behaviour	Main Audience	Main Channels	Indicative KPIs
Give Nature Room to Grow *Δώστε στη φύση χώρο να αναπτυχθεί*	Respect planted areas & designated routes	Nature visitors, hikers, beach users	On-site signs, QR codes, guides, digital storytelling	QR scans, visitor compliance, damage observations, message recall
Water is precious here. Use it with care. *Εδώ το νερό είναι πολύτιμο. Χρησιμοποιήστε το με σύνεση.*	Responsible water use	Visitors and tourism businesses	Accommodation material, digital channels, local businesses	Participation, message reach, visitor recall

Table 5. Campaign 1

Purpose	Protect the planted areas in Kato Zakros and Xerokampos and use the intervention as a visible example of local CCA.
Primary Audience	Visitors to Kato Zakros and Xerokampos, hikers, beach visitors and nature-oriented visitors.
Supporting Audience	Guides, tourism businesses and local residents.
Behaviour Objective	Keep outside planted areas, follow designated routes, avoid trampling young plants and respect protective measures and signs.
Core Message	***Give nature room to grow. Stay on the designated path.*** ***Δώστε στη φύση χώρο να αναπτυχθεί. Παραμείνετε στην καθορισμένη διαδρομή.***
Supporting Message	***These trees were selected to withstand dry and coastal conditions and to support a more resilient landscape. By keeping outside the planted area, you help them grow.*** ***Τα δέντρα αυτά επιλέχθηκαν ώστε να αντέχουν στις ξηρές και παράκτιες συνθήκες και να συμβάλλουν σε ένα πιο ανθεκτικό τοπίο. Παραμένοντας εκτός της φυτεμένης ζώνης, τα βοηθάτε να αναπτυχθούν.***

[28] Pilot Site Climate Communication Plan Instructions
Find Campaigns' Action Plans, Partners & respective Measurements along with a simple visitor guidance in Annex 6.

Why this Campaign?

The planting intervention is not decorative landscaping. It is part of a wider CCA effort addressing drought, soil degradation and pressure on vegetation. Approximately 500 shrubs and trees were planted in four zones in Kato Zakros and Xerokampos, supported by drip irrigation and temporary protection measures.[29] The campaign therefore connects a **visible local climate action** with a **simple visitor behaviour**: protecting the areas where nature is being supported to recover and adapt.

Table 6. Campaign 2

Purpose	Encourage responsible water use by visitors and tourism businesses without creating negative perceptions of the destination due to water scarcity.
Primary Audience	Overnight visitors, accommodation guests and tourism businesses.
Supporting Audience	Restaurants, cafés, guides and activity providers.
Behaviour Objective	Reduce unnecessary water consumption and encourage businesses to communicate and model responsible water use.
Core Message	***Water is precious here. Use it with care.*** ***Εδώ το νερό είναι πολύτιμο. Χρησιμοποιήστε το με σύνεση.***
Supporting Message	***Eastern Crete is shaped by long dry summers. Help protect this place by using water with care.*** ***Η περιοχή μας χαρακτηρίζεται από μακρά, ξηρά καλοκαίρια. Βοηθήστε στην προστασία αυτού του τόπου χρησιμοποιώντας το νερό με σύνεση.***

Why this Campaign?

Water scarcity is one of the destination's main climate-related pressures, particularly during the long, dry summer season. The campaign presents responsible water use as a **simple way for visitors and businesses to care for the place they are enjoying**.

The aim is to make water-saving behaviour visible, normal and easy to adapt.

[29] D.3.5.1: Pilot Destination Zakros–Koufonisi NbS Report

8. Stakeholder Engagement

Destination communication is based on shared ownership, local legitimacy, cooperation among public & environmental actors, tourism businesses, communities & others. [30] *The stakeholder roles described are proposed and will be confirmed through the planned Open Discussion Event.*

8.1 Key Stakeholders & Roles

Region of Crete

RoC will be the overall coordinator for the Strategy and its connection with NaTour4CChange.

Municipality of Sitia

The Municipality of Sitia is a key local stakeholder because of its direct relationship with the pilot area, local infrastructure and community.

Sitia UNESCO Global Geopark

Geopark can provide the main link between climate communication, environmental interpretation and visitor experience.

Tourism Businesses

Accommodation services, restaurants, cafés, guides and tourism activity providers, using a common set of messages across the destination, can act as direct communication multipliers. [31]

Guides as local ambassadors (influencers)

Guides can play a particularly important role in explaining the connection between the local landscape, climate pressures and the NbS.

Schools and Youth

Schools can contribute to long-term awareness and local ownership. Educational activities should focus on local examples instead of climate change only as a global issue. The planting intervention provides a practical opportunity to connect CCA with their familiar landscape.

8.2 Presentation and Open Discussion Event

Stakeholder presentation and open discussion event, within the RoC Green Actions Framework, to verify current communication practices; visitor behaviours that create pressure; practical channels already used locally; willingness to participate in the proposed campaigns; key messages; campaign concepts; roles of participating actors; feasible communication channels.

8.3 Ensuring Message Consistency by creating a common communication package for participating stakeholders including: the main campaign messages; short descriptions of the NbS; text for water-saving communication; visitor guidance; ready-to-use short texts for social media and websites.

[30] Stakeholder Roles in Annex 7: Table G.
[31] Read 10 Examples of Water-Smart Hospitality Messages at Annex 8

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring should remain simple, realistic and directly linked to the communication objectives. The purpose is to determine whether the Strategy is reaching its audiences and whether there are indications that the desired behaviours are being adopted through indicators like communication reach, visitor awareness, behaviour change and stakeholder participation.[32]

Before campaign launch, a simple baseline will be established for the main behavioural indicators: current visitor compliance with designated routes, visible visitor-related damage to planted areas, and current use of water-saving communication or practices by participating tourism businesses. This will provide a starting point for subsequent comparison without creating a complex monitoring exercise.

9.1 Monitoring Principles

Practicality
Indicators should be measurable with available or easily developed tools.

Relevance
Each indicator should correspond directly to a communication objective.

Proportionality
Monitoring effort should remain appropriate to the size and capacity of the pilot destination.

Adaptation
Results used to improve messages, communication channels and campaign activities over time.

9.2 Proposed Indicators

Objective 1 – Responsible Water Use Percentage of surveyed visitors reporting that they adopted at least one recommended water-saving action: number of tourism businesses participating in the campaign; of accommodation units displaying water-related material; of digital views or interactions with campaign content; percentage of surveyed visitors recalling the water message; qualitative feedback from participating businesses.

Objective 2 – Protection of Planted and Sensitive Areas: number of on-site signs or information points installed; of QR code scans; guests' recall of the purpose of the planting intervention; observed compliance with designated routes; visible signs of trampling or visitor-related damage; condition of protective measures around planted areas.

Objective 3 – Stakeholder Participation and Consistent Communication: number of stakeholders participating in the open discussion event; of businesses & guides using common communication material; of schools participating in educational activities; of stakeholder coordination meetings; stakeholder feedback regarding clarity & usefulness of messages.

Extreme heat (Supporting theme): seasonal heat guidance distributed; visitor recall of heat guidance; feedback on usefulness of the guidance.

[32] Pilot Site Climate Communication Plan Instructions

9.3 Digital Monitoring

Digital communication can be monitored using basic analytics, including: page views; QR scans; social media reach; engagement; video views; link clicks.

9.4 Monitoring Table

Table 7. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Objective	Indicator	Method	Responsibility	Frequency
Encourage responsible water use	Participating tourism businesses	Partner records	Region / local partners	Seasonal
Encourage responsible water use	Visitor message recall; percentage of surveyed visitors reporting at least one recommended water-saving action	visitor survey[33]	Region / partners	During and after campaign
Protect planted areas	QR scans	Digital analytics	Communication coordinator	Monthly during campaign
Protect planted areas	Visitor-related damage / compliance	Observation and NbS monitoring	Municipality / Geopark / tech stakeholder	Seasonal
Explain the NbS	Visitor understanding	Short survey	Region / partners	Post-campaign
Strengthen local communication	Number of guides/ businesses using common material	Participation records	Region / Municipality	Seasonal
Strengthen stakeholder engagement	Participation in events and educational activities	Attendance records	Region / activity organiser	Per activity
Measure digital reach	Reach and engagement	Website/social analytics	Communication coordinator	Monthly
Supporting theme : Extreme heat	Seasonal heat guidance distributed; visitor recall of heat guidance; feedback on usefulness	Communication records / short visitor survey	Region / local partners	Seasonal

[33] A short visitor survey can be found in Annex 8.

9.5 Review and Adjustment according to feedback, visitor response and observed behaviour.

Monitoring results should be reviewed after the first implementation period.

Where messages are not understood or visitor response is limited, adjustments may include: simpler wording; different placement of signs; stronger use of visuals; additional communication through accommodation providers; revised QR content; additional guide or business briefing.

10. Implementation Roadmap

Implementation should be phased so that the Strategy begins with actions that can be delivered using existing structures and gradually develops more permanent communication tools. With this method we can identify quick wins, responsible actors, required resources and dependencies to ensure that the Strategy remains operational rather than purely conceptual.

Table 8. Indicative Implementation Roadmap

Period / Phase	Key Actions	Main Responsible Stakeholders	Main Requirements
Phase 1 Preparation	Open Discussion Event	RoC, Municipality, Geopark, local stakeholders	Staff time, stakeholder participation
Phase 2 Development	Signs, QR content, digital and business material, school material	RoC / communication team / technical partners	Design, content production, approvals
Phase 3 Implementation	Launch of two campaigns and educational activities	RoC, Municipality, Geopark, tourism businesses, guides	Communication channels, on-site tools
Phase 4 Local Event	Presentation and dissemination of Strategy and project results	RoC and local partners	Venue, communication, participation
Phase 5 Monitoring	Surveys, analytics, observations and stakeholder feedback	RoC and relevant local partners	Data collection and reporting tools
Phase 6 Review	Adjustment of messages and continuation of successful actions	RoC, Municipality, Geopark	Coordination and available resources

10.1 Quick Wins Actions to be implemented relatively quickly & without new infrastructure: Publication of the two core campaign messages through existing social media channels; preparation of a short digital page on the NbS; use of QR codes linked to existing online platforms; provision of ready-to-use water messages to local accommodation providers; one-page briefing material for guides and tourism businesses; school awareness activities; integration of heat guidance into existing visitor information. [34] The overall implementation principle can therefore be summarised as: *Communicate what is being done, show why it matters, and make it easy for people to take part. Επικοινωνούμε όσα γίνονται, εξηγούμε γιατί έχουν σημασία και διευκολύνουμε όλους να συμμετέχουν.*

[34] For the Timeline see Table H in Annex 9.

References

1. European Commission (2019): The European Green Deal, COM(2019) 640 final.

2. United Nations (2015): Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/RES/70/1.

3. NaTour4CChange : Application Form, Version 8.0, Project Euro-MED0200735,

4. D.1.8.1: – Manual on Destination Marketing and Communication for Climate Action, NaTour4CChange.

5. D.3.3.1: Identification and Assessment of the Main Coastal Tourism-related Issues Concerning Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation – Destination Zakros–Koufonisi.

6. D.3.4.1: Destination Zakros–Koufonisi Tourism Climate Action Plan.

7. D.3.5.1: Pilot Destination Zakros–Koufonisi NbS Report.

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9. Region of Crete Contribution to Activity 3.6 : Preliminary Business and Financial Model Proposals for NbS Implementation.

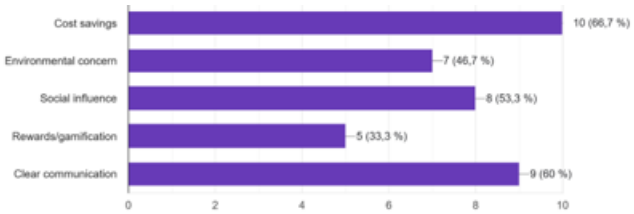
10. D.2.5.1: Regional Strategy for Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Region of Crete.

11. Behaviour Change Wheel framework (Michie et al., 2014)

Annexes

Annex 1. Main motives leading to behaviour change

Figure 1. Main motives leading to behaviour change



Annex 2. UN Sustainable Development Goals

At communication-strategy level, the strongest operational links are to SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation, through responsible water use; SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production, through responsible visitor behaviour; SDG 13 – Climate Action, through CCA and awareness; and SDG 15 – Life on Land, through protection of vegetation, biodiversity and restored areas. SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals supports the cooperative implementation model involving the Region of Crete, the Municipality of Sitia, the Sitia UNESCO Global Geopark, tourism businesses, guides and local communities. [35]

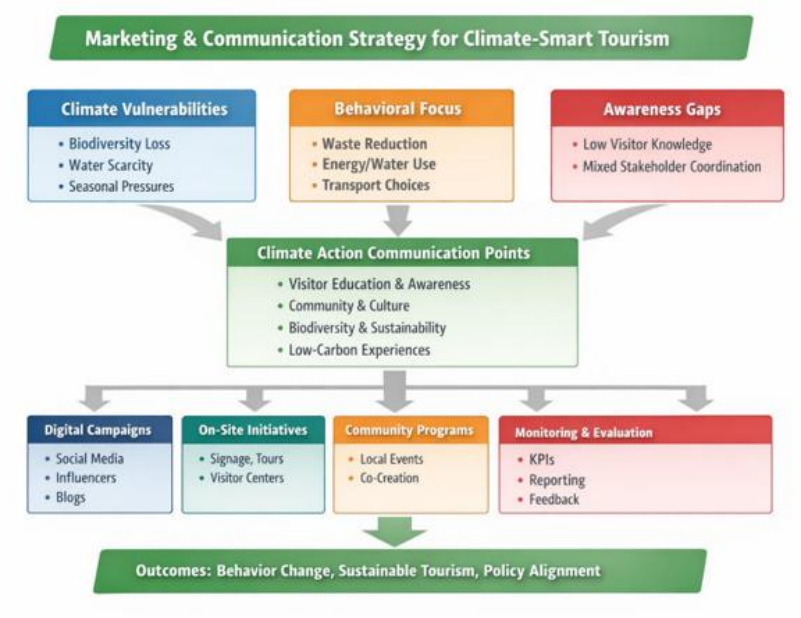
Figure 2. UN Sustainable Development Goals



[35] United Nations (2015) – Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/RES/70/1.

Annex 3. Overview of strategic process

Figure 3. Overview of strategic process



Annex 4. Strategic Communication Objectives

Table A: Strategic Communication Objectives

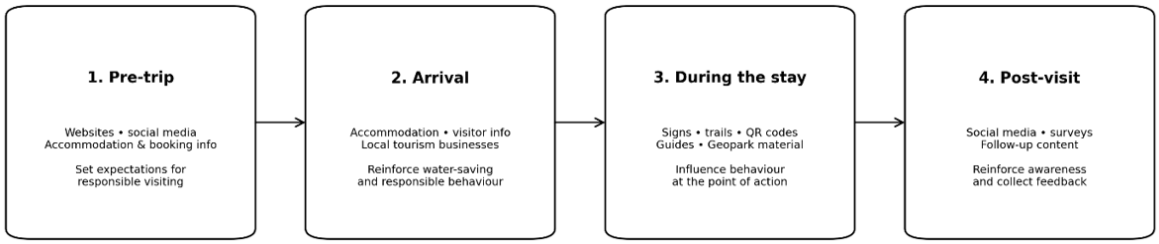
Objective	**Priority Behaviour**	**Main Audience**	**Measurement indications**
Encourage responsible water use	Reduce unnecessary water consumption	Visitors and tourism businesses	Message recall, partner participation, digital engagement
Protect planted and sensitive areas	Stay on designated routes and avoid damage to vegetation	Visitors to natural and coastal areas	Observation, visible damage, QR use, visitor awareness
Strengthen consistent local communication	Reinforce the same practical climate messages across visitor touchpoints	Tourism businesses, guides and local actors	Number of participating actors, message consistency, stakeholder feedback
Supporting seasonal communication – extreme heat	**Adapt timing and conditions of outdoor visits during periods of extreme heat**	**Visitors to natural, coastal and cultural sites**	**Seasonal guidance, message recall and feedback**

Annex 5: Visitor Communication Journey and Key Touchpoints

Table B. Visitor Journey and Communication Touchpoints

Travel Stage	Main Channels	Main Message / Purpose
Pre-trip	Website, social media, accommodation and partner channels	Introduce responsible visiting and destination values
Arrival	Accommodation, visitor information, local businesses	Reinforce water-saving and responsible behaviour
During stay	Signage, trails, QR codes, guides, Geopark material	Influence behaviour at the point of action
Post-visit	Social media, surveys, follow-up content	Reinforce awareness and measure message recall

Figure 4. Visitor Communication Journey and Key Touchpoints



Annex 6: Campaigns

Table C. Campaign 1 Action Plan

Action	Format / Channel	Visitor-facing Message	Purpose
1. On-site information	Small signs at or near planting zones	*New life is growing here. Please keep outside the planted area. GR Εδώ γεννιέται νέα ζωή. Παρακαλούμε παραμείνετε εκτός της φυτεμένης ζώνης.*	Prevent trampling and make the intervention visible
2. QR interpretation	QR code linked to a short landing page	*Why are these plants here? GR Γιατί βρίσκονται αυτά τα φυτά εδώ;*	Explain the climate challenge, the planting intervention and how visitors can help
3. Digital storytelling	Images, short videos and reels	*Nature is part of the solution. GR Η φύση είναι η λύση.*	Show the planting process, local conditions, people involved and plant development over time
4. Guide & business briefing	One-page A4 information sheet	*This is more than planting. It is an investment in the resilience of the landscape. GR Δεν πρόκειται απλώς για μια φύτευση. Είναι επένδυση στην ανθεκτικότητα του τοπίου.*	Enable local actors to explain the intervention consistently
5. School activity	Short educational activity	*How is our landscape adapting to climate change? GR Πώς προσαρμόζεται το τοπίο μας στην κλιματική αλλαγή;*	Connect drought, water, vegetation, biodiversity and CCA through a local example

QR Landing Page Content

The QR page should explain, in brief: the local climate challenge; why the intervention was selected; what was planted; how visitors can help; monitoring results, when available.

Table D. Campaign 1 Partners & Measurement

Key Partners	**Suggested KPIs**
Region of Crete	Number of signs / information points installed
Municipality of Sitia	Number of QR scans
Sitia UNESCO Global Geopark	Number of businesses / guides using campaign material
Local tourism businesses and guides	Reach and engagement of digital content
Schools and community organisations	Visitor awareness / message recall; observed compliance with designated routes; visible visitor-related damage to planted areas

Table E. Campaign 2 Partners & Measurement

Key Partners	**Suggested KPIs**
Region of Crete	Number of participating businesses
Municipality of Sitia	Number of accommodation units displaying the message
Accommodation businesses	Digital campaign reach and engagement
Tourism associations and local businesses	Percentage of surveyed visitors recalling the message; percentage of surveyed visitors reporting at least one recommended water-saving action
Sitia UNESCO Global Geopark, where relevant	Feedback from participating businesses

Simple Visitor Guidance

A very small number of practical actions should accompany the campaign: avoid leaving taps running unnecessarily; reuse towels where this option is available; report leaks when noticed; follow water-saving guidance provided by accommodation operators.

The guidance can be introduced with:

A few simple actions can help protect local water resources.

Μερικές απλές κινήσεις μπορούν να συμβάλουν στην προστασία των τοπικών υδάτινων πόρων.

A positive supporting line for accommodation material could also be:

Smart choices during your stay make a difference.

Έξυπνες επιλογές κατά τη διαμονή σας μπορούν να κάνουν τη διαφορά.

Table F. Campaign 2 Action Plan

Action	Format / Channel	Visitor-facing Message	Purpose
1. Accommodation communication	Room card, digital notice or welcome material	***Water is precious here.*** ***Το νερό είναι πολύτιμο εδώ.***	Introduce the message at the point where water-use decisions are made
2. Pre-arrival communication	Booking confirmation or welcome email	***Welcome to Eastern Crete. Enjoy your stay and help us care for our most precious resource: water. Καλώς ήρθατε στην ανατολική Κρήτη. Απολαύστε τη διαμονή σας και βοηθήστε μας να φροντίσουμε τον πιο πολύτιμο πόρο μας: το νερό.***	Set expectations before arrival
3. Social media content	Short posts, stories and reels	***A dry landscape, a precious resource. Every drop matters here. Ένα ξηρό τοπίο, ένας πολύτιμος πόρος. Εδώ, κάθε σταγόνα μετράει.***	Connect responsible water use with the identity of the local landscape
4. Local business participation	Common campaign message displayed by participating businesses	***We use water with care. Thank you for doing the same.*** ***Εμείς εδώ χρησιμοποιούμε το νερό με σύνεση. Σας ευχαριστούμε που κάνετε το ίδιο.***	Create a visible shared norm through social proof
5. Seasonal reinforcement	Stronger messages during dry and high-demand periods	***Summer is dry here. Please use water wisely.*** ***Τα καλοκαίρια εδώ είναι ξηρά. Παρακαλούμε χρησιμοποιείτε το νερό με σύνεση.***	Reinforce behaviour when pressure on water resources is greatest

Figure 5. Vision Board



Annex 7: Stakeholders

Table G.Stakeholder Roles (proposed to be confirmed through the Open Discussion Event)

Stakeholder	Main Role in the Strategy
Region of Crete	Overall coordination, regional communication, monitoring and dissemination
Municipality of Sitia	Local coordination, public communication and support for implementation
Sitia UNESCO Global Geopark	Environmental interpretation, scientific credibility and visitor guidance
Tourism businesses	Frontline guest communication and campaign amplification
Local guides	Storytelling, interpretation and behavioural guidance
Schools and youth	Environmental education and long-term local awareness
Community and environmental organisations	Local outreach, feedback and participation

Annex 8. Visitors' engagement

Short Visitor Survey

The survey can be kept to ~ five questions to be completed quickly on a mobile device.

1. **Did you notice information encouraging responsible water use during your visit?** Yes / No
2. **Did you notice information about protecting planted or sensitive natural areas?** Yes / No
3. **Did you understand why the planting intervention was carried out?** Yes / Partly / No
4. **Did any of the information influence what you did during your visit?** Yes / No / Not sure
5. **Which message do you remember most clearly?** Open response.

Optional: *Is there anything that would make responsible visiting easier?*

Examples of Water-Smart Hospitality Messages

1. Towel & linen change

Every stay is unique. Help us protect Eastern Crete's precious water resources.

We change towels and bed linen according to your needs rather than automatically.

Fresh towels and linen are always available whenever you need them, simply let us know.

2. Bed linen replacement

A small choice makes a big difference.

To reduce unnecessary water & energy use, bed linen is changed every 3 days during your stay.

If you would prefer an earlier change, please contact our reception team.

3. Short showers

Enjoy your shower. Save a little water.

Eastern Crete is a beautiful but water-sensitive destination. A few minutes less in the shower can help protect local water resources. Thank you for caring for the place you are visiting.

4. Tap use

Every drop matters here.

Please turn off the tap while brushing your teeth or when water is not needed.

Small actions from many visitors create a big difference.

5. Reporting leaks

Help us protect every drop.

If you notice a dripping tap, leaking toilet or any water issue, please inform our team.

Together we can prevent unnecessary water loss.

6. Reuse and refill

Refill. Reuse. Respect our island.

Whenever possible, choose reusable water bottles & refill, instead of single-use plastic bottles.

A simple choice that supports a more sustainable destination.

7. Air conditioning & water message

Stay cool while caring for Eastern Crete.

During the hot summer months, please keep doors & windows closed when the AC is operating.

Responsible energy and water use help protect the natural balance of our island.

8. Pool / outdoor areas

Our outdoor spaces depend on careful water use.

Please help us reduce water waste by following the guidance around pool and garden areas.

Every responsible choice helps maintain the beauty of Crete.

9. Hotel commitment message

We care for our destination. We care for its resources. As a hospitality provider in Eastern Crete, we are committed to using water responsibly and protecting the natural environment that makes this place special. Thank you for being part of this effort.

10. Guest participation / social norm message

Together, we can make every drop count. Thousands of visitors enjoy Eastern Crete every year. If each of us makes small, responsible choices, we can help protect local water resources for the future. Thank you for travelling with care.

Annex 9. Timeline

Table H. Implementation Timeline

Implementation Roadmap Timeline						
Action / Phase	**Month 1**	**Month 2**	**Month 3**	**Month 4**	**Month 5**	**Month 6**
1. Preparation & Validation	●					
Stakeholder engagement - contact	●					
Open discussion Event	●					
Validation of messages and campaign concepts	●					
2. Communication Material Development	●	●				
Design of signage and on-site material	●	●				
QR content and digital material	●	●				
Business and school communication material	●	●				
3. Campaign Launch and Implementation		●	●	●		
Launch Campaign 1		●	●	●		
Launch Campaign 2”		●	●	●		
4. Local Engagement & Dissemination			●	●	●	
School awareness activities			●	●		
Local dissemination event				●		
Stakeholder outreach and amplification			●	●	●	
5. Monitoring & Review				●	●	●
Visitor survey and feedback collection				●	●	
QR tracking and digital analytics				●	●	●
Observation of planted areas / campaign review					●	●
6. Continuity & Integration						●
Final review and adjustment of messages						●
Integration into existing destination communication						●