



Ciudad  
de Málaga

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# Strategic Plan for STO Malaga 2025-2029





# Summary

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# 1. Introduction

This document, entitled Strategic Plan for the Sustainable Tourism Observatory of Malaga (STO Malaga) 2025–2029, establishes the foundations for promoting a Smart Tourist Destination (STD) model of sustainable tourism that contributes to the balanced development of the city of Malaga, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the demands of the current global context.

Far from being a static document, this plan is a dynamic, continuously evolving project. Its development is enriched by the integration of new initiatives, projects, trends, data sources, and innovative methodologies. Through a participatory approach involving key stakeholders from the tourism sector, public institutions, and civil society, the plan aims to establish a working framework that enables Malaga to become a benchmark in smart and sustainable tourism management.

The implementation of this plan is intended not only to address the immediate challenges posed by tourism growth but also to anticipate future concerns related to sustainability, climate change, and social inclusion. This approach will allow Malaga to position itself as a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive tourist destination—fully aligned with the principles of environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

The Sustainable Tourism Observatory of Malaga (STO Malaga) is committed to ensuring that all strategic decisions are grounded in data-based evidence and a deep understanding of tourism’s impact on the local environment. In this way, the Observatory will serve not only as a platform for continuous monitoring and evaluation but also as a hub for sharing knowledge and best practices, both locally and internationally.

This plan is designed with flexibility in mind, allowing it to adapt to new trends, projects, and technological developments—ensuring its long-term relevance and effectiveness. We are confident that, with the joint effort of all the stakeholders involved, this document will be a cornerstone for guiding the sustainable digital transformation of tourism in Malaga, benefiting both its residents and its visitors.



## 1.1 UN Tourism Sustainability Strategy

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*UN Tourism is the United Nations agency responsible for promoting responsible, sustainable, and accessible tourism for all.*

As the leading international organisation in the field of tourism, UN Tourism advocates for sustainable, resilient tourism that contributes to **economic growth, inclusive development, and environmental sustainability**, while providing leadership and support to the sector in spreading knowledge and tourism policies worldwide.

UN Tourism is a leading advocate for **sustainable tourism development**, supporting policies and practices that make optimal use of environmental resources, respect the sociocultural authenticity of host communities, and deliver economic benefits for all.

In this regard, UN Tourism is tasked with promoting responsible, sustainable, and accessible tourism for all, with a strong emphasis on achieving the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the universally applicable Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

Within the area of sustainable development, **UN Tourism also drives the development of Sustainable Tourism Observatories worldwide**. These Tourism Observatories form a network dedicated to monitoring tourism development from the perspective of sustainability.

## 1.2 The INSTO Network Worldwide

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The **International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO)**, established by **UN Tourism**, is a global network of Observatories that monitor the economic, environmental, and social impacts of tourism at the destination level.

Created in 2004 under the auspices of **UN Tourism**, the INSTO Network aims to support the continuous improvement of sustainability and resilience in the tourism sector. It achieves this through systematic monitoring of tourism performance and its impacts, enabling a better understanding of the extensive use of resources in destinations and promoting the responsible management of tourism.



## 1.3 Role of the Observatories

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The UN Tourism INSTO network, launched in 2004, had expanded to 45 member observatories by 2024. This growth underscores the network's significant role, which extends beyond mere data collection. Equally important are the regular exchanges between Observatories, sustained over time, and the active involvement of stakeholders at all stages of knowledge management. The INSTO Network fosters the creation of synergies by facilitating the exchange of knowledge among all Observatories, with meetings, webinars, and workshops held regularly to share best practices and promote continuous learning.

The primary objective of Sustainable Tourism Observatories is to support data-driven decision-making by destination management organisations, businesses, non-governmental organisations, and even local communities. In addition, Observatories play a role in linking supranational frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with knowledge-driven actions at the destination level.

Sustainable Tourism Observatories play a crucial role in providing data and feedback mechanisms for adaptive management. They assist destinations in refining strategies and responding to emerging challenges, taking into account the governance framework and the specific characteristics of each destination. Furthermore, as Observatories support destination managers in evidence-based decision-making and sustainable tourism management, effective communication among stakeholders is essential to ensure informed and well-founded decisions.

It should be noted that UN Tourism has prepared a new set of methodological guidelines for Tourism Sustainability, which consider various spatial scales, including the local level—particularly relevant for Sustainable Tourism Observatories.

In Spain, there are 6 Observatories: Malaga, Navarre, the Canary Islands, Mallorca, Barcelona, and Biscay. Malaga has been part of the INSTO Network since 2022, under the name STO Malaga (Sustainable Tourism Observatory of Malaga).

## **INSTO Requirements**

The governance structures within which Observatories operate, as well as their data requirements, vary from one destination to another. For this reason, Sustainable Tourism Observatories adapt to the governance framework of each destination, aligning with new strategies while fostering a user-oriented approach, holding regular stakeholder meetings, and ensuring that results are communicated both to local communities and to all stakeholders.

Given the sensitive nature of sustainability and the unique characteristics of each destination, the INSTO Network establishes eleven mandatory thematic areas, each with baseline indicators. Destinations may also select additional, customised areas of focus, with indicators of particular relevance to their specific context.

The requirements cover the following areas:

1. **Stakeholder engagement and participation**
2. **Development of dissatisfaction areas and indicators**
  1. Local satisfaction
  2. Economic benefits at destination level
  3. Employment
  4. Tourism seasonality
  5. Energy management
  6. Water management
  7. Wastewater management
  8. Solid waste management
  9. Governance
  10. Accessibility
  11. Climate Change.
3. **Monitoring and reporting**
4. **Communication and information sharing**

## 1.4 Why an STO in Malaga?

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Sustainable Tourism Observatories are intermediary organisations that easily transcend borders and help to bridge the gap between research findings and concrete action. They serve as mediators between data collection and knowledge dissemination, providing high-quality information on destination development and performance to support strategic, data-driven decision-making. The keys to success lie in effective communication, a user-centred approach, and the commitment of all stakeholders.

Additional factors critical to data collection, interpretation, and application include: skilled human resources; the integration of missing datasets; the organisation of regular stakeholder meetings; coordination with data providers; clearly defined objectives aligned with destination strategies; long-term project sustainability; data quality and continuity; political support; a culture of data-driven innovation; common indicators; and proactive stakeholder participation across the Observatory network.

When all stakeholders are actively engaged, data is more contextually grounded and therefore more likely to be effectively applied in destination management and decision-making. The success of environmental monitoring systems, in particular, depends on the active involvement and commitment of all stakeholders, including citizens, decision-makers and politicians, data providers, and scientists. Regular stakeholder meetings should serve as platforms for continuous feedback, enabling Observatories to refine existing approaches and tailor their services to evolving needs.

Close collaboration between the Sustainable Tourism Observatory and data providers—such as universities and research institutions—is essential to ensure the proper sourcing of specific datasets and to support the creation of customised data services for each destination.

In the public sector, the key factors for evidence-based decision-making include stakeholder participation, reliable measurement of management systems, exemplary leadership, proper allocation of resources, and the competent management of an innovative organisational culture. In addition, high-quality data, robust technological infrastructure, and clear objectives regarding each Observatory's vision also play a crucial role in successfully achieving the goals set out in line with the destination's strategy, including motivating stakeholders.

There are two main objectives when making data-driven decisions for a destination:

1. Promoting the destination's sustainable development.
2. Stimulating the destination's competitiveness.

The creation of the Sustainable Tourism Observatory (STO) in Malaga, Spain, also responds to the following key objectives related to sustainable tourism and environmental management:

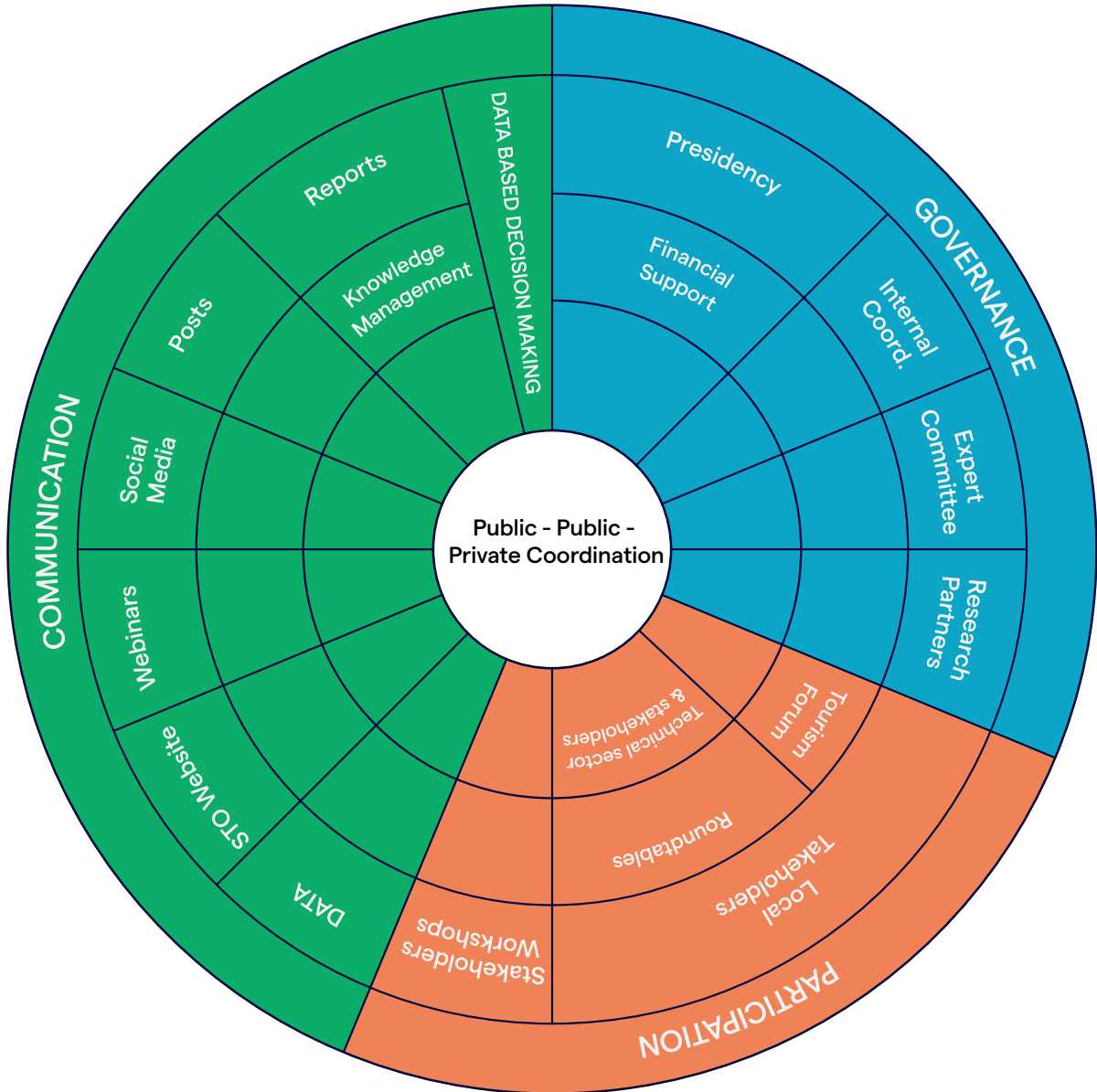
1. **Monitoring and Continuous Improvement:** STO Malaga contributes to the ongoing evaluation of the impact of tourism on the destination. This includes assessing environmental, social, and economic indicators to identify areas for improvement and ensure that tourism remains aligned with sustainability principles.
2. **Support for Local Strategies:** The observatory provides policymakers and tourism managers with data and tools to develop local sustainability strategies. This involves the implementation of best practices in resource management, carbon footprint reduction, and the promotion of the local economy.
3. **Fostering Cooperation:** STO Malaga aims to serve as a benchmark and an international hub for cooperation in sustainable tourism. This will facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences among different destinations and experts in sustainable tourism worldwide.
4. **Awareness and Education:** STO Malaga also plays a role in raising awareness and educating both the public and local stakeholders on the importance of sustainable tourism. This includes training activities, awareness campaigns, and educational programmes for both tourists and residents.
5. **Alignment with International Objectives:** The roadmap of STO Malaga is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which seek to promote tourism that benefits both the environment and local communities.
6. **Innovation and Best Practices:** Malaga can serve as a laboratory for testing new initiatives and best practices in sustainable tourism. The knowledge and experiences gained in Malaga can then be applied to develop and implement innovative solutions in other tourism destinations.
7. **Integration of Key Municipal Stakeholders:** STO Malaga also plays an essential role in strengthening the integration of different municipal departments in the development and implementation of the city's tourism strategy.
8. **Encouraging Participatory Processes:** STO Malaga provides the tools necessary to support participatory processes between the local community and businesses in strategic tourism planning and evidence-based decision-making.

Figure 1 illustrates the participatory process involving all stakeholders in evidence-based decision-making. STO Malaga is responsible for providing comprehensive, accessible, and reliable data. Its work is focused on strengthening collaboration between public and private stakeholders, enabling the identification of risks and opportunities to strike a balance between the needs of the local population, the economy, and the environment.

Through its inclusive approach, STO Malaga promotes intelligent destination management, fosters multisectoral cooperation, and prioritises sustainability as a central pillar of tourism development. By collecting data and producing reports and research, the Observatory contributes to Malaga's progress towards a more sustainable and resilient future, establishing itself as a global benchmark in responsible tourism. It is worth highlighting the three fundamental components of the participatory process:

- **Governance:** STO Malaga is backed by Malaga's highest political authority, who leads and chairs the coordination body, showing political commitment to its sustainable development as a tourist destination. Accordingly, the Presidency is held by the Mayor of Malaga, Mr Francisco de la Torre Prados.
- **Participation:** The main network of local agents collaborating as key elements in Malaga's development as a Smart Tourist Destination is the Malaga Tourism Forum. The current tourism-related working groups, coordinated by the Malaga City Council's Department of Tourism and City Promotion, are as follows:
  - STO Malaga Expert Panels.
  - Segmented Technical Panels.
- **Communication:** It is worth highlighting that the reports are the result of an open knowledge-sharing process, with participation and collaborative learning as key components.

Figure 1: Public-public-private coordination in the STO Malaga participatory process for data-driven decision-making



Source: Prepared by the Department of Tourism and City Promotion, Malaga City Council.

## 1.5 STO Malaga

Tourism is one of the world's most significant economic and social phenomena, as reflected by the figures collected annually through the main tourism indicators. However, the constant transformations in the global economic environment, demographic and environmental changes, and, above all, rapid technological advances present multiple challenges for tourist destinations, while also offering significant development opportunities.

Malaga has consistently worked to integrate sustainability, innovation, and culture into its strategic plans. This approach has led the city to achieve several milestones in sustainable development within the framework of a Smart Tourist Destination (STD).

Malaga was recognised as the European Capital of Smart Tourism 2020 by the European Commission, in view of the city's established performance across the four main pillars addressed by this accolade: Sustainability, Accessibility, Innovation, and Cultural Heritage.

It is worth noting that Malaga has been a member of the Smart Tourist Destinations Network since 2020. This network aims to promote destinations as innovative tourism spaces, built on cutting-edge technological infrastructure that ensures sustainable development of the tourism area, is accessible to all, facilitates visitor interaction and integration with the environment, enhances the quality of the visitor experience, and improves the quality of life for local residents.

According to the STD Methodology Management Manual (2024), the Smart Tourist Destination programme is an initiative designed to implement a management model that considers tourism's transversal nature and the distinctive characteristics of each destination, with a focus on territories and the local entities that govern them.

The main pillars of the Smart Tourist Destination model are:

1. **Governance:** Maximising public-public and public-private cooperation to ensure efficient, transparent, and participatory management.
2. **Innovation:** Applying innovation to processes, systems, resources, and products with a focus on tourism development within the destination.
3. **Technology:** Leveraging new technologies to enhance the management and optimisation of the destination.
4. **Sustainability:** Managing all resources to ensure sustainability across socio-cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions.
5. **Accessibility:** Application of universal accessibility policies in tourism products, services, and resources.

Considering the primary objective of the Smart Tourist Destination model—to contribute to a shift in the tourism development model of destinations based on knowledge, digitalisation, and sustainability, in order to drive and maintain long-term competitiveness, enhance resilience, and improve both the visitor experience and residents' quality of life—the following milestones can be highlighted:

1. Certification by SEGITTUR in 2020 as a **Smart Tourist Destination** for having met over 80% of the established requirements and for defending a long-term sustainable tourism model across all dimensions: socio-cultural, environmental, and economic.
2. **Promotion of STO Malaga, the key project of the Malaga Tourism Strategic Plan 2021–2024.** In this context, the Malaga Tourism Strategic Plan 2021–2024, drawing on the conclusions of the SEGITTUR Diagnostic Report and aligned with Strategic Challenge No. 2, 'Advancing Digitalisation and Knowledge', and especially point 2.5, identifies the creation of STO Malaga as a key project.
3. **Joining the INSTO network on 23 September 2022.** The inclusion of Malaga's qualified tourism data observatory into the INSTO Network represents a significant step forward in the destination's specialisation, positioning Malaga as a sustainable, resilient, inclusive, technologically advanced, and knowledge.

## Vision of STO Malaga

The Observatory will serve all the tourism stakeholders responsible for creating the tourist experience in Malaga, equipping them to face the collective challenges of today and tomorrow in the most informed and responsible manner.

## Mission of STO Malaga

Through multisectoral cooperation across the entire destination, and via monitoring, evaluation, and the regular and holistic reporting of tourism impacts, the Observatory's mission is to unlock the potential of tourism as a catalyst for positive change. It does this by gathering all relevant data knowledge for sustainable and resilient destinations and providing all stakeholders with the opportunity to create a tourism model that balances the needs of people, the planet, and prosperity.

The Observatory will monitor, evaluate, and disseminate the results achieved in Malaga's development as a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive tourist destination. STO Malaga will provide holistic and reliable information for data-driven decision-making, identify risks and opportunities, develop insights, and offer recommendations and best practices to achieve continuous improvement in sustainable tourism and smart destination management. Awareness-raising, learning, and evidence-based decision-making for the various target groups in Malaga society will be at the heart of its work.



## **Primary Objective of STO Malaga**

The Observatory's primary objective is to transform Malaga into a centre for analysis, knowledge transfer, and information within the tourism and sustainability sectors. All of this is based on stakeholder participation and data management.

This initiative aims to support Malaga in shifting from a marketing-driven development approach to a more management-oriented, net-positive model—one in which the local community actively contributes to the promotion of sustainable tourism, thereby fostering a socio-cultural shift towards smart tourism management at the destination.

## **Beneficiaries of STO Malaga**

The Sustainable Tourism Observatory of Malaga brings together a diverse range of actors and stakeholders to generate more holistic knowledge that goes beyond traditional economic data, integrating it into a data platform to facilitate access. STO Malaga aims to guide tourism stakeholders across the destination in their operations and management, enabling them to make real-time, evidence-based decisions.

Beneficiaries include tourism businesses and industry operators; academic institutions; local, regional, and provincial tourism organisations; ministries, other government departments, and associations; transport, infrastructure, and public service operators; community groups and associations; investors and developers; industry associations; and other organisations connected to tourism.

## Challenges of STO Malaga

Based on the initial vision upon which STO Malaga was founded, the following high-priority areas have been identified as relevant when defining STO Malaga's challenges:

### 1. Accessibility

Regarding efforts to improve accessibility within the city, Malaga has already implemented several local initiatives that began with the City Council's Accessibility Plan in 2010.

In line with the challenge set out in the Malaga Tourism Strategic Plan 2021-2024, the Malaga Accessible Tourism Plan was developed and presented on 18 October 2022.

Its main goal is to promote a **set of initiatives that position Malaga as a leading inclusive destination**. The Plan proposes a range of useful tools designed as levers for accessibility development, created through situation analysis and thoughtful reflection, with the ultimate aim of securing the future of such an important industry for the city of Malaga.

The in-depth analysis that forms part of this process aims to provide the necessary tools for the destination to improve the measures it has implemented in recent years, which are set out in the form of a working proposal. These initiatives will have to be aligned with the other key documents identified as having an impact on the destination, with particular focus on the Smart Tourist Destination Project and its Accessibility Pillar.

### 2. Governance

A key takeaway from Malaga's new tourism strategy is the crucial need to reinforce destination governance, particularly in relation to **monitoring objectives and indicators**. STO Malaga is set to play a central role in governance, which is why the creation of the observatory is explicitly highlighted in the strategy's action plan.

While the city already possesses abundant data, STO Malaga offers the opportunity to consolidate and disseminate this information across all key areas of sustainable tourism—economic, social, and environmental. Being able to generate this information on a regular basis and make it easily accessible to all stakeholders will enable the city to support both the public and private sectors in their decision-making processes.

### 3. Local Participation and Satisfaction

Closely tied to governance is Malaga's commitment to sustaining and expanding **collaborative processes within the destination, aiming to boost engagement from both the local community and businesses in strategic tourism planning**. Participatory approaches have been followed for the drafting of the new tourism strategy, implementing several stakeholder workshops and feedback mechanisms throughout the development process.

This ethos of collective responsibility is also intended to guide the establishment and ongoing operation of STO Malaga. A key objective—and a specific strategic action within the tourism strategy—is the implementation of a **survey to gauge resident satisfaction with tourism**. Preparations for this survey are currently underway. STO Malaga will play a pivotal role in shaping the survey's design, methodology, ongoing implementation, and the evaluation of resulting indicators.

### 4. Tourism Flows and Density

To maximise tourism's positive impacts and mitigate its less favourable effects, it must be integrated with urban planning, supply and demand control, and the protection of environmental quality. In this context, effective governance that follows sustainability principles not only enables greater economic benefits but also preserves local identity and fosters synergies with other sectors. The city, with its commitment to sustainable development, understands that sustainability imposes limits on growth, prioritising the quality of the tourism experience over simply increasing visitor numbers.

As demand and interest in living in Malaga continues to grow, there is an increasing need for a new, intelligent approach to tourism management that ensures environmental protection, economic development, and social progress. Achieving a transition towards sustainable, resilient, and inclusive tourism requires a thorough consideration of the current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, to meet the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities. To this end, destinations must promote alternative tourism experiences, encouraging visitors to explore areas with untapped tourism potential, beyond traditional routes. This strategy helps alleviate pressure on the most visited sites and prevents the emergence of inequalities.

It is crucial that STO Malaga consistently monitors and communicates the latest developments and future trends to all tourism stakeholders. Since 2016, significant benchmarking work has already been carried out through the Interreg 'Alter-Eco' project, which has collected a wide range of data points over the years. These include visitor density in different neighbourhoods and existing capacities, the growth and distribution of tourist apartments by district, and demographic changes across the city.

Within the framework of the Recovery, Transformation, and Resilience Plan—funded by the European Union through Next Generation EU—the Malaga City Council is implementing the **Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan**. This initiative is being led by the Department of Tourism and City Promotion through the **‘Sustainable Decentralisation of Tourism in Malaga’** project. The aim is to promote alternative tourism experiences by encouraging visitors to explore areas of the city with untapped tourism potential, helping to ease pressure on the most frequently visited sites.

STO Malaga will utilise the Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan to collect and process data in accordance with the Smart Tourist Destination model, ensuring that destination management is intelligent and sustainable at every level of the city, while boosting Malaga’s competitiveness.

Through the D3HUB Cluster: Tourism Flows, the destination will identify key performance indicators essential for managing tourist movements across both spatial and temporal dimensions. This enables the balanced distribution of visitors while safeguarding the destination’s needs within a sustainability context.

Following the internationally recognised ‘Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (SF-MST)’, D3Hub has defined a core set of baseline sustainability indicators. These indicators will facilitate ongoing monitoring and support benchmarking efforts among pilot destinations. The key indicators are as follows:

- Average stay
- Tourist arrivals
- Overnight stays
- Accommodation occupancy rate
- Average tourist expenditure
- Tourism’s contribution to total employment

## 5. Climate Change

With approximately 300 days of sunshine per year, Malaga enjoys a highly favourable climate for tourism year-round.

However, the growing frequency of heatwaves and the intensification of drought conditions—both of which have worsened over the years, leaving forested areas increasingly vulnerable and degraded—have heightened the risk of wildfires around the destination, presenting one of the most significant challenges for tourism.

Now that the city has a **climate action plan with specific emission reduction targets that includes tourism**, there is a significant opportunity to strengthen collaboration among the various departments of the Malaga City Council and public entities responsible for its implementation.

STO Malaga will support these efforts by participating in the development of vulnerability analyses, **coordinating closely with the University of Malaga (UMA) and IATUR on the creation of climate risk-related indicators.**

## 6. Impact of Cruise Ships

Passenger arrivals through the Port of Malaga have grown significantly in recent years. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2019, the city received a total of 288 cruise ships, bringing approximately 476,973 passengers to Malaga. However, in 2024 the number of cruise passengers saw a slight decline, falling from 476,973 in 2019 to 469,949 in 2024.

Currently, the Port of Malaga **ranks as the sixth most important cruise port in the Mediterranean and the second largest on the Iberian Peninsula.** To further strengthen the sector, the current tourism strategy has developed a cruise improvement plan aimed at attracting the premium and luxury cruise segments.

Data was identified as a critical factor during roundtable discussions with the cruise sector while developing the Malaga City strategy outlined in the Malaga Tourism Strategic Plan 2021–2024. This presents another key opportunity for **STO Malaga to support these efforts by regularly monitoring essential information related to cruise tourism in the city.** This is particularly relevant as the strategy emphasises positioning Malaga as a ‘green port’, fully aligned with the destination’s sustainability goals.

In addition to the key monitoring areas mentioned above for Malaga, other areas of focus stem from the initial tourism strategy and are now being integrated into the work of STO Malaga.

## 1.6 Thematic Areas of STO Malaga

As part of its commitment to the INSTO Network and to promote evidence-based decision-making in the city's main thematic areas, the Observatory will continue Malaga's efforts to improve and maintain its extensive supply-side inventory. In addition, STO Malaga plans to monitor information across 11 mandatory areas and 6 voluntary areas.

These 17 areas cover key themes for the city, including its territory and urban structure; natural resource management; social cohesion and economic development; and governance, among others. For each of these areas, the 2030 Agenda defined a list of specific indicators that provide insight into their development over time. **Malaga has been a pioneer in Spain, implementing a system to track and monitor progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their 169 targets, as well as producing voluntary progress reports on their implementation.**

Figure 2: SDGs applied to tourism












Source: <https://tourism4sdgs.org/>

## Mandatory thematic areas

Thematic area	Commitment to the SDGs
1. Tourism seasonality	 
2. Employment	  
3. Economic benefits at destination level	   
4. Governance	  
5. Local satisfaction	
6. Energy management	   
7. Water management	  
8. Wastewater management	     
9. Solid waste management	  
10. Accessibility	  
11. Climate change	   

## Malaga-specific thematic areas

Thematic area	SDG
Tourism offer	      
Mobility (inc. cruise ships)	    
Sustainable production	 
Sustainable events	  
Health-related information	
Education and training in sustainability	 



## 2. Strategy and operation of STO Malaga

### 2.1 Operation of STO Malaga

The Observatory is led and coordinated by the Department of Tourism and City Promotion. The unit is supported by other departments of the Malaga City Council that provide valuable information to the Observatory. STO Malaga is also advised by an Expert Committee, which offers guidance and support whenever specific topics require specialised expertise.

The Department of Tourism and City Promotion collects additional data through partnerships with leading research institutions, including the **Andalusian Institute for Tourism Research and Innovation (Instituto Andaluz de Investigación e Innovación en Turismo, IATUR)**, the **University of Malaga (UMA)**, and the **Centre for Strategic Research and Economic and Social Development of Malaga (Centro de Investigaciones Estratégicas y Desarrollo Económico y Social de Málaga, CIEDES)**.

All data and planned activities are reviewed and discussed collaboratively with members of the city's local stakeholder group. This group operates under the already established Malaga **Tourism Forum**, which brings together over 20 local organisations and associations and meets monthly to discuss the latest tourism developments in the city. To avoid duplication of effort and additional workload for group members, all relevant information related to STO Malaga is periodically shared with them during these scheduled meetings. Depending on the topics under discussion, additional organisations are invited, making this forum a dynamic and valuable resource for the Observatory.

Once activities have been reviewed and discussed with the local stakeholder group, all collected data will be integrated into the Smart Destination Platform and shared with all relevant tourism stakeholders across the destination. STO Malaga will therefore serve as a foundational resource for strategic projects such as Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan, Smart Destination Platform, and D3Hub.

The **Smart Destination Platform Malaga 2024** aims to enhance tourism management in the city through the implementation of an integrated, multimodal system. This digital platform will centralise the capture, storage, processing, and analysis of a new generation of tourism data to support decision-making, improving both the sustainability and resilience of Malaga as a tourist destination through digital transformation.

The Smart Destination Platform will connect to the National Central Node and ensure technical, semantic, and organizational interoperability, allowing efficient data management and coordination between different systems and applications.

- **Governance:** Developing a strategic vision and efficient, transparent, open, and participatory management carried out responsibly and under control.
- **Innovation:** Implementing tools that enhance management processes and improve products, services, marketing, commercialisation, and training.
- **Technology:** Developing solutions based on destination technological infrastructures.
- **Sustainability:** Optimising the management of this key dimension of tourism in all its aspects (environmental, economic, and social).
- **Accessibility:** Improving its management.

Additionally, the Smart Destination Platform aims to achieve:

- **Increased digitalisation:** boosting the number and quality of digital tourism tools and their use by visitors.
- **Enhanced promotion strategy:** optimising the impact of promotional campaigns and increasing tourist attraction.
- **Real-time data collection** to improve strategic decision-making.
- **Sustainability and resilience:** implementing practices that strengthen the destination's sustainability and its ability to adapt to future changes and challenges.

Therefore, this project is necessary to consolidate Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination. Digitalisation, innovation, efficient promotion, and sustainability will improve the tourist experience while ensuring sustainability and resilience, allowing Malaga to leverage its potential and make a significant qualitative leap towards the forefront of sustainable tourism. Furthermore, the Malaga Smart Destination Platform will contribute to fostering synergies with other destinations and organisations, thereby strengthening the national strategy established since the launch of the 2024 call.

Figure 3: Governance Structure of the Malaga Sustainable Tourism Observatory (STO Malaga)



Source: Prepared by the Department of Tourism and City Promotion

As shown in Figure 3 on the Governance Structure of the Malaga Sustainable Tourism Observatory, another key tool for Malaga as a data-driven destination is the D3HUB (Data-Driven Destinations Hub) project.

**The primary aim of D3HUB** is to provide tourist destinations with sustainable solutions grounded in data-driven evidence. D3HUB seeks to establish a self-sustaining European Competence Centre for Tourism Data, designed to assist destinations in advancing their ecological and digital transitions.

The European Competence Centre for Tourism Data, D3HUB, is committed to providing comprehensive support to European organisations in evidence-based destination management through the following initiatives:

- Assisting destinations in understanding present and future challenges
- Identifying potential data sources, statistics, and analytical tools
- Sharing expertise in data collection and processing
- Building knowledge through data analysis and interpretation
- Providing practical guidance on using data for smart destination management
- Supporting an increasingly broad tourism ecosystem

D3HUB is building a community of destinations committed to shaping the future of sustainable, data-driven destination management. By participating in this project, the goal is to gain training and skills to be prepared for aligning all data sources and efficiently analysing the information gathered across various institutions. It also aims to learn from how other destinations in similar situations operate in order to be more effective, minimise resource use, and maximise results, while adopting new tools and methodologies.

As Malaga is carrying out the ‘Sustainable Decentralisation of Tourism in Malaga’ project under the Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan framework, the city is participating in **Cluster 1: Tourist Flows**, which focuses on redistributing tourist flows across space and time—addressing the temporal and spatial distribution of visitors and highlighting existing imbalances. This cluster seeks to provide strategies for managing tourist flows, improving efficiency, and encouraging balanced tourism growth in the destination. Key challenges such as seasonality and territorial pressure are being addressed through the following proposed lines of action:

- **Tourist Intensity and Density:** Analysing the ratio of tourists to the local population and their distribution across different areas of the destination.
- **Seasonality Analysis:** Identifying peak and low tourism periods using techniques such as time series analysis and the Gini index. These insights can help guide policies to manage seasonality, using official data sources to compare regions while taking local context into account.
- **Impact on Employment and Local Resources:** Examining the link between tourist flows and job creation, supporting a better understanding of how to balance tourism with local economic development.
- **PMS Data Integration:** Making use of Property Management System (PMS) data to gain insights into tourist flows and optimise management. Future integration with European data spaces on water and energy will enable more comprehensive analysis.
- **Forecasting and Prediction:** Using data modelling and artificial intelligence to develop scenarios and assess the impact of potential interventions or likely future trends.

### 2.1.1 Role of the Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga

The Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga is an interdepartmental body, and one of the requirements of the Smart Tourist Destination Network for full members to remain at Level II. It serves as a coordination tool, enabling the city of Malaga to gather all the information requested for any Smart Tourist Destination diagnosis, study, or future periodic report more effectively and rapidly.

## Objective and Purpose

The main objective is to foster the efficient management of the tourism strategy, while strengthening interdepartmental coordination and cooperation within a framework of shared and accountable governance.

The purpose of the Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga is to act as a coordinating body between the different departments of Malaga City Council that are directly or indirectly involved in tourism in the city, ensuring and strengthening the necessary internal communication, coordination, and cooperation across all areas.

### **2.1.2 Members of the Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga**

This governance tool aims to establish coordinated work structures that foster synergies aligned with the Smart Tourist Destination model, while promoting procedures that enhance decision-making efficiency, shared responsibility, and the monitoring and control of tourism-related actions implemented by public managers in the territory.

The Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga has the following three components:

- Presidency
- Internal coordination
- Technical committee

#### Presidency

The commission is supported by the head of policy of the city of Malaga, leading and chairing this coordinating body, thus demonstrating the political commitment to the tourism development of the destination and promoting agility in the implementation of the agreements. Therefore, the Presidency will correspond to the Mayor of Malaga. The Mayor may be substituted by the Councillor for Tourism and City Promotion.

#### Internal Coordination

In terms of competence, the Department of Tourism and City Promotion is the internal coordination department responsible for driving, coordinating, supporting, and promoting the city of Malaga as a full member of the Smart Tourist Destination Network.

Its duties include:

- Promoting the integration of the various departments in the development and implementation of the destination's tourism strategy.
- Promoting dialogue between the departments and knowledge of the different departmental initiatives, bringing together interests for the benefit of the destination's tourism development.
- Sharing projects and actions related to tourism in the various departments of the Local Authority.
- Promoting the joint development of actions between the tourism department and other related departments, taking into account the destination's STD conversion strategy and, therefore, the convergence of projects and actions with the five pillars of the STD model.
- Presenting results and monitoring and controlling the implementation of territorial and/or tourism policy, as well as setting actions related to tourism in the destination.
- Identifying needs, areas for improvement and new services that require a common response between the different departments.
- Establishing and promoting a support system among local stakeholders in the tourism sector.

The senior technical representatives appointed by the Department of Tourism and City Promotion to coordinate the Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga are the Head of Service of the Department of Tourism and City Promotion, and the Head of the Special Programmes Section of the same department. Additionally, it should be noted that the Department of Tourism and City Promotion has created a dedicated generic email address for all communications related to the Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga: **málagaDTI@malaga.eu**.

### Technical Committee

The Technical Committee of the Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga will include technical representatives appointed by the departments directly linked to the five strategic pillars defined by SEGITTUR for Smart Tourist Destinations (**Governance**, **Innovation**, **Technology**, **Sustainability**, and **Accessibility**), as well as those departments whose responsibilities have a direct or indirect impact on tourism in the city. This structure reflects the City Council's strong commitment to Malaga's development as a Smart Tourist Destination.

Taking into account the Structure of the Executive Municipal Administration of the Malaga City Council, as approved by Mayoral Resolution on 17 June 2023, the Department of Tourism and City Promotion—responsible for coordinating the Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga—will be joined on the

Commission by technical staff appointed by representatives from the following Municipal Departments:

## 1. Department of the Presidency

The Department of the Presidency plays a crucial role in ensuring that all actions carried out within the destination operate under the framework of **governance**. This arrangement guarantees the implementation of targeted strategies designed to enhance the destination's resilience and comprehensive management, including:

- Strategic vision and implementation.
- Efficient management.
- Transparent, open and participatory management.
- Responsible and controlled management.

**Mayor's Office.** Its functions are linked to the efficient management and implementation, through administrative, technical, and legal support to the Mayor's Office – Presidency, institutional relations, and handling information requests addressed to the Mayor's Office – Presidency, among others.

**Department of Communications.** This department is responsible for directing, planning and developing institutional communications. It manages relations with the media, prepares and disseminates the City Council's official communications, oversees social media channels, and carries out tasks related to transparent governance.

## 2. Department of Economy, Finance, Management of European Union Funds, Coordination of Districts, and Human Resources and Quality.

The responsibilities of these departments are directly linked to actions that have a clear impact on the destination, including:

**European Fund Management.** This unit is primarily responsible for securing and managing new funding streams—an essential function for implementing new projects and initiatives.

**District and Integrated Project Coordination.** This unit serves as the public administration's closest point of contact for citizen demands and neighbourhood requests.

**Department of Human Resources and Quality.** The Quality and Modernisation Service of the Malaga City Council falls within the Department of Human Resources and Quality. It is responsible for designing, developing, and implementing improvement projects within the organisation, as well as advising all municipal departments on the path to continuous improvement by providing public employees with a range of strategies and tools to facilitate the effective management of services and activities.

### **3. Department of Culture, Sport, Tourism, Education, Employment Promotion, and Youth.**

**Department of Culture and Heritage.** One of the main functions of the Department of Culture is the coordination of the city's cultural policy, the fundamental basis of a resilient tourism model based on respect for the socio-cultural authenticity of the destination, in which tourist resources and attractions and cultural assets are valued.

**Department of Tourism and City Promotion.** This municipal department is responsible for the internal coordination of the Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga.

### **4. Department of Environmental Sustainability and Operational Services.**

**Department of Environmental Sustainability.** Tourism sustainability is a transversal tool that ensures the long-term continuity of tourism activity, upholding all quality and well-being standards for both visitors and residents. Therefore, it is essential to involve this department to ensure the following:

- Management of tourism sustainability
- Preservation of cultural heritage
- Environmental conservation
- Economic and social development

**Department of Operational Services, Internal Affairs, Beaches, and Festivals.** Among its many functions, particular attention must be paid to those most closely related to the sustainability of the destination, such as:

- Conservation and maintenance of municipal buildings
- Management of public lighting
- Beaches
- Festivals
- Oversight of Malaga's cleaning service (LIMASAM)

### **5. Department of Commerce, Public Space Management, Business Promotion, and Strategic Public Procurement.**

This department is tasked with promoting business growth and employment.

**Department of Commerce and Public Space.** Tourism and commerce are strategically interconnected activities; therefore, having representatives from this department on the monitoring commission is essential, as it manages everything related to markets, fairs, events, and business openings.

## **6. Department of Innovation, Urban Digitalisation, Promotion of Technological and Business Investment, and Attraction of Investment.**

**Department of Innovation and Digitalisation.** Innovation is understood as the introduction or improvement of new services, processes, marketing or organisational methods in the Destination Management Entity's internal practices and in its external relationship with its residents and tourists, with the aim of improving benefits provided and competitiveness.

The Department of Innovation and Urban Digitalisation has among its main functions the alignment of municipal organisation efforts with the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the digitalisation of services, implementation of measures to assess and improve the city's energy and environmental situation, and technological modernisation of the Malaga City Council's ICT systems.

Therefore, with the inclusion of this department in the Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga, the areas encompassed within the Smart Tourist Destination framework include:

- Technologies applied to governance
- Technologies applied to tourism marketing
- Destination technology infrastructures
- Tourism knowledge systems

**Trade Fairs and Congress Centre of Malaga (FYCMA).** With regard to responsible management, FYCMA is a fundamental axis in terms of the coordination and management of tourist events and a necessary collaborator in measuring the impact of events held in the city.

## **7. Department of Social Rights, Diversity, Equality, Accessibility, Housing, Citizen Participation, Transparency, and Good Governance.**

The Department of Social Rights, Equality, Accessibility, and Inclusive Policies aims to provide social services that meet the needs and expectations of citizens, facilitating their social inclusion within the framework of its own, assigned, and/or delegated competencies, while using available resources effectively and efficiently.

**Office of Social Rights, Diversity, Equality and Accessibility.** The universal accessibility of a Smart Tourist Destination entails developing tourism that enables all people—without exception—to access, use, and enjoy environments, goods, services, products, and technologies, ensuring equal opportunities in the safest, most comfortable, autonomous, and natural way possible.

The implementation of universal accessibility entails adopting a strategy based on 'universal design' or 'design for all', without prejudice to any reasonable accommodations that may be introduced. Therefore, in collaboration with the Department of Accessibility, the following areas of action are monitored:

- Regulatory framework
- Accessibility management
- Implementation in the destination
- Technological tools

**Office of Public Participation, Migration, External Action, Development Cooperation, Transparency, and Good Governance.** Among the functions of the Department of Public Participation are the preparation and coordination of the Open Government Plan of the City of Malaga, Transparency and Good Governance, and the coordination of Sector Councils. All this is necessary to assess local satisfaction with tourism, take into account public participation in strategic decision-making for the city, and manage the destination with a governance model based on efficiency and transparency

## **8. Department of Urban Planning, Mobility, and Security.**

**Municipal Urban Planning Management.** It is essential to consider how urban planning and territorial management impact progress towards sustainable tourism. Therefore, it is important to include the Municipal Urban Planning Management in this commission, as it is responsible for drafting, modifying, and reviewing the municipality's general planning, urban management, and urban infrastructure works within Malaga's municipal boundaries.

**Department of Mobility.** In tourism management, the mobility strategy is marked by sustainable and intermodal transport. This department also oversees Empresa Malagueña de Transportes (EMT Malaga), the city's public transport company, and Sociedad Municipal de Aparcamientos y Servicios (SMASSA), the municipal parking and services company.

**Department of Safety.** For a destination to be safe, the public work of the Police is essential, along with the coordination of security forces and emergency services, to ensure the well-being of both residents and tourists.

## Research Partners

Research partners are those collaborating entities that share an interest in promoting Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination. The main research partners are:

- **University of Malaga (UMA).** The University of Malaga is a key partner in knowledge management. Malaga City Council collaborates with the University of Malaga in all those projects in which it is necessary to promote the generation and significant advancement of scientific knowledge and research of proven quality as well as to advance towards the search for solutions to society's challenges.
- **Andalusian Institute for Research and Innovation in Tourism (Instituto Andaluz de Investigación e Innovación en Turismo, IATUR).** The Institute, based in Malaga, is established as an Andalusian Knowledge Centre of the Universities of Malaga, Granada, and Seville. It has a multidisciplinary scientific team of more than 200 members and acts as an intermediary between the tourism sector and advances in knowledge, with the primary objective of showcasing and transferring R&D in this field.
- **CIEDES Foundation.** The CIEDES Foundation is a private non-profit foundation, made up of the main institutions and entities of the city. Created on July 27, 1994, its birth was a milestone at national level because it was the first time that all the institutions and the main economic and social stakeholders of a city took the step of joining forces to work together for the future. As a partner in Malaga's Strategic Tourism Plan 2021-2024, aligned with the 2030 Agenda, the Foundation has proven to be a key driver of the city's development. Over time, it has established itself as a fundamental instrument for shaping Malaga's urban model in a plural, participatory and consensual way, grounded in the principles of Strategic Planning.

## Local Stakeholder Group

The main network of local agents collaborating as key elements in Malaga's development as a Smart Tourist Destination is the **Malaga Tourism Forum**.

Since its inception, the Malaga City Tourism Forum has been the ideal setting for the exchange of ideas, joint analysis of the tourism situation in our destination and decision-making, as well as an example of public-public and public-private collaboration. In fact, a series of actions have been developed in this body that have improved the positioning of Malaga as a competitive destination, helping the city's tourism industry to consolidate itself as one of the main sources of employment, wealth, and well-being.

The Tourism Forum currently comprises the Malaga City Council through the Departments of Tourism, Culture, and Sports; the Airport; the Port Authority; the Malaga Tra-

de Federation (Federación de Comercio de Málaga, FECOMA); Turismo y Planificación Costa del Sol; the Professional Association of Tourist Guides (Asociación Profesional de Informadores Turísticos, APIT); the Malaga Business Confederation (Confederación de Empresarios de Málaga, CEM); the Chamber of Commerce; the University of Malaga; the Hotel Business Association of the Costa del Sol (Asociación de Empresarios Hoteleros de la Costa del Sol, AEHCOS); the Association of Spanish Language Schools; the Historic Centre Association; the Malaga Hospitality Business Association (Asociación de Empresarios Hosteleros de Málaga, MAHOS); the Business Association of Travel Agents (Asociación Empresarial de Agentes de Viajes, AEDAV); the Vehicle Rental Companies Association; and the Malaga Trade Fair and Congress Centre (Palacio de Ferias y Congresos de Málaga, FYCMA).

Additionally, all relevant sector **associations** will be included in any working group depending on the topic, such as:

- **Development Groups:** The Malaga City Council has promoted social participation through the establishment of Development Groups—networked working groups made up of social organisations operating within specific areas. These groups aim to reach consensus on joint actions focused on raising awareness and providing information to prevent various issues. One of the most active groups related to the tourism sector is the Accessible Malaga Development Group, which is part of the Accessible Tourism Board of Malaga.
- **Neighbourhood Associations:** The importance of neighbourhood associations within communities is widely recognised, both in terms of the benefits they bring and the variety of activities they undertake. In this context, the most relevant associations will be taken into consideration, as they play a key role in representing the views and proposals of local residents before the authorities. Their work contributes positively to community well-being, particularly in areas such as tourism, safety, infrastructure, public services, the environment, and urban development. Neighbourhood associations also promote citizen engagement, foster collaboration, and encourage a culture of teamwork among residents.
- **Segmented Associations:** Depending on the topic to be addressed, associations that represent the various professional segments related to tourism activity will be involved.

## Working Groups

Within the Commission, any number of working groups may be created around specific thematic areas. Representatives from other relevant tourism-related entities, experts, or other territorial stakeholders may also participate as advisers, contributing their knowledge and supporting the destination's progress within the Smart Tourist Destination model.

The currently established working groups directly related to the tourism sector and promoted by the Department of Tourism and City Promotion are as follows:

- **Segmented Technical Panels:** Segmented technical panels are constituted within the framework of the current Malaga Strategic Tourism Plan, composed of representatives and professionals related to any of the tourism segments. In these panels, experiences are exchanged, the potential of each tourism segment is explored in depth, new opportunities for destination promotion are examined, and proposals and suggestions are gathered for the development of the Malaga Strategic Tourism Plan by the Department of Tourism and City Promotion of the Malaga City Council. The Segmented Technical Panels already established include the following:
  - Eno-Gastronomic Technical Panel.
  - Nature, Sun and Beach Tourism Technical Panel.
  - Cultural Tourism Technical Panel.
  - Premium Tourism, Golf and Shopping Technical Panel.
  - Cruise Ship Tourism Technical Panel.
  - Educational-Language Tourism Technical Panel.
  - MICE Technical Panel.
  - Cinematographic and Audiovisual Technical Panel.
  - Health and Well-being Technical Panel.

Some of these are in the creation phase, such as the Family Tourism Technical Panel.

- **-STO Malaga Expert Panels.** The INSTO Network (International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories) is a collective of tourism observatories that monitor the economic, environmental, and social impacts of tourism at the destination level. This initiative builds on the United Nations' commitment to fostering the sustainable and resilient growth of the tourism sector through measurement and monitoring, supporting evidence-based tourism management.

Among its objectives is to foster a dynamic network of partners striving to create healthy places for both visitors and local communities, while ensuring destinations remain resilient for future generations.

A fundamental pillar of the Network is the participation of the entire sector in decision-making processes.

These panels, organised into thematic blocks, serve as forums where participants identify sector needs, analyse information sources, establish relevant indicators, and propose strategic actions within each area of study

Figure 4: STO Malaga Expert Panels



Source: Department of Tourism and City Promotion. Malaga City Council.

The panels convened under the auspices of UN Tourism are as follows:

- **Economic Sustainability Panel.** Covering the following thematic areas:
  - Sustainable production
  - Employment
  - Economic benefits at destination level
  - Tourism seasonality
- **Social Sustainability Panel.** Covering the following thematic areas:
  - Social events
  - Local satisfaction
  - Accessibility
  - Education
  - Training in sustainability and health-related information
- **Environmental Sustainability Panel:**
  - Energy management
  - Water management
  - Wastewater management
  - Solid waste management
  - Climate Change

- **Tourism Governance Panel:**
  - Mobility (including cruise ships)
  - Tourism offer
  - Governance
- **Accessible Tourism Panel.** One of the main milestones of the Malaga City Council's Accessible Tourism Plan, developed by Ilunion Accesibilidad of the ONCE Social Group in collaboration with the Department of Tourism and City Promotion, the Department of Accessibility, and the city's network of associations, is the establishment of an Accessible Tourism Panel. Its main objective is to define a methodology to articulate and channel the roadmap for the actions set out in the plan. The creation of this panel is a clear reflection of the Malaga City Council's commitment to creating an accessible destination for both residents and tourists.

The Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga is responsible for approving the addition and removal of members. Requests for registration or withdrawal may be submitted to [malagaDTI@malaga.eu](mailto:malagaDTI@malaga.eu).

### 2.1.3 Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga

The establishment of the Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga and the appointment of the members of the Technical Committee (see Annex II) will be approved by a Resolution of the Mayor's Office–Presidency.

#### Functions of the Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga

The Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga will serve as a technical office and, at a minimum, will have the following functions:

- Coordinate, implement, and monitor the Smart Tourist Destination project by supporting the execution of actions derived from the development of Smart Tourist Destination Malaga. This includes monitoring the Smart Tourist Destination Action Plan and overseeing the follow-up and control of indicators validated during the diagnostic process, thereby ensuring the project's ongoing development over time.
- Manage and ensure the destination's participation in the activities of the Smart Tourist Destination Network.
- Coordinate the actions carried out by the different departments and ensure the proper implementation of Smart Tourist Destination Malaga actions involving other relevant areas of knowledge and management.
- Promote the destination's participation in projects at the provincial, regional, national, and European levels.

- Ensure transparency in all activities carried out within the Smart Tourist Destination Malaga framework by regularly informing the relevant social stakeholders.

Additionally, the Commission is assigned the following responsibilities:

- Propose opportunities for collaboration on matters of common interest to both parties (SEGITTUR and the Malaga City Council).
- Prepare programmes or projects and propose the corresponding specific implementation protocols related to the General Action Protocol signed between the State-Owned Company for the Management of Innovation and Tourism Technologies, known as SEGITTUR, and the Malaga City Council, dated 6 June 2024.
- Submit the proposals it develops to the competent bodies of both parties (SEGITTUR and the Malaga City Council).
- Monitor the specific protocols signed as part of the initiative, as well as clarify and resolve any questions that may arise regarding their interpretation and execution.

These functions may, as the implementation of the Smart Tourist Destination progresses, be supported by technological tools that provide the destination with the necessary resources for optimal management of the data generated and collected—ensuring it is made available to all those involved in the development of tourism-related activities.

It is important to note that the Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga does not have an organic or legal status and, therefore, does not constitute a decision-making body within the regulatory framework established by law. That is to say, its agreements are intentions only and cannot create obligations or rights on behalf of the signatories for the execution of actions carried out under the General Action Protocol signed between SEGITTUR and the Malaga City Council.

## Meeting Types

The Technical Monitoring Commission may operate in plenary session, as a standing committee, or, where appropriate, through the establishment of working groups.

### 1. Plenary Committee:

The Plenary Committee is composed of

- Presidency.
- Department of Tourism and City Promotion. Internal Coordination.
- Technical Committee.

The Plenary Committee will meet at least twice a year, or whenever requested by the Chair, the Department of Tourism and City Promotion, or at least one third of the members of the Technical Committee.

For meetings to be held and decisions to be made, the presence of at least one third of the members of the Technical Committee, or their duly authorised delegates with voting rights, is required.

Decisions will be adopted by at least one third of the Technical Committee members and recorded in the minutes of each meeting, which will be signed by all attendees.

### 2. Standing Committee:

The Standing Committee is composed of:

- Department of Tourism and City Promotion. Internal Coordination.
- European Fund Management.
- District and Integrated Project Coordination.
- Office of Public Participation. Migration. External Affairs. Development Cooperation. Transparency, and Good Governance.
- Department of Operational Services, Internal Affairs, Beaches, and Festivals.

At least four meetings will be convened annually to monitor the progress of the Smart Tourist Destination Malaga Action Plan.

- Two meetings will take place prior to the Plenary Committee sessions.
- Two ordinary meetings will be held to review and follow up on the various topics within the Committee's remit.

### **3. Working Groups:**

Working groups may be convened based on the destination's needs, at the request of the Chair, the Department of Tourism and City Promotion, or at least one third of the Technical Committee members.

Meetings may be held either in person or virtually and will be accompanied by the relevant agenda and any necessary documentation to ensure proper understanding of the topics to be discussed.



### 3. Strategic Plan for STO Malaga 2025-2029

STO Malaga aims to establish the city of Malaga as a benchmark sustainable city, particularly in the areas of data management and governance.

Figure 5: Presentation of the Water Report at the Hall of Mirrors, Malaga City Hall, 2024



Source: Department of Tourism and City Promotion. Malaga City Council.

Malaga’s ambition is not only to meet current environmental and social challenges, but to serve as an inspiration for other cities by adopting a model that is balanced, forward-thinking, and environmentally responsible. Through this strategic plan, the aim is to develop initiatives based on the active participation of citizens, businesses, and public bodies, fostering sustainable development that safeguards social and economic well-being.

Ultimately, the observatory’s main objective is to position Malaga as a hub for the transfer of knowledge and information in the fields of tourism and sustainability.

## 3.1 STO Malaga's Challenges for the Future

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STO Malaga currently faces several challenges in achieving its purpose and fulfilling its mission to support the city in its transition toward a sustainable tourism development model. The challenges outlined below aim to ensure that Malaga becomes a resilient, sustainable, and inclusive tourism destination through digital transformation:

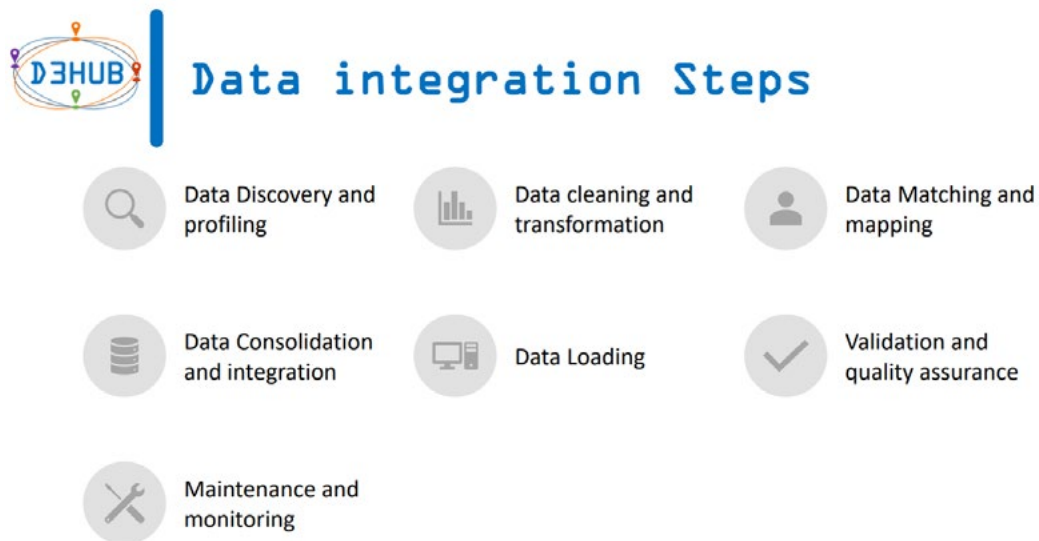
### 1. Improving data quality and accessibility.

The collection of comprehensive data, extending beyond traditional qualitative sources, will enable better planning and more informed decision-making, grounded in quantitative evidence. Additionally, the real-time automated updating of this data would benefit all stakeholders involved in the tourism sector in the city of Malaga.

Aligned with the international strategic framework Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism (SF-MST), which provides a solid structure for organizing data and statistics using common concepts, definitions, classifications, and standard reporting rules, along with the guidelines set by UN Tourism and other European initiatives, the D3Hub tool seeks to offer training and capacity building to enable alignment of all data sources, which are often scattered, incompatible with one another, and contain unstructured data. It also includes efficiently analysing the information obtained from various institutions and learning how other destinations manage similarly complex data collection and processing challenges, in order to be more effective, minimize resources, and maximize results. This involves acquiring different tools and methodologies for the future integration of data into Malaga's Smart Destination Platform, following the integration steps proposed by D3Hub (see Figure 6):

1. Data collection and representation.
2. Data refinement and transformation.
3. Data cross-referencing and mapping.
4. Data consolidation and integration.
5. Uploading data.
6. Data validation and quality assurance.
7. Maintenance of data integration processes and data monitoring.

Figure 6: Steps for data integration in the Smart Destination Platform



Source: D3Hub Cross-Cluster Session, 2025.

## 2. Developing a governance model that enables proper tracking of objectives and indicators.

Malaga's governance aims for a comprehensive approach to managing the city as a Smart Tourist Destination, prioritising not only economic growth but also social development and institutional strengthening. In accordance with the Smart Tourist Destination model, which Malaga tailors to its specific needs while adhering to the requirements and indicators established by SEGITTUR (State-Owned Company for the Management of Innovation and Tourism Technologies), governance represents the highest level of public-public and public-private cooperation to ensure efficient, transparent, and participatory management.

Tourism governance is coordinated through an integrated structure of various bodies and entities that engage at the local, provincial, regional, and national levels. This structure fosters cross-institutional collaboration, enabling the effective management of various tourism challenges, from event organisation to regulating tourism flows and promoting sustainability within the sector.

The creation of the Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga aims to promote the implementation of coordinated work structures, seeking synergies driven by the Smart Tourist Destination model and the development of procedures that increase efficiency in decision-making, shared responsibility, and the monitoring and control of actions affecting tourism by public managers in the territory.

Although there is no specific department dedicated exclusively to comprehensive sustainability, the Malaga City Council has established STO Malaga (Sustainable Tourism Observatory), which provides essential support to tourism stakeholders. By offering real-time data, STO Malaga enables informed decision-making and strengthens the management of tourism activities.

These stakeholders encompass tourism businesses and industry operators; academic institutions; local, regional, and provincial tourism organisations; ministries, other government departments, and associations; transportation, infrastructure, and utility providers; communities and community associations; investors and developers; industry associations; and other organisations linked to the tourism sector.

Particular mention should be made of the Malaga Tourism Forum, which serves as the advisory body that, after nearly two decades of activity, continues to bring together various City Council departments and the tourism sector to represent and defend Malaga's interests as a destination. This forum represents all the aforementioned stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, with the objective of planning and coordinating actions that positively impact local tourism.

**Figure 7: Workshop on Water Management in Destinations, 2024**



*Source: Department of Tourism and City Promotion. Malaga City Council.*

### **3. Promoting collective collaboration and local satisfaction.**

Closely tied to governance is Malaga's commitment to sustaining and expanding collaborative processes within the destination, aiming to boost engagement from both the local community and businesses in strategic tourism planning. The Observatory, guided by a spirit of collective responsibility, seeks to involve all actors within the tourism value chain, fostering cooperation among organisations and stakeholders. This will help to build collective awareness and shared responsibility towards sustainability.

It is also important to emphasise the role of STO Malaga in participatory processes, engaging local communities and stakeholders in the development of sustainable and resilient tourism practices and policies.

### **4. Balancing social, environmental, and economic needs.**

Malaga faces the challenge of maximising the benefits of tourism without compromising the natural environment or the quality of life of its residents. To this end, the Observatory focuses on identifying risks and opportunities, promoting best practice and recommendations. Additionally, it aims to have automated, real-time data sources to monitor indicators such as: Local tourism GDP, total tourism revenue, total spending/investment in Malaga's tourism sector, average daily expenditure per visitor, total economic impact of tourism expenditure, etc.

### **5. Promoting regenerative tourism.**

The city must make progress in areas such as infrastructure improvement, green spaces, and sustainable mobility—sectors where deficiencies still exist—adopting a regenerative approach that not only minimises environmental impact but also contributes to the restoration of the surroundings, with positive effects on biodiversity and community well-being. Regenerative tourism encourages active participation by visitors and communities in practices that support landscape regeneration, respect for biodiversity, and the strengthening of local cultures. STO Malaga should pay close attention to this aspect to identify areas for improvement that enable the definition of key lines of action, resulting in a lasting and transformative positive impact.

### **6. Climate crisis and tourism resilience.**

STO Malaga must focus on increasing the destination's capacity to adapt to extreme weather events. Events such as intense heatwaves or sudden flooding not only affect the tourist experience and safety but also threaten residents' quality of life and the city's infrastructure. The challenge for the Observatory is to identify guidelines for developing resilient tourism that can face and overcome these challenges through innovative strategies. Similarly, close collaboration between tourism sector actors and local authorities should be encouraged to develop emergency plans, improve respon-

se capacity for unforeseen climatic events, and ensure rapid and effective recovery following such incidents.

It should be noted that the Department of Tourism and City Promotion is implementing various actions within the Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan: Urban Shelters in City Parks, Analysis of the Evolution of the Tourist Footprint. Meanwhile, the Department of Environmental Sustainability is carrying out other projects, such as air quality studies.

## 7. Flows and density.

As noted above, and given that Malaga is implementing the ‘Sustainable Decentralisation of Tourism in Malaga’ project under the Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan framework, the city has taken the initiative to participate in D3Hub Cluster 1: Tourist Flows, which focuses on redistributing tourist flows across space and time—addressing the temporal and spatial distribution of visitors and highlighting existing imbalances. This cluster aims to provide strategies to manage tourist flows, improve the efficiency of data collection and processing, and promote balanced tourism growth at the destination, based on benchmarking analyses of best practices from other tourist destinations.

The ‘Malaga Sustainable Tourism Decentralisation Project’ seeks to redistribute tourist flows in the city from areas of high concentration to other spaces and resources, using alternative routes. All actions are guided by principles of respect for the city’s essence, cultural traditions, and the sustainability of resources, as well as consideration for the social, cultural, and residential environment in which they are located. Strategic cross-cutting principles—such as accessibility, sustainability, digitalisation, and the preservation of cultural heritage—are central to every initiative.

Some of the main routes being highlighted include:

- Fishermen’s District Route: Palo-Pedregalejo
- Noble and Port District Route: Malagueta
- Arts District Route: SOHO
- Industrial Heritage Route
- Nature Trail Route
- Historic Neighbourhoods Route

In 2024, preliminary work was carried out across several focus areas:

- Pillar 1: Green and Sustainable Transition
- Pillar 2: Enhanced Energy Efficiency
- Pillar 3: Digital Transition
- Pillar 4: Competitiveness

## 8. Sustainable transport:

At the European level, reports from the Community of European Cities: CityDNA (City Destinations Alliance) highlight new measures to protect historic city centres by promoting sustainable transport. Malaga is noted as a leading example, having phased out horse-drawn carriages due to animal welfare concerns and to enhance the city's modern image.

This forms part of a broader shift towards sustainable mobility, including the expansion of the city-wide electric bike-sharing scheme.

Regarding cruise tourism, Malaga ranks as the second-busiest cruise port on the Iberian Peninsula and the sixth in the Mediterranean. As such, Malaga is a key destination in this sector. Plans are underway to develop robust procedures for data collection, processing, and analysis to assess both the economic and environmental impacts of cruise tourism, alongside measuring passenger satisfaction and other relevant indicators.

### 3.2. Specific Objectives of STO Malaga

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As mentioned above, the primary objective of the Observatory is to establish Malaga as a centre for knowledge and information transfer in the field of sustainable tourism.

To achieve the vision of STO Malaga, the following specific objectives must be considered:

- Improving the quality of existing and potential data.
- Creating continuous and reliable perspectives on tourism trends and dynamics.
- Improving the accessibility of data available to all stakeholders.
- Increasing knowledge and understanding of tourism development.
- Providing tangible evidence of tourism's value and its impacts.
- Strengthening data-driven decision-making.
- Facilitating the prioritisation of development decisions and actions.
- Reducing information gaps and fostering data standards.
- Facilitating benchmarking of progress both internally and against other destinations.
- Increasing cooperation within and between organisations.
- Boosting the productivity and competitiveness of organisations.

- Increasing the commitments of all tourism stakeholders to share data.
- Involving all stakeholders in strategic planning through details on indicators and priorities.
- Encouraging collective responsibility in the destination.

By improving the data landscape for tourism stakeholders in Malaga and fostering better-informed decision-making, the initiative seeks to help regions move from a primarily marketing-driven development approach to a more management-oriented development approach. This approach relies on forward-looking metrics of success, where net benefits for the local community play a key role, thereby creating a cultural shift in tourism management within the destination.

### **3.3 Key Initiatives and Focus Areas for STO Malaga**

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To effectively address the challenges it faces, STO Malaga is defining a structured set of focus areas and initiatives designed to achieve its strategic objectives.

These focus areas reflect STO Malaga's commitment to providing the city with the essential tools to strengthen stakeholder collaboration, enhance citizen engagement and satisfaction, and guide Malaga's tourism strategy with a strong emphasis on sustainability.

Figure 8: Focus areas for STO Malaga

FOCUS AREAS	INITIATIVES	INDICATORS
<b>1. Engage new areas within the Observatory structure and enhance collaboration among all stakeholders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve public-private communication.</li> <li>• Ongoing communication and sharing with relevant stakeholders at the destination to build trust, understanding, engagement, collaboration, and support for the initiative.</li> <li>• Regular exchange of experiences with other destinations worldwide.</li> <li>• Preparation and provision of annual reports to the INSTO Network and active participation in network meetings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of meetings and forums held.</li> <li>• Level of participation in meetings.</li> <li>• Response rate to satisfaction surveys.</li> <li>• Number of joint initiatives implemented.</li> <li>• Participation in international sustainable tourism events.</li> <li>• Impact of INSTO Network recommendations on local decision-making.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Identify new sources of information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing review, adjustment, and improvement of data insights from internal and external sources.</li> <li>• Ongoing extension of indicators by thematic area, as well as extension of topics to be monitored.</li> <li>• Ongoing translation of the evidence generated for the different stakeholders of the destination.</li> <li>• Continuously strengthen and expand alliances for research and data analysis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of data sources reviewed and updated.</li> <li>• Number of new indicators by thematic area.</li> <li>• Frequency of data updates from these new sources.</li> <li>• Quality of the data obtained (measured by accuracy, coverage, and frequency).</li> <li>• Number of new partnerships.</li> <li>• Number of reports and studies produced through these partnerships.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Strengthen citizen participation in tourism planning processes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organise regular meetings between representatives of the local community, tourism businesses, municipal authorities, and other key actors to discuss and co-create tourism strategies.</li> <li>• Develop an online platform where residents can participate in consultations and surveys on key tourism projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of meetings held.</li> <li>• Attendance rate of local community members and tourism stakeholders.</li> <li>• Number of co-created proposals.</li> <li>• Number of registered users on the platform.</li> <li>• Number of consultations and surveys conducted through the platform.</li> <li>• Number of citizen proposals implemented.</li> </ul>

FOCUS AREAS	INITIATIVES	INDICATORS
<b>4. Evaluate and improve the perception and satisfaction of citizens and tourism sector agents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct surveys to gauge residents' satisfaction with tourism (defining questions, methodology, continuity, and resulting indicators).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of surveys completed by citizens.</li> <li>Overall resident satisfaction index with tourism.</li> <li>Percentage of improvement in previously unsatisfactory areas following the implementation of measures.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Support the city of Malaga in its sustainable tourism objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist in the Sustainable Tourism Decentralisation project developed by the Department of Tourism and City Promotion.</li> <li>Strengthen collaboration to achieve the Climate Action Plan's targets, including emission reduction goals that incorporate tourism.</li> <li>Coordinate with IATUR in developing indicators related to climate risk.</li> <li>Support the development of regenerative tourism practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Variation in tourist flows in decentralised areas compared to previous years.</li> <li>Environmental impact in new areas of tourism development.</li> <li>Number of regenerative tourism initiatives implemented.</li> <li>Positive environmental impact measured in terms of biodiversity, soil and water quality, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>6. Digitalisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convert STO Malaga dashboards into APIs with real-time data.</li> <li>Make digital information accessible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of API datasets available on the STO Malaga website.</li> </ul>
<b>7. Monitoring of key projects led by the Department of Tourism and City Promotion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Smart Tourist Destination.</li> <li>Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan.</li> <li>Smart Destination Platform</li> <li>D3Hub.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage (%) of compliance with requirements in each area of the relevant pillar of the Smart Tourist Destination model,</li> <li>Percentage (%) of implementation of actions for each pillar of the Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan.</li> <li>Key performance indicators (KPIs) and expected outcomes, aligned with the objectives of each module, both common and Smart Destination Platform-specific.</li> <li>Key sustainability indicators that will contribute to the management of tourist flows across space and time.</li> </ul>






Source: Compiled by author.

STO Malaga is under continuous development, so the key focus areas and initiatives presented in this section are constantly reviewed, expanded, and adapted to meet the city’s evolving needs and circumstances. Consequently, any newly identified focus areas or initiatives, as well as those arising from the definition of the new Malaga Tourism Strategic Plan 2025–2029, will be integrated into the ongoing STO Malaga projects.

These initiatives are prioritised according to a short-, medium-, and long-term time-frame.

**Figure 9: STO Malaga actions designed for the short, medium, and long term**

<b>STO Malaga actions</b>	<b>Short term</b>	<b>Medium term</b>	<b>Long term</b>
<p><b>Involve new departments in the observatory structure and increase collaboration; improve public-private communication.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve public-private communication.</li> <li>• Ongoing communication and sharing with relevant stakeholders at the destination to build trust, understanding, engagement, collaboration, and support for the initiative.</li> <li>• Preparation and provision of annual reports to the INSTO Network and active participation in network meetings.</li> <li>• Regular exchange of experiences with other destinations worldwide.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>2. Identify new sources of information.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing review, adjustment, and improvement of data insights from internal and external sources.</li> <li>• Ongoing improvement of the Smart Destination System in terms of content and usability.</li> <li>• Ongoing extension of indicators by thematic area, as well as extension of topics to be monitored.</li> <li>• Ongoing translation of the evidence generated for the different stakeholders of the destination.</li> <li>• Continuously strengthen and expand alliances for research and data analysis.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>3. Strengthen citizen participation in tourism planning processes.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organise regular meetings between representatives of the local community, tourism businesses, municipal authorities, and other key actors to discuss and co-create tourism strategies.</li> <li>• Develop an online platform where residents can participate in consultations and surveys on key tourism projects.</li> </ul>			

STO Malaga actions	Short term	Medium term	Long term
<b>4. Evaluate and improve the perception and satisfaction of citizens and tourism sector agents.</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct surveys to gauge residents' satisfaction with tourism (defining questions, methodology, continuity, and resulting indicators).</li> </ul>			
<b>5. Support the city of Malaga in its sustainable tourism objectives.</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist in Malaga's Sustainable Tourism Decentralisation Project, developed by the Department of Tourism and City Promotion.</li> <li>Strengthen collaboration to achieve the Climate Action Plan's targets, including emission reduction goals that incorporate tourism.</li> <li>Coordination, together with OMAU, of the development of indicators related to climate risk.</li> <li>Support the development of regenerative tourism practices.</li> </ul>	 		

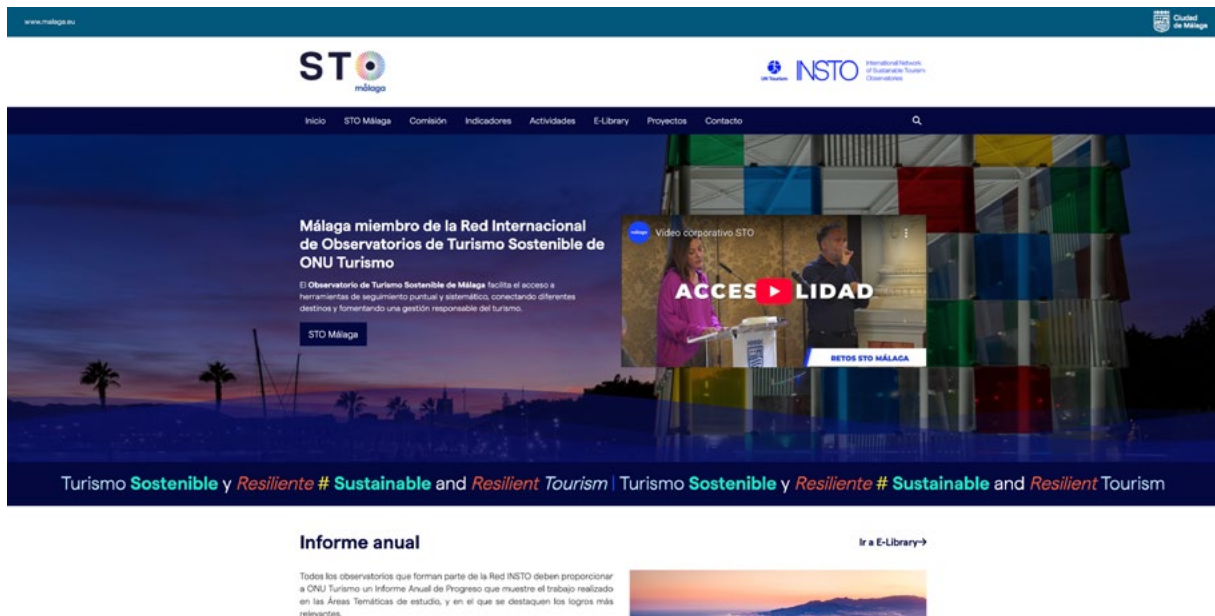
Source: Compiled by author.

### 3.4 STO Malaga Communication Process

STO Malaga has various communication channels. The primary access point for information is the **website (sto.malaga.eu)**, which publishes reports, studies, and key statistics on the impact of tourism on the local environment, as well as strategies for its sustainable management. As one of the requirements set by UN Tourism for observatories, the creation of a dedicated website allows Malaga to build a more comprehensive, coherent, and up-to-date view of tourism at the regional, national, and international levels. Additionally, STO Malaga emphasises collaboration with other observatories through the sharing and exchange of information.

All resources on the observatory website are organised into the main sections of STO Malaga: the STO Malaga Technical Commission, key indicators, observatory activities, and ongoing sustainable initiatives. This portal enhances transparency in municipal management and facilitates smoother dialogue between the local government and citizens.

Figure 10: STO Malaga website

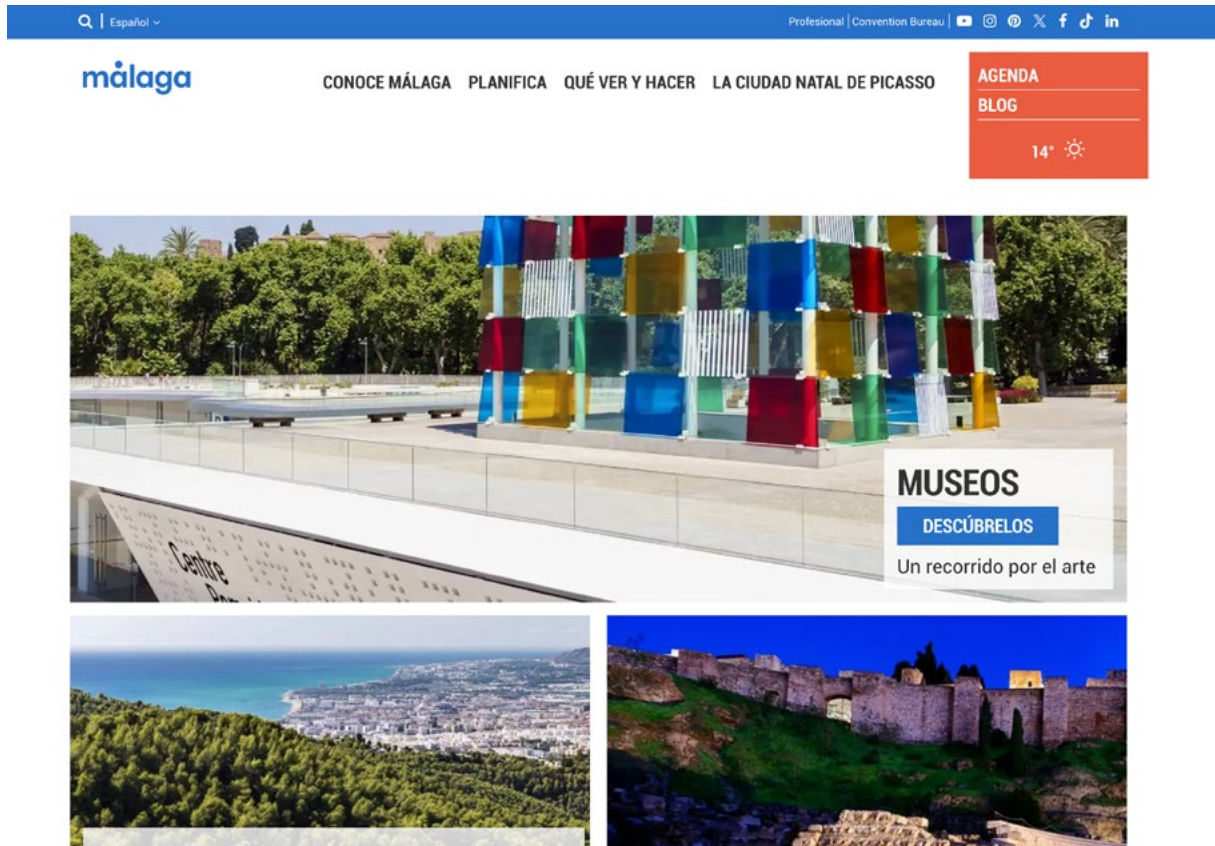


Source: <https://sto.malaga.eu/>

In addition, STO Malaga provides users with an **email address (stomalaga@malaga.eu)** to handle inquiries, suggestions, and collaboration related to sustainable tourism. Through a **dedicated public helpline (658 995 442)**, a more immediate service is offered to respond to enquiries and process requests.

Users can also consult the official website of the Department of Tourism and City Promotion, where up-to-date information about tourism in Malaga is available: **<https://visita.malaga.eu/en/>**

Figure 11: Malaga Tourism website



Source: <https://visita.malaga.eu/en/>

These channels allow STO Malaga to maintain smooth communication with the tourism community and facilitate the dissemination of best practices in sustainability within the sector.



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# Annex I. Detailed thematic areas

## MANDATORY THEMATIC AREAS

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### 1. SEASONALITY

Tourism seasonality is defined as the tendency for tourist flows to concentrate during short periods of the year, creating an imbalance in the supply and demand of a destination. In Malaga, seasonality is most evident during the summer months and around specific events such as Holy Week and Christmas.

#### Methodology

##### Data sources and variables

- Use of data from the Hotel Occupancy Survey (Encuesta de Ocupación Hotelera, EOH) and the Tourist Apartment Occupancy Survey (Encuesta de Ocupación de Apartamentos Turísticos, EOAT), produced monthly by the National Statistics Institute (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, INE).
- Analysis of variables such as the number of overnight stays in hotels and tourist apartments, as well as the estimated number of beds in both types of accommodation.

##### Statistical methods

- Use of basic statistical methods to interpret seasonality, such as the max/min ratio and seasonal factors that define the patterns of each analysed variable.
- Analysis of the monthly evolution of overnight stays and estimated bed capacity to identify periods of high and low demand.

##### Indicadores Clave

- Use of indicators such as the Gini coefficient and the max/min ratio to measure the seasonal concentration of tourist demand.
- Presentation of results through charts and tables showing the monthly distribution of tourism demand and supply.

Malaga faces the challenge of tourist seasonality, with visitor flows concentrated in the summer months and festive periods such as Christmas. This creates imbalances between supply and demand, impacting the sustainability of the destination. To address this, strategies have been implemented to promote less seasonal tourism segments, such as cultural tourism and business/conference tourism. Additionally, efforts focus on diversifying the tourism offer and strengthening public-private collaboration

to achieve more stable occupancy throughout the year, thereby enhancing both economic and environmental sustainability.

## 2. EMPLOYMENT

The tourism sector is a key pillar of Malaga's economy, generating employment and driving economic activity. Job creation in the tourism sector not only contributes to economic development but also improves the quality of life for residents. However, seasonality and the quality of employment can present challenges, particularly regarding job stability and working conditions.

### Methodology

#### Data sources and variables

- Use of data from the Labour Force Survey (Encuesta de Población Activa, EPA), the National Statistics Institute, and other official sources.
- Analysis of variables such as employment rate, number of temporary and permanent contracts, and vocational training in the tourism sector.

#### Statistical methods

- Use of descriptive and analytical statistical techniques to interpret employment data.
- Analysis of trends and patterns in job creation, labour stability, and professional training within the tourism sector.

#### Key indicators

- Employment rate in the tourism sector.
- Number of temporary versus permanent contracts.
- Level of employee skills and qualifications.
- Quality of working conditions.

Tourism plays a crucial role in job creation in Malaga, accounting for 18.4% of total employment in 2022. However, seasonality and temporary employment remain challenges, particularly during the high season. To improve job stability, employment is being promoted in less seasonal segments, such as cultural tourism and business/conference tourism. In addition, vocational training programmes have been implemented to enhance workers' skills and encourage entrepreneurship in the sector. Despite improvements in working conditions, efforts continue to ensure equal opportunities and strengthen job stability.

### 3. ECONOMIC BENEFITS AT DESTINATION LEVEL

Tourism is a significant economic activity with a direct impact on Malaga's territorial and social development. The sector generates income, employment, and economic dynamism, contributing to the well-being of the local community. However, economic dependence on tourism can present challenges, particularly during market fluctuations or global crises.

#### Methodology

##### Data sources and variables

- Use of data from the National Statistics Institute, the Tourist Expenditure Survey (Encuesta de Gasto Turístico, EGATUR), and other official sources.
- Analysis of variables such as tourist expenditure, tourism's contribution to the local GDP, and employment generation.

##### Statistical methods

- Use of descriptive and analytical statistical techniques to interpret economic data.
- Analysis of trends and patterns in tourist expenditure and its impact on the local economy.

##### Key indicators

- Average expenditure per tourist.
- Contribution of tourism to local GDP.
- Employment creation in the tourism sector.
- Distribution of economic benefits within the community.

Tourism in Malaga has had a positive economic impact, representing 14% of GDP in 2022 and generating local employment. The city has diversified its tourism offer, promoting cultural, gastronomic, and business/conference tourism, which has helped reduce seasonality and improve economic sustainability. In addition, tourism infrastructure has been enhanced and entrepreneurship encouraged in the sector, supporting local innovation. Through sustainable practices and monitoring systems, Malaga seeks to balance economic development with the conservation of natural and cultural resources.

## 4. GOVERNANCE

Governance in Malaga focuses on comprehensive management of the tourist destination, aiming not only for economic growth but also for social development and the reinforcement of institutional frameworks. The city has made significant strides in establishing strong governance structures that enable effective collaboration between public and private stakeholders, while fostering active citizen engagement in decision-making processes.

### Methodology

#### Data sources and variables

- Collection of data from official bodies, surveys, and specific studies on tourism governance.
- Analysis of variables such as citizen participation, transparency in management, and the effectiveness of tourism policies.

#### Statistical methods

- Use of descriptive and analytical statistical techniques to interpret governance data.
- Comparative assessment of the effectiveness of different governance models in the tourism sector.

#### Key indicators

- Level of citizen participation in tourism-related decision-making.
- Degree of transparency in the management of tourism resources.
- Effectiveness of strategic plans and tourism policies.
- Stakeholder satisfaction with governance processes.

## 5. LOCAL SATISFACTION

The analysis of resident and visitor well-being and satisfaction in Malaga is a key element in improving quality of life and the overall tourism experience in the city. Satisfaction levels are evaluated through regular surveys and studies that collect opinions on various aspects of municipal life and the city's tourism offerings.

## Methodology

### Data sources and variables

- Collection of data through citizen and tourist satisfaction surveys managed by the Malaga City Council and other organisations.
- Analysis of variables such as the quality of public services, urban cleanliness, safety, and cultural and leisure offers.

### Statistical methods

- Use of descriptive and analytical statistical techniques to interpret satisfaction data.
- Comparative assessment of satisfaction levels across different areas and services.

### Key indicators

- Level of resident satisfaction with public services and municipal management.
- Level of tourist satisfaction with the quality of tourism services and attractions.
- Tourist recommendation rate for the destination.
- Identification of priority areas for continuous improvement.

## 6. ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Energy management in Malaga is essential for addressing challenges related to energy supply, the climate crisis, and resource efficiency. Malaga has implemented a series of strategies and programs to improve energy efficiency and promote the use of renewable energy, in line with European requirements and long-term sustainability goals.

## Methodology

### Data sources and variables

- Collection of data from official bodies, targeted studies, and surveys on energy consumption and renewable energy production.
- Analysis of variables such as energy consumption by sector, percentage of renewable energy, and CO2 emissions.

### Statistical methods

- Use of descriptive and analytical statistical techniques to interpret energy data.
- Comparative evaluation of the effectiveness of different energy efficiency measures and renewable energy projects.

### Key indicators

- Energy consumption per capita.
- Share of renewable energy in total final energy use.
- CO2 emissions from energy consumption.
- Energy efficiency in key sectors (transport, buildings, industry).

## 7. WATER MANAGEMENT

Water is a limited and essential resource for Malaga's economic development, making its efficient management crucial. Recurring droughts and the impact of climate change highlight the need for comprehensive strategies to ensure the long-term availability and quality of water. Malaga has implemented various measures focused on conservation, reuse, and wastewater treatment to address these challenges.

### Methodology

#### Data sources and variables

- Collection of data from official bodies, targeted studies, and surveys on water consumption and quality.
- Analysis of variables such as water consumption by sector, water quality, and wastewater treatment capacity.

#### Statistical methods

- Use of descriptive and analytical statistical techniques to interpret water management data.
- Comparative evaluation of the effectiveness of different water-saving and treatment measures.

#### Key indicators

- Water consumption per capita.
- Quality of water intended for human consumption.

- Capacity and efficiency of wastewater treatment infrastructure.
- Volume of water reused and regenerated.

## 8. WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT

The management and treatment of wastewater in Malaga is an essential public service, both for environmental protection and public health. Population growth and increased tourism activity in the city, combined with the challenges of climate change, have made efficient wastewater management a key priority. Various measures have been implemented to improve the city's infrastructure and wastewater treatment practices.

### Methodology

#### Data sources and variables

- Data collected from official bodies, specialised studies, and surveys on wastewater treatment.
- Analysis of variables such as treatment capacity, treated water quality, and volume of water reused.

#### Statistical methods

- Use of descriptive and analytical statistical techniques to interpret wastewater management data.
- Benchmarking the effectiveness of different wastewater treatment technologies and practices.

#### Key indicators

- Capacity and efficiency of tertiary treatment infrastructure.
- Volume of treated and reused wastewater.
- Greenhouse gas emissions generated by wastewater treatment.
- Quality of treated water.

## 9. SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Urban solid waste (USW) management in Malaga is essential to maintaining environmental sustainability and quality of life in the city. Between 2015 and 2021, various strategies have been implemented to improve waste collection, treatment, and disposal. The city has worked to align with European guidelines promoting a circular economy, focusing on waste reduction, reuse, and recycling.

## Methodology

### Data sources and variables

- Data collected from official agencies, specialised studies, and surveys on waste generation and management.
- Analysis of variables such as the quantity of waste collected, the composition of municipal solid waste (MSW), and the treatment methods used.

### Statistical methods

- Use of descriptive and analytical statistical techniques to interpret waste management data.
- Benchmarking the effectiveness of different waste management strategies and programmes.

### Key indicators

- Quantity of waste collected and treated.
- Percentage of waste recycled and sent to landfill.
- Efficiency of waste management infrastructure.
- Citizen participation in recycling and waste reduction programmes.

## 10. ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility in Malaga is treated as a priority to ensure that all people, regardless of physical or sensory abilities, can interact with and enjoy urban spaces and tourism services. This aligns with guidelines from the World Health Organization and national and regional regulations, such as Law 51/2003 and Decree 293/2009, which promote equal opportunities and universal accessibility.

## Methodology

### Data sources and variables

- Data collected from official bodies, specialised studies, and surveys on accessibility.
- Analysis of variables such as the number of accessible establishments, user satisfaction, and the effectiveness of adapted infrastructure.

### Statistical methods

- Use of descriptive and analytical statistical techniques to interpret accessibility data.
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of different accessibility strategies and programmes.

### Key indicators

- Number of accessible tourism resources.
- Satisfaction of users with special needs.
- Efficiency of accessible infrastructure and services.

## 11. CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is one of the greatest global challenges, and Malaga is no exception. The city faces significant risks due to rising temperatures, reduced rainfall, the increased frequency of extreme weather events, and rising sea levels. These factors can impact public health, water resources, biodiversity, and key sectors such as tourism.

### Methodology

#### Data sources and variables

- Data collected from official agencies, specialised studies, and surveys on climate and its impacts.
- Analysis of variables such as CO2 emissions, energy consumption, air quality, and the occurrence of extreme weather events.

#### Statistical methods

- Use of descriptive and analytical statistical techniques to interpret data related to climate change.
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of different mitigation and adaptation strategies.

#### Key indicators

- CO2 and other greenhouse gas emissions.
- Energy consumption and percentage of renewable energy.
- Air quality and number of days with extreme temperatures.
- Area of green spaces and quality of water resources.

## ADDITIONAL THEMATIC AREAS FOR MALAGA

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### 1. TOURISM OFFER

Over the past two decades, Malaga has experienced significant growth in its tourism offer, transforming into a destination of national and international relevance. This growth has been driven by the diversification of tourism in the city, which has positioned itself across several key segments:

- **Cultural Tourism:** Malaga has developed a rich cultural offer that includes museums, historic monuments, and major cultural events that attract both national and international visitors. The city has built a cultural identity around emblematic figures such as Picasso, reinforcing its image as a leading cultural destination.
- **MICE Tourism:** The city has strengthened its infrastructure to attract international events, meetings, and conferences. This has positioned Malaga as an important destination for business tourism, benefiting from the growing demand in this sector.
- **Sports and Cruise Tourism:** In addition to its cultural attractions, Malaga has leveraged its coastal location and infrastructure to attract tourists interested in sports activities and cruises. This type of tourism has contributed to an increase in visitor numbers and the development of the local economy.

In summary, Malaga has successfully adapted and evolved its tourism offer to meet the changing demands of the market, establishing itself as a diverse and attractive destination in Southern Europe. However, the growth of tourist accommodation presents a challenge that requires attention to ensure sustainable development. Furthermore, the city continues to strengthen its cultural and events offer, helping to increase the average length of tourist stays and positioning Malaga as an attractive destination for high-quality tourism and international events.

### 2. MOBILITY (INCLUDING CRUISES)

Mobility in Malaga is a complex and crucial issue, influenced by the city's geography and socio-economic dynamics. Situated at the heart of the Costa del Sol, Malaga occupies a strategic position in terms of transport and connectivity. This location has fostered the development of an extensive transport infrastructure network, linking the city at municipal, regional, national, and international levels.

At the same time, Malaga faces the challenge of balancing tourism growth with the need to reduce CO2 emissions and promote more sustainable modes of transport.

Mobility in Malaga reflects both its urban and economic growth and its importance as a Mediterranean tourist destination.

The city has demonstrated remarkable resilience in its transport infrastructure, recovering quickly from recent challenges, such as the pandemic. Malaga continues to strengthen its public transport network and encourage more sustainable mobility. The city is positioned as a strategic travel hub and an important tourist destination, adapting to new mobility patterns and attracting both tourists and business travellers.

Currently, the Port of Malaga ranks as the sixth most important cruise port in the Mediterranean and the second largest on the Iberian Peninsula. To further strengthen the sector, the current tourism strategy has developed a cruise improvement plan aimed at attracting the premium and luxury cruise segments.

Data was identified as a critical factor during roundtable discussions with the cruise sector while developing the Malaga City strategy outlined in the Malaga Tourism Strategic Plan 2021–2024. This presents another key opportunity for STO Malaga to support these efforts by regularly monitoring essential information related to cruise tourism in the city. This is particularly relevant as the strategy emphasises positioning Malaga as a ‘green port’, one that is not overcrowded, and fully in harmony with the destination.

### **3. SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION**

The audiovisual industry, driven by the boom in streaming platforms, has grown exponentially, generating significant economic and environmental impacts in the locations where filming takes place. Malaga has emerged as an attractive destination for international audiovisual productions, thanks to its unique light and charm, as well as renowned festivals such as the Malaga Film Festival.

Film tourism, which develops in the wake of successful productions shot in the city, has also grown, further encouraging the promotion of tourist routes based on film and TV series locations. However, this expansion brings environmental challenges, emphasising the need to adopt sustainable production practices to minimise carbon footprints and safeguard destinations.

Malaga has positioned itself as a leading destination for the audiovisual sector, notable for its commitment to sustainability. Through various municipal initiatives and the promotion of cinematic tourism routes, the city not only attracts high-profile productions but also fosters economic and social development in harmony with the environment. Its free-of-charge approach to certifying sustainable productions sets it apart from other cities, fostering a virtuous cycle in which the audiovisual industry and sustainability are mutually reinforcing.

## 4. SUSTAINABLE EVENTS

Sustainable events, as conceptualised by the United Nations, are those that ensure minimal environmental impact while leaving a positive legacy for society.

These events aim not only to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> and other pollutant emissions but also to promote inclusion and equal opportunities, while generating wealth for the local economy.

Organising sustainable events requires the active involvement of all participants at every stage of planning and management. Event organisers must take a proactive role in selecting locations, materials, and suppliers, as these decisions are critical to achieving sustainability in all aspects of the event. The most common environmental impacts of such events include the consumption of natural resources, waste generation, and various forms of pollution (noise, air, light, etc.). Responsible water use is also emphasised.

Sustainability extends beyond environmental concerns to include economic and social dimensions. A sustainable event must be economically viable and contribute to socio-economic development, ensuring that economic benefits are not divorced from environmental preservation. These events support the local economy, encourage sustainable agricultural and livestock practices, reduce costs through efficient resource use, and promote social equality. They also raise environmental awareness among society and stimulate technological innovation for more sustainable solutions.

In this context, Malaga has distinguished itself as a MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) destination that promotes sustainable practices, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The city has implemented several pioneering initiatives, such as calculating tourists' carbon footprints and offsetting them through technological tools, as well as creating an Environmental Advisory Centre and a specific certification for sustainable events.

## 5. HEALTH-RELATED INFORMATION

Public health in Malaga is a crucial component of citizen well-being and sustainable urban development. Health policies in Malaga are framed within a strong regulatory framework that includes European, national and regional laws and regulations. These cover food safety, hygiene standards, and sanitary control in public establishments.

Since 1989, Malaga has been a member of the Spanish Network of Healthy Cities, a project led by the World Health Organization (WHO) aimed at improving local health and sustainable development. This initiative aligns with the 'Health for All' programme, which seeks not only to enhance medical care but also to promote the physical, mental, and social well-being of the community.

## **6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN SUSTAINABILITY**

Environmental education is a key tool to drive the transition towards sustainable development, both locally and globally. According to UN Tourism, raising environmental awareness is essential to manage the future challenges of tourism and ensure long-term sustainability. Malaga has implemented policies that integrate environmental education into its development strategy, engaging both the local community and tourists in adopting sustainable practices.

The municipality faces challenges such as the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and pollution, and environmental education serves as a catalyst for the adoption of sustainable solutions. Local policies aim to raise citizens' awareness of the importance of balancing tourism development with the conservation of natural resources.

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the all-round city



## Annex II. Members of the technical committee

Following a request to each representative of the City Council of Malaga’s Government Departments to appoint a technical staff member to the Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga, and after notifying the appointed members at the meeting held on 21 June 2024, the municipal employees serving on the same are listed below. The committee’s purpose is to promote activities driven by the Smart Tourist Destination Network and to support the development of joint projects and collaborations for implementing initiatives through this forum. It aims to foster synergies and facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge among Smart Tourist Destinations, advancing the project and maximising the benefits of applying the methodology in Malaga.

Figure 12: Government Departments represented in the Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga

Government Department	Dependency
Presidency	Mayor’s Office
	Communication
Economy, Finance, Management of European Union Funds, Coordination of Districts, and Human Resources and Quality	European Fund Management
	District Coordination
	Human Resources and Quality
Culture, Sport, Tourism, Education, Employment Promotion, and Youth	Culture
	Tourism
Environmental Sustainability and Operational Services	Environmental Sustainability
	Operational Services
Commerce, Public Space Management, Business Promotion, and Strategic Public Procurement	Shops and businesses
Innovation, Urban Digitalisation, Promotion of Technological and Business Investment, and Attraction of Investment	Innovation and Digitalisation
	Trade Fairs and Congress Centre
Social Rights, Diversity, Equality, Accessibility, Housing, Citizen Participation, Transparency, and Good Governance	Social Rights, Equality, Accessibility, and Inclusive Policies
	Citizen Participation, Transparency, and Good Governance
Urban Planning, Mobility, and Security	Urban Planning
	Mobility
	Security

Source: Department of Tourism and City Promotion. Malaga City Council.