



2020 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title of the Story: Sustainability Charter of the Azores

Destination Name: *(include any state, province or region)*

Autonomous Region of the Azores

Country: Portugal

Submitter name: Azores DMO

Email address: sustainableazores@azores.gov.pt

Position: DMO

Nomination Category: *(Please check the boxes that indicate the focus of your story)*

- Culture & Communities
- Environment & Climate
- Nature & Ecotourism
- Islands & Seaside
- Immediate responses in dealing with the COVID -19
- Post COVID -19 recovery
- One of the 17 SDGs* *(if yes, which one)* Click or tap to choose

*The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. The 17 SDGs are integrated—that is, they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. What are the Sustainable Development Goals? <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>

For further information on Tourism for SDGs: <http://tourism4sdgs.org/>

Find detailed instructions for submitting good practices [here](#)



DESCRIBE YOUR GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Address each aspect of your good practice story in the different sections being specific including relevant quantitative and qualitative information.

Issues faced

Our Planet faces big challenges related to social, cultural, and environmental issues caused by the impacts of human activity. In 2030, the Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the United Nations aims to give a response to these problems, providing a shared blueprint for peace, prosperity and planet, now and into the future. Governments of all countries have already agreed to these goals, but companies and business have an important role in achieving sustainable development, contributing through their core activities and reducing their negative impact. The Sustainability Charter of the Azores is a Government initiative that has the mission to be an agent of change for sustainable development in the Azores through the dissemination, implementation, monitoring and reporting of the Sustainable Development Goals and encouraging the collaboration and formation of partnerships. It is a local action, with a global impact.

Methods, steps and tools applied

2017 was declared by the United Nations as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, also the year where the Regional Secretary of Energy, Environment and Tourism organized an International Conference for Sustainable Tourism, joining in these celebrations and bringing together national and international experts on the subject, and to assume a multi-sectorial commitment towards sustainable development. The conference was a place of learning and dissemination of the theory and practice of Sustainable Tourism. The closing of the conference was marked with a strongly corporate and governmental responsibility, culminating in a public commitments session in which several stakeholders signed the Sustainability Charter of the Azores (SCA) and commit their strategies to achieving sustainability-led goals in the short, medium and long term. This was an important mark for the long run of the sustainable development of the Azores.

Subscribing to the Charter is to undertake a public commitment with a responsible and transparent management, guided by the implementation of the sustainable development goals, with the eyes placed in the future. With the government support, each regional organization, company and NGO that aims to subscribe the Charter, has free access to Forums, sustainability consultation and Workshops, where a specialized team guides them on how they can align their strategies as well as measure and manage their contribution to the SDGs.

The Subscribing Workshops, that took place in every island, follow the SDG Compass methodology, which is a guide that presents five steps to assist companies in maximizing their contribution for the sustainable development goals, in an inclusive and comprehensive way, and adapted to the reality of each company. In this Workshops, the specialized sustainability team and the Azores DMO, helps regional companies and organizations to understand what are the SDGs and how integrating the SDGs in their core business will enhance the value of their corporate sustainability, and will help them discover new growth opportunities and lower their risk profiles, capitalizing a range of benefits. After defining priorities and setting three annual sustainable goals, the entities shall integrate them into their core business, embedding sustainability across all functions, with a top down leadership that will help all members in the organization to help in achieving the goals. Finally, all companies have to report and communicate their progress in order to understand their development, improvements, and level of impacts. Apart from that, sustainability reporting is a way to build trust and improve the company's reputation. In order to facilitate the management of the Sustainable Goals adopted by the Azorean entities, the Sustainability



Charter Web Platform was created, where companies can upload their goals, report their progress, and ask for support and consulting sessions.

We must emphasize that the Sustainability Charter of the Azores is a non-binding agreement, and that all companies, organizations, government associations and NGOs had voluntarily subscribed to the Charter, assuming a public commitment to the Sustainable development of the Azores. This is collaborative approach that involves a wide net of local stakeholders and the local community, where the government and the business tissue work together to bring benefits to the environment and society, involving all aboard in this ship, sailing towards the sustainable future of the Azores.

Key success factors

Since 2017 we could witness to a growing project. In the first public session of the Sustainability Charter of the Azores, 45 local companies voluntarily subscribed to the charter, identifying three annual public commitments aligned with the SDGs.

In 2019 we can count with more than one hundred subscribers, which translates in more than three hundred sustainable public commitments.

What contributed to the amazing success of this project, was a strong leadership of the Regional Government, that publically stated the commitment with the sustainable development of the Azores, and many companies followed this lead, aligning their strategies with the Governments' sustainable strategy.

Lessons learned

The Azores are an archipelago of nine islands, with 250 thousand residents. This project, is most of all, a collaborative project that aims to involve all the local community, business tissue and local government associations to board in this ship, towards a sustainable future. One of the biggest challenge, taking into account the dimension of these islands, was the promotion and dissemination of the project along all islands.

To overcome this challenge, we developed workshops and other events in every single island, during 2018/2019, where we invited the local companies, NGOs and other entities to join this events. This way we could promote the Sustainability Charter of the Azores in a closer way to the locals, and raise new subscribers from every island of the Azores, creating a net of agents of change, that are aligned with the Azorean sustainable strategy and the SDGs.

Another challenge we face this year is the COVID-19 global pandemics, a crisis to which none of us could escape from. Being a group of 9 islands, the Regional Government took all measures to control the entrance of infected people in the archipelago. As one of the mandatory measures, every person that arrives to the Azores must perform the SARS-COV-2 test and stay in prophylactic isolation at home/lodge until getting the test results. Due to this measures, the Azores have about twenty COVID-19 positive cases, most of them imported. With the economic crisis, many measures were taken to help local companies, like the simplified lay-off, tax and social security measures, and employment support measures. The Sustainability Charter of the Azores also suffered a pause in the process, once we must avoid meeting with more than 10 people to prevent the virus from spreading. To overcome such situation, we focused on making the transition to digital tools, that allow mechanisms of improved report of the progress of the compromises from each entity. So we have created an online platform with individual access for each subscribing entity, where they can upload their sustainability commitments and report their progress. They can also make consultancy requests and online meetings. This was we continue to support companies and help them achieve their sustainability commitments. We plan to be fully operating in October, with the the Economic Recovery Plan of the Region.



Results, achievements and recognitions

This is the best part of this story. The results of this project are incredible, with a high adherence rate. In 2017 the Sustainability Charter of the Azores marked its beginning with 45 signatory entities. Now, we have 102 subscribing entities which corresponds to 381 sustainable commitments, taking into account that many entities have already renewed their subscription to the Charter, with three new commitments. Apart from that, 35 sustainable events took place in the Azores (in all 9 islands) during the period 2018/2019 that involved a total of 549 people.

Apart from this, the subscribers are very committed in achieving their sustainable goals. Many goals are related to water consumption, energy efficiency, and many local companies have already totally banned the use of disposable plastics. There are many subscribers that have very ambitious commitments, for instance, the first electric charger for electric cars in the Azores was the result of a local Rent-a-Car company that subscribed to the Charter (SDG 7 – Clean energy). A local government association reached their goal to educate for the empowerment of the local society in face of the global environmental challenges, and to educate for environmental citizenship based on information, interpretation and active participation by organizations and citizens, locals and visitors (SDG 4 – quality education). Another local Rent-a-Car company decided to completely remodel a house for a family in need, involving the company's employees in the remodeling process (SDG 11 – sustainable communities). A Cooperative cellar has the goal to implement a collecting system for brandy and spiritual bottles, to reuse in their production (SDG 12 – sustainable production and consumption).

The many sustainable goals of the subscribers can cover all the 17 SDGs, with many commitments directly related with the entity's activity scope.

The size of the success of this project equals the total amount of the people reached, and this number doesn't stop growing.

Additional references

Provide links to further information. Pictures and videos should be available for download either from Youtube, Vimeo or other Cloud-based (Google/ One Drive) download URL.

Link to the Sustainable Charter of the Azores: <https://sustainable.azores.gov.pt/en/charter/>

