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Session: Marine Cultural Heritage (Integrated approaches in research and management of maritime cultural heritage sites)

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Integrated approaches fostering capacity building, protection, preservation and sustainable valorization of Underwater Cultural and Natural Heritage

Herein we present integrated approaches for the protection, preservation and valorization of Underwater Cultural and Natural Heritage (UCNH), that aim at the sustainable management of maritime heritage sites and smart thematic tourism development in coastal areas and islands. The goal is to raise awareness on the cultural and socioeconomic value of UCNH and address the challenges of the marine environment, through capacity building at regional level, support of scientific research, use of blue culture technologies and active involvement of actors and citizens. These interdisciplinary approaches are based on a variety of corroborating models and technological approaches, adaptable and replicable to needs of areas and characteristics of the UWCH sites, even beyond the Mediterranean.

An approach is to reinforce innovation excellence in regions, aligned with smart specialization strategies and EU policies, to contribute sustainably to the protection, restoration, management and promotion of UCNH. Through building regional Excellence Hubs and establishing cross-border collaborations, the model applies innovative R&I prototype solutions of Blue Culture Technologies to support sustainable management of UCNH. Another multidimensional approach is fostering smart UCNH tourism destinations with a new ecological focus that draws on natural and cultural resources in EU Outermost Regions. The model develops sustainability Strategies and Action Plans, policy pathways for stakeholders' engagement, local interventions focusing on green and circular economy and a multi-destination eco-tourism product. Another model focuses on cultural & creative tourism, and on cultural science & silver tourism as drivers for sustainable development in rural remote regions, and proposes a participatory approach towards sustainable tourism development. A fourth model suggests a framework for remote surveying of UCH assets' state-of-preservation and degradation, utilizing autonomous remote sensing aiming at reducing OPEX/CAPEX and assessment accuracy.

These approaches are currently developed in the EU funded BCThubs, NERITES and TOURAL Horizon Europe projects, and in the ecoRoute EMFAF project.