

BODAH takes another step in improving tourism management and people management flows in heritage cities in the Atlantic Area

To measure and better understand the behaviour of both visitors and the citizens of heritage cities in the Atlantic Area; in order to enhance management practices and enable the achievement of sustainable tourism and crowd's management.

This is the main aim of the BODAH (Big and Open Data for Atlantic Heritage) project. The project is headed by Turismo de Santiago de Compostela and includes Fomento de San Sebastián and Fundación Santa María la Real del Patrimonio Histórico (Spain), Universidade Nova de Lisboa (Portugal), Cork Institute of Technology (Republic of Ireland), Glasgow Caledonian University and Bangor University (UK).

→ How can this be achieved?

By designing technological solutions that collect data from different sources and transform them into practical knowledge. As of now, the project, which began at the end of 2019, has already managed to establish its own indicator system that determines which data should be measured and used for pilot schemes in four cities: Santiago de Compostela and San Sebastian in Spain, Pau in France, and Cork in Ireland.

→ Indicator System:

The system has been designed using the Europe-based model. Such model has been adapted, on the one hand, to the specifications of the project and to the destinations selected for the implementation and, on the other hand, to the unprecedented situation generated by COVID-19 pandemic. ***“Our aim is to strengthen sustainable tourism and improve people management flows in the cities in which we operate as this creates benefits for both visitors to the destination and for its citizens”*** as BODAH Partners have stated.

The main purpose of the indicator system is to determine what aspects need to be measured and assessed to develop suitable tourism and people flow management practices. To achieve this, firstly, it is necessary to understand the behaviour of both citizens and visitors of the destination. Some issues are addressed: which places are visited the most; what level of visitation these experience; how this traffic affects the site in question; what perceptions tourists and citizens have of the destination and, finally, the socio-economic effects associated to the destination.

→ 30 indicators tackling different aspects:

The response – determined by 30 indicators – has three functions: to understand the real situation of the areas of reference monitored; to anticipate and prevent possible saturation; to establish action strategies aimed at promoting good practices in the field of tourism.

The system developed by the BODAH project will make possible, for example, to know how many people visit Santiago de Compostela's historical city centre at any given time, the length of their stay, how their visit affects the environment, what opinions tourists have of the city, and the attitude of the local population towards tourists.

The BODAH Partner responsible for the Indicators System added: “At a time like this, with the coronavirus totally disrupting our daily lives, it is crucial to have tools and systems that allow tourism and its flows to certain areas to be better controlled in order to ensure safety”.

→ Next steps

As soon as the system is completed, this will be applied to the destinations selected for the project. This will allow to continue the development of technological solutions to inform local and national organisations and provide guidance how to efficiently manage heritage cities in the Atlantic Area.

With a total budget of €1,573,373 – of which 75% is provided by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) – the BODAH project will run until 2021 as part of the Interreg Atlantic Area programme.