



# **TWINNED** By Stars

## **D.4.4 POLICY FEEDBACK REPORT 1**

### **TWINNEDBYSTARS**

UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF INNOVATION, CIRCULARITY, AND  
DIGITALISATION FOR ACCELERATING NEW MARINE-BASED  
ECOTOURISM, JOINT PRACTICES, AND BUSINESSES IN ORS

**GRANT AGREEMENT N° 101124900**



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## VERSION HISTORY

Ver.	Date	Comments/Changes	Author/Reviewer
0.1	24/03/2025	First draft sent to Lead partner, CMC and Nautic Ocean	Consulta Europa
0.2	25/03/2025	Second draft sent to Lead partner, CMC and Nautic Ocean	Revision made by Teresa Gubern (ULPGC), modification by Consulta Europa.
0.2	26/03/2025	Second draft sent to Lead partner, CMC and Nautic Ocean	Revision made by Mónica Quesada (CMC), modification by Consulta Europa.
1.0	27/03/2025	Final draft reviewed by partners	Consulta Europa

## DELIVERABLE INFORMATION

<b>Project Acronym</b>	TWINNEDbySTARS
<b>Project Title</b>	Unlocking the potential of innovation, circularity, and digitalisation for accelerating new marine-based ecotourism, joint practices, and businesses in ORs
<b>Type of action</b>	EMFAF Project Grants
<b>Topic</b>	EMFAF-2023-PIA-FLAGSHIP-5-OR
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<b>Author(s)</b>	Consulta Europa Projects and Innovation
<b>Reviewer(s)</b>	Steering Committee members

<sup>1</sup> PU= Public, SEN=Sensitive



**POLICY BRIEF** (max 4 pages)

**Project acronym and number:**

TWINNEDBYSTARS – 01124900

**Policy impact** (max 100 words)

*How does your project contribute to the policy objectives indicated in the Call document (including more recent policy initiatives at EU or national level).*

The project contributes to the EU Sustainable Blue Economy Strategy and the European Green Deal by promoting sustainable, low-impact tourism models in the ORs. Through co-creating innovative tourism products, it supports local economic diversification while protecting marine ecosystems, in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

By fostering cooperation among maritime territories and encouraging multi-destination development, the project strengthens regional synergies and visibility. It aligns with the EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters, promoting ocean literacy and community-driven tourism innovation. The project also supports the EU's Transition Pathway for Tourism, emphasizing resilient, sustainable tourism and growth in the blue economy.

**Impact for citizens and communities**

*Describe the impacts for EU citizens and citizen communities.*

The TWINNEDbySTARS project is enhancing the economic, social, and digital resilience of Europe's Outermost Regions (ORs) by promoting sustainable coastal and maritime tourism, supporting local businesses, and fostering cross-regional cooperation. Regional analysis confirmed the strategic weight of the sector: maritime tourism generates up to 20% of local GDP in some territories and involves hundreds of small businesses with close ties to their communities. Through co-creation workshops, product innovation, and capacity-building initiatives, the project directly benefits small tourism SMEs and coastal communities, helping them integrate digital tools and sustainable practices to improve their competitiveness and long-term viability.

A key strength of TWINNEDbySTARS is its participatory approach, ensuring that local stakeholders play an active role in shaping new tourism experiences. The project follows a bottom-up methodology, where SMEs, policymakers, and other key actors in the sector co-create tourism products that align with real market needs and sustainability objectives. The final products to be developed—Atlantic Starlight Adventures and Atlantic On-board Internships—were selected through a public voting process, further reinforcing the importance of stakeholder involvement in decision-making. This approach guarantees that the new tourism offerings contribute to the economic diversification of ORs, providing stable, long-term employment opportunities and reducing reliance on seasonal tourism cycles.

The project addresses long-standing gaps in skills and innovation capacity across the outermost regions, as identified in regional mapping and stakeholder surveys. To tackle these, TWINNEDbySTARS prioritizes capacity building and professional development to ensure that local SMEs are equipped to meet digital and sustainability challenges. Its Capacity Building Programme, currently under development, includes a series of training and mentoring activities focused on digitalisation, sustainability, and business innovation. The first two training courses, led by ULPGC, focus on AI-powered digital marketing and innovation in nautical tourism. As the programme expands, additional opportunities will be introduced. These initiatives are particularly targeted at young professionals, small business owners, women entrepreneurs, and workers in transition, aiming to strengthen skills and foster a more resilient, inclusive, and future-oriented blue tourism sector.

TWINNEDbySTARS also fosters community engagement and stakeholder networking. To strengthen collaboration among tourism professionals, researchers, and entrepreneurs, the project has launched the "My Community" section on its website. This platform brings together innovative companies, experts, and entrepreneurs from the maritime and tourism sectors who share a common vision: transforming and diversifying the tourism offer in the Outermost Regions. Through this network, businesses and professionals exchange

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knowledge, promote authentic and sustainable tourism initiatives, and support the co-creation of new astro-tourism and marine experiences tailored to the challenges and opportunities of these territories.

Beyond product development and training, TWINNEDbySTARS fosters collaboration across regions, strengthening networking between ORs and increasing their collective visibility in international markets. The project plays a crucial role in positioning the Outermost Regions as key actors in sustainable maritime tourism, ensuring that businesses in these remote areas can compete effectively while preserving their environmental and cultural heritage. Through partnerships with initiatives such as A3M Alliance, NAUTICOM, and Interreg MAC projects, TWINNEDbySTARS integrates its work within broader European and regional strategies, ensuring long-term sustainability and reinforcing the role of the blue economy in ORs.

From an environmental perspective, the project encourages the adoption of low-impact and responsible tourism practices, particularly through its support for Starlight Certification and the promotion of astrotourism experiences that raise awareness about light pollution and marine conservation. To ensure sustainability, companies involved in the project and interested in the products developed must meet a range of criteria, including recycling all types of materials on board, minimizing plastic and single-use items, offering local food products, and incorporating elements of cultural heritage into their services. For example, showcasing the role of stars in traditional navigation. These initiatives help ensure that economic growth in maritime tourism aligns with the protection of natural resources, the night sky, and coastal ecosystems.

Together, these activities empower coastal communities, strengthen regional resilience, and ensure that maritime tourism in the Outermost Regions remains inclusive, sustainable, and competitive in the long term.

**Impact for companies and businesses (if applicable) (max 100 words)**

*Describe the impacts for EU companies and businesses.*

TWINNEDbySTARS is delivering concrete benefits for tourism SMEs in the ORs by supporting the development of new products, services, and skills. The project engages a highly fragmented sector—over 600 small-scale tourism businesses were identified across the four regions—helping them adapt to evolving market demands.

Key outcomes include the co-created tourism products Atlantic Starlight Adventures and Atlantic On-board Internships, the uptake of Starlight Certification by participating companies, and targeted training activities to boost innovation and digitalisation. Certification has already been obtained by two companies, and others are actively contributing to product development and capacity building. Its multi-regional scope reinforces long-term sustainability and replication across similar coastal and island areas.

**Barriers and future needs (max 100 words)**

The project has identified structural challenges that affect the participation of tourism SMEs in sustainability and innovation initiatives. Many businesses operate with limited staff, especially during high tourism seasons, and lack expertise in adopting digital or low-impact practices. There are also major disparities in market maturity and institutional support across the ORs. In addition, the absence of common standards for sustainable tourism products and certifications hampers cross-regional coordination and scalability.

Future policy efforts should reinforce technical and financial support tailored to micro-enterprises, harmonize certification and sustainability frameworks across regions, and strengthen collaboration between local and EU-level Programmes to accelerate adoption and replication.

**Market readiness and IPR (if applicable) (max 100 words)**

The selected tourism products, Atlantic Starlight Adventures and Atlantic On-board Internships, are in the early development and validation phase, with participating SMEs contributing to their design and implementation.



While not yet commercialised, both products demonstrate strong market potential, supported by co-creation with end users and a public voting process to ensure demand.

The upcoming marketing and business plan will provide a framework for testing and scaling. Initial adopters include certified companies engaged in astro-tourism. While the project does not involve patents or awards, its community-driven model increases the chances for successful market uptake across similar territories.

#### Other

*Are there any other elements about the project relevant for being mentioned?*

TWINNEDbySTARS strengthens structured cooperation among Europe's Outermost Regions (ORs) by providing a practical framework for cross-regional collaboration in the blue tourism sector. Through this initiative, public and private actors from Azores, Madeira, Canary Islands, and Martinique have co-created a tourism narrative grounded in sustainability, innovation, and territorial identity. One of the key legacies of the project is the "My Community" platform, a digital space that will remain active beyond the project's lifetime, supporting long-term networking and the co-development of future initiatives.

Tourism plays a crucial role in the economies of the ORs, representing 35% of the GDP in the Canary Islands and a quarter in Madeira. The COVID-19 crisis significantly impacted this sector, underscoring the need for resilient, sustainable recovery. TWINNEDbySTARS contributes to this recovery by promoting low-impact, sustainable tourism models, while helping local businesses adapt to digital and sustainability challenges.

In line with the European Commission's *COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS, Putting people first, securing sustainable and inclusive growth, unlocking the potential of the EU's outermost regions (03/05/2022)*, the project encourages investments in resilient, digitally fit, and sustainable tourism, which aligns with the Commission's emphasis on the green and digital transitions.

TWINNEDbySTARS shows how locally rooted, participatory approaches can generate scalable, sustainable tourism models, strengthening territorial cohesion and enhancing collaboration across Europe's Outermost Regions.

#### EU funding statement



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