Title of the Story: Working together towards recovery: The good practice manual for nautical activities

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Nomination Category: Tourism Reset & Recovery

Please find detailed information for the categories below in the Top 100 training module ‘Good Practice Story’.

- Localizing the destination supply chain
- Decarbonizing the destination supply chain
- Culture & Communities
- Environment & Climate
- Nature & Ecotourism
☒ Tourism Reset & Recovery

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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
What was the problem/issue solved with the good practice?

Since the beginning of 2020 the world is living a pandemic crisis due to COVID-19 that besides the health issues brought lots of social and economic problems, such as the tourism industry crisis that was never dreamt. In fact, the tourism indicators fell to levels of the 1970s and 1980s, when in 2019 tourism had the main leverage role in world economy.

In Portugal, according to INE (Statistics of Portugal) the total revenue of tourism fell to 1.5 billion euros in 2020, which corresponds to a decrease of 66.1% compared to 2019, and overnight stays also decreased more than 60%. This impressive reduction due to the pandemic context that affected the world was also felt in Alto Minho.

The huge decreasing in tourism revenue and the difficulties faced by tourism stakeholders led CIM Alto Minho responsible to adapt the activities that were previously defined to help tourism stakeholders to overcome the difficulties that emerged due to this pandemic context. One of the CIM Alto Minho initiatives regarded the Alto Minho nautical stakeholders (although this was the target group it was open to all the tourism stakeholders) and aimed to train them to help them overcome the difficulties caused by COVID-19 pandemic, understand how to perform during this period due to health and safety issues, as well as train them in what concerns accessible nautical tourism, and raise awareness for the need of an integrated nautical supply in the region to reach the national and international markets. In summary, this initiative intended to help Alto Minho nautical stakeholders to face the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, empowering them with knowledge and tools so that they may work according to the new national health and safety guidelines.

Methods, steps and tools applied
How was the good practice implemented?

The underlying philosophy of CIM Alto Minho initiative was to empower local nautical stakeholders with knowledge and tools so that they may work according to the new national health and safety guidelines and avoid the spread of COVID-19 during their activities. So, to implement this good practice CIM Alto Minho technicians, the three hired consultants/experts and the stakeholders worked together along 2020.

Through this jointly work there was a share of knowledge concerning how to create and sell their products on a more efficient manner according their target markets, with particular emphasis on accessible nautical tourism products. The implementation of this good practice included:

i) Workshops (Accessible nautical tourism destination: workshop 1 – accessible destinations; workshop 2 – creation of accessible products and itineraries; and International nautical destination: Workshop 1 – nautical destinations; workshop 2 – creation and development of nautical products) aiming, on one hand, to raise awareness regarding issues such as sustainability, accessible and inclusive tourism,
networking/partnerships, nautical stations as integrated nautical destinations, and internationalization. On the other hand, the workshops aimed to train the local stakeholders regarding the development of Alto Minho as a nautical destination, more specifically in what concerns the product creation/development and nautical accessibility. During these workshops were presented some Alto Minho tourism experiences in order to create a moment of interaction and sharing, as well as of potential business (creation of partnerships, products, ...) between the nautical agents, the travel agencies and all interested parties. The presentation of those tourism experiences also aimed to enhance the territory tourism attractiveness, as well as promote and improve the resources connected to sea, river, nature and heritage, and give the opportunity to the stakeholders to get involved in these activities. Important to add that CIM Alto Minho continues to manage requests from different organizations to get in contact with relevant stakeholders and entities. These accessibility, product creation and international tourism workshops were organised to help the local nautical stakeholders to overcome the sudden revenue decrease and the new challenges of working during a pandemic context.

ii) Alto Minho Nautical Station Forum – this event, held on 22nd July 2020, intended to discuss the importance of nautical tourism for the regional economy. The forum “The role of nautical tourism in Alto Minho destination” joined municipalities and enterprises to discuss the nautical tourism potential through the debate of ideas, knowledge sharing and the creation of links between national and regional organizations. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions the number of participants was limited, so to reach the greatest number of stakeholders it was live-streamed on CIM Alto Minho Facebook and YouTube. These actions concluded with the publication of the guidelines for nautical sports during COVID-19 pandemic “Manual de boas práticas – Os desportos náuticos em tempo de pandemia COVID-19” (Manual of good practices - Water sports in COVID-19 pandemic time), which was presented on 22nd July during the already mentioned Alto Minho Nautical Station Forum. The good practices manual aimed training and empowering the nautical tourism businesses so that they could work the most effectively possible during this pandemic period, while respecting the new national health and safety guidelines and, whenever the authorities allowed, continue to labour the best possible within the restrictions defined by the government. This manual was also the basis of a virtual training action for all related with nautical activities (from the enterprise owners to the persons that practice nautical activities in the territory, in summary, although the focus was the nautical stakeholders it was open to all that were interested in the subject), which is available on CIM Alto Minho YouTube.

This work enabled the local nautical stakeholders to have the knowledge regarding the new national health and safety guidelines allowing them to work during the periods that there was no emergency state/lockdown, as well as learn about accessible tourism as all have the right to practice nautical activities, and raise awareness for the need to create tourism products and work together with other stakeholders to increase their revenue and access to new market shares. Still significant to mention that while implementing this initiative the strategic relationships (and networking) topic was also discussed and its importance was highlighted. During this work the stakeholders were aware of the importance of national and regional strategies for the development and promotion of their products and services, being highlighted the role that Nautical Stations may have, as well as of the networking not only between them, but also the private and public partnerships. Regarding the strategic relationships the international relationships were focused, namely the connection with Galicia as the stakeholders of this adjacent region may act as valuable strategic partners on nautical tourism. Highlight for the dialogue about strategies that encourages the
development of sustainable nautical activities (and accessible tourism) linked to the natural and cultural heritage of both territories, simultaneously, aiming to get to know the tourism services and products that the stakeholders of both regions have to offer. Finally, it is important to mention the jointly promotion of nautical tourism of Alto Minho and Galicia, being the website Nautic Destination (https://nauticdestination.com) an example.

Key success factors

What helped you tackle the issues?

First of all, the involvement (and interest demonstrated) by the nautical stakeholders was a key success factor. The main collaborators, and the ones that are the reason of this initiative, were the Alto Minho maritime and river tourism stakeholders (they participated in three manners: as invitees, as supporters, and as actively participating partners) and they were engaged in the activities being the Manual developed with them. Besides working together with nautical stakeholders CIM Alto Minho also involved experts/people that has experience in the field, which was essential to involve the stakeholders and effectively develop the nautical guidelines for this pandemic context.

We consider that the invitation, during workshops, to stakeholders share their contacts between them was also a key success factor that promotes knowledge transfer and networking, and that hopefully will create interesting sustainable tourism experiences in Alto Minho in short-term. The nautical experiences presentations, as well as of the stakeholders that develop them, were a factor of great importance in the event as enabled the promotion of these products and of the region, as well as helped to raise awareness for activities not so marketed as tourism activities, like sport fishing in Arcos de Valdevez municipality.

We also consider as key success factors the following aspects:
- Meetings with partners (mostly nautical stakeholders) to find out their main difficulties;
- Rigorous assessment of the partners’ needs (also according their core business);
- Evaluation/analysis of the existing legislation;
- Support regarding the creation of the guidelines for this pandemic period;
- In-depth knowledge of the Alto Minho destination distinguishing aspects.

And, consequently, we may state that this contributes for the strengthening of the brand “Alto Minho | Sustainable by Nature”.
**Lessons learned**

While implementing the Good Practice what challenges were faced, and how were they overcome?

The beginning of the year 2020 was hard for the Alto Minho (nautical) tourism stakeholders and managers. The worsening of the pandemic, the tourism “restart” period approaching (summer is still the high season for these enterprises) and the lack of organised and gathered regulation, caused disorientation and concern that many businessmen(women) considered to give up their businesses. The actions promoted through this good practice allowed strategic information to be structured and organized, which until then were separated and dispersed. Besides the work developed allowed to understand that the annual preparation of the destination, bringing together the stakeholders, is extremely important both in the final result with a continuous improvement of the tourism supply, and in the involvement of the stakeholders in the global strategy of the destination. Consequently, one must say that work in partnership/networking and sharing are crucial and the utmost lesson learned.

**Results, achievements and recognitions**

What were the qualitative and quantitative results of the good practice? Has it received any rewards?

As mentioned before, several stakeholders thought in giving up, however, thanks to this initiative that did not happen. The information given (regarding the legislation and the territory) to the stakeholders was essential for the businesses strategic repositioning, as well as enabled them to better prepare themselves for the high season. In fact, this preparation was vital for their work during the June-September period as minimized the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. At national level, noteworthy to mention that the northern region of Portugal was the second best regarding overnight stays according to Statistics of Portugal, being the Minho region (that includes Alto Minho) one of the destinations that had occupancy rates around 90%, as people looked for quiet and sustainable locations, as well as safe tourism experiences, and this initiative directly (due to capacity building of the stakeholders and the good practices manual) and indirectly (promotion of the territory as safe) contributed for this figures. The actions developed jointly with the stakeholders, especially the nautical ones, the networking and the sharing helped to raise awareness for the need to work together/networking and preserve the destination. Consequently, these strengths the positioning of the territory as a sustainable destination (“Alto Minho | Sustainable by Nature”). And the good practices manual guided the nautical tourism businesses so that they could work the most effectively possible during this pandemic period, while respecting the new national health and safety guidelines and, whenever the authorities allowed, continue to labour the best possible within the restrictions defined by the government. Some quantitative results of this initiative are:

i) The development of a good practices manual for nautical stakeholders with guidelines about how to act during this pandemic times.

ii) The good practice manual presentation was live-streamed on Facebook and on YouTube, and on the latter was viewed 45 times after the live-streaming.

iii) The Forum (round table) regarding Nautical Stations was also live-streamed on Facebook and YouTube, and on YouTube was viewed 256 times.
iv) The accessibility workshop had 53 participants on Zoom meeting platform and it was live-streamed on YouTube where it has 29 views.

v) The workshop regarding international nautical destination had 55 participants on Zoom meeting platform and it was live-streamed on YouTube, where it has a total of 86 views.

Other benefits that may be added are: i) capacity building/training of the nautical stakeholders regarding the destination, the creation of products and accessibility in nautical experiences; ii) promotion of tourism experiences, enhancement of Alto Minho attractiveness, as well as of its resources (at all levels: sea, river, nature and heritage).

The stakeholders liked the experience as they felt that they had organisations, like CIM Alto Minho, that were interested in hearing them and helping them to develop their activities safely and according to the Portuguese General Directorate of Health. This enabled them to feel safe and develop their activities. Regarding the workshops/events they liked, felt that they were not alone (especially when their doubts and fears were the same of the other enterprises) and felt that they were special once there were organisations interested in organising events for them (like capacity building ones) and with them. Besides, it seems that they understood that they are important for the tourism development of the region. However, despite understanding the importance of partnerships, some do not feel ready to make that important step right now as the priority, by now, is to maintain their enterprises and/or employees. Nevertheless, if an opportunity shows up, they may step into it. They appreciate and thank for the opportunity given and hope that this kind of work continues as it is important for them and allows them to work (together) towards tourism development and sustainability, as well as enabling them to meet the other stakeholders. In summary, they liked the experience, felt that it was interesting and useful, and expect this kind of work continues, including the workshops but, if possible, physically and in low season (despite some of their activities may be developed all the year around).

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.

i) Workshop regarding the good practices manual:  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSuTJrZAfGg&ab_channel=CIMAltoMinho

ii) Forum “O Papel do Turismo Náutico no Destino Alto Minho” (The role of nautical tourism in Alto Minho destination):  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JtnDeiw2RAU&t=45s&ab_channel=CIMAltoMinho

iii) Workshop “Destino náutico acessível” (Accessible nautical destination):  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=185MYKyn9-E&ab_channel=CIMAltoMinho

iv) Workshop “Destino náutico internacional” (International nautical destination):  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Uh3UWFzVEU&ab_channel=CIMAltoMinho

v) “Manual de boas práticas – Os desportos náuticos em tempo de pandemia COVID-19” (good practices manual) – available under request to CIM Alto Minho