



MedDiet Go

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Notice

According to the MDG Application, this document draws the guidelines for a partnership **Joint Action Plan**, which represents a critical output of the project. The guidelines are not mandatory for the partners; however, they are proposed as a common **framework of reference** to guide cooperation and ensure the continuity of the Mediterranean Diet network beyond the project's duration.

The information and views set out are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Commission.



1. Premises

The Med Diet Go project gathers ecosystems located in **rural areas** whose Agri-food, Cultural and Creative heritage represent key factors of resilience for their economy and communities. The project aims to deliver support for a **common Tourism development strategy, safeguarding traditional “values” while promoting innovation** and modernisation in products, services and process models to respond to global challenges.

The **Joint Action Plan** is a strategic document that aligns the shared vision, objectives, and coordinated activities of the MDG Eurocluster, setting a common framework for action, resource mobilisation, and long-term collaboration among partners. It reflects the European policy context, recognising Tourism as a strategic component of the local development in the rural areas concerned, in compliance with the EU Industrial Strategy and of the Green and Digital twin transition. The MDG Eurocluster builds on these orientations to enhance competitiveness, resilience and sustainability of rural economies.

The specific objectives of the MDG Eurocluster derive from these premises: to preserve authenticity, foster innovation and evolution, strengthen inter-territorial connections and partnerships, and open up to internationalisation. Innovation and evolution mean connecting existing business and non-business actors of each territory who share traditional quality criteria, to equip them with instruments and technologies that can strengthen complementarities and synergies and position them as inter-regional value chains on international markets.

The MDG Eurocluster Joint Action Plan therefore builds a portfolio of proposals supported by a digital platform. These aim at

1. **upholding** UNESCO principles as leverage of sustainable tourism in rural areas through information and training activities
2. **promoting** Rural Heritage Systems, aligned with FAO-UNESCO initiatives such as GIAHS, with reference to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Cohesion Policy priorities
3. **supporting** implementation of the international marketing strategy based on a two-pronged “export and incoming” strategy taking advantage of a digital hub (MDG Eurocluster platform) that will connect local “itineraries” of agri-food, creative, cultural, natural excellences.

To achieve these goals, the Plan identifies main **tasks**, such as information events, training and webinar activities, local Living Labs, and **tools**, such as the MDG Declaration, the registered Trade Mark (in force until 2030), the Eurocluster web platform. These instruments



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will support know-how rising, community engagement, institutional networking, and international relations.

The **MDG Declaration** and **Trade Mark** will foster the relation between territories shaping partnerships and agreements among producers, cultural operators and service providers, with the aim to achieve the critical mass of production and services needed to compete globally. The **Eurocluster platform** will act as a virtual *marketplace* to exchange information, organise strategic fora and promote internationalisation of products and integrated local itineraries.

The Joint Action Plan also defines a **Governance System**, ensuring that the MDG Eurocluster is effectively managed and coordinated across its members, while a **road map** identifies the pathways for collaboration, external connections, and funding opportunities. The governance processes will involve the **four-helix stakeholders** of each community necessary to develop such “tourism” strategy: at different stages MSMEs, social organisations, traditional crafts, training and research institutions, public administrations, to organise the local/international cooperation and raise awareness on the potential of complementarities and integrations among traditional/innovative activities.

Finally, the Joint Action Plan introduces a set **of key performance indicators** (KPI) to monitor the effectiveness of the strategy and to guarantee long-term impact at regional, national and European level.



2. Policy context

2.1 Tourism Policy in Industrial Strategy of the European Commission

Article 195 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union underlines that the “Union shall complement the action of the Member States in the tourism sector, in particular by promoting the competitiveness of Union undertakings in that sector”. EU Tourism policy aims to maintain Europe’s position as a **leading global destination** and to turn Europe into a sustainable destination, bearing also its social and environmental aspects. The EU, therefore, supports, coordinates and complements the actions of EU countries related to tourism and promotes **cooperation between EU countries**. Some objectives are, notably, to maximise the tourism industry’s contribution to growth and jobs, as well as develop the attractiveness of Europe as a destination.

2.1.1 Tourism as a Dedicated Industrial Ecosystem

As part of the **New Industrial Strategy** (March 2020; updated May 2021), the EU treats tourism as one of its 14 key industrial ecosystems, alongside sectors like automotive, agri-food, digital, and retail.

The **Tourism ecosystem** is highly diverse and complex, covering globalised and interconnected value chains. The whole Tourism ecosystem comprises businesses that work in several sectors, including food and beverage services, on-line information and services providers (tourist offices, digital platforms, travel technology providers), travel agents and tour operators, accommodation managing organizations’, attractions and passenger transport (for example, airlines and airports, trains, and cruises).

According to the New Industrial Strategy, the **activities included in the Tourism ecosystem** are the following:

- Land transport and transport via pipeline
- Water transport
- Air transport
- Accommodation and food service activities
- Travel agency, tour operator and other reservation service and related activities
- Office administrative, office support and other business support activities
- Creative, arts, and entertainment activities, libraries, archives, museums and other cultural activities, gambling and betting activities
- Sports activities and amusements and recreation activities.

Both **public and private funding** and partnerships are important drivers for tourism recovery, transition and resilience. Therefore, in February 2022, the European Commission



launched a co-creation process with stakeholders, EU member states and regions in order to design the **transition pathway for tourism**. To that end, it proposed working together with industry, public authorities, social partners and other stakeholders to design and implement transition pathways for each ecosystem. The updated EU Tourism Strategy identifies **27 concrete measures** targeting digitalisation, sustainability, and resilience of tourism in Europe, and highlights the need to accelerate the green and digital transition of EU tourism ecosystems, improving its resilience and competitiveness. Based on that co-creation process, on 1 December 2022, the Council adopted the European Agenda for Tourism 2030, built upon that pathway and including a multi-annual work plan for EU Member States, the Commission, and Tourism actors that reflects tourism's interconnections across other sectors and its systemic economic impact.

Today, **increased resilience** remains a focus, including better regulation, public funding, and preparedness for future shocks.

Emphasis is placed on **skills**—from green & digital skills to hospitality and language abilities—to retain quality jobs and enhance sector attractiveness.

Initiatives include:

- reducing seasonality,
- supporting underserved destinations,
- improving accessibility for all travellers,
- encouraging local participation and inclusive growth.

Through the Urban Agenda Sustainable Tourism Partnership, the EU promotes multi-level governance, data standardisation, and smart urban destination planning. Tools like the EU Tourism Dashboard and dedicated data space initiatives underpin this (e.g. Data Act, Data Governance Act, European Data Space for Tourism).

As of **June 2025**, the Commission launched a targeted stakeholder consultation (open until August 15, 2025) to shape a new EU Sustainable Tourism Strategy expected in early 2026. Themes include overtourism, community impact, cross-border mobility, crisis resilience, and climate-aligned tourism models.

Pilot and regional innovation projects —such as **NaTour4CChange** and **Community4Tourism in Mediterranean regions**— are already informing the development of this upcoming strategy, aligning policy with on-the-ground sustainable practices.

This **integrated vision of tourism as a cross-cutting industrial ecosystem** provides the strategic foundation for the MDG Eurocluster Joint Action Plan, ensuring that its actions on



Mediterranean Diet, agri-food value chains, and sustainable tourism are aligned with EU priorities on resilience, digitalisation, and green transition.

2.1.2 Key Impacts of U.S.A. Tariffs on European Tourism Ecosystem

Contrary to weakening U.S. inbound tourism, following the new U.S.A. tariffs policy, Europe is experiencing a notable spike in American holidaymakers. From January to May 2025, over **7.7 million Americans** visited Europe—a **6% increase** year-on-year, despite no major events like the Paris Olympics. This increase is driven by Americans seeking alternatives amid instability elsewhere (e.g., Middle East) and decreased European travel to the U.S. However, this influx is exacerbating **overtourism** in popular urban destinations like Barcelona, Amsterdam, and Venice, driving up hotel rates and triggering local discontent and protests¹. European travelers are increasingly shying away from the U.S. — hotel data and seasonal booking trends confirm significant cooling in outbound tourism. For instance:

- In **April 2025**, business travel bookings from Europe dropped by around **26%** compared to April 2024
- A broader consumer backlash—including boycotts—has contributed to around a **17% drop** in European tourists traveling to the U.S.
- Tourism Economics forecasts up to an 8.2% reduction in international inbound travel to the U.S., while the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) estimates a loss of **\$12.5 billion** in visitor spending in US. Combined, the U.S. tourism industry could lose between \$25–29 billion in 2025 due to tariffs, restrictive immigration, and rhetoric **for the benefit of other destinations including Europe.**²

Furthermore, while U.S. tariffs don't directly target tourism services, their broader economic effects are cascading into the European tourism ecosystem:

- **Cost pressures:** Global tariffs elevate prices for imported supplies critical to hospitality, such as hotel goods and aircraft parts, impacting operating costs across tourism services
- **Perception shifts:** Political volatility, tariffs, and restrictive policies have created negative sentiment, reducing travel demand to the U.S. and redirecting tourism toward Europe.³

To summarise, the current U.S. tariff policies—and their economic and political fallout—are reshaping global tourism flows. The new tariffs US policy produced a significant rise of inbound US Tourism (+6%) driving overtourism in major European destinations; and a sharp

¹ Financial Times - 29 June 2025 - US holidaymakers descend on Europe as overtourism fears mount.

² Financial Times+The Washington Post+Wikipedia+POLITICO.

³ [Wikipediahospitalityinsights.ehl.edu](https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hospitality_insights).



decline of the outbound EU tourists to the US (up to -26%) due to policy backlash and economic uncertainty. Rather than hurting the European tourism ecosystem, they're indirectly boosting it by:

- **Attracting more American tourists**, though triggering overtourism risks.
- **Reducing European travel to the U.S.**, keeping more tourism spending within Europe.
- Creating **cost and supply challenges**, but also possibly opening opportunities for regional suppliers and alternative suppliers within the EU.

For the MDG Eurocluster Joint Action Plan, these dynamics underline the need to manage rising **U.S. and EU tourism flows into Mediterranean destinations** in a balanced way—maximising economic benefits while addressing overtourism risks and reinforcing local, sustainable agri-food and cultural value chains.

2.2 EU orientations to Strengthen Tourism economy resilience

Tourism is one of the European Union's most important socio-economic sectors. However, the sector has been confronted with successive shocks, ranging from the pandemic to climate-related disruptions. In order to strengthen its resilience, the tourism economy must be embedded within the EU's broader policy frameworks for sustainable growth, digital innovation and climate neutrality.

The European Green Deal, the Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030 and the EU Transition Pathway for Tourism provide the strategic foundations for a resilient and competitive tourism ecosystem. These frameworks advocate a dual transition, digital and green, that will transform how destinations operate, how businesses deliver services, and how visitors experience and travel across Europe.

The MDG Eurocluster Joint Action Plan builds on these orientations to translate European resilience goals into concrete actions that connect Mediterranean Diet heritage, sustainable agri-food systems and tourism innovation.

2.2.1 Digital transition

Within the Joint Action Plan, digitalisation becomes a **key enabler** for Mediterranean SMEs and clusters, improving skills, data use and cross-border collaboration to reinforce competitiveness and preparedness.

Applying digital uptake enables tourism SMEs to enhance their **competitiveness, efficiency and visitor engagement**.



EU Priorities include supporting data-driven decision-making, promoting the interoperability of digital tools and improving and upskilling digital skills among the tourism workforce. It is also recognised that digitalisation strengthens crisis preparedness by enabling **smarter mobility management**, predictive visitor flow analytics and more effective communication during disruptions.

2.2.2 Green economy

The green transition enhances resilience by **reducing dependency on resources**, protecting biodiversity and strengthening Europe's reputation as a sustainable destination. It requires integrated approaches and policy coherence.

Strengthening resilience requires coordinated action at the European, national, regional, and local levels, with **synergies** between Cohesion Policy, NextGenerationEU, CAP policy, Horizon Europe and all EU Direct funds Programmes playing a key role in mobilising investment. The EU policies prioritise the tourism ecosystem in the twin transition, embedding resilience as a guiding principle. Rather than having separate processes, digitisation and sustainability reinforce each other, ensuring that European Tourism remains innovative, competitive and climate-resilient.

Through the Joint Action Plan, the MDG advances this green transition by fostering regenerative tourism models and resilient agri-food value chains rooted in the Mediterranean Diet. To align with the EU's climate and environmental objectives, **MDG promotes regenerative practices to reduce tourism ecological footprint**. This requires fostering investments in energy efficiency, circular economy and sustainable mobility, as well as supporting local communities in the adoption of climate adaptation strategies.

2.3 The role of clusters

Over the past decades, research has consistently shown that **clusters are a cornerstone of modern economies**. The European Union highlights a clear positive correlation between strong clusters and the economic performance of both companies and regions. Evidence indicates that employees in clusters earn on average **11% more** than colleagues in the same industries outside clusters, and that approximately 45% of all jobs in traded industries are concentrated within cluster environments. **Firms embedded in clusters demonstrate higher productivity, greater innovation capacity, and more resilient employment patterns.**

Clusters provide an integrated governance framework that enables the design and implementation of territorial strategies while strengthening sectoral value chains. In **the tourism sector, clusters** offer an effective response to the challenge of **integrating local**



economies, thereby enhancing competitiveness, inclusion, and sustainability—particularly in less developed territorial contexts. By ensuring permanent and structured connections among enterprises, and by facilitating interregional services and shared infrastructures, clusters reinforce both **internal cohesion and external visibility**. Their contribution includes:

- Supporting the growth of green enterprises and eco-innovative solutions
- Driving digitalisation and innovation among SMEs
- Facilitating global market access for small producers
- Nurturing social, creative, and transnational networks
- Improving access to health and social services
- Strengthening education, training, and skills development.

In the Mediterranean Diet economy, largely driven by MSMEs across agri-food, tourism, creative and social sectors, clusterisation can generate significant prosperity in rural and peri-urban areas. Many of the emerging industries linked to the Mediterranean Diet—such as creative industries, eco-innovation, and social entrepreneurship—cut across traditional boundaries. Interregional clusters encourage this **cross-sectoral fertilisation**, giving rise to new industrial landscapes and value chains that integrate competences from diverse fields such as agri-food, cultural tourism, technology, mobility, and ancillary services.

This **multi-sectoral dimension** lies at the core of the European *Euroclusters* initiative, which provides an open framework for interregional collaboration. While clusters are rooted in their territorial context, their complementarity across regions is increasingly essential: the success of one location can stimulate opportunities in others, creating a **multiplier effect**.

In this perspective, the **MDG Eurocluster** emerges not only as a driver of competitiveness, but also as a **strategic instrument** for sustainable development, **internationalisation**, and resilience of Mediterranean Diet economies. **By pooling services, knowledge, and infrastructures**, it fosters innovation in products, services, and processes while offering common responses to global challenges.

2.4 Key words to retain

The MDG Eurocluster Joint Action Plan is built on a set of guiding concepts that capture the added value of cluster-based cooperation. These key words highlight how clusters connect local actors, strengthen competitiveness, accelerate innovation, and build bridges across Mediterranean regions. They also underline the Eurocluster's role as a governance tool, ensuring that Mediterranean Diet economies remain resilient, sustainable, and aligned with European and international policy frameworks.



Ecosystem Coordination

Clusters integrate business and non-business actors (farmers, agri-food SMEs, cultural associations, training providers, tourism operators, municipalities, etc.) into structured ecosystems. They foster coordinated cooperation over fragmentation, enhancing collective capacity and reducing isolation among local actors.

Critical Mass and Competitiveness

By pooling resources and aligning strategies, **clusters generate scale and visibility** unattainable by individual actors. This aggregation strengthens value chains, facilitates exports, and supports integrated tourism itineraries, making Mediterranean Diet products and services globally competitive.

Innovation and Modernisation

Clusters serve as accelerators for the adoption of **digital tools, sustainable practices, and quality standards**. Their interconnected structure facilitates the diffusion of innovation and promotes cross-sector fertilisation, where food heritage, culture, and tourism mutually reinforce each other.

Eurocluster Network Building

At transnational level, local clusters connect into Euroclusters, **enabling structured exchanges** of best practices, joint initiatives, and strategic partnerships. This fosters interregional cooperation and creates virtual marketplaces where Mediterranean excellence gains European and global outreach.

Policy and Governance Impact

Clusters act as **institutional interfaces**, engaging with local, national, and European authorities as well as international organisations (e.g., UNESCO, FAO). They contribute to governance models that balance cultural heritage safeguarding with economic development, in line with EU priorities such as the Green Deal, cohesion policy, and the twin digital-green transition.

Sustainability and Long-Term Impact

Cluster frameworks embed cooperation mechanisms within communities, ensuring continuity beyond project cycles. They provide a basis for capacity-building, skills development, and business scale-up, **creating long-term opportunities** for young entrepreneurs and reinforcing the resilience of Mediterranean territories.



3. MDG Eurocluster

3.1 Specific Objectives

Building on the outcomes of the MD.net project, the Med-Diet Eurocluster will serve as a **strategic platform to connect territories** whose economies are directly influenced by Mediterranean Diet values, combining their agriculture, food production, logistics, hospitality, and cultural identity. The Eurocluster will set up a multidimensional system to strengthen their competitiveness and promote new sustainable practices. The working platform (both physical and digital) considers the MD value chains encompassing **four main economic sectors**:

1. The agricultural sector
2. The food and beverages industry
3. The logistics and distribution industry
4. The Ho.Re.Ca. (Hotel, Restaurant, Catering) sector.

The MDG Eurocluster considers that local initiatives and strategies in each of these sectors are directly influenced by **consumer behaviours, innovation trends, and government policies**. To support local communities, tools and services should help to stay tuned with these social, economic and policy evolutions, while facilitating cooperation among public institutions, civil society and research. To achieve this aim, the MDG Eurocluster is structured to address the following specific objectives:

3.1.1 Preserving Authenticity and Heritage

- **Safeguard quality and origin:** Establish shared criteria and certification mechanisms (building on the Med-Diet Declaration) to protect the authenticity of MD products and services, countering imitations and ensuring compliance with EU quality schemes (Protected Designation of Origin - PDO, or Protected Geographic Indication - PGI, organic, etc.).
- **Link heritage to innovation:** Promote the Mediterranean Diet as both an intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO recognition) and a tangible territorial asset (FAO-GIAHS). A constructive strategy needs to be timeless -preserving a traditional authenticity- and innovative – because connected to the evolution of life.
- **Raise consumer awareness:** Develop joint campaigns and educational programmes targeting citizens, schools and local communities to strengthen MD Brand, valorise traditional know-how, and promote healthier consumption models.



3.1.2. Innovating and Evolving

- **Quadruple Helix cooperation:** Build a transnational network of businesses, research bodies, civil society and public authorities to identify and implement innovative solutions across the value chain.
- **Scouting and adoption of technologies:** Support SMEs in accessing and implementing competitive solutions such as Internet of Things (IoT) for traceability, circular economy practices, waste reduction, smart packaging and digital tools for supply chain optimisation.
- **Synergies with AKIS and EU networks:** Act as a link among regional Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS), Digital Innovation Hubs, Horizon Europe initiatives, and other EU platforms.
- **Skills and training:** Promote talent development through cluster-wide training programmes (online and itinerant), reskilling of workforce, talent attraction, and transnational learning initiatives (e.g., ClusterXchange). The Eurocluster will actively participate in the EU Pact for Skills and collaborate with universities, VET providers and lifelong learning institutions.

3.1.3. Establishing Connections and Partnerships

- **Strengthen the Med-Diet Declaration community:** Expand the membership and visibility of the more than 200 stakeholders already engaged, ensuring continuity beyond project funding and providing a guarantee of quality standards.
- **European and international networking:** Facilitate the participation of cluster members in the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP) and the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN).
- **Institutional cooperation:** Reinforce links with UNESCO and FAO-GIAHS strategies, and align with European, national and regional public policies in areas such as sustainable food systems, tourism, rural development and cultural heritage.
- **Cross-sectoral partnerships:** Encourage synergies with creative industries, health and social innovation sectors, and digital ecosystems to broaden the impact of the MD economy.

3.1.4. Go international

- **Joint internationalisation strategy:** Develop a shared roadmap towards selected third markets, based on global trends and local priorities identified through MDG local and international cooperation.
- **Market intelligence for SMEs:** Provide technical and administrative support to SMEs to conduct market analysis (global demand, competing players, trends, opportunities) and to identify potential partners.
- **Business agreements and ventures:** Facilitate matchmaking and joint ventures that



increase exports, attract investments and generate employment across Mediterranean territories.

Added value of partnership: Harness the collective competencies and resources of the Eurocluster to deliver transnational agreements, joint branding, and international promotion campaigns with greater scale and visibility.

3.2 The Model

The MedDiet Go Eurocluster builds on the legacy of four years of cooperation and participatory activities under the **MD.net project** (<https://mdnet.interreg-med.eu/>). That experience produced common outcomes—**shared methodologies, local mobilisation, branding strategies, and training formats**—that now provide the foundation for scaling up into the MDG Eurocluster model. The Eurocluster is designed to support local communities in competing on international markets and strengthening Mediterranean rural and peri-urban economies, by turning cultural heritage into a driver of sustainable competitiveness. The MDG Eurocluster model is articulated around **six key elements**:

3.2.1 Holistic Vision

MD.net demonstrated how the Mediterranean Diet integrates economic, social, territorial, and environmental dimensions. What UNESCO recognises as an **intangible** cultural heritage has increasingly been translated into **tangible** practices—linking agri-food traditions, cultural landscapes, health, and tourism. The term holistic, when applied to the Mediterranean Diet, underlines its systemic nature: it is not only a nutritional pattern but a way of life that embraces interconnected spheres of sustainability. In this sense, the Mediterranean Diet represents **a practical translation of several EU and international policy frameworks that call for integrated approaches to innovation and sustainability**:

- **Nutritional and Health:** The Mediterranean Diet promotes balanced and preventive nutrition, encouraging seasonal, plant-rich diets that reduce chronic disease risks. This supports the objectives of the **EU Farm to Fork Strategy and the EU4Health Programme**, which prioritise healthier lifestyles and sustainable food systems.
- **Cultural and Social:** It embodies traditions, conviviality, rituals, and intergenerational knowledge exchange, strengthening community cohesion and cultural identity, in line with the **European Agenda for Culture and the New European Bauhaus**, which highlight culture and heritage as key dimensions of sustainable living.
- **Territorial and Environmental:** It reflects agro-ecological practices, biodiversity preservation, and sustainable management of landscapes and resources. This directly contributes to the **European Green Deal, the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030**, and global frameworks such as FAO's Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (**GIAHS**).
- **Economic and Tourism:** It sustains MSMEs in agri-food, gastronomy, and hospitality, and acts as a driver for cultural, culinary, and rural tourism. This aligns with the EU



Transition Pathway for Tourism, which advocates resilience, competitiveness, and the twin green-digital transition across tourism ecosystems.

- **Educational and Governance:** It supports knowledge transfer, skills development, and governance models that connect local communities to international sustainability agendas, consistent with **Cohesion Policy, NextGenerationEU, and the European Skills Agenda.**

By combining these dimensions, the Mediterranean Diet offers a holistic model of sustainable development: food as nourishment, but also as culture, economy, ecology, and identity. This systemic perspective strengthens the Eurocluster approach, positioning Mediterranean Diet territories as **living laboratories** of sustainability that deliver concrete contributions to EU priorities on climate neutrality, digital transformation, social inclusion, and rural economic growth.

3.2.2. Integration

By recognising the Mediterranean Diet as a shared identity that encompasses food, culture, landscapes, and lifestyles, MDG strengthens the sense of belonging among rural communities while also projecting these values externally as a **recognisable brand**. The **Med Diet Declaration**⁴ promoted by the partners is more than a symbolic commitment; it functions as a practical instrument for integration of activities, rural revitalisation and economic empowerment. For rural areas facing the erosion of traditions and know-how under globalisation, the Declaration provides a platform to:

- Affirm cultural heritage by defending local skills, rituals, and agro-food practices as assets of identity and resilience
- Promote local economies by linking agriculture, fisheries, gastronomy, and tourism to regional development and competitiveness
- Enhance community visibility by building common narratives and recognisable values that improve the image of territories both locally and globally
- Foster cooperation among enterprises, knowledge centres, public authorities, and civil society to unlock new development opportunities
- Build trust and networks that help small producers overcome isolation, gain critical mass, and position their goods and services within larger Mediterranean and international markets.

In this way, the Declaration acts as a **catalyst for integration**: it reduces fragmentation, aligns diverse actors around shared values, and embeds cultural identity into economic strategies. By treating the Mediterranean Diet as both heritage and development driver, the Declaration transforms local pride into competitive advantage, reinforcing rural

⁴ https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/13TyiBeYFxbly6cnyGKZ58_jaTlHmyoTn



communities' capacity to sustain their economies in line with EU objectives on cohesion, sustainability, and inclusion.

3.2.3 Critical Mass

- **Pooling scale to unlock markets for Mediterranean MSMEs.**

Across the EU, clusters concentrate a large share of employment and productive capacity, which is precisely what small, place-based firms need to reach export scale. The European Panorama of Clusters and Industrial Change (2020) identify 2,950 regional clusters accounting for ~61.8 million jobs (23.4% of all EU employment) and ~50% of jobs in exporting industries — evidence that clustered scale and value-chain density correlate with market access and tradability. For Mediterranean MSMEs (agri-food, hospitality, crafts, creative), a Eurocluster lets them pool production, synchronise standards, and present integrated offers (products + experiences + destinations), which stabilises supply and improves reliability for international partners. **Euroclusters, launched by the Commission in 2022**, were designed exactly to help SMEs network, innovate, adopt green/digital processes, train their workforce, “go international,” and extend outreach beyond their home regions—all levers that reduce⁵ the scale handicap of small firms.⁶ MD.net Eurocluster was **registered in the European Clusters Cooperation Platform in March 2022**.

- **From competition to complementarity (“coopetition”)**

EU policy now explicitly promotes interregional complementarities: connecting territories with **similar or complementary strengths** so they co-create new value chains rather than duplicate them. The Interreg Europe policy brief on complementarities (2024) maps how instruments like Thematic S3 Platforms, I3 (Interregional Innovation Investments), Regional Innovation Valleys and Euroclusters can work in sequence: **learning + alignment** → **co-investment** → **scale-up across regions**. This framework turns local diversity (different products, seasons, skills, landscapes) into a shared strength by assembling modular, cross-border offerings (e.g., MD-aligned food products + cultural routes + rural stays + mobility solutions) that a single territory could not build alone. In practical terms for the MDG Eurocluster, that means joint itineraries, bundled Protected Designation of Origin/Protected Geographical Indication portfolios, shared digital marketplaces, and interoperable data/quality schemes—all underpinned by EU programmes that reward complementarity rather than zero-sum rivalry.⁷

- **Credibility and institutional leverage to sustain SME cooperation**

Small firms often hesitate to collaborate without a trusted umbrella and predictable support. The Euroclusters initiative - in which MDG Eurocluster can participate as registered

⁵ European Panorama of Clusters and Industrial Change (2020 edition) Publications Office of the European Union

⁶ European Panorama of Clusters and Industrial Change (2020 edition) Publications Office of the European Union

⁷ Interregional Complementarity in Innovation - A policy Brief from the Policy Learning Platform for a smarter Europe (October 2024)



entity of the ECCP - (first 30 Euroclusters approved, €42 million from the Single Market Programme; 171 partners in 23 countries across all 14 industrial ecosystems) gives MDG territories institutional visibility, common rules, shared services and funding pathways — which lowers coordination costs, builds trust, and keeps cooperation going beyond short projects. Coupled with the **Transition Pathway for Tourism** (resilience + twin transition) and SME policy instruments (SME Performance Review; I3 for co-investment), the governance/funding mix provides the “credible commitment device” that MSMEs need to engage there is a recognised framework, measurable objectives, skills/upskilling support, and routes to internationalisation. For MDG, this translates into common branding/standards, pooled promotion and procurement, shared training and data assets, and a standing interface with EU and **macro-regional strategies** — i.e., the kind of institutional backbone that turns collaboration into tangible, durable economic benefits.⁸

3.2.4 Co-creation

The MedDiet Go Eurocluster builds upon the participatory tradition initiated in MD.net, where Living Labs and co-creation workshops proved essential in mobilising stakeholders and stimulating innovation. Under MDG, these processes have been consolidated and scaled up into a **structured ecosystem for social innovation** that embeds community participation in every stage of value creation.

- **Living Labs as innovation engines.**

The seven Living Labs established in Andalusia, Catalonia, Slovenia, Puglia, North Aegean, Alentejo, and Vratsa function as territorial laboratories where enterprises, policymakers, researchers, and civil society (quadruple helix) interact in real-life settings. Each lab followed a participatory methodology structured around three phases: exploration (diagnosis, needs mapping, SWOT analysis), **experimentation** (design and prototyping of services, itineraries, and tourism products), and evaluation (testing, validation, and transfer of lessons learned). This approach ensures that innovations are not externally imposed but **co-designed with end-users and stakeholders**, thereby increasing ownership, relevance, and sustainability.

- **Participatory methods and outcomes.**

Guidelines developed within the project standardised the use of design thinking (“Project in a Day”), World Café, and Future Workshops as formats for ideation, prototyping, and strategic planning. These tools enabled the **identification of territorial missions** (e.g. wine tourism in Catalonia, eco-innovation in Slovenia, integrated routes in Alentejo) and the co-creation of concrete outputs such as digital platforms, tourism itineraries, MedDiet certification concepts, and youth entrepreneurship actions.

⁸ European Panorama of Clusters and Industrial Change - Performance of strong clusters across 51 sectors and the role of firm size in driving specialisation - EU Commission 2020 edition; Euroclusters Initiative: 16 Projects Selected to Strengthen EU's Industrial Ecosystems (July 2025)



- **Community anchoring and inclusiveness.**

The Living Labs acted as “**social innovation spaces**”, lowering barriers to participation and involving a wide spectrum of actors: SMEs, producer associations, universities, municipalities, heritage managers, NGOs, and youth initiatives (see, for example the Hacienda Guzman in Andalusia⁹). In this way, they combined **top-down institutional support with bottom-up community knowledge**, embedding cooperation mechanisms into rural societies that are often fragmented or facing depopulation.

- **From local to transnational integration.**

Each Living Lab served as a think tank performer, generating ideas and pilots that were then channelled into the **One-Stop Shops** — conceived as permanent support hubs for sustainable tourism and MedDiet-based innovation. At transnational level, the Eurocluster connects these local co-creation processes, allowing **cross-fertilisation** of solutions, pooling of digital tools, and the scaling-up of pilot services into a broader Mediterranean marketplace.

- **Strategic role in the Eurocluster model**

Co-creation is therefore not an accessory activity but a **core governance principle** of the MDG Eurocluster:

- o It ensures continuous innovation, as MSMEs can specialise in niche excellence while accessing shared services and infrastructures.
- o It drives the green and digital transition, by embedding eco-innovation, circular economy practices, and digital skills into new business models.
- o It consolidates community resilience, by making rural actors co-authors of strategies that directly affect their economies and identities.
- o It enhances policy alignment, since the participatory outputs reflect both local needs and EU strategic priorities (Green Deal, Farm to Fork, Transition Pathway for Tourism).

In conclusion, co-creation through Living Labs transforms the Eurocluster from a network of enterprises into a **learning and innovation community**. By systematising participatory methods across seven territories, it delivers concrete services, strengthens rural cohesion, and accelerates the modernisation of Mediterranean Diet economies.

3.2.5 Resilience and Transition

The MDG Eurocluster embeds resilience as a guiding principle, directly aligning with EU priorities set out in the **European Green Deal, the Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030**, and the **Transition Pathway for Tourism**. Its design strengthens the capacity of Mediterranean territories to cope with systemic shocks such as pandemics, climate-related disruptions, demographic change, or market volatility, by linking cultural heritage to

⁹https://haciendaguzman.com/en?srsId=AfmBOoqzXZ9DaQzs4W409_INrKxxup_L5e5O2z8mQ1CQFZlRjtZq8uue
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innovation and modernisation.

Resilience through the Green Transition.

Building on the work of the Living Labs and One-Stop Shops, the MDG Eurocluster promotes the uptake of eco-innovation and circular economy practices, such as sustainable agri-food production, low-carbon tourism services, and regenerative landscape management. It embeds the Mediterranean Diet model as a practical driver of the Green Deal—turning local heritage into a framework for biodiversity protection, sustainable consumption, energy efficiency in hospitality, and climate adaptation strategies. By reducing dependency on external resources and **enhancing territorial self-sufficiency**, the Eurocluster increases rural resilience while positioning Mediterranean Diet regions as laboratories for Europe’s sustainable transformation.

Resilience through the Digital Transition.

In parallel, the MDG Eurocluster accelerates the integration of smart and data-driven tools to modernise tourism and agri-food economies. Building on **digital training** and participatory design from the seven Living Labs, it enables MSMEs and communities to adopt tools such as digital marketplaces, interactive tourism maps, visitor-flow analytics, and e-learning modules. The Eurocluster thereby contributes to the objectives of the **EU Digital Decade** by raising digital maturity in rural areas, ensuring interoperability across platforms, and strengthening data governance. These measures improve competitiveness and crisis preparedness, while also addressing the digital divide that often leaves Mediterranean rural actors at risk of exclusion.

Resilience through Integration of Green and Digital.

The MDG Eurocluster explicitly demonstrates how the **twin transition reinforces itself**: digital innovation enables eco-innovation (e.g. using AI and data to reduce food waste, smart mobility for low-carbon tourism, blockchain for PDO/PGI traceability), while sustainability provides the content and purpose for digital solutions (e.g. valorising local supply chains, storytelling, and community branding). This complementarity ensures that the Mediterranean Diet economy evolves not only as a heritage-based sector, but also as a forward-looking ecosystem aligned with Europe’s competitiveness, inclusion, and sustainability goals.

In sum, the MDG Eurocluster operationalises resilience by embedding the **twin green and digital transition into local development models**, ensuring that Mediterranean Diet communities can withstand external shocks while turning heritage into a platform for innovation, sustainability, and long-term prosperity.



EU Policy Anchors for Resilience and Transition

The MDG Eurocluster contributes directly to the following EU frameworks:

1. **European Green Deal** –promoting climate neutrality, biodiversity protection, circular economy, and sustainable food systems.
2. **Farm to Fork Strategy** – embedding sustainability in agri-food supply chains and consumer choices.
3. **EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030** – protecting natural capital and strengthening ecosystem-based approaches in rural areas.
4. **Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030** –raising digital skills, connectivity, interoperability, and data governance across EU regions.
5. **EU Transition Pathway for Tourism (2022)** –supporting tourism’s green and digital transition, resilience, and competitiveness.
6. **Cohesion Policy & NextGenerationEU** –mobilising investments to reduce territorial disparities and accelerate twin-transition adoption.

3.2.6 Governance and Internationalisation

Clusters are not only economic but also governance instruments. The MDG Eurocluster acts as a structured platform where local voices engage with regional, national, and European institutions, as well as with international organisations such as UNESCO and FAO. By pooling knowledge, infrastructures, and policy interfaces, it ensures that Mediterranean Diet economies gain international visibility, attract investment, and contribute to global debates on food, culture, and sustainability.

The governance model builds on a **multi-level structure**:

- **Local Level** – One-Stop Shops and Living Labs act as the operational nodes, directly engaging MSMEs, municipalities, producer associations, training centres, and civil society.
- **Transnational Level** – these nodes are connected through thematic networks (e.g. food and beverage, tourism services, mobility and distribution, Ho.Re.Ca., innovation and training) that pool resources, circulate knowledge, and generate shared services such as communication, promotion, and financial facilitation .
- **International Level** – a Board for International Governance ensures structured dialogue with the European Commission, UNESCO, FAO, and other international organisations, embedding the Mediterranean Diet economy in global sustainability and heritage agendas.



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This governance system guarantees that the Eurocluster does not remain a closed network but becomes a **policy interface and advocacy platform**, able to:

- Channel grassroots innovation and community knowledge into EU policymaking
- Provide a recognised voice for Mediterranean rural areas in global forums
- Mobilise investments through coordination with EU programmes (Cohesion, Horizon Europe, InvestEU) and private actors
- Ensure long-term sustainability of cooperation by embedding governance functions into permanent structures rather than time-limited projects.

In sum, the **MedDiet Go Eurocluster transforms a set of localised initiatives into a structured, transnational system** that integrates heritage, innovation, and market access. It ensures that the Mediterranean Diet is not only safeguarded as a cultural asset, but also mobilised as a driver of competitiveness, resilience, and sustainable development across the region. By creating a **multi-level governance system** with strong international projection, the Eurocluster positions itself as both an **economic driver** and an **intermediate actor**, bridging local Mediterranean communities with European and global institutions.



4. Core Pillars of the Joint Action Plan (JAP)

Building on the specific objectives outlined in Section 3.1, the MDG Eurocluster JAP is designed to transform the Mediterranean Diet (MD) from a cultural heritage into a **driver of innovation, competitiveness and territorial cohesion**. The Eurocluster operates at the intersection of economy, society, environment, institutions, and its approach is structured around **four thematic areas of activity** and **five enabling tools**.

The **four thematic areas** address the main needs identified by stakeholders:

1. enhancing skills,
2. empowering local communities,
3. expanding international relations,
4. strengthening institutional anchoring.

The **five tools** - MD Declaration, Trademark, Living Labs, Web Platform, Digital/Human resources - inherited from the MD.net project and further developed, provide the Eurocluster with operational assets to ensure long-term impact and sustainability.

Together, these pillars ensure that the Eurocluster can:

- Preserve the **authenticity** of the MD
- Enable **innovation and skills development**
- Expand **market and institutional connections**
- Secure a **sustainable transnational governance framework**.

4.1 Activities by thematic areas

4.1.1 Enhancing skills

The Eurocluster invests in human capital (in particular **youth**) as a critical driver of competitiveness, resilience, and inclusion in Mediterranean Diet economies. Skills development is aligned with the **European Skills Agenda**, the **Pact for Skills**, and the **Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030**; the application in the **EU Programmes** calls (Erasmus, Cosme, ECCP initiatives) will contribute to actively participating in Europe's green and digital transitions initiatives.

Capacity building for SMEs and workers.

Tailored training programmes—delivered both online and through itinerant workshops—will equip agri-food and tourism SMEs with practical competencies in sustainable production methods, digitalisation of supply chains, and innovation adoption (IoT applications, circular economy, waste reduction, and resource efficiency).

Cluster learning initiatives.

The Eurocluster will serve as a learning ecosystem, fostering **peer exchange and mutual**



learning through twinning schemes, staff mobility, and participation in EU-level initiatives such as **ClusterXchange**. These activities will enable SMEs and workers to access Europe-wide knowledge pools, adopt best practices, and build trust across regions.

Talent management.

The Eurocluster connects universities, VET providers, research centres, and enterprises to attract, retain, and reskill talent in rural and peri-urban areas. By supporting **cross-border internships**, applied research projects, and joint curricula, the Eurocluster ensures that young professionals and workers can develop career paths in sustainable food, tourism, and cultural sectors, thereby countering rural depopulation and brain drain.

Consumer and citizen awareness.

Beyond professional skills, the Eurocluster promotes **civic and intergenerational education**. Dedicated modules for schools, youth organisations, and community groups will disseminate Mediterranean Diet values, encourage healthier lifestyles, and create bridges between generations around food heritage, hospitality, and sustainability.

In sum, enhancing skills through the Eurocluster means strengthening both **labour market readiness** and **community resilience**: MSMEs and workers gain the tools to innovate and internationalise, while citizens and consumers become active participants in sustaining Mediterranean Diet values.

4.1.2 Empowering local communities

The Eurocluster recognises that sustainable development must be community-driven. Local empowerment ensures that Mediterranean Diet economies retain authenticity while scaling up to international markets. The MDG approach strengthens the **Med Diet Declaration** community and leverages **Living Labs and One-Stop Shops** as mechanisms to anchor innovation in grassroots participation.

Empowerment of territories.

The Eurocluster consolidates the **Med Diet Declaration** as a charter of shared values, engaging SMEs, cooperatives, associations, and municipalities in a common Mediterranean identity. By signing and implementing the Declaration, rural communities reinforce their ownership of the process and ensure that Eurocluster actions remain authentic, inclusive, and connected to local traditions and landscapes.

Living Labs as collaborative spaces.

Regional **Living Labs** act as open environments where producers, consumers, researchers, policymakers, and civil society co-design solutions for sustainable farming, cultural tourism, and digital logistics. Building on the experience of the seven MDG communities, these spaces enable participatory innovation through design-thinking workshops, world cafés, and future scenarios, ensuring that local knowledge is transformed into actionable strategies with measurable impacts.



Cultural and social innovation.

The Mediterranean Diet is not only a food system but a cultural ecosystem. The Eurocluster **One-Stop Shops** support community-driven initiatives that link MD values to arts, culture, and health promotion—festivals, food trails, local markets, culinary schools, and intercultural events. These **practical initiatives** foster social cohesion, stimulate rural and peri-urban economies, and promote the New European Bauhaus principles of sustainability, aesthetics, and inclusion.

Digital engagement.

To extend community empowerment across borders, the Eurocluster deploys a transnational digital platform. This **platform** hosts interactive fora, storytelling campaigns, and peer-to-peer learning communities, allowing rural actors, entrepreneurs, and citizens to connect, exchange practices, and co-create narratives around Mediterranean heritage. It provides visibility for local products and services while embedding them in a shared Mediterranean **marketplace**.

In sum, empowering local communities means ensuring that the Mediterranean Diet economy is not top-down imposed but bottom-up driven, rooted in local identities yet connected to global opportunities. By combining the Med Diet Declaration, Living Labs, One-Stop Shops, cultural and social innovation, and digital platforms, the Eurocluster fosters resilient, creative, and self-confident communities that can sustain development beyond the project cycle.

Table 1 - Comparative Table – Community-Driven Initiatives of the MDG Partners

| Country/Region | Partner | Type of Initiative | Focus/Thematic Area | Participatory Methods | Key Actors | Local | Main Output/Impacts |
|---------------------|---------|--------------------|---|--|--|-------|---|
| Portugal (Alentejo) | ADRAL | LL + OSS | Strengthening rural tourism governance and cooperation; connecting stakeholders for integrated territorial offers | Stakeholder survey, co-design focus groups | Municipalities, tourism operators, SMEs, educational and public bodies | | New collaborative framework for rural tourism; improved coordination between local and transnational networks |



| | | | | | | |
|--|------------------|-------------|--|--|---|--|
| Spain (Seville – Andalusia) | CCSEV | LL + OSS | Sustainable gastronomy, eco-responsibi lity, and social agriculture | Design Thinking, World Café, Future Workshops | Chamber network, hospitality schools, EcologicaKOK, SMEs, social enterprises | Creation of a regional food network; eco-gastrono my training; inclusive agri-food initiatives linking producers and chefs |
| Spain (Catalonia) | MDF | LL + OSS | Wine tourism and circular bioeconomy as drivers of rural diversification | Multi-stakeho lder dialogue, focus groups, expert panels | Ministry of Agriculture, Spanish Wine Federation, wineries, sustainability platforms | National wine-tourism network; roadmap for sustainable enotourism; best practice transfer to regional hubs |
| Italy (Puglia – Foggia) | Puglia Region | LL + OSS | Co-design of Med Diet Hub in Museum of the Territory; cultural heritage & experiential tourism | Co-creation Design Thinking, participatory planning, persona & mapping | Museums, universities, local SMEs, agritourism farms, creative networks, cultural and touristic operators | Concept and pilot services for Med Diet Hub; new museum contents related to Mediterranea n Diet; museum-com munity partnerships |
| Greece (Lesvos/ North Aegean) | ELORIS | LL + OSS | Food identity, cultural storytelling, creative promotion of local gastronomy | Brainstormin g, co-creation, design thinking, SWOT | Tourism boards, universities, producers, content creators, cultural associations | Strengthened food identity; multimedia promotion; producer-crea tor clusters; long-term strategy for local branding |



| | | | | | | |
|---------------------|------------|----------|---|--|---|--|
| Slovenia (National) | E-ZAVOD | LL + OSS | Circular rural tourism, local product innovation, and heritage valorisation | Co-creation, testing, feedback surveys | Regional development agencies, farms, research centres, tourism offices | New integrated touristic products; skills transfer on fermentation; enhanced community engagement |
| Bulgaria (Vratsa) | CCI-Vratsa | LL + OSS | Cultural heritage, gastronomy, and digital innovation for rural tourism | World Café, Future Workshops, Story Mapping, Design Thinking | Craftsmen, cultural NGOs, schools, digital start-ups, local producers, Public Institutions; Agri-food Associations and Sector Organizations, Nature and Environmental Organizations; Cultural Institutions; Young people and Entrepreneurs; Regional Library, Media | Digital tourism platform concept; gastronomic routes (“Taste Vratsa”); youth-led content creation; preservation of local heritage, |

Across these seven initiatives, Living Labs and One-Stop Shops act as open innovation ecosystems, translating the Mediterranean Diet’s values into local empowerment models. Each community co-created tangible solutions — from rural hubs and food networks to digital maps and heritage festivals — proving that bottom-up participation can anchor sustainable development in cultural identity, while connecting local actors to the transnational Eurocluster framework.

4.1.3 Expanding international relations

The MDG Eurocluster is conceived as a **transnational platform with global reach**. Its internationalisation strategy builds on the Med Diet Declaration, the Living Labs experience, and the Eurocluster governance system to project Mediterranean Diet values and economies into international arenas, while aligning with the priorities of the **European Commission, UNESCO, FAO, WTO, and Mediterranean cooperation frameworks**.



- **Joint internationalisation strategy**

A shared roadmap for accessing third-country markets will be developed, identifying priority destinations where demand for Mediterranean products, gastronomy, and tourism is growing. This strategy will be informed by market intelligence on consumer trends (healthy diets, sustainable food, experiential tourism), competitor positioning, and regulatory barriers. The Eurocluster provides the scale and credibility required to negotiate access, reduce costs, and build trust among distributors and investors.

- **Promotion and branding.**

The MDG Eurocluster label will be promoted internationally through collective participation in trade fairs, joint marketing campaigns, and thematic events that showcase Mediterranean Diet heritage and innovation. By pooling resources, SMEs will gain visibility they could not achieve alone, reinforcing a recognisable Mediterranean Diet brand that links food quality, cultural identity, and sustainability. This collective branding is also a response to international calls for clearer traceability and sustainability labelling, in line with WTO trade facilitation guidelines and EU farm-to-fork ambitions.

- **Business matchmaking**

The Eurocluster will act as a broker of cross-border partnerships, facilitating joint ventures, export consortia, and investment opportunities. This will be supported by European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP) tools, Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) services, and collaboration with chambers of commerce. Business matchmaking will particularly focus on bundled PDO/PGI portfolios, Mediterranean Diet-inspired tourism packages, and sustainable logistics solutions, offering international buyers integrated value propositions.

- **Global partnerships and diplomacy.**

The Eurocluster will strengthen structured dialogue with UNESCO (intangible heritage safeguarding), FAO and GIAHS (agricultural heritage and food security), and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (sustainable tourism models). It will also link with Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) initiatives on sustainable blue/green economy and cultural cooperation. Through these alliances, the Eurocluster will not only promote business opportunities but also contribute to global debates on food systems, climate resilience, cultural diversity, and healthy lifestyles.

- **Strategic role.**

By embedding internationalisation in its governance, the MDG Eurocluster ensures that Mediterranean Diet economies gain long-term visibility and influence in global markets and institutions. It positions the Mediterranean not only as a region of tradition, but as a living laboratory of sustainable food systems and tourism models, directly contributing to the UN 2030 Agenda, the European Green Deal, and the FAO-UNESCO agendas on heritage and sustainability.



4.1.4 Strengthening institutional connections

The Eurocluster is not only an economic initiative but also an **institutional interface** that connects Mediterranean Diet economies with European, national, regional, and local policy frameworks. By strengthening institutional connections, the MDG Eurocluster ensures long-term legitimacy, sustainability, and integration into wider governance and cooperation processes.

- **Policy alignment.**

Eurocluster activities are systematically connected to EU strategies such as the **European Green Deal, Farm to Fork Strategy, EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030**, and the **Digital Decade Policy Programme**, as well as to national and regional **Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3)** and local development plans. This alignment guarantees that MDG actions contribute to EU cohesion policy and macro-regional strategies, ensuring that Mediterranean Diet economies are recognised as drivers of Europe's twin green and digital transitions.

- **Institutional dialogue.**

The Eurocluster provides a structured platform where **public authorities, SMEs, and civil society** can engage in permanent dialogue. Through workshops, policy labs, and joint consultations, the Eurocluster co-creates policies that support sustainable food systems, rural development, and tourism models. This dialogue reinforces trust and cooperation across governance levels, while ensuring that the voices of local communities are reflected in European and international decision-making.

- **Certification and quality schemes.**

Supporting the uptake of **EU quality standards (PDO, PGI, organic)** is central to both safeguarding authenticity and enhancing competitiveness. The Eurocluster helps institutions and SMEs implement these schemes while also promoting innovative labelling initiatives that combine sustainability, traceability, and digital tools (blockchain, QR codes, storytelling platforms). Such schemes strengthen the reputation of Mediterranean Diet products and services, linking them to the values of health, culture, and sustainability recognised worldwide by **UNESCO** and **FAO GIAHS**.

- **Governance model.**

A **multi-level governance framework** underpins the Eurocluster, linking **local Living Labs and One-Stop Shops** with **transnational thematic networks** (tourism, agri-food, mobility, Ho.Re.Ca., innovation and training) and with the **Board for International Governance** engaging institutions such as the EU Commission, UNESCO, FAO, and WTO . This structure ensures that the Eurocluster is institutionally anchored beyond the project life cycle, recognised as a trusted interlocutor, and positioned as a **permanent platform for policy integration, international cooperation, and investment mobilisation**.

In sum, by strengthening institutional connections, the Eurocluster not only enhances the competitiveness of Mediterranean Diet economies but also consolidates their **political and**



governance dimension, ensuring continuity, visibility, and influence in European and global sustainability agendas.

4.2 Tools

4.2.1 The MD.Declaration

The **Med Diet Declaration**, already signed by more than 200 stakeholders across Mediterranean regions, is the **cornerstone of the Eurocluster**. It serves as both a **voluntary quality charter** and a **community-building instrument**, providing a shared framework of values and standards for Mediterranean Diet products and services.

The Declaration affirms the Mediterranean Diet as a **core element of Mediterranean identity**, encompassing skills, knowledge, rituals, symbols, and traditions tied to landscapes, lifestyles, and ways of working. It responds to the risks of globalisation, which have often eroded local traditions and know-how, by raising awareness of their socio-economic potential.

Commitments.

By adhering to the Declaration, stakeholders commit to:

- Defending traditions, rituals, eating habits, and lifestyles that make the Mediterranean Diet unique, while promoting creativity and intercultural openness.
- Safeguarding landscapes where sustainable agriculture, fisheries, and gastronomy are directly linked to rural development and local prosperity.
- Enhancing communities by strengthening common identities and recognisable values, and by promoting local products and services both locally and globally.

Functions in the Eurocluster.

- **Framework for action:** it provides a cultural and ethical compass for the Eurocluster's activities, ensuring that economic development is balanced with heritage safeguarding and community well-being.
- **Visibility and branding:** it positions the Mediterranean Diet as both a **UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage** and a **globally recognised brand**, reinforcing the Eurocluster's legitimacy in international markets.
- **Engagement tool:** it creates a platform for dialogue among companies, research bodies, public organisations, and civil society, both within the Mediterranean and with other regions worldwide.
- **Economic driver:** it frames the Mediterranean Diet as a tool to revitalise rural economies, support cultural and tourism industries, and increase competitiveness at regional and international levels.

Strategic impact.

The Eurocluster will continuously enlarge the Declaration community and integrate it into all its activities—**from skills training to digital platforms, from branding to governance**.

By doing so, the Declaration evolves from a symbolic commitment into a **living governance instrument**, anchoring local authenticity in the Eurocluster's transnational strategies and connecting rural communities to EU and global sustainability agendas (WHO on health,



FAO-GIAHS on sustainable food systems, UNESCO on cultural heritage).

What is the Med Diet Declaration?

- A shared commitment to be signed by stakeholders (SMEs, cooperatives, municipalities, associations) to safeguard and promote the Mediterranean Diet.
- A quality and values charter linking food, culture, landscapes, and lifestyles, recognised by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage and by FAO/WHO as sustainable and healthy.
- A branding tool that enhances visibility of members and positions Mediterranean products and services in global markets.
- A governance instrument providing a cultural and ethical framework for Eurocluster activities, ensuring authenticity, inclusiveness, and sustainability.

4.2.2 The Trademark and Branding Strategy

The **Mediterranean Diet (MD) trademark**, registered and valid until 14 September 2030, is a cornerstone tool for the Eurocluster. It guarantees **legal protection and market recognition** for products and services under the MDG Eurocluster label, ensuring that Mediterranean Diet values are translated into credible, distinctive, and competitive offerings.

- **A unified branding asset.**

The MD trademark allows the Eurocluster to implement a **coordinated branding strategy** across all sectors—agriculture, food processing, gastronomy, tourism, culture—providing a recognisable symbol of authenticity, sustainability, and Mediterranean identity. By pooling visibility, the Eurocluster prevents fragmentation and strengthens the collective reputation of Mediterranean territories in both European and global markets.

- **Selection and quality assurance.**

As defined in the methodological procedures, brand users are selected through **open calls** supported by clear eligibility criteria and a **Guide for Applicants**. Only stakeholders who commit to the principles of the **Mediterranean Diet Manifesto** can use the brand. The terms of use ensure compliance with European trademark law (Directive 2015/2436) and guarantee that branding is not misused or diluted. This process ensures that the trademark functions as a **voluntary quality charter**, combining cultural legitimacy with economic credibility.



- **Market positioning and demand.**

The brand responds to rising consumer demand for **authentic, sustainable, and geographically linked products**. Recent EU market studies confirm that geographical indications (PDO/PGI) and certified labels increase product value, enhance consumer trust, and generate added value for rural territories. The MD trademark adds an **umbrella label** that complements existing schemes (PDO, PGI, organic) with a transversal narrative of heritage, lifestyle, and sustainability—positioning the Mediterranean Diet as both a **cultural system** and a **competitive market brand**.

- **Strategic branding model**

Benchmarking of labelling models carried out under MD.net concluded that a **Manifesto model “Med Diet Declaration”**—based on shared values, voluntary commitments, and strong communication impact—is the most effective and sustainable option for the Mediterranean Diet brand. It combines low implementation costs with high visibility, ensuring scalability and inclusiveness. In this sense, the trademark is not only a legal tool but a **community-driven branding system** rooted in Mediterranean identity.

- **Eurocluster role.**

The MDG Eurocluster will manage and promote the trademark as a shared asset:

- **Renewal and continuity:** ensuring legal protection is maintained beyond 2030.
- **Dissemination and uptake:** expanding the number of authorised users across partner regions.
- **Promotion and visibility:** deploying the brand in trade fairs, digital campaigns, and joint marketing actions.
- **Integration:** embedding the trademark in Eurocluster services such as product bundling, certification, and digital platforms.

In sum, the MD trademark is more than a symbol: it is a **strategic instrument for branding, governance, and internationalisation**. It ensures that the Mediterranean Diet is recognised not only as an intangible heritage but as a **trusted mark of quality and sustainability** in the global marketplace, enhancing competitiveness while safeguarding authenticity.

The MD Trademark – Four Key Functions

- **Legal Protection** – Registered until *14 September 2030*, ensuring exclusive use and defending against unfair competition.
- **Quality Assurance** – Linked to the Med Diet *Manifesto* and eligibility criteria, guaranteeing authenticity and sustainability.
- **Market Branding** – Provides a unified identity for Mediterranean Diet products and services,



strengthening visibility and consumer trust.

- **Eurocluster Asset** – Managed collectively to support promotion, renewal, and integration into Eurocluster activities and internationalisation strategies.

4.2.3 The Living Labs and One-Stop Shops

Living Labs are the operational backbone of the Eurocluster, functioning as **territorial innovation ecosystems** rooted in local communities yet connected transnationally. They are designed as **co-creation arenas** and **testing grounds** where producers, consumers, researchers, and policymakers co-develop solutions in real-life contexts.

Drawing on the methodological guidelines prepared for the MedDiet Go project¹⁰, Living Labs adopt a participatory and iterative process built on three steps:

- **Exploration** – mapping needs, opportunities, and assets within communities
- **Experimentation** – prototyping products, services, and processes with active stakeholder participation
- **Evaluation** – testing outputs, measuring impacts, and validating scalability.

From Living Labs to One-Stop Shops.

To ensure continuity and institutionalisation, the innovations generated in Living Labs are anchored in **One-Stop Shops (OSS)**. These are **permanent support structures** established in each partner territory¹¹, designed to provide:

- **Integrated services for SMEs and communities**, including business support, digital training, access to EU quality schemes (PDO/PGI/organic), and matchmaking with tourism operators
- **Visibility and promotion**, acting as contact points for consumers, travellers, and investors interested in Mediterranean Diet products and experiences
- **Policy interface**, connecting local innovation with regional and EU institutions, ensuring alignment with Smart Specialisation Strategies and Cohesion Policy tools
- **Transnational networking**, linking the seven OSS across regions into a wider Eurocluster platform for knowledge exchange and internationalisation.

Impact on innovation and resilience.

Through this dual structure, Living Labs and OSS reinforce each other:

- Living Labs act as **incubators** of innovation, stimulating co-creation, creativity, and experimentation at grassroots level.
- OSS act as **stabilisers**, embedding those innovations into permanent services and

¹⁰ MDG D.2.2.1 Report with the proofs of 7 one-stop shops established

¹¹ MDG D.2.3.1 Living Labs Workshops Report



governance frameworks, ensuring continuity beyond project cycles.

This system has already led to concrete outputs such as new tourism itineraries, digital platforms, gastronomic events, and cross-sectoral business models tested locally and then scaled up at Eurocluster level.

Strategic role.

By combining **temporary participatory spaces (Living Labs)** with **permanent institutional nodes (OSS)**, the MDG Eurocluster creates a robust ecosystem that:

- Sustains **co-creation and community empowerment**
- Provides SMEs with **practical services and training**
- Channels local innovation into **Eurocluster-wide branding and internationalisation**
- Aligns with **EU and global frameworks** (European Green Deal, Digital Decade, UNESCO Intangible Heritage, FAO GIAHS, ENOLL).

Key Insights

Living Labs and One-Stop Shops are not stand-alone tools but complementary elements of the Eurocluster model. Together, they turn community knowledge into concrete services, embed innovation into territorial governance, and provide the continuity required for the Mediterranean Diet to become both a **heritage safeguarded** and a **market driver**.

- **Living Labs** generated over 80 co-creation activities and 40+ pilot actions, engaging SMEs, schools, and local administrations.
- **One-Stop Shops** transformed these pilots into **permanent regional nodes**, providing business support, training, and branding services.
- Together, LL and OSS deliver a **circular innovation model**: *local experimentation → validation → institutionalisation → transnational scaling*.

Table 2 - Main focus of Living Labs and One Stop Shop (OOS) of the MDG Partners

| Region | Main Focus of Living Lab (LL) | Flagship Outputs / Pilots | Focus of One-Stop Shop (OSS) | Key OSS Services & Achievements |
|-------------------|---|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| Andalusia (Spain) | Sustainable tourism and Med-Diet territorial branding | Community co-creation events, cooking workshops, creation of regional MD brand identity | Business and tourism hub for SMEs | Training for agri-food SMEs, tourism promotion packages, MD awareness campaigns in schools |
| Catalonia (Spain) | Wine tourism and health promotion | Development of thematic wine routes, | Regional coordination point | OSS for wine tourism SMEs, mentoring on EU |



| | | | | |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| | | stakeholder twinning, MD integration in tourism offers | for wine & gastronomy clusters | quality schemes (PDO/PGI), participation in trade fairs |
| Slovenia | Integrated rural tourism and eco-innovation | Pilot eco-tourism itineraries, fermentation workshops, new wellness products | Strengthening sustainable and circular tourism network, part of the Slovenian Centre for Circular Economy | Advisory services for rural destination management, support in developing new business models, knowledge support to the tourism sector in improving tourism environment -population balance. |
| Puglia (Italy) | Med-Diet hub and cultural tourism | Mapping of agri-food actors, co-creation of digital storytelling tools, intergenerational cooking | Regional coordination for Med-Diet Hub | Training for youth and women entrepreneurs, business mentoring, link with regional Smart Specialisation Strategy |
| North Aegean (Greece) | Food-tourism -marketing clusters | Creation of producer clusters, experiential food events, local policy proposals | Innovation node for island SMEs | Online marketplace for local producers, export readiness training, stakeholder database for tourism operators |
| Alentejo (Portugal) | Innovation and rural resilience through Med-Diet | Community-led markets, digital storytelling campaigns, sustainable itinerary prototypes | Regional observatory for MD innovation | Digital training, support to local start-ups, cultural-gastronomic tourism promotion, governance liaison with municipalities |
| Vratsa (Bulgaria) | Cultural and social regeneration | Culinary festivals, youth entrepreneurship programmes, | Cross-sectoral OSS for social economy | Entrepreneurship support services, cooperative incubation, youth |



| | | | | |
|--|-------------------|---------------------------|--|---|
| | via gastronomy | cooperative networking | | mentoring, participation in Eurocluster communication campaigns |
|--|-------------------|---------------------------|--|---|

4.2.4 The web platform

The **MedDiet Go digital platform** is conceived as the **virtual infrastructure of the Eurocluster**, connecting regional ecosystems, SMEs, and citizens in a single collaborative environment. It serves both as a **marketplace** and a **knowledge and governance hub**, integrating digital tools that support visibility, networking, and innovation across all partner regions.

The platform offers four main functionalities:

- **Business matchmaking and partnership opportunities**, enabling SMEs, clusters, and investors to connect through a searchable database and partnership profiles aligned with Eurocluster thematic areas (agri-food, tourism, culture, education).
 - **Repository of best practices and innovation scouting**, collecting outputs from Living Labs and One-Stop Shops, including toolkits, co-creation methodologies, case studies, and replicable business models.
 - **Interactive fora for knowledge sharing and citizen engagement**, promoting dialogue among stakeholders, public authorities, and communities. These spaces will host digital campaigns, surveys, and thematic discussions to strengthen the Med Diet community.
- Training and governance tools**, including online learning modules (MOOCs, webinars, tutorials), and a dedicated area for Eurocluster management and internal coordination (document sharing, reporting, KPI tracking).

Current status and next steps.

The platform, available at <https://meddietgo.dietamediterranea.com>, is already operational in several modules, hosting institutional content, partner information, news, and promotional material. However, according to the platform development plan (Annex *MDG Platform.xlsx*), the following tasks are still underway:

- **Integration of the marketplace section**, with profiles for SMEs, clusters, and regional OSS, including a dynamic search function and contact interface;
- **Completion of the repository**, linking Living Lab and OSS results to thematic databases and downloadable resources;
- **Activation of e-learning features**, enabling blended training delivery and participant tracking;
- **Launch of the interactive forum**, including moderation guidelines, multilingual interface, and connection to social media channels;
- **Analytics and KPI dashboard**, allowing real-time monitoring of Eurocluster



performance indicators.

Table 3 - MedDiet Go Web Platform - Status and Next Steps (as of October 2025)

| MedDiet Go Web Platform – Status and Next Steps (as of October 2025) | | | |
|--|---|-------------|--|
| Component | Description | Status | Next Steps |
| Homepage and Institutional Area | General presentation of the Eurocluster, partners, news, events, and MD values. | Completed | Regular updates and multilingual optimisation. |
| Marketplace Section | Profiles of SMEs, clusters, and OSS; business matchmaking and partnership requests. | In progress | Integration of contact forms, advanced search filters, and partner dashboard. |
| Repository of Best Practices | Database of Living Lab and OSS outputs, co-creation methods, and case studies. | In progress | Upload final reports, visual materials, and filtering by theme/region. |
| E-learning and Training Area | MOOCs, webinars, tutorials, and certification options. | Planned | Integration of Learning Management system and tracking of participant metrics. |
| Interactive Forum | Online space for discussion, community engagement, and surveys. | Planned | Develop moderation policy, multilingual chat and social media integration |
| Governance tools | Internal management area for partners: document sharing, reporting, KPI dashboard. | In progress | Testing secure access, KPI visualisation, and notification system. |
| Analytics and Monitoring | Real-time data on usage, engagement, and Eurocluster performance indicators. | Planned | Develop analytics dashboard and periodic reporting system. |

Strategic role.

Once completed, the web platform will constitute the **digital backbone of the MDG Eurocluster**. It will link the seven regional ecosystems through a shared space for cooperation, business visibility, and learning. As a digital public good, it contributes to the objectives of the **EU Digital Decade 2030**, the **Transition Pathway for Tourism**, and the **Green Deal Data Space**, reinforcing the digital capacity of Mediterranean MSMEs while fostering innovation, transparency, and inclusiveness.

In sum, the MedDiet Go platform transforms the Eurocluster into a **hybrid digital ecosystem**, where community, innovation, and governance converge—providing the foundation for long-term connectivity, market access, and policy alignment across the Mediterranean Diet economies.



Platform Hosting, Administration, and Data Governance

The **MedDiet Go platform** is hosted and maintained under the coordination of the **Fundación Dieta Mediterránea**, which ensures technical reliability, data protection, and long-term accessibility. The platform's back-end infrastructure is built to comply with **EU standards on data privacy (GDPR)**, cybersecurity, and interoperability, allowing future integration with European digital ecosystems such as the **European Data Space for Tourism** and the **Green Deal Data Space**.

Administration and maintenance.

- The Fundación Dieta Mediterránea will act as **technical administrator and content curator**, coordinating updates with the Eurocluster Secretariat.
- Partner institutions and One-Stop Shops will have designated access credentials to upload resources, manage local content, and monitor regional performance.
- An editorial calendar will be implemented to ensure regular updates, multilingual content, and dynamic communication across regions.

Data governance and interoperability.

- The platform adopts **open-data principles**, enabling controlled sharing of anonymised datasets related to SMEs, training activities, and Eurocluster outputs.
- Compatibility with EU interoperability frameworks (INSPIRE, SEMIC) ensures that data on tourism, agri-food, and sustainability indicators can be reused by public authorities and research institutions.
- Security measures—encryption, user authentication, and access controls—ensure compliance with **EU Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR)** and **Directive 2016/1148 (NIS Directive)**.

Sustainability and evolution.

To ensure the platform's continuity beyond the project life cycle, a **long-term sustainability plan** will be established, including:

- Annual maintenance and domain renewal agreements up to **2030**;
- Integration of the platform into the Eurocluster's permanent governance system;
- Development of revenue-generating services (digital visibility packages, training certificates, and promotional subscriptions) to co-finance updates and expansion.

In this way, the MedDiet Go platform is not only a technological tool but also a **governance and cooperation infrastructure** — a living, evolving space that will continue to link Mediterranean Diet communities, enterprises, and institutions across borders, ensuring visibility, innovation, and resilience for years to come.



4.2.5 Integration Human Resources and Artificial Intelligence

The MDG Eurocluster recognises that innovation today relies not only on technology but on the **synergy between human expertise and artificial intelligence**. This integration—symbolically reflected in the collaboration between human and digital intelligence—is central to achieving efficiency, inclusiveness, and creativity within Mediterranean Diet economies.

Human capital as the core driver.

People remain at the heart of the Eurocluster: local entrepreneurs, artisans, researchers, public officers, and community leaders who embody the cultural richness and diversity of the Mediterranean. The Eurocluster invests in their capacity to adapt, learn, and cooperate, ensuring that digital tools amplify rather than replace human potential.

Artificial intelligence as an enabling layer.

AI applications will progressively be integrated into Eurocluster operations to support:

- Data analysis and decision-making, through predictive models on market trends, consumer preferences, and tourism flows
- Platform personalisation, tailoring content, training offers, and matchmaking suggestions to each user's profile
- Process optimisation, improving management efficiency in Living Labs, OSS, and the Eurocluster Secretariat
- Monitoring and evaluation, using AI-assisted dashboards to track KPIs, identify emerging patterns, and support evidence-based governance.

Cooperative intelligence model.

The Eurocluster promotes a **“cooperative intelligence” approach**, where human knowledge and AI capabilities are not in competition but in co-evolution. Researchers and digital developers work alongside community actors to design algorithms that reflect Mediterranean values—transparency, ethics, sustainability, and cultural respect. This ensures that AI serves as a tool for empowerment rather than control.

Ethical and governance principles.

The integration of AI follows EU frameworks such as the **Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI (European Commission, 2019)** and the **AI Act (2024)**, guaranteeing fairness, accountability, and human oversight. The Eurocluster's governance system will include a Digital & AI Ethics Charter, ensuring compliance with GDPR, data protection, and cultural sensitivity standards.

In sum, the Eurocluster embraces the **human-AI partnership** as a new dimension of the Mediterranean Diet's evolution—from tradition to intelligent innovation. Just as recipes blend ancient wisdom with new techniques, the MDG Eurocluster blends **human creativity and artificial intelligence** to create a learning, adaptive, and forward-looking community.



From Human to Hybrid Intelligence – How AI Supports the MDG Eurocluster

- **Smart learning:** AI tools personalise online training and suggest courses or webinars based on each participant's profile and interests.
- **Innovation scouting:** Algorithms analyse data from Living Labs and OSS to identify promising ideas, products, and cross-sector synergies.
- **Market insight:** Predictive analytics track global trends in agri-food and tourism, helping SMEs anticipate demand and adapt strategies.
- **Sustainability monitoring:** AI-assisted dashboards process environmental, social, and economic indicators to measure cluster impact in real time.

Human creativity meets digital intelligence — ensuring that tradition, innovation, and technology evolve together under the Mediterranean Diet's shared values.



5. The Governance system

The **Med-Diet Eurocluster (MDG)** is not the spontaneous result of local networking alone, but the outcome of a shared political commitment, a common vision, and an organisational model that creates tangible added value for MSMEs and Mediterranean territories facing global competition.

Its governance system capitalises on the **MD.net legacy**, ensuring that results live beyond project life and evolve into a **long-term transnational cooperation framework**.

The system rests on two complementary dimensions:

- **Local dynamics**, where MSMEs, civil society, research institutions, and public authorities (quadruple helix) interact through Living Labs and One-Stop Shops, giving life to community-based innovation and entrepreneurship.
- **Transnational coordination**, which ensures strategic coherence, trust-building, and continuous alignment with European and international policies.

The Eurocluster's governance thus combines **bottom-up energy** with **top-down coordination**, creating a circular and participatory model that transforms local creativity into transnational impact.

5.1 Organisation and Management

5.1.1 Leveraging the Med Diet Declaration

The Med Diet Declaration acts as the **social contract** of the Eurocluster, underpinning its governance model. Signed by over 200 stakeholders, it provides a shared ethical and cultural foundation for cooperation. The Declaration ensures:

- A **common standard** of authenticity, sustainability, and quality across all territories
- **Community expansion**, onboarding new actors (SMEs, associations, cooperatives, municipalities) who adhere to its principles
- **Visibility and legitimacy**, giving recognition to innovative yet underrepresented stakeholders
- **Continuity and credibility** beyond project cycles, anchoring the Eurocluster in a long-term governance framework.

Membership to the Eurocluster is formalised through **adherence to the Declaration**, which acts as the gateway for participation in **Living Labs, One-Stop Shops**, and access to **platform services**.

5.1.2 Establishing a Hub-and-Spoke Governance Model

The MDG Eurocluster adopts a hub-and-spoke model, balancing central coordination with regional autonomy.



- **Central Hub – The Eurocluster Secretariat**
 - Provides strategic direction and coordination of transnational activities.
 - Manages the MD Trademark and oversees the branding strategy.
 - Ensures coherence, visibility, and compliance with EU and international frameworks (Green Deal, Farm to Fork, Digital Decade).
 - Facilitates participation in European networks (ECCP, EEN, Pact for Skills) and oversees reporting and KPI monitoring.

- **Spokes – Local One-Stop Shops and Living Labs**
 - Function as **territorial nodes** of innovation and participation.
 - Support co-creation, training, and business development through Living Lab methodologies.
 - Deliver integrated services to SMEs, manage local branding, and act as interfaces with municipalities and regional authorities.
 - Ensure that innovation and digital tools generated locally are scaled up through the Eurocluster platform.

- **Boards and Committees**
 - **Board for International Governance:** engages with EU institutions, UNESCO, FAO, WTO, and the Union for the Mediterranean, positioning the Eurocluster as a policy interlocutor.
 - **Technical Board:** coordinates financial management, innovation scouting, digital infrastructure, research, communication, and training.
 - **Sectoral Nodes:** thematic clusters covering Tourism Services, Food & Beverage, Mobility & Distribution, and Ho.Re.Ca., ensuring cross-sector integration and balanced representation.

5.1.3 Integrated Governance Architecture

The governance structure establishes a clear administrative link between the cluster’s operational tools:

Table 4 - Governance structure of the MedDiet Go

| Layer | Main Function | Administrative Link |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Med Diet Declaration | Membership charter and value framework | Entry condition for participation; defines rights and obligations of cluster members. |
| Living Labs | Innovation and co-creation mechanism | Registered members co-design services and solutions; results uploaded to the platform. |



| | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| One-Stop Shops | Institutional service nodes and | Verify membership, manage local data, and provide training, business, and policy services. |
| Web Platform | Digital governance interface | Hosts membership registry, manages marketplace, training, and KPI dashboard; connects all nodes. |

This integrated approach ensures that the MDG Eurocluster operates as a **single ecosystem**, in which authenticity (Declaration), innovation (Living Labs), institutionalisation (OSS), and digitalisation (Platform) reinforce each other.

5.1.4 Transnational and International Governance

The Eurocluster’s transnational coordination is guided by the **Eurocluster Secretariat** and the **Board for International Governance**, which maintain structured dialogue with:

- The **European Commission** (DG GROW, DG AGRI, DG EAC, DG REGIO)
- **UNESCO**, for heritage safeguarding and cultural identity policies
- **FAO-GIAHS**, for sustainable agri-food systems and rural resilience
- **UNWTO and WTO**, for sustainable tourism and fair trade
- The **Union for the Mediterranean**, for cooperation on green, blue, and cultural economy strategies.

This multi-level governance allows the Eurocluster to act as both an **economic driver** and a **“diplomatic” platform**, giving a collective voice to Mediterranean Diet communities in global sustainability debates.

5.2 Sustainability and Institutionalisation

The MDG Eurocluster is designed as a **long-term governance entity**, not a project consortium.

- It will ensure **continuity through formal registration** as a transnational cluster entity (under EU Regulation 2021/1058).
- Its governance tools — **the Declaration, Ls, OSS, Platform, and Trademark** — constitute permanent assets, guaranteeing replicability and growth. Financial sustainability will be supported by combined sources: EU programmes, service fees, and reinvestment of cluster revenues (branding licences, training certifications, digital services).

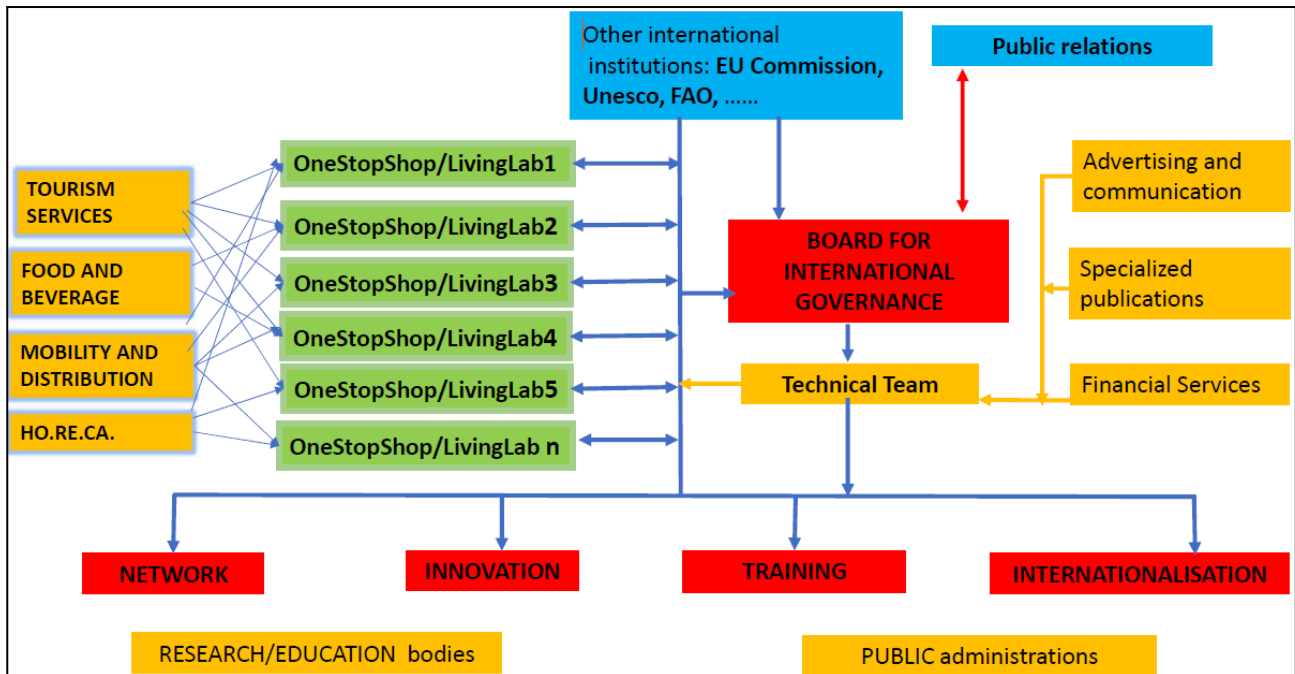
In essence, the governance system translates the Mediterranean Diet from a cultural heritage into a **living model of cooperative governance** — where local participation, digital intelligence, and international cooperation converge to generate resilience,



competitiveness, and cultural identity across the Mediterranean.

5.3 The MDG Eurocluster Governance Diagram

Figure 1- The MDG Eurocluster Governance Diagram



This diagram visualises the **hub-and-spoke governance system** of the Med-Diet Eurocluster. The **central hub**—comprising the Board for International Governance, the Technical Team, and the four Sectoral Nodes (Tourism Services, Food & Beverage, Mobility & Distribution, Ho.Re.Ca.)—ensures strategic direction, coordination, and visibility at transnational level. **The territorial spokes**, represented by the network of **One-Stop Shops** and **Living Labs**, act as regional innovation and service nodes connecting MSMEs, civil society, research, and public authorities. This structure ensures:

- **Vertical integration**, linking local actors to European and international institutions (EU Commission, UNESCO, FAO, WTO, UfM)
- **Horizontal cooperation**, connecting thematic networks (Tourism, Food & Beverage, Ho.Re.Ca., Mobility & Distribution)
- **Operational synergy**, through the Technical Team managing innovation, training, communication, and financial services.

Together, these layers form a **coherent governance ecosystem**, where local participation, institutional dialogue, and digital infrastructure converge to sustain the Mediterranean Diet as both a **cultural heritage** and a **transnational economic driver**.



6. Road Map

The Med-Diet Eurocluster Road Map translates the **governance framework into a strategic plan of implementation**. The goal is to connect the **governance system (chapter 5)** to a **strategic and operational plan** that shows vision, sequencing, and durability.

It operationalises the Eurocluster's vision—built on heritage, innovation, and cooperation—into a sequence of coordinated actions that ensure continuity, scalability, and measurable impact across the Mediterranean.

While the governance system defines who acts and how decisions are coordinated, the **Road Map defines what must be done, when, and with which milestones and resources**.

Structured around the **twin green and digital transition**, the Road Map integrates activities on skills development, community empowerment, branding, digital infrastructure, and internationalisation into a coherent timeline. It draws from the results of the **Living Labs, One-Stop Shops, and platform development**, ensuring that all tools and networks created by the project evolve into **permanent mechanisms of cooperation**.

This chapter therefore outlines the **phased implementation strategy** of the Eurocluster—linking local innovation to transnational governance—so that the Mediterranean Diet continues to serve as a living model of sustainable growth, cultural identity, and international collaboration.

6.1 Objectives and Strategic Axes

The **Med-Diet Eurocluster Road Map** translates the strategic vision of the cluster into a structured plan of action aimed at consolidating its governance, strengthening the twin transition, and ensuring lasting impact across the Mediterranean.

The Road Map pursues a **triple objective**:

1. To consolidate a **transnational governance and cooperation framework** that connects local communities with European and global institutions (Institutional/Policy focused relations with EU, UNESCO, FAO, UfM, UNWTO, WTO)
2. To transform **Mediterranean heritage into a source of innovation and competitiveness**, combining sustainability, culture, and digitalisation (Community-focused for local stakeholders and NGOs).
3. To ensure that the **Mediterranean Diet ecosystem** becomes a permanent driver of resilience, inclusion, and prosperity (private undertakings-oriented for fairs,



investors, MSMEs).

In coherence with the Eurocluster’s multi-actor nature, the Road Map is articulated around **three strategic axes**, corresponding to its main stakeholder groups:

Axis 1 – Institutional and Policy Dimension: Shaping the Twin Transition

(Stakeholders: EU institutions, UNESCO, FAO, UfM, national/regional authorities)

Strategic Statement:

*“Through the **Board for International Governance**, the MDG Eurocluster positions Mediterranean Diet territories as a strategic actor in delivering Europe’s twin transition and global sustainability goals.”*

This axis focuses on the **alignment of cluster activities with European and international strategies**, consolidating the Eurocluster as a policy interface.

Key actions include:

- Integrating the **Eurocluster within EU policy frameworks** (Green Deal, Farm to Fork, Biodiversity Strategy, Digital Decade, Transition Pathway for Tourism).
Reinforcing **dialogue** with UNESCO, FAO-GIAHS, and WTO to promote sustainable food systems and cultural heritage preservation.
Promoting governance innovation through **multi-level participation**, linking local OSS and Living Labs to national and EU decision-making.
- Developing evidence-based **policy recommendations** and contributing to European and global sustainability forums.

Expected results:

Enhanced policy recognition of the Mediterranean Diet as a model for integrated sustainability; institutional anchoring of the Eurocluster; contribution to EU and UN 2030 Agenda targets.

Axis 2 – Community Dimension: Empowering Local Territories

(Stakeholders: local communities, NGOs, training centres, schools, associations)

Strategic Statement:

“The MDG Eurocluster empowers Mediterranean communities to turn their heritage into a shared future of resilience, modernisation, and prosperity.”

This axis strengthens **community-based participation and social innovation**, ensuring that the Eurocluster’s growth remains inclusive and rooted in local realities.



Key actions include:

- **Consolidating Living Labs and One-Stop Shops** as participatory innovation ecosystems.
- Expanding the **Med Diet Declaration** community and embedding its values in education, culture, and training.
- Promoting intergenerational **learning** and gender equality, implementing training, reskilling, and citizen-awareness activities via the Eurocluster’s digital platform (MOOCs, webinars, interactive campaigns).

Expected results:

Empowered local actors, improved social cohesion, increased participation in sustainable agri-food and tourism sectors, and widespread adoption of Mediterranean Diet values.

Axis 3 – Business Dimension: Building Mediterranean Competitiveness

(Stakeholders: SMEs, investors, clusters, entrepreneurs, trade networks)

Strategic Statement:

“The MDG Eurocluster unites Mediterranean excellence under one brand, making local products, services, and destinations globally competitive.”

This axis promotes **market integration, innovation, and internationalisation**. It connects small producers and enterprises to global value chains under the unified **MD trademark and branding strategy**.

Key actions include:

- Deploying the **MD trademark** and **coordinated branding** for certified products, services, and tourism experiences.
- Enhancing the digital marketplace and matchmaking tools of the **MDG platform** to connect SMEs, investors, and clusters.
- Organising **collective participation** in international trade fairs and promotional campaigns.
- Supporting the creation of **bundled PDO/PGI portfolios** and integrated Mediterranean Diet itineraries.
- Facilitating access to **finance** and innovation through ECCP, EEN, and European funding programmes.

Expected results:

Expanded international market presence, stronger SME competitiveness, increased exports and partnerships, and a consolidated Mediterranean Diet brand recognised globally for quality and sustainability.



In sum, the Road Map's strategic axes reflect Eurocluster's holistic approach—combining policy advocacy, community empowerment, and market competitiveness. By aligning local creativity with institutional and economic frameworks, the MDG Eurocluster ensures that the Mediterranean Diet evolves into a **living, interconnected model of sustainable development**, rooted in identity and driven by innovation.

6.2 Phased Implementation Plan

The **Implementation Plan** presented below is **hypothetical in temporal terms**, as the current **Med-Diet Go (MDG)** project formally concludes at the end of **2025**.

Nevertheless, it represents a **concrete and realistic strategic roadmap** that can guide the continuation and scaling up of the Eurocluster in the following years.

The actions described are designed to ensure the **continuity of cooperation, governance, and services** beyond the project's lifecycle, and will be refined according to **future financing paths**—including potential alignment with EU 2026–2030 programmes such as the **Single Market Programme, Horizon Europe, Interreg NEXT MED, Creative Europe, and Erasmus+**.

The plan follows a **phased and cumulative approach**, ensuring that actions mature progressively—from the consolidation of tools to transnational integration, and from internationalisation to long-term sustainability. Each phase activates the three strategic axes—**Institutional/Policy, Community, and Business**—in a coordinated way, guaranteeing balanced growth across territories and stakeholder groups.

Phase I – Consolidation of Tools (2025–2026)

Objective: Transform the Eurocluster's foundational assets (Declaration, Living Labs, OSS, Trademark, and Platform) into a coherent operational system.

Key actions by Axis:

- **Institutional Axis:**
 - Formalise the Eurocluster governance framework and the Board for International Governance.
 - Ensure alignment with EU and international policies (Green Deal, Digital Decade, UNESCO, FAO–GIAHS).
 - Define policy indicators and reporting templates for EU-level monitoring.
- **Community Axis:**
 - Consolidate the seven Living Labs and OSS as regional innovation nodes.
 - Expand the Med Diet Declaration community through targeted outreach campaigns.
 - Launch first online training and awareness activities through the MDG platform.
- **Business Axis:**



- Finalise the MD trademark management structure and prepare guidelines for authorised users.
- Complete the development of the digital marketplace and repository for SMEs.
- Pilot bundled PDO/PGI portfolios and integrated tourism itineraries.

Expected outputs:

Operational platform with LMS and KPI dashboard; functioning OSS network; Eurocluster governance fully established; trademark guidelines published; first transnational visibility campaign launched.

Phase II – Transnational Integration (2026–2027)

Objective: Create functional and thematic synergies across regions, connecting territorial innovation ecosystems through shared standards and collaborative projects.

Key actions by Axis:

- **Institutional Axis:**
 - Establish formal cooperation agreements among partner regions and thematic nodes (Tourism, Agri-food, Ho.Re.Ca., Mobility).
 - Develop a Mediterranean-wide certification and policy alignment mechanism.
- **Community Axis:**
 - Scale up Living Lab methodologies across additional territories; encourage participation of new NGOs, schools, and youth associations.
 - Integrate OSS services into the platform, ensuring interoperability and shared data collection.
 - Expand training curricula on green and digital skills.
- **Business Axis:**
 - Implement Eurocluster-wide branding and promotion strategy.
 - Organise collective participation in major international fairs (e.g., Berlin Fruit Logistica, Terra Madre, FITUR).
 - Launch Eurocluster business matchmaking and cross-border investment events.

Expected outputs:

Transnational cooperation network established; shared quality framework adopted; 500+ SMEs registered in the platform; MD brand deployed in at least 3 international fairs.

Phase III – Internationalisation and Policy Uptake (2027–2028)

Objective: Position the MDG Eurocluster as a global reference model for sustainable food, culture, and tourism.

Key actions by Axis:

- **Institutional Axis:**
 - Strengthen partnerships with UNESCO, FAO, and UNWTO; contribute to EU-UfM dialogue on sustainable economies.



- Develop policy papers and best-practice guidelines for integration into EU programmes and macro-regional strategies.
- **Community Axis:**
 - Promote interregional study visits, youth exchanges, and creative residencies focused on Mediterranean identity.
 - Launch thematic campaigns on healthy diets, cultural diversity, and circular lifestyles.
- **Business Axis:**
 - Conduct global promotional actions using the MD trademark and digital marketplace.
 - Support export consortia and joint ventures among SMEs.
 - Introduce AI-powered analytics for market intelligence and performance monitoring.

Expected outputs:

Eurocluster recognised as a policy partner at EU and global levels; brand visibility extended to non-EU markets; measurable export growth and increased investment flow.

Phase IV – Long-Term Sustainability (2028–2030)

Objective: Ensure the Eurocluster’s legal, financial, and operational sustainability beyond the project duration.

Key actions by Axis:

- **Institutional Axis:**
 - Formalise the Eurocluster as a legal entity under EU law or European Cluster Alliance framework.
 - Establish a long-term funding strategy (EU programmes, membership fees, public-private partnerships).
 - Maintain active governance dialogue with international organisations.
- **Community Axis:**
 - Institutionalise Living Labs and OSS within regional policies.
 - Integrate Med Diet education modules into schools and VET systems.
 - Maintain continuous citizen engagement through the platform.
- **Business Axis:**
 - Ensure renewal of the MD trademark beyond 2030.
 - Develop new business models for cluster-based services (digital promotion, certification, training).
 - Launch the first Mediterranean Diet Excellence Award as an annual event.

Expected outputs:

Eurocluster institutionalised; self-financing mechanisms in place; continuous policy dialogue active; sustainable branding and training services operating beyond 2030.



Summary of Implementation Logic

The four phases form a **progressive consolidation pathway**:

Tools → Integration → Internationalisation → Sustainability

Each phase deepens the cooperation between institutions, communities, and markets, ensuring that the Eurocluster matures from a project-based partnership into a permanent transnational organisation aligned with European and global sustainability objectives.

6.3 Milestones and Timelines

The following roadmap translates Eurocluster's strategic phases into **chronological milestones**, illustrating how its governance, digital tools, branding, and cooperation mechanisms can mature over time.

Although indicative, this timeline provides a **realistic framework** for future continuity, ensuring that all assets and networks created under the Med-Diet Go project evolve into a **permanent Mediterranean cooperation platform**.

Each milestone is associated with one or more of the three strategic axes — Institutional/Policy, Community, and Market — and identifies the **key actors** responsible for implementation.

6.3.1 Descriptive Overview

2025 – Consolidation of Results and Governance Setup

- Completion of the MDG project activities and formalisation of the Eurocluster governance (Board, Technical Team, Sectoral Nodes).
- Strengthening of the Med Diet Declaration network and renewal of stakeholder engagement.
- Activation of the web platform core functions and alignment with GDPR and EU digital standards.
- Responsible: Eurocluster Secretariat, Fundación Dieta Mediterránea, OSS coordinators.

2026 – Operationalisation and Digital Expansion

- Launch of the digital marketplace and repository of best practices.
- Deployment of the Learning Management System (LMS) and KPI dashboard.
- Full networking of the seven OSS and integration into the platform.
Publication of the MD trademark guidelines and first co-branded visibility campaign.
Responsible: Technical Team (Digital & Branding Units), Local OSS Managers, Communication Lead.

2027 – Transnational Integration and Cross-Border Cooperation

- Establishment of thematic working groups across the four sectoral nodes.
- Joint training initiatives, transnational Living Labs, and shared policy recommendations.



- Participation in EU tourism, food, and innovation pathways (ECCP, Pact for Skills, Transition Pathway for Tourism).
- Responsible: Eurocluster Secretariat, Sectoral Node Leads, Regional Partners.

2028 – Internationalisation and Global Branding

- Launch of global MD brand campaign with participation in major international fairs (FITUR, Terra Madre, Berlin Fruit Logistica).
- Policy dialogue events with UNESCO, FAO, and EU institutions.
- Establishment of Eurocluster Excellence Award and transnational investment forum.
- Responsible: Board for International Governance, Secretariat, Branding Unit.

2029–2030 – Institutionalisation and Sustainability

Legal registration of the Eurocluster as a transnational entity.

- Renewal of the MD trademark (valid until 2030) and creation of revenue-generating digital services.
- Integration into EU and UfM macro-regional strategies and long-term financing mechanisms.

Responsible: Eurocluster Secretariat, Legal and Financial Units, Board for International Governance.

Table 5 - Indicative Implementation Timeline and Milestones (2025-2030)

| Indicative Implementation Timeline and Milestones (2025-2030) | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|-------------------------|
| Year/Phase | Main Milestones | Expected outputs | Key Responsible Actors | Strategic Axis |
| 2025-Consolidation of Tools | Governance structure finalised; OSS network operational; Platform core active | Governance charter, Declaration relaunch, platform online | Eurocluster Secretariat, OSS Coordinators | Institutional Community |
| 2026-Digital Expansion | LMS integration; marketplace launch; MD trademark operational | Fully functional platform; training modules online; 1st branding campaign | Technical Team (Digital, Branding), Fundación Dieta Mediterránea | Community Business |
| 2027-Transnational strengthening | Thematic nodes of cooperation; FAO-UNESCO, UNWTO, WTO, | Eurocluster-wide collaboration agreements, joint training and policy | Sectoral Leaders, Regional Partners; Board of International | Institutional Community |



| | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|--|---|----------------------------------|
| | UfM partnerships | actions | Governance, Secretariat | |
| 2028-Internationalisation | Shared certification and quality framework; Global brand campaign; | Increased visibility, investor interest, cross-border business deals | Board for International Governance, Secretariat | Institutional Business |
| 2029-2030-Sustainability | Legal recognition of Eurocluster; long-term financing; renewal of trademark | Permanent Eurocluster entity; stable funding; sustainability plan | Secretariat, Financial Unit, Legal Advisors | Institutional Community Business |

6.3.2 Implementation Highlights

- The **Institutional/Policy axis** drives governance, partnerships, and policy influence (2025–2030).
- The **Community axis** sustains Living Labs, OSS, and training programmes (2025–2027).
The **Business axis** activates branding, digitalisation, and competitiveness (2026–2030).
- Each phase consolidates the previous one, ensuring that **MDG evolves from a project to a permanent Eurocluster structure.**

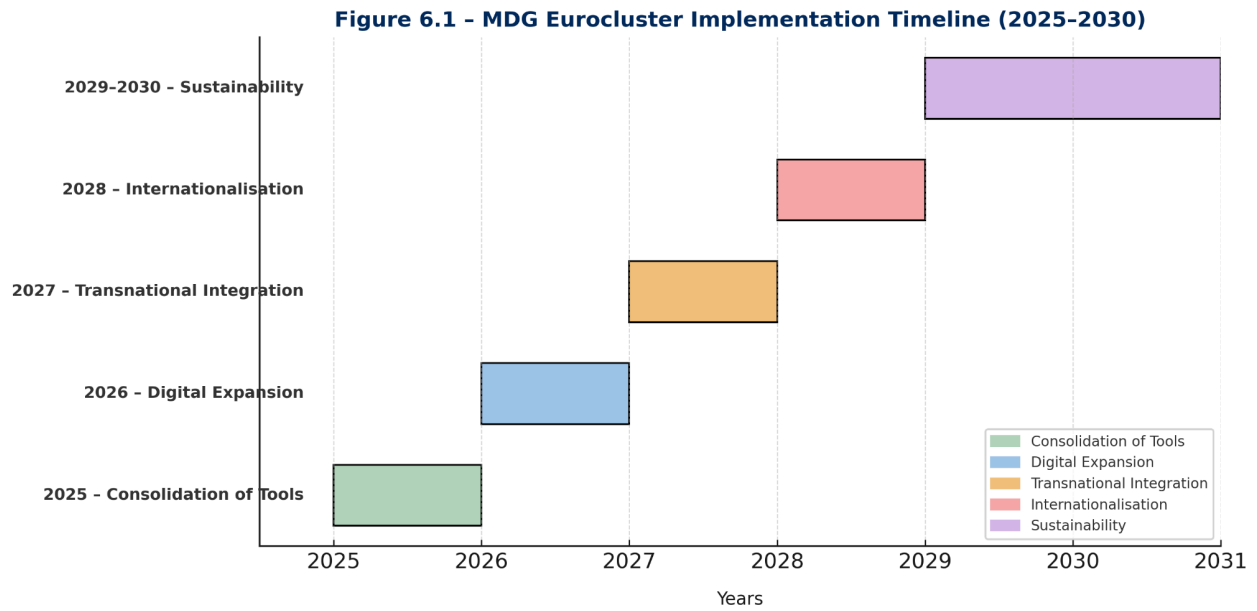
6.3.3 Expected 2030 Outcome

Following the above-described pathway, by 2030 the Med-Diet Eurocluster will be:

- **Legally established** as a transnational cooperative entity
- **Financially sustainable**, with diversified funding and service-based revenues
- **Institutionally recognised** by the EU, UNESCO, and FAO as a Mediterranean model for sustainable food systems
- **Digitally connected**, through a fully integrated platform linking enterprises, communities, and governance actors.



Table 6 - MDG Eurocluster Implementation Timeline (2025-2030)





7. Expected results and Key Performance Indicators

The Key Performance Indicators (KPI) mirror the structure of the JAP: Governance→Implementation→Impact - while matching EU rational output vs result indicators. The **KPI framework** ensures that the Med-Diet Eurocluster’s achievements are **measurable, comparable, and policy-relevant**.

It translates the Eurocluster’s actions — from governance and capacity building to digitalisation and internationalisation — into a set of **outputs (immediate deliverables)** and **results (medium- to long-term impacts)**, following the EU cohesion and cluster monitoring methodology.

The indicators are grouped under the **three strategic axes** and complemented by **cross-cutting KPIs** for governance, digital transition, and sustainability.

Table 7 - Institutional and Policy Axis - Shaping the Twin Transition

| 7.1 Institutional and Policy Axis - Shaping the Twin Transition | | | | |
|---|--|---------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Type | Indicator | Baseline 2025 | Target 2030 | Data source Verification |
| Output | Number of public institutions engaged in Eurocluster governance (EU, national, regional, local) | 7 | 21 | Governance database; Board minutes |
| Output | Number of cooperation agreements / MoUs signed with EU & international organisations (UNESCO, FAO, WTO, UfM) | 1 | 3 | Official agreements; Secretariat reports |
| Output | Number of Policy briefs, position papers, joint recommendations produced | 2 | 5 | Secretariat documentation |
| Result | Integration of MDG model in EU and international organisations’ policies | 0 | At least 2 formal recognitions | EU, UNESCO, FAO, UNWTO, UfM. |
| Result | Improvement in multi-level coordination (measured by stakeholder survey index, 1–5 scale) | n.a. | 4 | Annual Governance Survey |



Table 8 - Community Axis - Empowering Local Territories

| 7.2 Community Axis - Empowering Local Territories | | | | |
|---|--|-----------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| Type | Indicator | Baseline 2025 | Target 2030 | Data source Verification |
| Output | Number of Living Labs and OSS operational | 7 | 14 | Regional reports; platform registry |
| Output | Number of stakeholders (SMEs, NGOs, schools, associations) participating in Eurocluster activities | 200 | 700 | OSS and LL attendance lists |
| Output | Number of participants trained (online and in-person) via Eurocluster LMS and events | 0 | 700 | LMS analytics; training reports |
| Output | Number of new adherents to the Med Diet Declaration | 200 | 700 | Declaration Registry |
| Result | Increase in local cooperation rate among MSMEs (measured by surveys and joint initiatives) | Baseline survey | +30% | Monitoring Survey |
| Result | Improved social inclusion and gender participation in rural communities | n.a. | +30% | Participant data |

Table 9 - Business Axis - Building Mediterranean Competitiveness

| 7.3 Business Axis - Building Mediterranean Competitiveness | | | | |
|--|---|---------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| Type | Indicator | Baseline 2025 | Target 2030 | Data source Verification |
| Output | Number of SMEs using the MD trademark and participating in branding actions | 0 | 300 | Trademark register |



| | | | | |
|--------|---|------------|------|------------------------------------|
| Output | Number of products and services promoted under the MD brand (food, tourism, culture) | 35 | 200 | Marketplace data |
| Output | Number of joint promotional campaigns and international fairs attended | 0 | 10 | Communication reports |
| Output | Number of business matchmaking and B2B events organised | 0 | 10 | ECCP participation records |
| Result | Increase in SME export visibility (measured through online reach and market presence index) | Baseline 0 | +30% | Platform analytics |
| Result | Growth in cluster-wide turnover from branded products/services | Baseline 0 | +20% | Financial self-reporting; OSS data |

Table 10 - Cross-Cutting Indicators - Governance, Digitalisation, Sustainability

| 7.4 Cross-Cutting Indicators - Governance, Digitalisation, Sustainability | | | | |
|---|---|---------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Type | Indicator | Baseline 2025 | Target 2030 | Data source Verification |
| Output | Eurocluster platform fully operational (modules: marketplace, repository, LMS, KPI dashboard) | 30% | 100% | Platform analytics |
| Output | Number of registered users and active interactions on the platform | 0 | 700 users 7000 annual visits | Web analytics |
| Output | Number of digital training modules and MOOCs developed | 0 | 20 | LMS statistics |
| Output | Number of eco-innovation and circular economy practices piloted | 0 | 14 | LLs reports |



| | | | | |
|--------|--|----------|------|----------------------|
| Result | Reduction of environmental footprint in cluster operations (energy, waste, logistics) | Baseline | -25% | Sustainability audit |
| Result | Eurocluster self-sustainability ratio (share of self-generated income in total budget) | 0 | +50% | Financial reports |

7.5 Monitoring and Data Governance

All KPIs will be monitored through the **Eurocluster Platform Dashboard**, connected to:

- **One-Stop Shop data inputs** (stakeholder participation, services delivered);
- **LMS analytics** (training hours, completion rates);
- **Marketplace statistics** (transactions, visits, user interactions);
- **Governance surveys** (cooperation levels, satisfaction indices);
- **Financial and administrative reports** from partners.

Annual reports will consolidate progress under each axis, while the **AI-assisted monitoring system** will generate real-time visual dashboards. These will support adaptive management and evidence-based policymaking, aligned with EU evaluation standards (result orientation, coherence, added value).

Table 11 - Summary of Expected Impacts by 2030

| 7.6 Summary of Expected Impacts by 2030 | |
|---|--|
| Impact Area | Outcomes |
| Institutional/Policy | Mediterranean Diet recognised as a model for sustainable territorial governance at EU and global level. |
| Community | Empowered Mediterranean communities actively participating in innovation, education, and local resilience networks. |
| Business | Mediterranean Diet brand consolidated as a trusted mark of quality and sustainability, with increased SME competitiveness and export visibility. |
| Digital/Green Transition | Full operational integration of digital, training, and sustainability tools reducing environmental footprint and enhancing data-based cooperation. |
| Governance Sustainability | Eurocluster is legally established, financially self-sufficient, and operating as a transnational cooperation entity. |



8. Conclusion

The **Med-Diet Eurocluster Joint Action Plan** lays the groundwork for a renewed Mediterranean cooperation, transforming the cultural and environmental wealth of the **Mediterranean Diet** into a catalyst for innovation, competitiveness, and shared prosperity.

Through its integrated governance, participatory methodologies, and alignment with the **EU twin transition**, the Eurocluster bridges **tradition and innovation**, linking **local communities with global policies**.

Beyond institutional frameworks, the actions already carried out by partners through **Living Labs, One-Stop Shops**, and collaborations with **international organisations** (UNESCO, FAO, EU) have begun to **change mindsets within communities**.

They have nurtured new forms of participation, a stronger sense of belonging, and a collective awareness that sustainable development is not imposed from above but **co-created from within**.

The Plan, thus, consolidates this cultural shift, turning cooperation into a lasting practice and the Mediterranean Diet into a **living model of social innovation**.

By connecting institutions, communities, and markets under a shared vision, the Med-Diet Eurocluster reaffirms that the values of the Mediterranean Diet—**sustainability, cooperation, and identity**—can inspire a new generation of Mediterranean actors committed to building a **resilient, inclusive, and forward-looking region**.



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2. **Farm to Fork Strategy** (European Commission, 2020)
3. **EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030** (European Commission, 2020)
4. **Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030** (Decision (EU) 2022/2481)
5. **EU Transition Pathway for Tourism** (European Commission, DG GROW, 2022)
6. **New Industrial Strategy for Europe** (European Commission, COM(2020) 102 final; updated 2021)
7. **European Agenda for Tourism 2030** (Council Conclusions, 1 December 2022)
8. **Cohesion Policy 2021–2027** (Regulation (EU) 2021/1058)
9. **NextGenerationEU Recovery Plan** (European Council, 2020)
10. **European Skills Agenda** (European Commission, 2020)
11. **Pact for Skills** (European Commission, 2020)
12. **SME Performance Review** (European Commission, 2024 edition)
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23. **UNESCO Mediterranean Diet inscription** (2010)
24. **FAO Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)** (FAO, 2002)
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MedDiet Go

**Interreg
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Co-funded by
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30. **World Health Organization (WHO) – Healthy Diets Framework and Mediterranean Model** (2021)

Methodological and Project-based Sources

31. **MD.net – Mediterranean Diet Network Project** (Interreg MED, 2018–2022)
32. **MedDiet Go Project Application Form and Guidelines** (Interreg Euro-MED, 2023)
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34. **MedDiet Declaration and Trademark Guide for Applicants** (2024)
35. **MedDiet Go Digital Platform Development Plan** (Annex MDG Platform.xlsx, 2025)
36. **European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL) – Living Lab Methodology and Standards** (2023 edition)