

project review

Interreg project Italy – Croatia S.LI.DES.



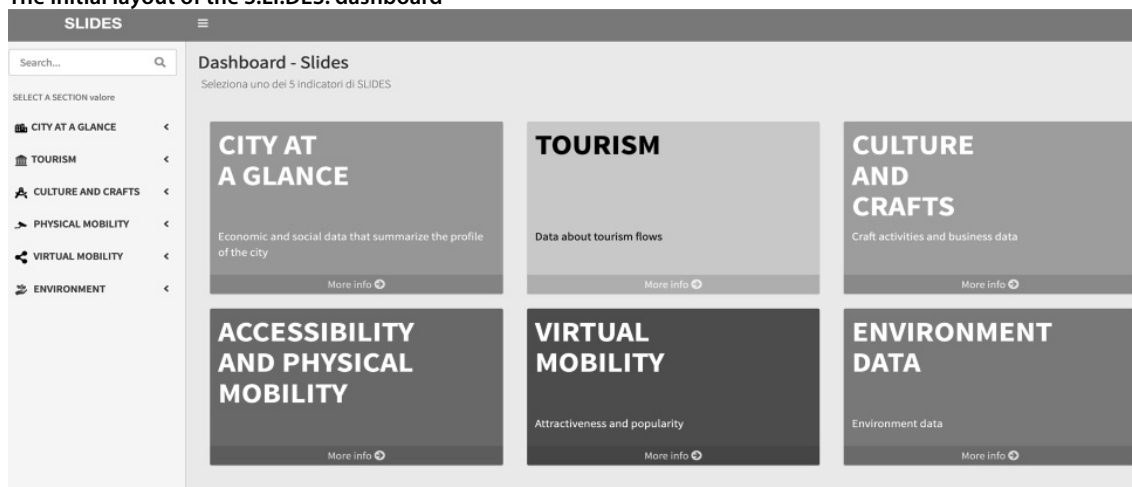
"Heritage as a leverage for sustainable tourism": this is the slogan of the European project Smart strategies for sustainable tourism in Lively cultural DESTinations (S.LI.DES.), funded by the INTERREG Italy-Croatia Programme and started in January 2019 involving 11 partners: University of Ca' Foscari, lead partner, CISET, Ecipa, SIPRO Ferrara, City of Bari, City of Venice, CAST-University of Bologna, Institute for Tourism, Craft College - Institution for adult education Subsidiary Rijeka, Development Agency of the City of Dubrovnik - Dura and Sibenik Tourist board.

The project aims at fostering cross border cooperation among cultural destinations in the program area and the joint planning of smart strategies to support more sustainable and balanced territorial development through the promotion of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, in particular those assets shaping the identity of the destinations.

The project will provide local authorities – but potentially also other stakeholders - with an innovative dynamic knowledge system that will enhance their decision-making process regarding the management of most popular sites. Especially by exploiting the tourism potential of "minor" cultural assets, as a leverage to revitalize the urban and social environment and diversify the local economy. So, through the set of innovative tools and methods, S.LI.DES will develop a Smart Destination Ecosystem to dynamically analyze different aspects of the project cultural destinations' heritage, monitor visitors' mobility patterns and identify the potential of valuable skills and "know-how" to enhance visitors' experience. All data will concur to assess the competitive and sustainable performance of the destinations, to support the development of actions aimed at diversifying tourism offer through targeted investments in cultural heritage and to design a cross border smart strategy transferable at EU level.

The first phase of the project was largely dedicated to a data hub creation. For this purpose, a set of indicators has been defined using the relevant scientific literature. The set of identified indicators consists of five groups: smart economy, smart environment, smart accessibility and mobility, smart society, smart living. After identifying the indicators, partner cities (Venice, Bari, Ferrara, Sibenik, Dubrovnik) started with a data collection process that proved to be extremely demanding for several reasons. One of the major challenges was the difficulty of obtaining the requested data at local level (sometimes not available at all), followed by the inappropriate format and insufficient time series. Heterogeneity of data and differences in the way of measuring the same indicators between five cities (for example green areas) was also noticed. Ultimately, the partner cities manage to collect a satisfactory amount of data that were enriched with the data retrieved from Google Trend and TripAdvisor. The next step in data hub creation is to add a real-time data on tourist flows, which is why procurement and installation of appropriate equipment (sensors and cameras) are underway in five partner cities. All data collected will be processed and a city specific KPIs will be created and displayed on a dashboard whose initial layout is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
The initial layout of the S.LI.DES. dashboard



Also, the dashboard will be enriched with the data on existing handicrafts and CCI businesses in each partner city. Considerable amount of information about the consistency of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, handicrafts and related CCIs will be collected to understand their tourism potential. A heritage database will contain basic information such as the company name, address, primary activity, website, product category, turnover of the last available year etc. In addition to the basic information, database will provide dynamic map and the ranking/clustering of the businesses. Additional information will be collected through an online survey among the selected businesses. One of the aims of the survey is to collect information valuable for analyzing the impact of Covid-19 emergency and its recovery. Covid-related questions were added subsequently, as the pandemic seriously affected the tourism sector. Given that a pandemic of this magnitude cannot be ignored; adapting and rescheduling of the activities of the SLIDES project will continue together with modifications, which will consist the emerging needs of enterprises and public bodies.

Certainly, there is a need, for the near future and longer, to help associations and entrepreneurs to manage the difficult times and take the necessary actions for recovery and revitalization of businesses connected with tourism economy. SLIDES can support destinations to manage tourism in a sustainable way, by considering how the following elements have been affected: patterns of mobility in relation to current health concerns, city users behaviors, ways to experience the destination, business requirements. Visitors' mobility models can help to know better how local and non-local city users share public spaces, obtaining access to services and attractions (see Figure 2), supporting governance policies and innovation within tourism destinations. Mapping cultural heritage can help businesses to innovate and improve the offer of visitors' experiences (also becoming more sustainable).

S.LI.DES. project combines a wide range of smart technologies and methods to integrate destination data and analytics thus supporting decision-makers in adopting a new sustainable perspective to valorize cultural heritage, preserve local identity, promote territorial development and make their destinations more lively and livable for visitors and the local community. The main project outputs (Smart Destination Ecosystem methodology, Destination dashboard and S.LI.DES strategy) will benefit decision-makers and public authorities, local craftsmen, cultural associations and SMEs, tourism industries visitors and citizens.

Figure 2
Real-time heat map of the crowd effect



Due to many different activities and complexity of the project, it is important to continuously monitor progress, exchange ideas and opinions. For these reasons, project meetings are held regularly. The last in person meeting was held in Zagreb (see Figure 3), while the third project meeting was held online due to the Covid-19 emergency.

The project will end in June 2021.

Figure 3
The second Project Meeting held in Zagreb



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