PortCREW | Interreg Euro-MED | Co-funded by the European Union

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PortCREW - Port-City Regions To Wave Med Cruise Destinations As Smart, Sustainable And Striking Eco-Tourism Systems

FUNDACIÓN VALENCIAPORT | ITL Istituto dei Trasporti e della Logistica | amadeus | LUKA KOPER Port of Koper | CCI VAR | Moving innova | CERTH/HIT Hellenic Institute of Transport

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1.The PortCREW project in a nutshell



Total budget

€ 2 028 851



Project duration

33 months



Interreg Funds

€ 1 623 0811

PortCREW (Port-City Regions To Wave Med Cruise Destinations As Smart, Sustainable And Striking Eco-Tourism Systems) is an EU Project co-funded by Interreg Euro-MED that responds to cruise tourists' growing demand for authentic, accessible, and sustainable inland experiences, by testing an innovative eco-tourism platform across five Mediterranean ports in Spain, France, Italy, Slovenia, and Greece.

The cruise sector continues to be one of the fastest-growing sectors of tourism. The Mediterranean basin in particular, has long been a magnet for tourists worldwide and in 2024 it was the second cruise destination at the world level. However, the rise of mass tourism has brought both opportunities and challenges to the ports and destinations of the MED regions.

Starting from these considerations, the PortCREW project's strategic objectives are:

- Tackle overtourism/seasonal tourist peak problems in MED cruise small and middle-size cities.
- Valorise inland natural and cultural assets as cruise ports' decongestion strategy.
- Increase social acceptability of the cruise sector in MED cities thanks to more balanced touristic flow management at territorial levels.
- Favour a better inclusion of cruise tourism sustainable management measures in local/regional urban, touristic and transport planning/strategic tools.
- Create a new transnational tool for the provision of dynamic and interoperable touristic information in the MED cruise terminals



1.1 What we do

PortCREW aims to promote smart and sustainable ecotourism in Mediterranean cruise ports by increasing the visibility and attractiveness of lesser-known inland natural areas and local events.

This is supported by a jointly developed smart platform that collects and ranks eco-tourism destinations, helping identify experiences with high sustainable value. The platform is designed to assist cruise operators and public authorities in delivering more targeted information at cruise terminals, while also supporting the creation of more sustainable, locally rooted tourism packages for cruise passengers.



As an innovative digital solution, the PortCREW platform gathers, organizes, and shares up-to-date information with cruisers, highlighting eco-tourism activities, hidden destinations, and their unique historical, cultural, and natural value.

1.2 The five pilot actions

Valencia

Testing the PortCREW platform to diversify tourist offerings, reduce congestion, and tailor packages for families and people with disabilities. A new electronic totem at the cruise terminal will provide tourist information.

Koper

Promoting destinations beyond the city center and sustainable access. Smart benches at the terminal will share eco-tourism info and offer electric bike charging.

Toulon

Advancing sustainable cruise tourism through eco-tour labeling, low-impact transport, and improved onshore services. Includes info totems, charging points, and links with local networks.

Thessaloniki

Integrating PortCREW with the Smart City Pass to provide cruise travellers with tailored, sustainable experiences and seamless digital-physical engagement.

Ravenna

Using PortCREW to deliver geolocated, personalized info for independent cruisers, showcasing lesser-known eco-friendly sites and building tailored tour packages via info-totems.

2.Updates on project activities

2.1 Deliverable 1.1.1

Deliverable 1.1.1 is now complete and available to download from the PortCREW website. The report brings together the findings from a three-pillar analysis across our five Mediterranean pilot areas: Valencia, Toulon, Ravenna, Koper and Thessaloniki. We benchmarked the international eco-tourism landscape, conducted more than 35 interviews with key stakeholders across the cruise ecosystem, and analysed 2025 geolocation data from non-domestic cruise passengers to better understand how visitors move through each destination. The findings provide an evidence base for the next phase of PortCREW, and work under WP2 is now underway.



2.2 What comes next

2.2.1 WP2 Updates

WP2 focuses on testing the PortCREW platform and implementing new eco-tourism solutions across the five pilot destinations. A joint testing methodology has now been finalised, including common indicators covering platform performance, user experience and the social, economic and environmental impact of each pilot. The five pilot areas are also developing their action plans and working with local stakeholders to

define the eco-tourism packages that will be promoted through the platform. Next, the project will move towards testing these solutions in real-life conditions, supported by new equipment in selected destinations, including an e-totem in Valencia, smart equipment in Koper and electric charging points in Toulon. The results will then inform a joint long-term strategy and action plans for more sustainable cruise-flow management across Mediterranean ports.



Source for both the images: https://google.com

2.2.2 WP3 Updates

WP3 is designed to involve local stakeholders in the project, share PortCREW's results beyond the pilot destinations and support the platform's long-term use. So far, local workshops have been launched across the pilot areas, bringing together relevant stakeholders to discuss local needs, eco-tourism solutions and the development of the PortCREW platform. Partners have also begun documenting these workshops and their participation in transnational events through common reporting templates. In parallel, the project team has started shaping the permanent management scheme that will support the platform's continued operation and wider uptake, while building connections with other European projects, networks and initiatives to share knowledge and expand the PortCREW community.

2.2.2.1 Workshops

As part of WP3, the first round of ex-ante regional workshops has already taken place in Valencia and Thessaloniki, bringing local stakeholders into the development of PortCREW's solutions from an early stage. In Valencia, the workshop brought together more than 40 representatives from municipalities, tourism organisations and service companies to explore the development of new cruise experiences beyond the most frequented tourist areas. Participants discussed the cruise tourism value chain, existing excursion offers, cruise-line requirements and opportunities to create new, more sustainable tourism products across the province.

In Thessaloniki, the workshop involved the port and tourism authorities, tour operators, technology partners and other stakeholders, who reviewed the proposed eco-attractions and discussed the PortCREW platform and the needs of independent cruise travellers. Their feedback highlighted opportunities including alternative and more modern visitor experiences, improved access to destination information and better navigation tools. These first workshops are helping ensure that PortCREW's pilot solutions are shaped together with the local organisations that understand each destination and its cruise tourism ecosystem.



Workshop in Valencia



Workshop in Thessaloniki

3. Latest news

3. 1 Third in-person meeting in Valencia

The PortCREW consortium came together in Valencia on 6–7 October for its third in-person project meeting to review progress and plan the next stages of the project. Partners shared updates across the different work packages, including the completion of WP1 and ongoing work under WP2.

Alongside the project sessions, Fundación Valenciaport organised a visit to La Albufera, offering partners a practical example of sustainable, community-focused tourism. A traditional boat ride introduced the area's natural and cultural heritage, followed by a tasting of regional wines and Valencian tapas highlighting local producers.

The meeting provided an opportunity to align on upcoming priorities, strengthen collaboration and experience first-hand the type of sustainable tourism PortCREW aims to support.



3.2 PortCREW at CIVITAS Forum 2026

"If you don't design the system, the system designs the outcome." This was one of the key messages emerging from CIVITAS Forum 2026 in Thessaloniki, where PortCREW took part in the session *"Towards Sustainable Hand in Hand Tourism and Mobility Planning."* Fondazione ITL, FIT Consulting and CERTH-HIT came together to share PortCREW's contribution and discuss how closer links between tourism and mobility planning can help destinations transition towards more sustainable models. Beyond presenting the project's progress, the Forum created an opportunity to exchange experiences, connect with other European projects and strengthen synergies around sustainable tourism and mobility.



3.3 PortCREW at Seatrade Cruise Med 2026



In September 2026, Fondazione ITL took part in Seatrade Cruise Med 2026, one of the leading international events dedicated to the cruise industry.

As part of the *CruiseItaly – One Country, Many Destinations Pavilion, promoted and coordinated by Assoporti*, ITL presented the European project PortCREW, which explores how digital tools and smart solutions can help Mediterranean destinations manage growing tourism pressure.

The project was presented at the CruiseItaly stand, in the presence of representatives from Italian ports and stand visitors, providing an opportunity to exchange views on how innovation can contribute to more sustainable tourist flows. Francesco Magagnoli (Fondazione ITL) took part in the panel “Smarter Destinations: Can Technology Help Manage Destination Growth?”

Discussions over the two days addressed an increasingly important challenge for Mediterranean destinations: which tools can effectively manage visitor growth while promoting a more balanced distribution of tourism and its benefits?

Both sessions highlighted that the challenge is not simply to manage tourism growth, but to find new ways to turn it into an opportunity for local areas. PortCREW contributes to this goal by testing smart approaches and solutions that put technology at the service of destinations and local communities.

4. About us: the project partners

The Institute for Transport and Logistics (ITL) is a nonprofit body founded on 17th December 2003. Its purpose is to contribute to the development and promotion of logistics and transport systems in the Region Emilia-Romagna through research, consultancy and training activities.

Visit the website

The Hellenic Institute of Transport (HIT) is part of the Centre for Research and Technology Hellas (CERTH), a non-profit research organization based in Thessaloniki, Greece. HIT focuses on applied research in transportation. Its mission is to support policy-making, enhance infrastructure, and promote sustainable mobility through innovation and collaboration with national and international partners. Visit the Website

FIT Consulting is an Italian consulting firm specializing in sustainable mobility and innovation. Founded in 1997, it offers technical-scientific services in transport, logistics, and urban development. Its expertise is based on experiences in fundraising and technical and scientific assistance for the development of innovative projects and services in the transport sector, funded in different EU Programmes. Visit the Website

The Valenciaport Foundation for research, promotion and commercial studies of the Valencian Region is a hub for research, promotion, and commercial studies supporting the logistics and port sector of the Valencian Region, fostering innovation, sustainability, and global competitiveness. Visit the Website

The Var Chamber of Commerce and Industry is a public institution of the State supporting regional economic development through a wide range of specialist services. The CCI du Var manages the commercial terminals in the ports of the Rade de Toulon. As such, it is responsible for operating the Toulon Côte d'Azur terminal. Visit the website

The Port of Koper, managed by Luka Koper d.d., is the only commercial port of Slovenia and a core node in three EU TENT Corridors. Luka Koper has a long and consolidated experience in participating and managing EU projects cofunded by several EU Programmes, both Interreg and CEF. Visit the Website

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5. Contacts

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