



Annual report 2024



Funded by:



Acknowledgements

The Department of Tourism and City Promotion gratefully acknowledges the International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO) of UN Tourism for their invaluable support and collaboration in sharing knowledge on the critical role of governance and participatory approaches to promote destination sustainability. Their contribution to the development of the Sustainable Tourism Observatory of Malaga (STO Malaga) activities and the initiatives implemented within the destination's sustainability framework are thoroughly reflected in this STO Malaga 2024 Final Annual Report.

We extend our deepest gratitude to INSTO and all participating institutions, whose dedication and involvement have been essential to the success of this edition. We also commend the implementation of best practices that emphasize inclusivity and evidence-based decision-making, driving a positive transformation toward tourism development that is both resilient and inclusive.

Malaga City Council
Department of Tourism and City Promotion



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Abstract

Current tourism demands integrated, agile responses aligned with the major challenges linked to sustainability and data availability.

Spain is leading the new path towards global sustainable development, where innovation combined with cutting-edge technology serves as a powerful tool to address social, economic, and environmental challenges. Malaga, as a member of the Smart Tourist Destination Network, is undergoing a comprehensive transition by shifting its tourism development model towards one rooted in knowledge, sustainability, and holistic digital transformation. This aims to drive and maintain competitiveness over time, while also enhancing resilience and improving both visitor experience and the quality of life for residents.

It is vital to promote a governance model in which the management of tourism sustainability lies at the very heart of the destination's foundational framework. As the Malaga tourism ecosystem evolves towards a new generation of tools that facilitate evidence-based decision-making, enhance promotion, support training, and integrate cutting-edge technological solutions, it is essential for the destination to lead through data, talent, and collaboration across public and private sectors. This approach will transform Malaga into a hub for analysis, knowledge transfer, and information within the tourism and sustainability sectors.

For this reason, the creation of STO Malaga (Sustainable Tourism Observatory of Malaga) and its incorporation to the INSTO Network (International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories) of UN Tourism in 2022 have marked key milestones in Malaga's evolution as a Smart Tourist Destination and in its sustainable tourism strategy. The Observatory is responsible for providing comprehensive, accessible, and reliable data that support informed and sustainable decision-making. Its work aims to strengthen collaboration between public and private stakeholders, identify risks and opportunities, and strike a balance between the needs of the

local community, the economy, and the environment. With an inclusive approach, STO Malaga promotes smart destination management, encourages multisectoral cooperation, and places sustainability at the heart of tourism development. Through data collection, reports, and research, the Observatory helps guide Malaga towards a more sustainable and resilient future, reinforcing its position as a global leader in responsible tourism.

This annual report outlines the objectives of the Sustainable Tourism Observatory of Malaga, grounded in the current status of the destination and the Smart Tourist Destination governance model. It considers global trends in sustainable tourism alongside the present and future challenges facing STO Malaga. The report details the management tools for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga and highlights the key lines of action driven by smart tourism innovation. Concluding with final reflections, the report also introduces STO Malaga's new initiatives— Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan (Plan de Sostenibilidad Turística en Destino, PSTD), Smart Destination Platform (Plataforma Inteligente de Destino, PID), and D3Hub—which collectively aim to position the city as a smart, resilient, sustainable, and inclusive tourist destination through a comprehensive digital transformation.





Introduction

In 2023, the city welcomed over 1.8 million overnight visitors

Tourism represents one of the main sources of income for the economy of the city of Malaga. Thanks to its ability to reinvent itself, the destination has evolved from being solely a sun-and-beach resort to becoming a benchmark for cultural, gastronomic, and urban tourism, as well as

a strategic hub for MICE tourism. This change has been accompanied by a significant improvement in its infrastructure, highlighting the modernization of its port, which has provided the city with facilities capable of attracting cruise ships and thousands of passengers.

Malaga is currently a major tourist hub and the capital of a globally recognised brand. Internationally, it is known as “the all-round city” for its diverse offerings. In recent years, Malaga has actively promoted the destination abroad through numerous presentations and marketing campaigns, with a focus on premium and luxury tourism. In 2023, the city welcomed over 1.8 million overnight visitors (1,801,406), of whom 61% were international tourists (1,106,758 foreigners).

These figures underscore Malaga’s status as a key international destination, with major source markets including the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Germany, the United States, and the Netherlands.

Tourism plays a vital role in the lives of Malaga’s 586,770 residents. In 2023, the sector accounted for 14.8% of total employment in the city, highlighting its significant influence on the local labour market. Notably, the tourist accommodation sector—including hotels and apartments—generated an average of 2,581 jobs annually, reflecting its importance to the city’s economic development.



The Malaga City Council is advancing its strategy to become a smart, sustainable, digital, and resilient destination through the development of the Smart Destination Platform. This digital tourism initiative, created in collaboration with SEGITTUR (State Company for the Management of Tourism Innovation and Technologies) and other cities, builds on previous milestones—such as Malaga’s designation as the European Capital of Smart Tourism in 2020 and its recognition through SEGITTUR’s certification as a Smart Tourist Destination (Destino Turístico Inteligente, DTI).

In its pursuit of balanced tourism development that respects the social and urban fabric, the destination is transitioning towards a sustainable governance model. This shift is supported by the coordinated efforts of key entities, including the Department of Tourism and City Promotion and the Department of Sustainability. The commitment of the Department of Tourism and City Promotion is also evident in its strategic plans and the guidelines issued over recent years.

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 project ‘Sustainable Decentralisation of Tourism in the City of Malaga’. The project aims to promote alternative tourism experiences by encouraging visitors to explore areas of the city with untapped tourism potential, thereby helping to ease pressure on the most frequently visited sites.

Meanwhile, the Sustainable Tourism Observatory of Malaga, or STO Malaga, continues to make progress and is recognised as an effective tool for promoting sustainability as a central pillar of tourism development. To this end, it aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the city’s strategy, as outlined in the current Malaga Tourism Strategic Plan.

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.

In its initial years, STO Malaga has contributed to fostering a holistic understanding of tourism’s impact on the natural environment, the local economy, and residents’ quality of life. This has been achieved through the systematic collection, analysis, dissemination, and monitoring of tourism data.

The knowledge generated serves as a vital resource, empowering stakeholders in strategic planning by providing the tools and capabilities needed to address current and future challenges responsibly and effectively.

03.

STO Malaga objectives

The Sustainable Tourism Observatory of Malaga serves as a technical tool to support strategic decision-making

Its creation responds to the need to provide the destination with a structured, continuous, and multidimensional monitoring system that enables an integrated analysis of tourism impacts from economic, social, and environmental perspectives. By improving tourism knowledge and focusing on data transparency and accessibility, it aims to benefit all tourism stakeholders in the region.

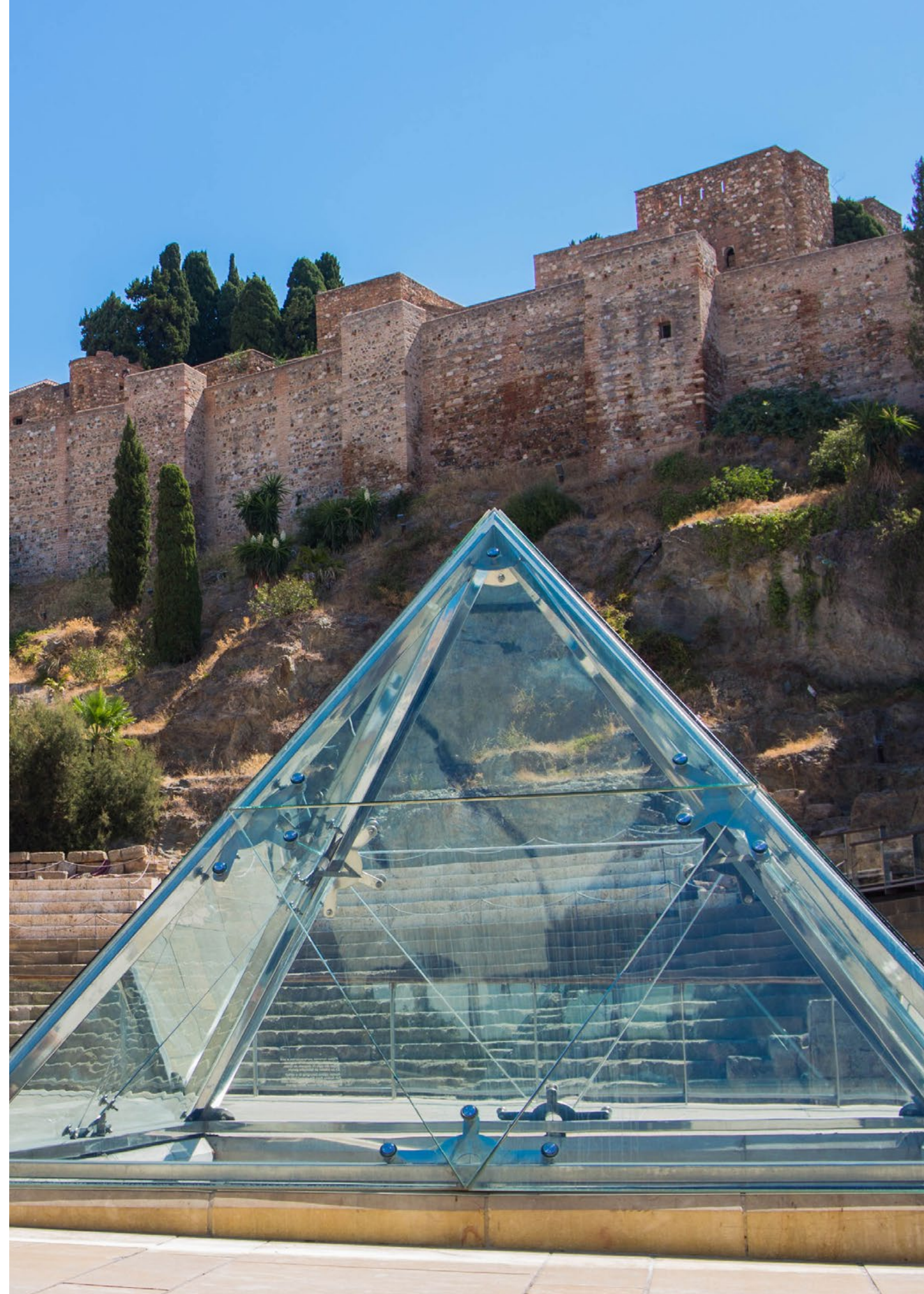
The Observatory's primary objective is to transform Malaga into a centre for analysis, knowledge transfer, and information within the tourism and sustainability sectors. All of this is based on stakeholder participation and data management.

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.

The detailed objectives that are necessary to achieve this vision are:

- Increasing knowledge and understanding about tourism development.
- Strengthening data-driven decision-making.
- Providing tangible evidence of tourism's value and its impacts.
- Improving the quality of existing and potential data.
- Engaging all stakeholders in strategic planning through detailed indicators and priorities.
- Fostering collective responsibility within the destination.
- Creating continuous and reliable insights into tourism trends and dynamics.
- Reducing information gaps and fostering data standards.
- Facilitating benchmarking of progress both internally and against other destinations.
- Enhancing data accessibility for all stakeholders.
- Supporting the prioritising of decisions and development actions.
- Increasing cooperation within and between organisations.
- Boosting the productivity and competitiveness of organisations.
- Increasing the commitments of all tourism stakeholders to share data.

The Observatory thus acts as a catalyst for structural transformation towards a more equitable, smart, and sustainable tourism model, focusing on the net positive impact on the local community.



03.1.

Alignment of STO Malaga objectives with UN Tourism SDGs

Malaga is a pioneering city in promoting sustainable urban policies, and its commitment to sustainability has strengthened over time. In 1995, it was one of the first Spanish cities to adopt a Local Agenda 21, marking the beginning of a firm path towards a more balanced and environmentally respectful development model. In 2010, this commitment was reinforced when Malaga became Spain's third city to join the European Digital Green Charter, an agreement promoting the use of digital technologies to advance environmental sustainability.

The year 2015 marked a milestone with the approval of Urban Agenda 2050, the city's current strategic framework for sustainable development, integrating environmental, social, economic, and governance aspects in a transversal manner. This long-term vision was complemented in 2018 when Malaga joined the global implementation process of the United Nations 2030 Agenda, actively committing to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (see Figure 1).

In this context, the creation of the Sustainable Tourism Observatory of Malaga plays a key role in aligning tourism with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Tourism is closely linked to **SDG 12**, Responsible Consumption and Production. The city's strategy reflects a strong commitment to preserving cultural heritage and managing urban resources responsibly, in support of a tourism model that avoids overexploitation.

A prime example of this strategic approach is the promotion of local products through the Sabor a Málaga brand. This initiative supports the local economy and generates employment in Malaga's agricultural and agri-



Figure 1: SDGs applied to tourism

food sectors, while encouraging the marketing of all products linked to the brand by highlighting their unique qualities and exclusivity.

The destination actively encourages responsible consumption through sustainable practices designed to raise awareness among both tourists and residents about the impact of their actions. Some initiatives include tax incentives and efficiency programmes for hotels and housing, as well as during events and audiovisual or film production. Further contributions to **SDG 12** include the implementation of pricing systems and meters that promote the rational use of resources in the case of water, as well as the reuse of materials with new biowaste treatment plants. These efforts resulted in a 24% reduction in waste per capita and a 71% increase in separate waste collection in 2023.

SDG 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities, is also central to Malaga's strategy to maintain a balanced relationship between tourism and residents' well-being. The city undertakes actions aligned with strategies from the Municipal Urban Planning Area and incorporates residents' views on tourism into its strategic planning as a Smart Tourist Destination.

The destination has set objectives to achieve carbon neutrality, reduce emissions, and expand renewable energy use, thereby contributing to **SDG 13** (Climate Action). Under the pillar 'Improving Energy Efficiency' of the Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan project 'Sustainable Decentralisation of Tourism in the City of Malaga', several key initiatives are being promoted, including: 'Analysis of the Evolution of the Tourist Footprint', 'Improving the Energy Efficiency of Road Lighting through LED Technology', and 'Plan for the Transition to a Renewable Energy System and Implementation of Renewable Energy Production Systems'. The city has also implemented various measures and awareness campaigns aimed at reducing water demand amid challenges posed by drought and climate change.

Other environmental education initiatives align with additional Sustainable Development Goals, such as **SDG 4** (Quality Education), **SDG 15** (Life on Land), and **SDG 14** (Life Below Water).

Under **SDG 7** (Affordable and Clean Energy), the installation of photovoltaic systems on public buildings stands out, promoting clean energy generation. Malaga is committed to renewable energy sources, supporting the electrification of its public transport fleet and the rollout of electric vehicle charging stations.

Aligned with **SDG 6** (Clean Water and Sanitation), Malaga has reduced its water consumption in 2023 and is working towards the global water sustainability targets set for 2050. Improvements include enhancing the efficiency of the water distribution network through measures such as zoning and leak repairs. Malaga has also successfully treated 100% of its wastewater since 2016 and has improved its infrastructure through advanced treatment plants incorporating tertiary treatment, promoting the reuse of regenerated water.

The destination promotes citizen participation and data-driven decision-making, aligning with **SDG 16**, Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, as well as **SDG 17**, Partnerships for the Goals. Supported by a governance system comprising numerous institutions and management channels, the city has developed a collaborative model involving various departments of the Malaga City Council, the business sector, the University of Malaga, and the Provincial Council. Other institutions, such as the Malaga Tourism Forum and the Sustainable Tourism Observatory itself, align with this model and are progressing towards greater sustainability for both the destination and its tourism sector.

Strategic proposals have been designed to ensure effective implementation of accessibility and to reduce inequalities in Malaga, an effort consistent with **SDG 10**. In this context, notable initiatives include the Malaga Accessible Tourism Plan (2022) and the Second Strategic Plan for Universal Accessibility of the City of Malaga (2023–2027).

Other goals that tourism helps advance are **SDG 2** and **SDG 3**, which focus on ensuring universal access to healthcare services, preventing malnutrition, and combating disease. Examples include the Malaga Cardio-Protected initiative, the Soludable project, and the Malaga Gluten-Free network of establishments. Finally, particular emphasis is placed on the link between tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals related to employment, with **SDG 8** (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and **SDG 5** (Gender Equality) being the most relevant.



04.

Starting point

The city of Malaga is recognised as one of the best cities in the world to work and live in, according to the 2023 Forbes survey: among 420 cities across 89 countries, Malaga was highlighted as the most impressive and charming spot in the world.

It is important to highlight the growing trend of long stays by digital nomads and the creative class (engineers, artists, lawyers, etc.) in Malaga, with this type of visitor rediscovering the city's many attractions. In addition, according to survey respondents, Malaga is the highest-rated city in the world for the friendliness of its residents: 89% say the locals are particularly charming and welcoming to foreign residents (compared to a global average of 65%). Quality of life, climate, and weather are also highlighted as some of the key aspects of Malaga, alongside many other highly rated factors mentioned in the report.

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. Given that achieving a transition towards sustainable, resilient, and inclusive tourism requires taking into account the economic, social, and environmental impacts—both current and future—to meet the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities, it is essential for the destination to promote alternative tourism experiences. This means encouraging visitors to explore other areas with tourism potential, thereby relieving pressure on the most popular sites while also highlighting charming, more authentic spots that remain relatively unknown to travellers.

© Madden, D. (2023, febrero 11). Explore this map of the world's best alternative capital cities. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/duncanmadden/2023/02/11/explore-this-map-of-the-worlds-best-alternative-capital-cities/>

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Additionally, in line with **SDG 17**, Partnerships for the Goals, the city has forged strategic connections with national and international organisations that support its sustainability initiatives. These partnerships strengthen its objectives in urban regeneration and the promotion of quality tourism, providing access to resources, knowledge, and technologies that enhance governance and reinforce its commitment to efficient and responsible management. This highlights the importance of the actions undertaken by STO Malaga as a member of the UN Tourism INSTO Network within the framework of the project: Start-up and Promotion of STO Malaga, made possible by EU funding, which will be explored in further detail under Management Tools for the Smart Tourist Destination.

In recent years, Malaga has strengthened its collaboration with national, European, and international bodies. The projects in which Malaga has participated throughout 2024 are shown in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2: Major milestones in developing strategic management for the city’s sustainable tourism, achieved in collaboration with national and international organisations

2019	European Commission Accessibility Award
2020	European Capital of Smart Tourism Membership of Smart Tourist Destinations Network
2021	Malaga Strategic Tourism Plan 2021–2024
2022	STO Malaga’s joining of the UN Tourism INSTO Network
2023	Workshop ‘Present and Future of Sustainable Destinations’, in collaboration with UN Tourism
2024	Workshop ‘Water Management in Destinations’, in collaboration with UN Tourism Call for proposals to develop Malaga’s Smart Destination Platform

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





05.

Governance model: Smart Tourist destination Malaga

SEGITTUR defines a Smart Tourist Destination as an innovative, accessible space for everyone, underpinned by advanced technological infrastructure. This model promotes the sustainable development of the destination, fosters interaction and integration between visitors and the local environment, and enhances both the quality of the visitor experience and residents' quality of life.

Building on this definition, the Smart Tourist Destination programme is an initiative that supports the adoption of a management model that recognises both the transversal nature of tourism and the destination's specific characteristics and needs.

The profound transformations occurring within the tourism sector and its wider environment call for new planning and management tools at the local level—tools firmly grounded in the principle of tourism's transversal impact. The optimal evolution of tourism inevitably generates interrelationships not only among actors directly involved in the sector, but also among those indirectly connected to it.

This underscores the need to follow the Smart Tourist Destination model and progressively integrate, within the tourism policy and alongside the Department of Tourism and City Promotion, the other departments within the Malaga City Council and all stakeholders who play a key role in the participatory processes.

By implementing the Smart Tourist Destination methodology, the goal is to support a transition in Malaga's tourism development model—one founded on knowledge, digitalisation, and sustainability. This approach aims to foster long-term competitiveness, strengthen resilience, and enhance both the visitor experience and residents' quality of life. To achieve this, it is essential to apply a management and analysis tool that evaluates the actions undertaken by the city. This will guide the design of initiatives aligned with strategic planning and the five core pillars of the Smart Tourist Destination model:

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

Since tourism management is a unifying element that drives competitiveness and improves both the visitor experience and residents' quality of life—grounded in sustainability and accessibility, with technology and innovation as key drivers—the Smart Tourist Destination model serves as a strategic management framework to address the challenges of tourism development in regions. It is therefore also regarded as a continuous improvement process that helps strengthen the planning and coordination capabilities of destination managers in the face of increasingly complex and ever-changing challenges. These challenges must be tackled by both public authorities and businesses within their territories amid growing uncertainty.



05.1.

Smart Tourist Destination model

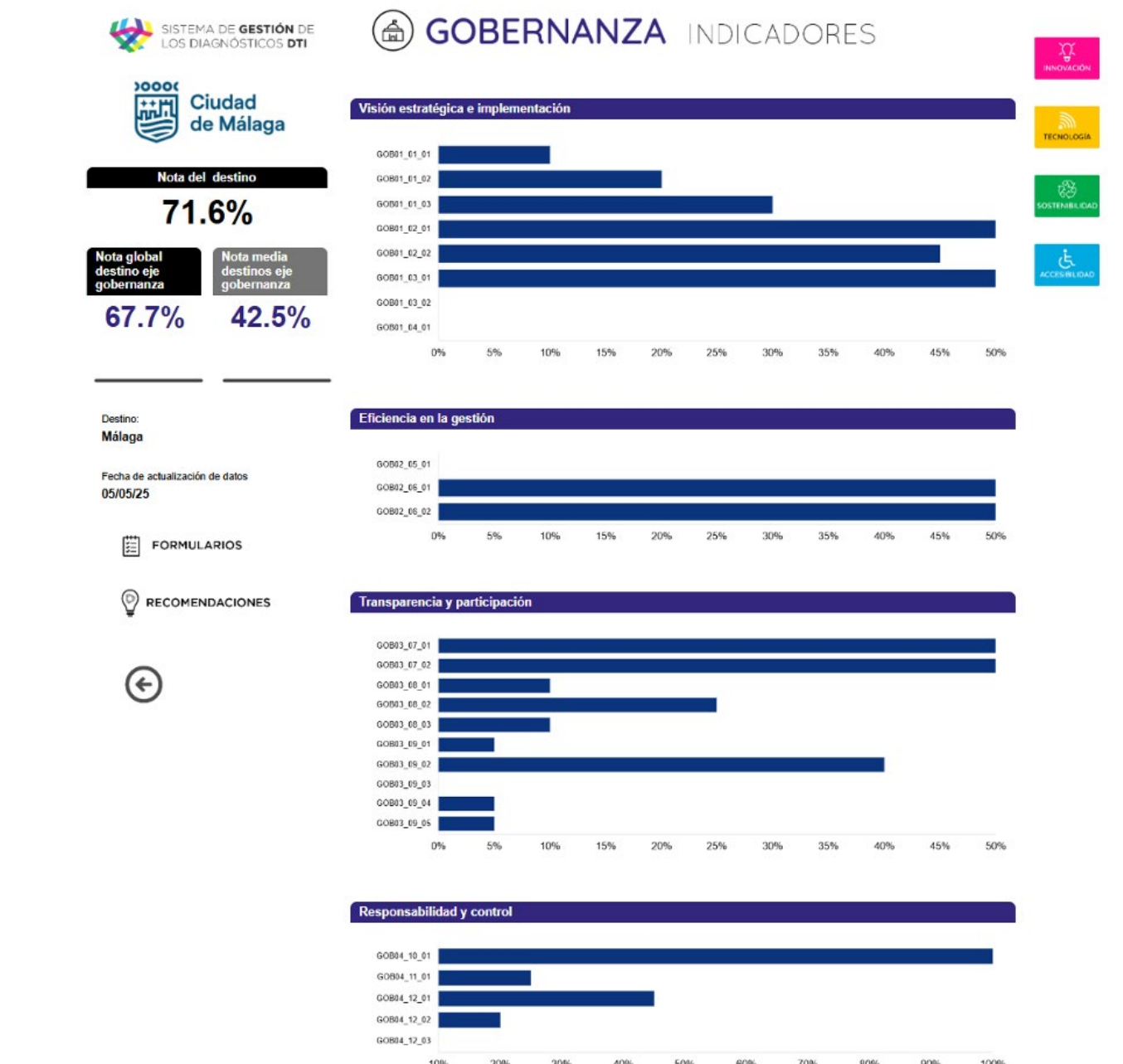
Governance

In line with the Smart Tourist Destination model, tourism governance is based on tools designed and developed to strengthen strategic planning within the framework of Destination Sustainability.

In addition to ensuring effective planning and coordination between the Department of Tourism and City Promotion and the other departments of the Malaga City Council, it is essential to guarantee the quality of services and infrastructure. This requires cross-sectoral action coordinated between the City Council, other administrations, and destinations at the national level.

As of May 2025, Malaga had met 67.7% of the requirements established by SEGITTUR for the Governance pillar within the Smart Tourist Destination Diagnostic process (see Figure 3).

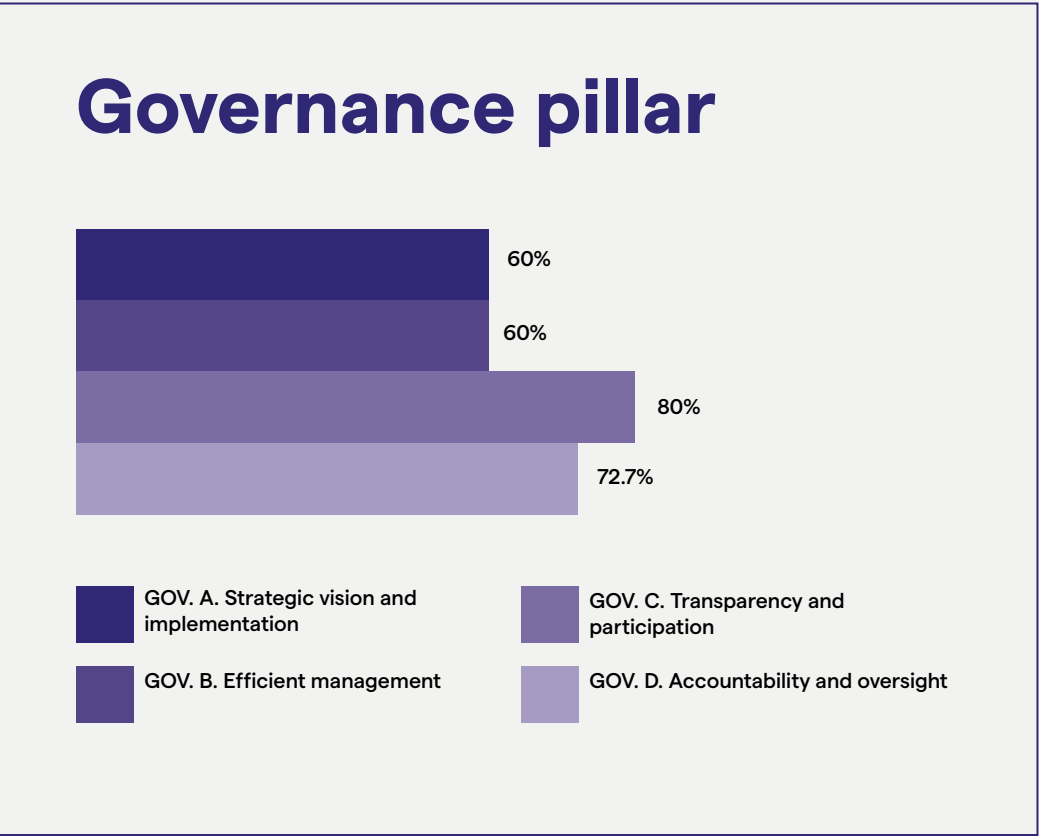
Figure 3: Overall governance score for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga and progress level for each indicator



Source: Smart Tourist Destination Malaga SmartSheet App, SEGITTUR, 2025.

The following figures show the percentage of compliance for each requirement, along with the percentage corresponding to each area within the Governance pillar. Malaga, as a Smart Tourist Destination, is undertaking a significant number of actions that align with the recommendations developed by SEGITTUR in the latest Diagnostic Report: Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination 2024 (see Annex: SEGITTUR, 2024. Diagnostic Report: Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination). Further details on these actions and all the activities carried out during 2024 will be presented later.

Figure 4: Compliance level by area within the Governance pillar



Source: Diagnostic Report: Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination, SEGITTUR, 2024.

Figure 5: Results by area and breakdown by requirement

GOVERNANCE			
SCOPE	CODE	REQUIREMENTS	RATING
STRATEGIC VISION AND IMPLEMENTATION	GOB01_01	Relevance of tourism within the organisation	60%
	GOB01_02	Strategic planning tools	95%
	GOB01_03	Planning tools for promotion and marketing	50%
	GOB01_04	Development of tourism products	Pending
MANAGEMENT EFFICIENCY	GOB02_05	Training programme for the Local Authority and businesses	Pending
	GOB02_06	Coordination structures within the Local Authority for tourism development	100%
TRANSPARENCY AND PARTICIPATION	GOB03_07	Public-private and public-public collaboration structures	100%
	GOB03_08	Channels of communication with visitors, residents, and industry	45%
	GOB03_09	Promoting transparency and e-administration	55%
ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT	GOB04_10	Touristic quality	100%
	GOB04_11	Monitoring of tourism promotion actions	25%
	GOB04_12	Tourism activity observatory / measurement process	75%

Source: Prepared by the Department of Tourism and City Promotion, Malaga City Council. Based on Diagnostic Report: Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination, SEGITTUR, 2024.

Figure 6: Recommendations for Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination

ACTION CODE	DESCRIPTION OF RECOMMENDATIONS
GOB01_01_01_R02	Integration of all municipal departments into the destination's tourism development commitment
GOB01_01_03_R01	Allocation of a budget for the annual Tourism Action Plan
GOB01_02_02_R04	Involvement of citizens and the private sector in drafting the Strategic Tourism Plan
GOB01_03_02_R06	Planning of digital tourism marketing actions
GOB01_04_01_R04	Drafting of a coordinated procedure for tourism product development
GOB02_05_01_R03	Development of a tourism training plan
GOB03_08_01_R01	Creation of an online forum for citizens
GOB03_08_01_R03	Services at tourist information points oriented towards residents
GOB03_08_02_R03	Creation of real-time communication channels
GOB03_08_03_R01	Creation of an online forum for the tourism sector
GOB03_09_01_R01	Online publication of destination management activities by the Department of Tourism
GOB03_09_03_R04	Promotion of the use of the Electronic Office among tourism sector businesses
GOB04_11_01_R03	Expansion of monitoring of tourism promotion actions
GOB04_12_01_R03	Tracking of the most visited tourist resources
GOB04_12_02_R01	Assessing business opinion and confidence within the tourism sector

Source: Proposed Smart Tourist Destination Action Plan for Monitoring 2024–2026, SEGITTUR.

The governance of the structures within which Sustainable Tourism Observatories operate, as well as their data requirements, varies depending on the destination. Therefore, the Sustainable Tourism Observatory of Malaga adapts to new strategies in line with the destination’s tourism governance, promoting a user-centred approach, holding regular meetings with stakeholders, and communicating results to the local community and all stakeholders.

A fundamental principle of effective governance is the integration of good governance with a sustainable development model. Building on this principle, Malaga is advancing towards comprehensive destination management, focusing not only on economic growth but also on social development and institutional strengthening.

At the city governance level, key factors have been identified for evidence-based decision-making, including stakeholder participation, reliable measurement of management systems, exemplary leadership, appropriate allocation of resources, and competent management of an innovative organisational culture. Furthermore, a high standard of data quality, a robust technological infrastructure, and clear objectives regarding the Observatory’s vision play a crucial role in successfully achieving the goals established by Malaga’s strategy, including motivating all stakeholders.

Figure 7 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.

Figure 7: 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.

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. As previously mentioned, the three fundamental components of the participatory process are:

- **Governance in the coordination of the STO Malaga participatory process:** The Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga was established to ensure effective management of the tourism strategy and to advance the Smart Tourist Destination Action Plan based on the Level II diagnostic assessment. 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
 - Accessible Tourism Panel
- **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.

The commitment to quality is also evident in the management and governance of the destination. Since joining SICTED (Sistema Integral de Calidad Turística Española en Destino, Integrated Spanish Quality System for Tourism in Destinations) in 2007, the city has worked to enhance the excellence of its tourism establishments and services.

The governance of destination management is embedded within the Smart Tourist Destination model, which is built upon four fundamental pillars: innovation, sustainability, accessibility, and governance. Through this approach, the destination is committed to promoting transparency and public participation in tourism planning, as well as improving the indicators that help understand the impacts generated by tourism.

With the aim of consolidating Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination, digitalisation, innovation, efficient promotion, and sustainability are promoted to enhance the visitor experience while ensuring sustainability and resilience. This enables Malaga to leverage its potential and make a significant qualitative leap towards becoming a leading destination in sustainable tourism. Furthermore, the 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.

It is important to highlight the considerable efforts being made to collect all data and indicators within the Sustainability framework, meeting the requirements set by UN Tourism regarding knowledge management in Sustainable Tourism Observatories, as not all destination data are currently available.

However, the Malaga City Council already offers citizens a range of resources to promote transparency and facilitate access to data and indicators related to municipal management, in line with the Smart Tourist Destination model and UN guidelines, through the official STO Malaga website (<https://sto.malaga.eu/>). To support the city's progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Observatory also releases periodic reports on its website, detailing the milestones accomplished.

In the field of tourism data monitoring, the city of Malaga relies on leading platforms at both the national and regional levels. Notable among these are tools such as DATAESTUR (<https://www.dataestur.es/en/>) and SIT (Sistema de Inteligencia Turística, Tourism Intelligence System: <https://sistemainteligenciaturistica.es/>), promoted by Spain's Secretariat of State for Tourism; and SMART DATA (<https://smartdata.andalucia.org/>), promoted by the Regional Government of Andalusia through Turismo Andaluz. These platforms provide access to a wide range of key indicators, including those related to tourism supply, demand, and mobility, among others.

Malaga is also making strides towards the development of its own digital tourism platform: the Smart Destination Platform 2024. This initiative aims to strengthen tourism management in the city through the implementation of an integrated, multi-modular system. The centralised platform will enable the collection, storage, processing, and analysis of a new generation of tourism data, supporting informed decision-making while enhancing the city's sustainability, resilience, and digital transformation as a destination.

In this context, the Sustainable Tourism Observatory (STO Malaga) presents a valuable opportunity to gather and disseminate information across all areas relevant to tourism, providing data, indicators and analysis to help define evidence-based strategies focused on sustainability and continuous improvement.

Malaga is therefore consolidating an advanced model of sustainable tourism governance, in which strategic planning, the intensive use of data, and the active involvement of all stakeholders in the tourism ecosystem contribute to building a more resilient, competitive, and sustainability-aligned destination.

The city's commitment to quality, innovation, and multisectoral cooperation positions Malaga as a benchmark for smart tourism management—one that is firmly focused on the well-being of its residents and the quality of experience offered to visitors.

5.1.1 STO Malaga Technical Monitoring Commission

Tourism is the driving force of Malaga’s economy. This makes it essential to establish a transversal governance structure that brings together all municipal departments connected to the five key areas defined by SEGITTUR for Smart Tourism Destinations (Governance, Innovation, Technology, Sustainability, and Accessibility), as well as those with competencies that directly or indirectly influence the city’s tourism sector.

The creation and activation of STO Malaga’s Technical Monitoring Commission has enabled the city to meet several recommendations outlined in the Smart Tourist Destination Diagnostic, including:

ACTION CODE	DESCRIPTION OF RECOMMENDATIONS
GOB01_01_01_R02	Integration of all municipal departments into the destination’s tourism development commitment

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 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 initiatives between the Department of Tourism and City Promotion and other related municipal departments, in alignment with Malaga’s Smart Tourist Destination transformation strategy, ensuring that all projects and actions converge with the five strategic pillars of the Smart Tourist Destination 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: malagaDTI@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.
- > **Área de Comunicación.** 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 (UMA) contributes its academic and research excellence to promote an innovative and sustainable tourism model. Its contribution, based on scientific knowledge, enables the destination to effectively face challenges and supports informed decision-making aimed at the common good.
- **Andalusian Institute for Research and Innovation in Tourism (Instituto Andaluz de Investigación e Innovación en Turismo, IATUR).** The Andalusian Institute for Research and Innovation in Tourism (IATUR) plays a strategic role in strengthening tourism knowledge in Andalusia. Its mission focuses on promoting high-quality research, generating robust empirical evidence, and facilitating the transfer of results to the tourism sector—thereby contributing to more informed and efficient decision-making processes.

Based in Malaga and established through collaboration with the Universities of Granada and Seville, IATUR acts as a key player in connecting academia, public administration, and the business community.

As a partner of STO Malaga, the Institute strengthens a working dynamic grounded in dialogue between science and practice, offering a strategic perspective that prioritises territorial intelligence and the efficient use of data.

It is also important to highlight the role of other institutions and organisations, such as INE (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, National Statistics Institute), SEGITTUR, Turismo Andaluz, Turismo y Planificación Costa del Sol, Fundación CIEDES, City DNA, D3Hub, and UN Tourism. These entities play a crucial role in the governance of tourism in the city of Malaga, supporting STO Malaga's initiatives and promoting sustainability across its three fundamental pillars: economic, social, and environmental.

Local stakeholders

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 Trade 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.
- Family Tourism Technical Panel.

—→ **STO Malaga Expert Panels.** The INSTO Network 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.

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. Focusing on the following 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.

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.

—> **Plenary Committee:**

The Plenary Committee is composed of:

- The Chair
- 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.

—> **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.

—> **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.



05.2.

Smart Tourist Destination model

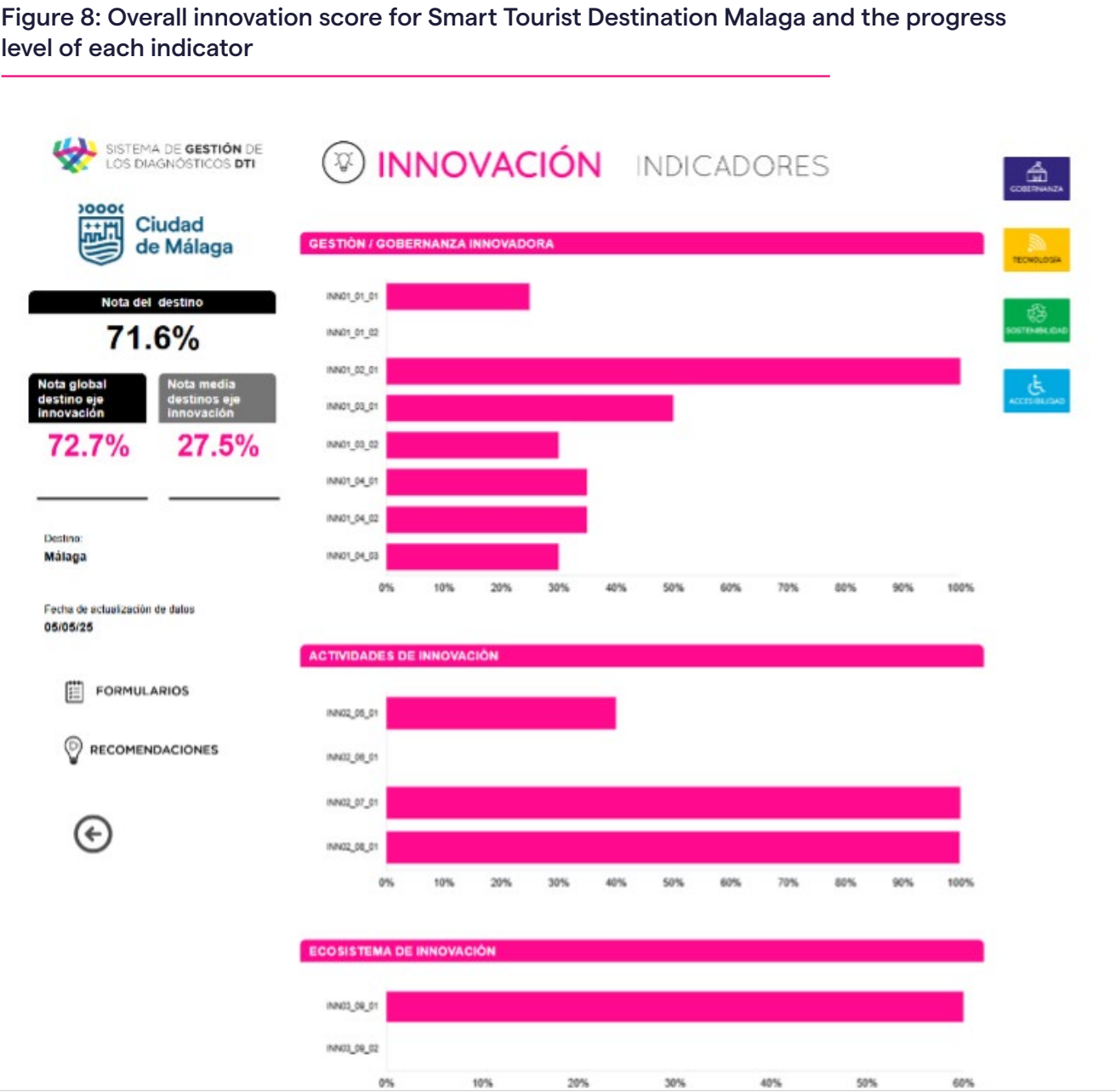
Innovation

As a Smart Tourist Destination, innovation must be a priority in Malaga’s governance and actively fostered, both from within the organisation and externally among residents and visitors. Given that tourism drives the local economy, it is essential to plan innovative initiatives and establish an internal framework that ensures their coordination and alignment with the city’s strategic objectives.

To enhance the economic competitiveness of the region and support the efficient development of innovation projects by businesses, entrepreneurs, organisations and other stakeholders, it is vital to create the right conditions for transforming knowledge into innovation.

Accordingly, all available resources should be dedicated to the development and management of social innovation, as well as tourism products and services—both internally and externally—through measures that foster an open, innovative environment. This will maximise the benefits of this key pillar of the Smart Tourist Destination model.

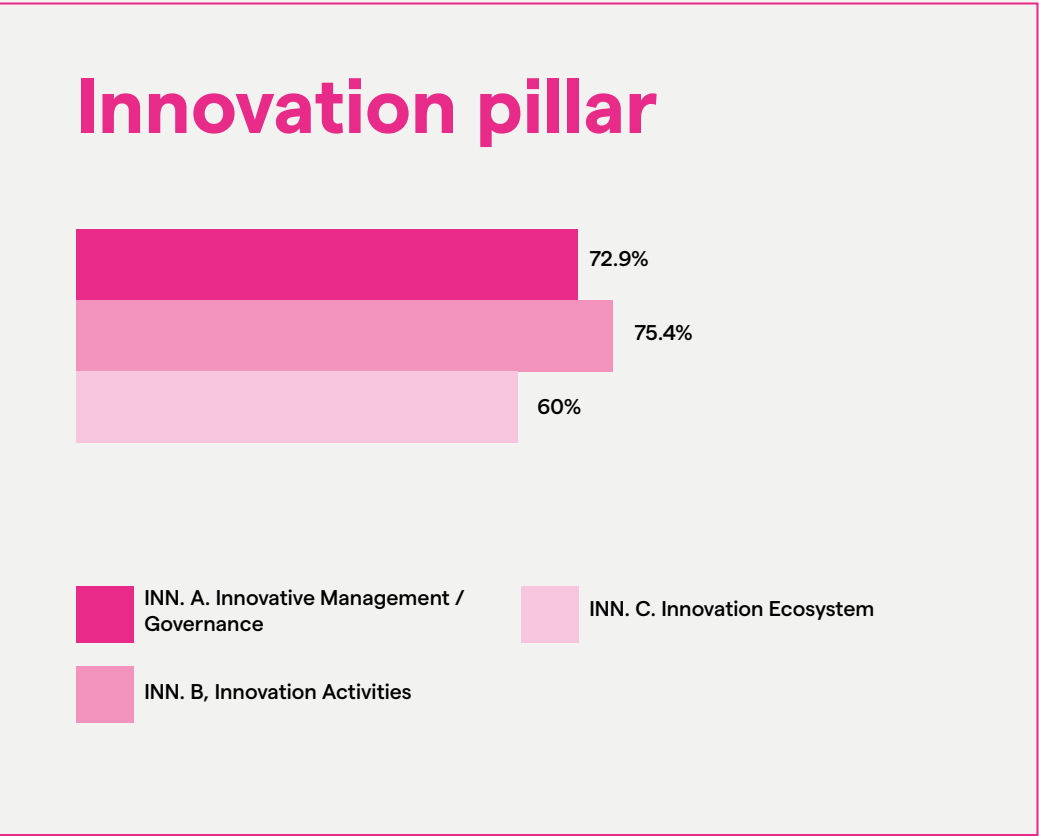
By 2025, Malaga had already fulfilled 72.7% of SEGITTUR’s requirements for the Innovation pillar as part of the Smart Tourist Destination Diagnostic process (see Figure 8).



Source: Smart Tourist Destination Malaga SmartSheet App, SEGITTUR, 2025.

The following figures show the percentage of compliance for each requirement along with the corresponding percentage for the Innovation pillar. Malaga, as a Smart Tourist Destination, is undertaking a significant number of actions that align with the recommendations developed by SEGITTUR in the latest Diagnostic Report: Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination 2024 (see Annex: SEGITTUR, 2024. Diagnostic Report: Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination). A detailed review of the actions and all activities carried out during 2024 will be presented later.

Figure 9: Compliance level by area within the innovation pillar



Source: Diagnostic Report: Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination, SEGITTUR, 2024.

Figure 10: Results by area and breakdown by requirement

INNOVATION			
SCOPE	CODE	REQUIREMENT	RATING
INNOVATIVE MANAGEMENT/ GOVERNANCE	INN01_01	Innovation strategy and management system at the destination	25%
	INN01_02	Promotion of tourism innovation through public tenders	100%
	INN01_03	Public resources for innovation	80%
	INN01_04	Encouragement of open innovation	100%
INNOVATION ACTIVITIES	INN02_05	Promotion of social innovation	40%
	INN02_06	Perception of innovation by residents and visitors	Pending
	INN02_07	Development of innovative tourism products and services	100%
	INN02_08	Process innovation	100%
INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM	INN03_09	Impulso del ecosistema de innovación en el destino	60%

Source: Prepared by the Department of Tourism and City Promotion, Malaga City Council. Based on Diagnostic Report: Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination, SEGITTUR, 2024.

Figure 11: Recommendations for Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination

ACTION CODE	DESCRIPCIÓN RECOMENDACIONES
INN01_01_01_R02	Inclusion of tourism as a priority sector for innovation in the strategy
INN01_01_02_R01	Promotion of the implementation of management systems in tourism companies and/or destination organisations
INN01_03_02_R04	Strengthening innovation training for innovative staff
INN02_05_01_R02	Promotion of social innovation in tourism
INN02_06_01_R01	Availability of surveys on the perception of innovation at the destination
INN03_09_02_R01	Survey to measure innovation among tourism companies

Source: Proposed Smart Tourist Destination Action Plan for Monitoring 2024–2026, SEGITTUR.

05.3.

Smart Tourist Destination model

Technology

As a Smart Tourist Destination, Malaga aims to make intensive use of technology, promoting the development and adoption of technological tools while ensuring their accessibility to all stakeholders. These efforts align with the city's tourism governance objectives and are implemented within a broader sustainability framework. Simultaneously, new standards of security and transparency are applied to enhance communication with both the local population and key stakeholders.

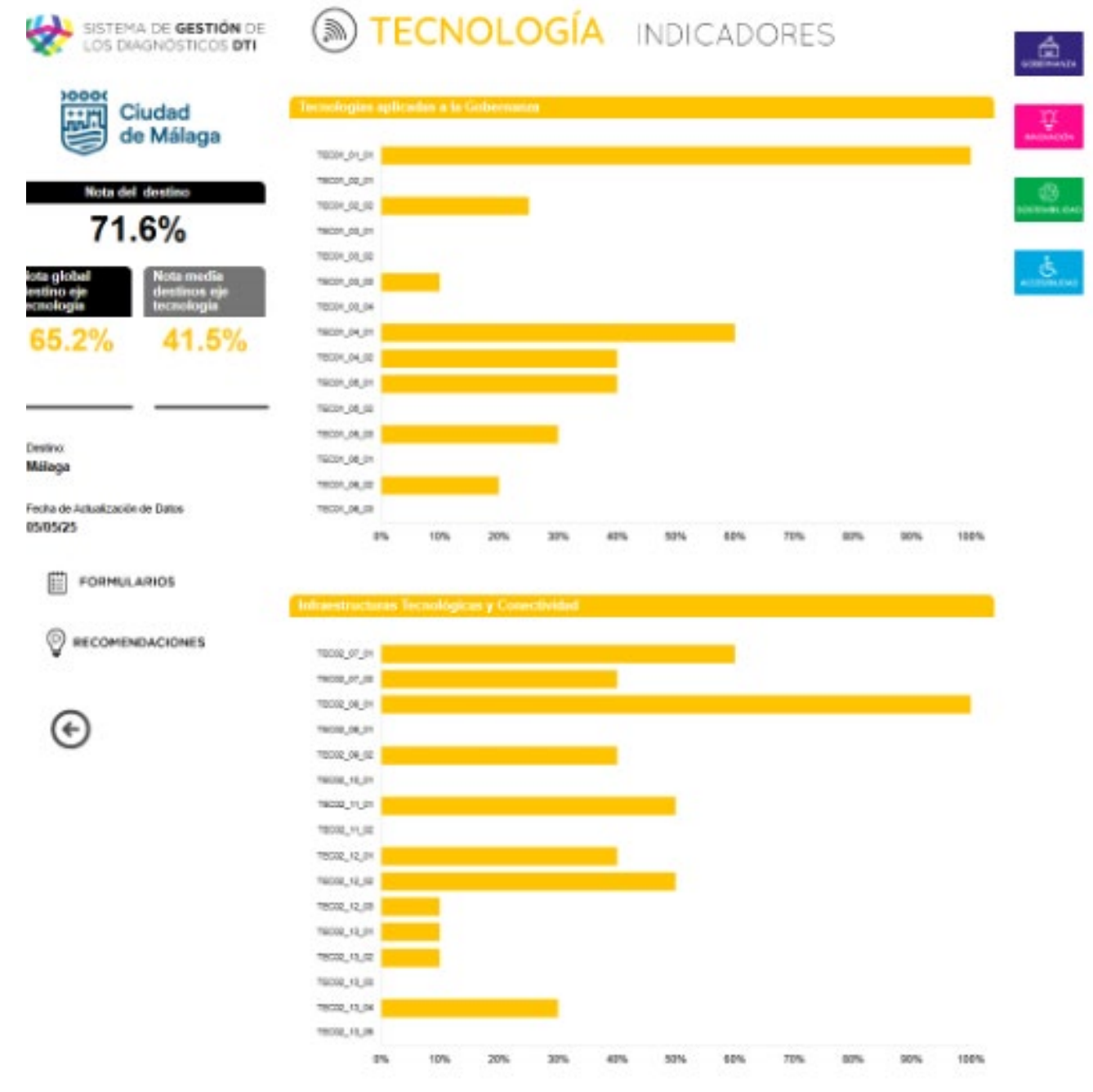
The strategic deployment of technological infrastructure is vital for improving the efficiency of service management and enhancing the destination's capacity to understand and respond to its realities—enabling more informed, evidence-based decision-making. In this context, and in recognition of the fact that today's travellers demand greater connectivity than ever before, cutting-edge infrastructure and advanced technological systems are essential components of Malaga's digital transformation and its intelligent approach to tourism management.

As modern tourists are increasingly hyperconnected and have growing expectations of smart destinations, it is crucial to capitalise on the potential of new technologies. This involves moving beyond traditional models of data management towards innovative tools capable of collecting and analysing diverse data sources.

Malaga is currently undergoing this digital evolution, making use of ICT, web portals, social media, and mobile applications to maintain continuous engagement with visitors throughout all stages of their journey. This shift encourages more interactive communication and leverages new strategies in digital marketing and promotion.

By May 2025, Malaga had met 65.2% of the requirements set by SEGITUR for the Technology pillar within the Smart Tourist Destination Diagnostic process (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Technology score for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga and the progress level of each indicator

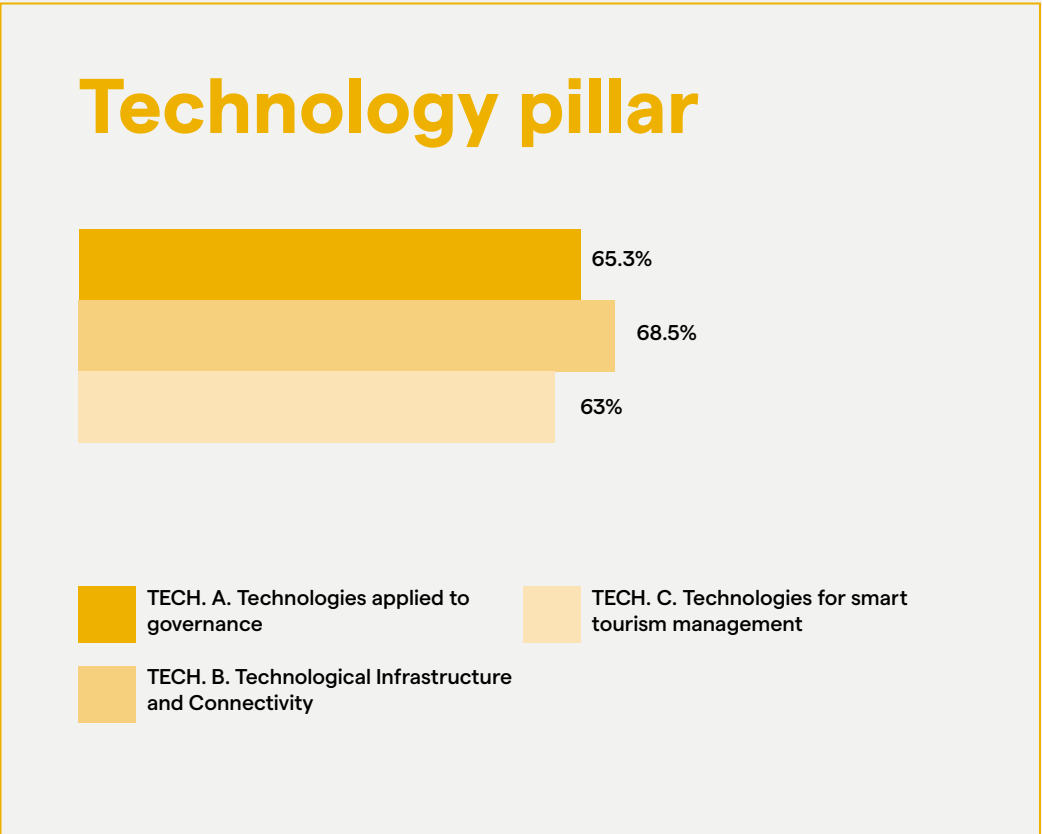




Source: Smart Tourist Destination Malaga SmartSheet App, SEGITTUR, 2025.

The following figures show the percentage of compliance for each requirement, alongside the corresponding percentage for the Technology pillar. Malaga, as a Smart Tourist Destination, is undertaking a significant number of actions that align with the recommendations developed by SEGITTUR in the latest Diagnostic Report: Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination 2024 (see Annex). A detailed review of the actions and all activities carried out during 2024 will be presented later.

Figure 13: Compliance level by area within the Technology pillar



Source: Diagnostic Report: Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination, SEGITTUR, 2024.

Figure 14: Results by area and breakdown by requirement

TECHNOLOGY			
SCOPE	CODE	REQUIREMENT	RATING
TECHNOLOGIES APPLIED TO GOVERNANCE	TEC01_01	ICT management Area / Unit	100%
	TEC01_02	Strategic planning and Smart project	25%
	TEC01_03	Smart development at the destination	10%
	TEC01_04	Cybersecurity strategy	100%
	TEC01_05	Open data platform	70%
	TEC01_06	Two-way communication systems between administration and residents/non-residents	20%
TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY	TEC02_07	Connectivity to fixed networks at the destination (fibre, mobile, satellite, etc.)	100%
	TEC02_08	Connectivity to mobile networks at the destination	100%
	TEC02_09	Connectivity at tourist points of interest (POIs) and Tourist Information Offices	40%
	TEC02_10	Cloud Computing and Edge Computing solutions	Pending
	TEC02_11	Availability of free Wi-Fi	50%
	TEC02_12	Sensor systems and management tools	100%
	TEC02_13	Tourist space management system	50%
TECHNOLOGIES FOR SMART MANAGEMENT	TEC03_14	Tourism intelligence (systems, technology and tools)	10%
	TEC03_15	Tourism web portal	78%
	TEC03_16	Campaign tracking systems	Pending
	TEC03_17	Tourist card with advanced tech support	50%
	TEC03_18	Tourist apps	65%
	TEC03_19	Smart signage	100%
	TEC03_20	Level of technological development in Tourist Offices	60%
	TEC03_21	Automated visitor relationship management	100%

Source: Prepared by the Department of Tourism and City Promotion, Malaga City Council. Based on Diagnostic Report: Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination, SEGITTUR, 2024.

Figure 15: Recommendations for Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination

ACTION CODE	DESCRIPTION OF RECOMMENDATIONS
Code	Description of Recommendations
TEC01_02_1_R01	Creation of a Smart Strategic Plan for the destination, including a dedicated tourism vertical
TEC01_02_2_R02	Coordination of existing smart projects
TEC01_03_1_R01	Creation of an integrated destination management platform
TEC01_03_2_R01	Inclusion of a wider range of services into the destination management platform
TEC01_03_4_R01	Development of a citizen card using new technologies
TEC01_05_2_R01	Promotion of tools for publishing open data
TEC01_06_1_R01	Implementation of a tool for the administration to publish notices, alerts and incidents
TEC01_06_2_R02	Improvement of the citizen-facing tool for publishing notices, alerts and incidents
TEC01_06_3_R01	Promotion and enhancement of the alerts, incidents and reporting tool to increase the number of incidents addressed
TEC02_09_1_R01	Provision of free Wi-Fi access in at least half of the points of interest listed on the tourism portal
TEC02_10_1_R01	Deployment of cloud and node-based computing solutions
TEC02_11_2_R01	Promotion of the use of the destination's public Wi-Fi network and user tracking and monitoring
TEC02_13_3_R01	Use of information systems to manage pedestrian flows and calculate tourist movement
TEC02_13_5_R01	Installation of CO ₂ sensors to improve air quality in enclosed spaces
TEC03_14_1_R01	Deployment of systems and/or technologies for data transformation and information analysis
TEC03_14_2_R01	Availability of systems to gather visitor information
TEC03_14_3_R01	Implementation of an interoperable system linking tourism intelligence tools with other systems (Open Data, destination platform, etc.)
TEC03_14_4_R01	Monitoring of destination branding and visitor satisfaction

ACTION CODE	DESCRIPTION OF RECOMMENDATIONS
TEC03_14_5_R01	Development of dashboards and monitoring and tracking reports
TEC03_15_2_1_R01	Integration of recommendation systems on the tourism website
TEC03_15_2_3_R01	Distributed updating of content on the tourism website
TEC03_15_2_4_R01	Development of a tourism newsletter on the tourism website
TEC03_15_5_R02	Execution of web analytics actions to increase the number of unique visitors
TEC03_16_1_R01	Monitoring of the destination’s tourism promotion campaigns
TEC03_17_1_R01	Implementation and management of the destination’s tourist card
TEC03_18_1_R01	Availability of an up-to-date tourism app designed using responsive criteria
TEC03_20_1_R02	Boosting of tourism marketing through digital fixed points
TEC03_20_4_R01	Development of a catalogue of immersive experiences for visitors at the Tourist Information Office
TEC03_20_6_R01	Availability of a content management system (CMS) based on semantic web technologies
TEC03_20_8_R01	Availability of a chatbot or virtual assistant for tourism

Source: Proposed Smart Tourist Destination Action Plan for Monitoring 2024–2026, SEGITTUR.



05.4

Smart Tourist Destination model

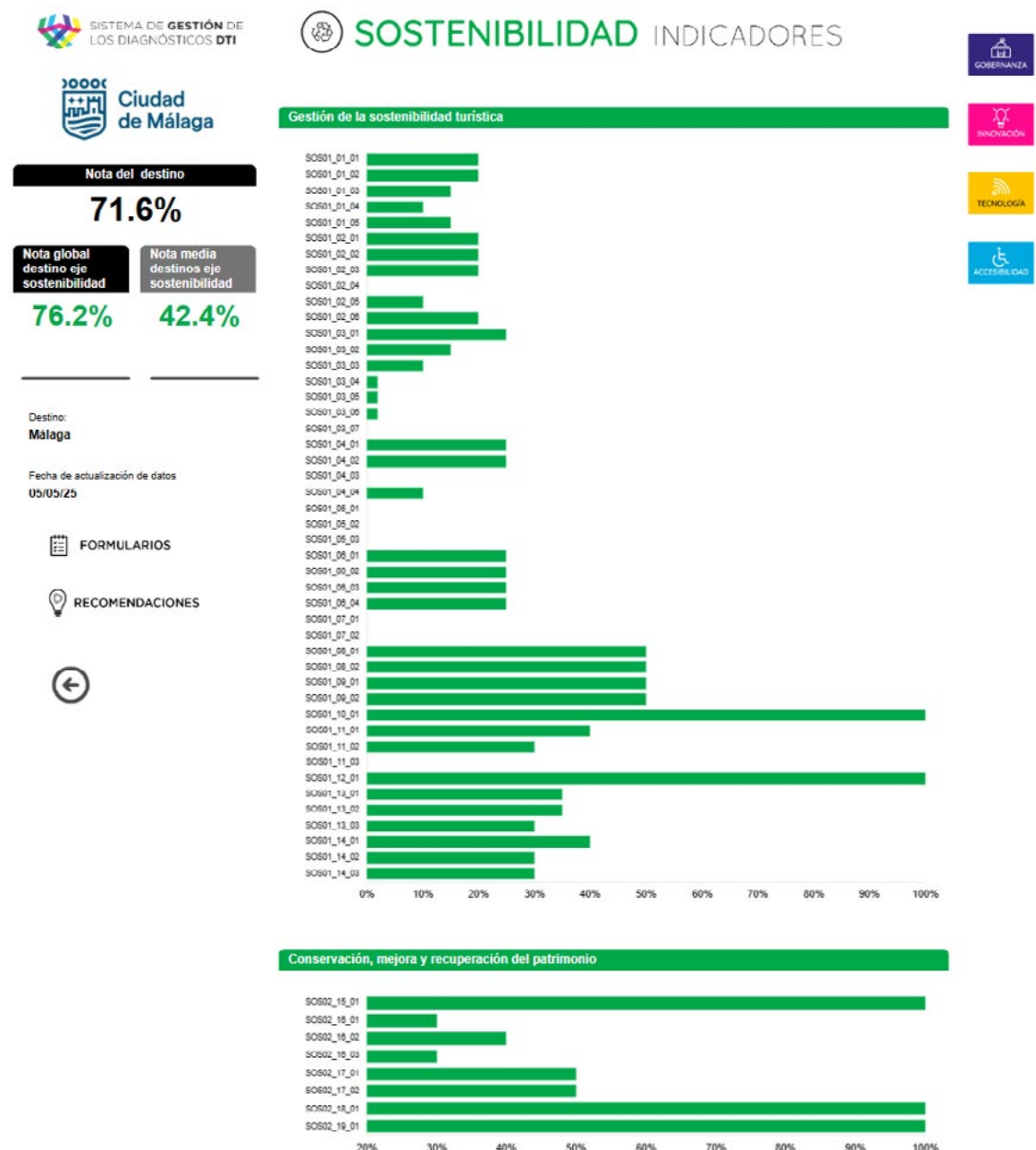
Sustainability

To drive effective planning and management of tourism sustainability within the Smart Tourist Destination framework, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including urban planning adapted to sustainability principles, sustainable mobility, measurement of tourism carrying capacity, an internationally approved sustainability indicator system, and the contribution of tourism expenditure to sustainability, it is necessary to implement a sustainable tourism policy for the city. This policy must include the clear definition of the strategy for regulatory, control, usage, and communication elements that enable the implementation and development of comprehensive tourism sustainability management at the destination.

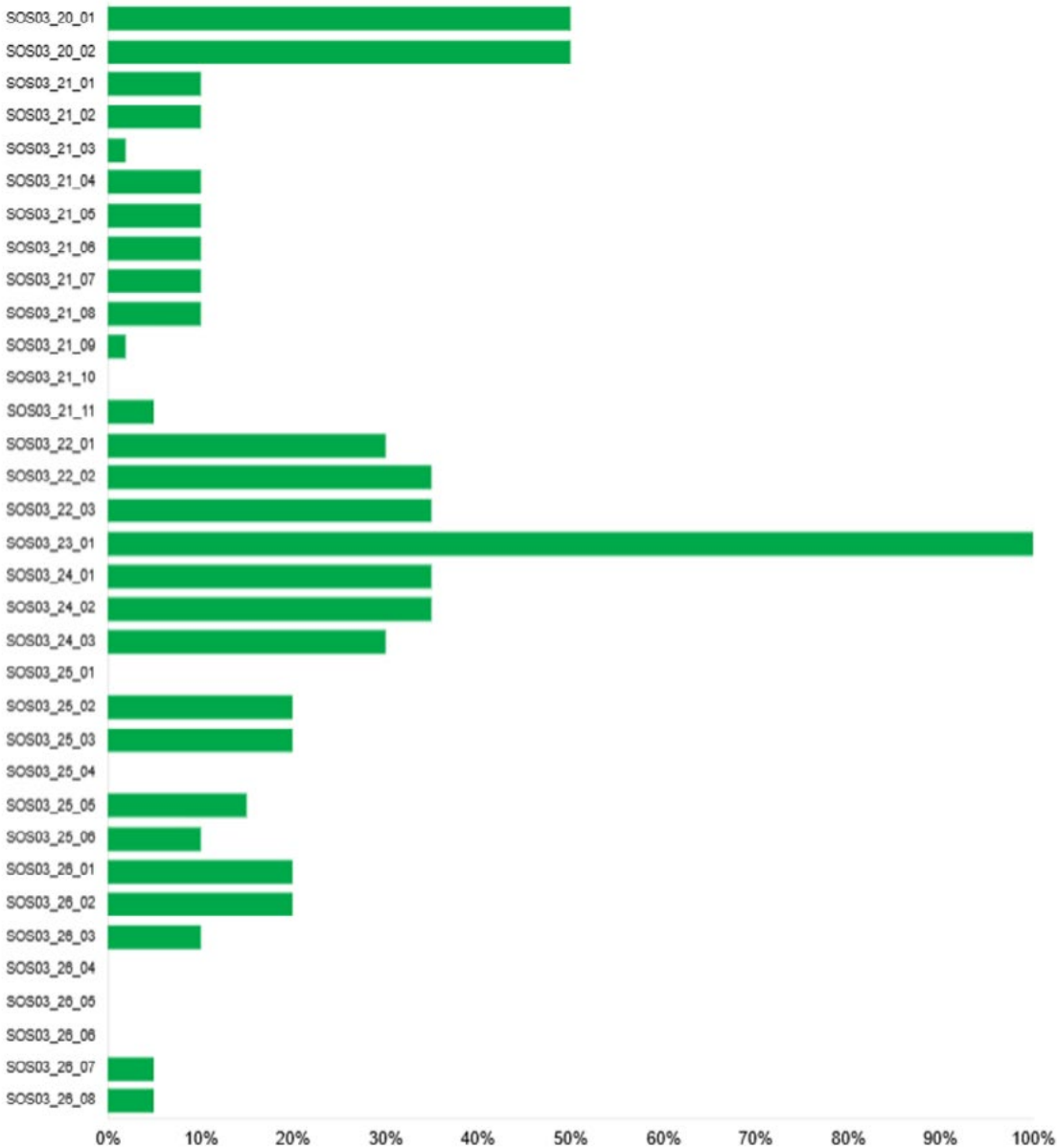
This sustainability pillar is fundamental to advancing the Smart Tourist Destination model. Alongside environmental conservation and enhancement, it encourages the adoption of renewable energy sources, energy efficiency measures, water cycle management, urban cleanliness, waste management, air quality improvement, climate change mitigation, preservation of natural spaces, minimisation of landscape impact, control of noise pollution, recycling initiatives, and the protection of natural resources—among other actions directly linked to the physical environment and environmental stewardship of the destination. Moreover, territorial sustainability must be complemented by economic and social sustainability, which are crucial for smart destination management. This includes supporting the local economy, promoting products from nearby suppliers and local experiential tourism, fostering responsible consumption, delivering sustainability education, ensuring fair employment opportunities, collaborating with sustainability research centres, redistributing tourism's benefits and impacts, providing healthcare for visitors, and maintaining safety and crisis management systems.

Ultimately, the key to successful destination sustainability lies in the proactive engagement of all stakeholders in shaping new Smart Tourist Destination strategies aligned with Malaga's vision. This approach maximises the value of available resources and develops well-suited proposals for implementing future-ready technological business models. By 2025, Malaga had achieved 76.2% compliance with SEGITTUR's requirements for the Sustainability pillar in the Smart Tourist Destination Diagnostic process (see Figure 16).

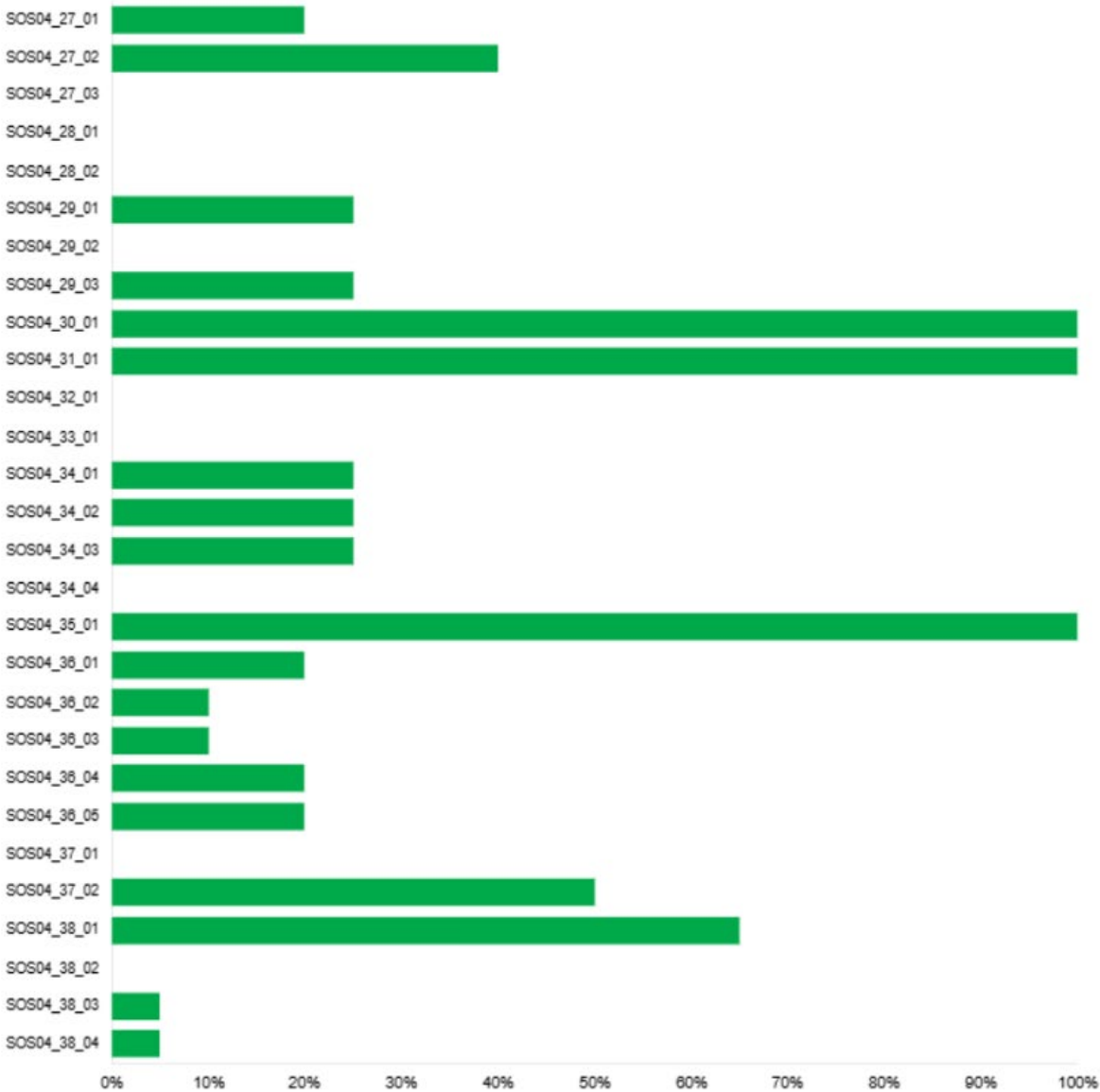
Figure 16: Sustainability score for Smart Tourism Destination Malaga and the progress level of each indicator



Conservación y mejora del medioambiente



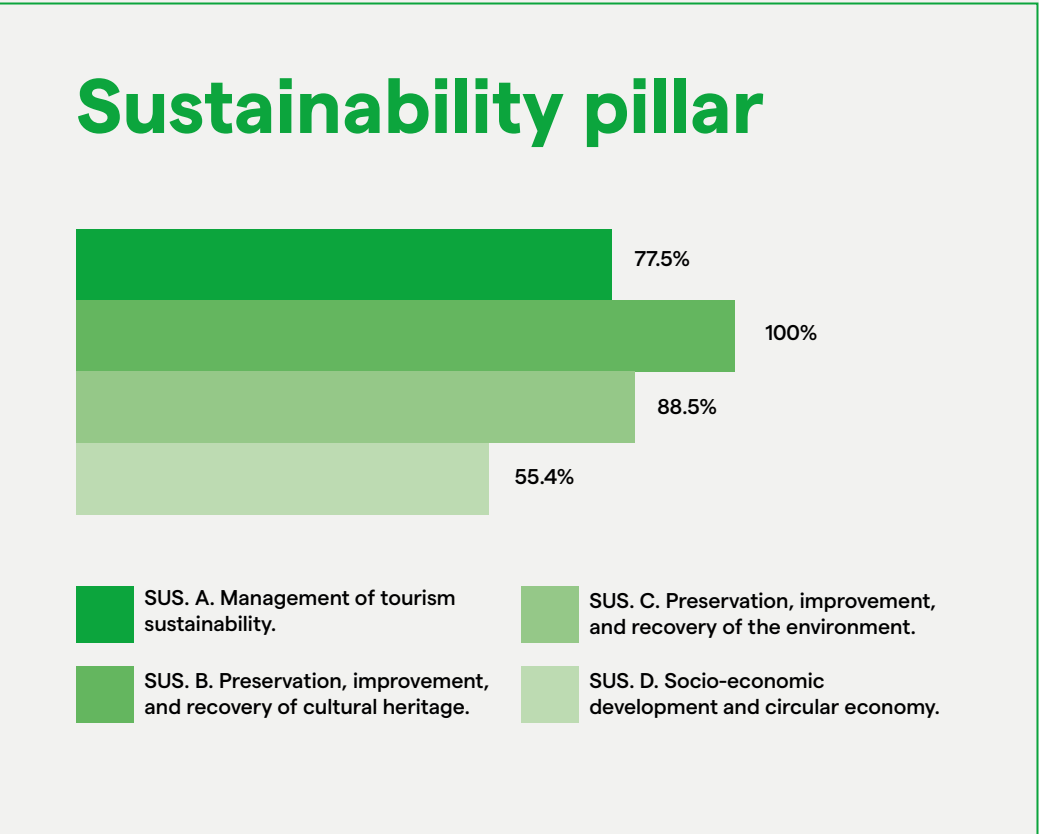
Desarrollo socioeconómico y economía circular



Source: Smart Tourist Destination Malaga SmartSheet App, SEGITTUR, 2025.

The following figures highlight the percentage of compliance with each requirement alongside the overall percentage for the Sustainability pillar. Malaga, as a Smart Tourist Destination, is undertaking a significant number of actions that align with the recommendations developed by SEGITTUR in the latest Diagnostic Report: Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination 2024 (see Annex). A detailed review of the actions and all activities carried out during 2024 will be presented later.

Figure 17: Compliance level by area within the Sustainability pillar



Source: Diagnostic Report: Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination, SEGITTUR, 2024.

Figure 18. Results by area and breakdown by requirement

SUSTAINABILITY			
SCOPE	CODE	REQUIREMENT	RATING
MANAGEMENT OF TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY	SOS01_01	Planning and management of the destination's tourism sustainability in line with the SDGs	80%
	SOS01_02	Urban planning or land-use management of the destination/territory adapted to sustainability principles	90%
	SOS01_03	Promotion of more organised and sustainable mobility	56%
	SOS01_04	Sustainable management of tourism resources	60%
	SOS01_05	Measurement of tourism carrying capacity	Pending
	SOS01_06	Implementation of a sustainability indicators system for the destination	100%
	SOS01_07	Contribution of tourism expenditure to sustainability	Peding
	SOS01_08	Management of destination seasonality	100%
	SOS01_09	Marketing for sustainable tourism	100%
	SOS01_10	Specific legislation for natural and cultural heritage	100%
	SOS01_11	Economic support for sustainability in the private sector	70%
	SOS01_12	Engagement of visitors regarding sustainability efforts	100%
	SOS01_13	Promoting interaction between visitors and residents	100%
	SOS01_14	Raising awareness of tourism sustainability among residents and visitors	100%
PRESERVATION, IMPROVEMENT, AND RECOVERY OF CULTURAL HERITAGE	SOS02_15	Existence of a protection framework for cultural heritage	100%
	SOS02_16	Design, construction, and protection of heritage and landscape	100%
	SOS02_17	Inventory and action plan for the conservation of historical and artistic heritage	100%
	SOS02_18	Cultural heritage restoration programmes	100%
	SOS02_19	Promotion and protection of local cultural resources	100%

SUSTAINABILITY			
SCOPE	CODE	REQUIREMENT	RATING
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND IMPROVEMENT	SOS03_20	Protecting the local natural environment and its biodiversity	100%
	SOS03_21	Water cycle management (management, supply, treatment and reuse of water)	79%
	SOS03_22	Air quality management	100%
	SOS03_23	Assessment of noise reduction mechanisms	100%
	SOS03_24	Climate change adaptation	100%
	SOS03_25	Promotion of energy efficiency	65%
	SOS03_26	Selective waste collection and treatment	60%
SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CIRCULAR ECONOMY	SOS04_27	Protection of the economy, locally sourced products, and local tourism	60%
	SOS04_28	Policy on responsible purchasing and support for locally sourced	Pending
	SOS04_29	Promotion of local suppliers of products, services, and tourism experiences	50%
	SOS04_30	Promotion of programmes/measures for redistribution of benefits and burdens caused by tourism	100%
	SOS04_31	Policy on diversification and segmentation	100%
	SOS04_32	Combating seasonality in employment	Pending
	SOS04_33	Training actions in sustainability	Pending
	SOS04_34	Fair employment opportunities	75%
	SOS04_35	Collaboration between the managing body and tourism schools or centres on sustainable development activities or programmes	100%
	SOS04_36	Ensuring tourist safety and crisis management at the destination	80%
	SOS04_37	Ensuring health safety and compliance with health, hygiene and food safety standards	50%
	SOS04_38	Health monitoring and care for visitors	75%

Source: Prepared by the Department of Tourism and City Promotion, Malaga City Council. Based on Diagnostic Report: Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination, SEGITTUR, 2024.

Figure 19: Recommendations for Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination

ACTION CODE	DESCRIPTION OF RECOMMENDATIONS
SOS01_01_03_R03	Dissemination of the Sustainable Tourism Plan via digital channels
SOS01_01_04_R02	Technical characterisation of public buildings and facilities linked to tourism
SOS01_01_05_R04	Implementation of the annual operational sustainability plan
SOS01_02_04_R01	Preparation of a landscape study at municipal level
SOS01_03_04_R02	Adequate cycling lane Infrastructure
SOS01_03_05_R02	Renewal of 50% of the public bus fleet
SOS01_03_06_R02	Electrical charging points on main roads in strategic locations
SOS01_03_07_R01	Promotion of bike rentals
SOS01_04_03_R01	Environmental study of resources under the most tourism pressure
SOS01_04_04_R02	Tourism resources with sustainability or quality certification
SOS01_05_01_R01	Preparation of a carrying capacity study for the destination's main tourist attractions
SOS01_05_02_R01	Calculation of maximum human pressure on the destination
SOS01_05_03_R01	Estimation of monthly floating population
SOS01_07_01_R01	Design of mechanisms to allocate part of tourism economic benefits to destination sustainability
SOS01_07_02_R01	Improving the contribution of tourism benefits to the destination's sustainable development
SOS01_11_03_R01	Promotion of certifications in tourism sustainability
SOS03_21_03_R02	Implementation of a leak control system in the water supply network aiming for 75%-80% water efficiency
SOS03_21_09_R02	Programme for using treated wastewater for irrigation of parks and street cleaning: target reuse between 65%-75%
SOS03_21_10_R01	Improvement of irrigation and drainage systems

ACTION CODE	DESCRIPTION OF RECOMMENDATIONS
SOS03_25_01_R01	Energy efficiency
SOS03_25_04_R01	Energy management system certification for public buildings
SOS03_26_04_R01	Achievement of a recycling rate higher than 45%
SOS03_26_05_R01	Programmes/measures to control illegal landfill sites
SOS03_26_06_R02	Availability of fixed and mobile recycling centres
SOS04_27_02_R02	Boosting of support plan for SMEs in the tourism sector
SOS04_27_03_R01	Promotion of the tourism sector's participation in the SME support programme
SOS04_28_01_R01	Purchases from suppliers following good sustainability practices
SOS04_28_02_R01	Promotion of purchases from local suppliers with protected designations and fair trade
SOS04_29_02_R01	Promotion of own tourism experiences
SOS04_32_01_R01	Management of seasonality in tourism employment
SOS04_33_01_R01	Providing of training in sustainable tourism
SOS04_34_04_R01	Promotion of work-life balance among businesses in the tourism sector
SOS04_36_02_R02	Crime rate reduction
SOS04_36_03_R02	Availability of sufficient police personnel
SOS04_37_01_R01	Protocol for action and coordination with health authorities in the event of pandemics
SOS04_38_02_R01	Collection and monitoring of the annual number of visitors receiving healthca- re in the destination

Source: Proposed Smart Tourist Destination Action Plan for Monitoring 2024–2026, SEGITTUR.



05.5.

Smart Tourist Destination model

Accessibility

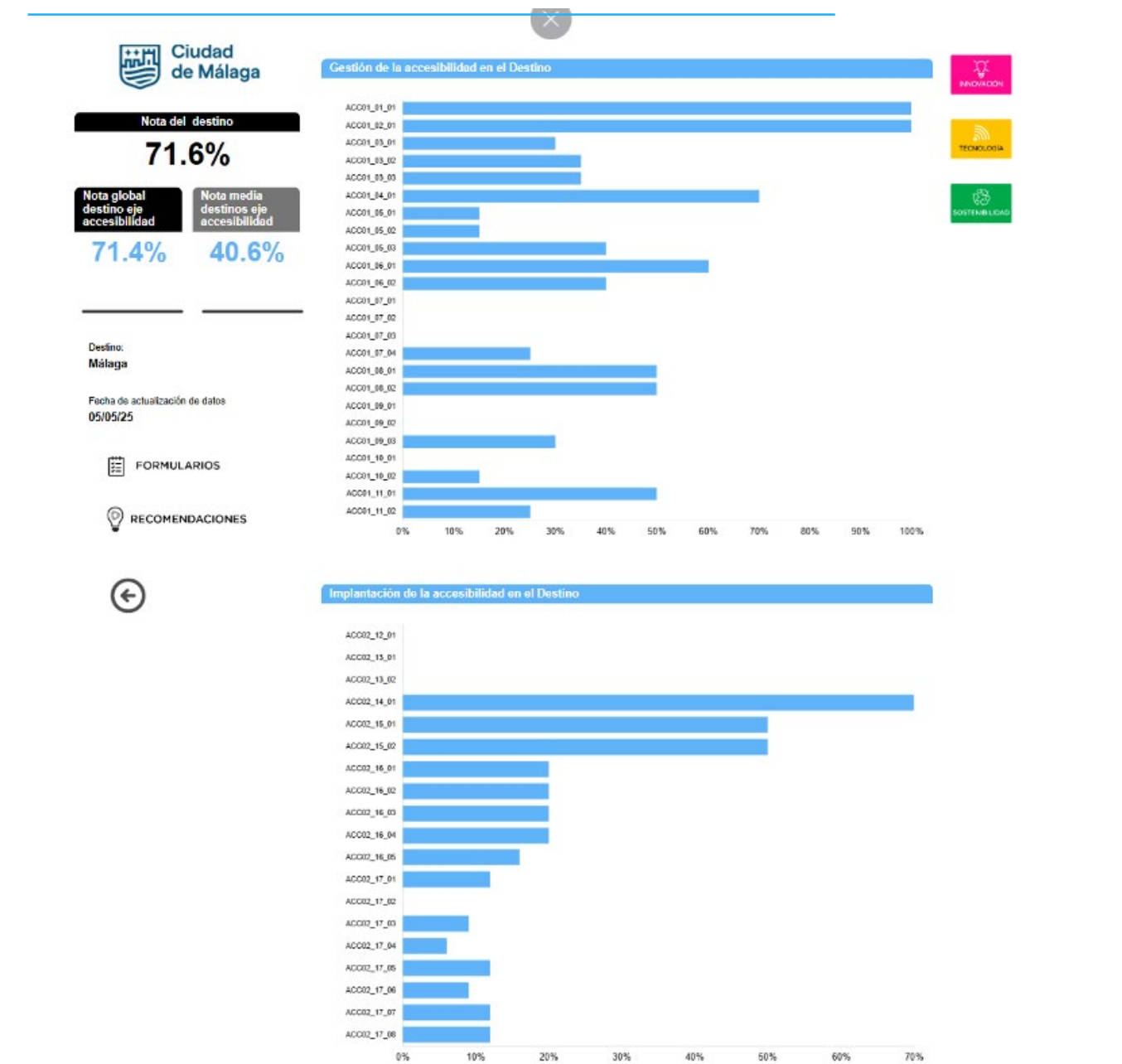
As an accessible destination, Malaga continues to make significant progress in this area, currently supported by two key plans: the Malaga Accessible Tourism Plan (2022) and the 2nd Universal Accessibility Strategic Plan for Malaga 2023–2027. It is essential to identify the strategic planning instruments, enhance the destination's understanding of the accessibility conditions of its tourism offer, and promote communication and user participation in shaping policies and actions aimed at implementing measures to improve accessibility across all sectors.

Accessibility is no longer considered solely in terms of physical spaces, although ensuring necessary conditions in local transport and critical visitor areas—such as tourist information centres, major attractions, beaches, and natural spaces—remains crucial. Equally important is accessibility in the activities and events organised by the destination. Technological tools have become fundamental to Smart Tourist Destination Malaga's communication strategy, making the accessibility of public sector websites and mobile applications a top priority in the strategic management of the destination.

Improving the accessibility of tourism websites, apps, and other visitor-facing tools is necessary to raise accessibility standards across the board.

By 2025, Malaga had already met 71.4% of the requirements established by SEGITTUR for the Accessibility pillar in the Smart Tourist Destination Diagnostic process (see Figure 20).

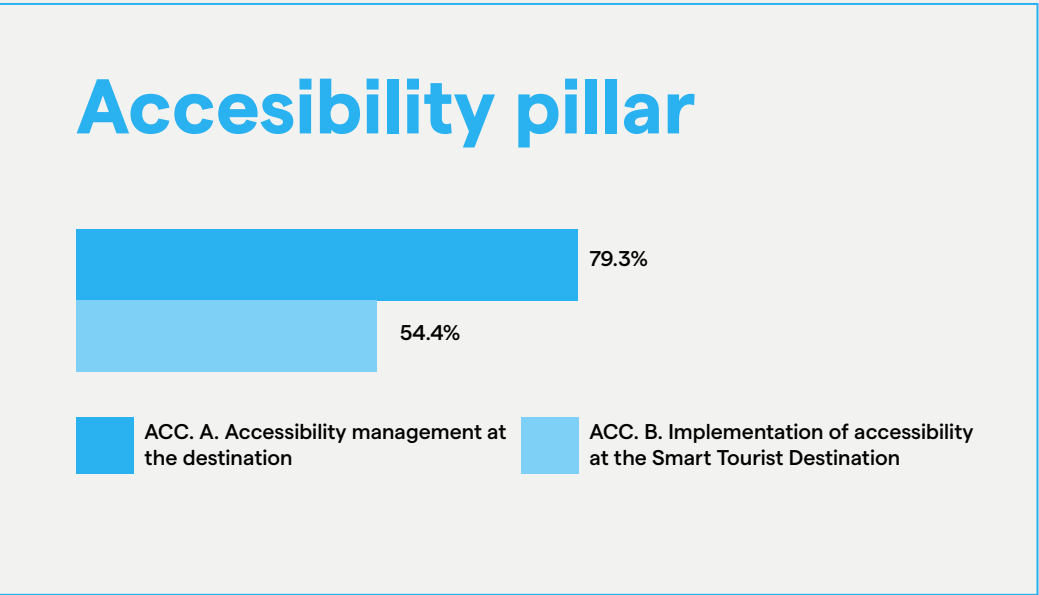
Figure 20: Overall accessibility score for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga and progress level of each indicator



Source: Smart Tourist Destination Malaga SmartSheet App, SEGITTUR, 2025.

The figures below show the percentage of compliance for each requirement, alongside the corresponding percentage for the Accessibility pillar. Malaga, as a Smart Tourist Destination, is undertaking a significant number of actions that align with the recommendations developed by SEGITTUR in the latest Diagnostic Report: Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination 2024 (see Annex). A detailed review of the actions and all activities carried out during 2024 will be presented later.

Figure 21: Compliance level by area within the Accessibility pillar



Source: Diagnostic Report: Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination, SEGITTUR, 2024.

Figure 22: Results by area and breakdown by requirement

ACCESSIBILITY			
SCOPE	CODE	REQUIREMENT	RATING
ACCESSIBILITY MANAGEMENT	ACC01_01	Technical accessibility regulations	100%
	ACC01_02	Accessibility planning	100%
	ACC01_03	The Managing Entity has sufficient resources for accessibility management	100%
	ACC01_04	Staff training on accessibility	70%
	ACC01_05	Sufficient knowledge of the destination's accessibility	70%
	ACC01_06	Mechanisms for managing, developing, and monitoring accessibility actions	100%
	ACC01_07	Accessibility in safety and emergency procedures	25%
	ACC01_08	Encouraging user participation in improving accessibility	100%
	ACC01_09	The Managing Entity incentivises accessibility in the private tourism sector	30%
	ACC01_10	Promotion of accessibility across the destination	15%
	ACC01_11	Promotion of accessibility development through technological/innovative solutions	75%
IMPLEMENTATION OF ACCESSIBILITY	ACC02_12	Accessibility of the tourism website and app	Pending
	ACC02_13	Pre-visit information and planning for users with varying needs	Peding
	ACC02_14	On-site information is accessible	70%
	ACC02_15	Connectivity of intercity transport with the destination's services/resources	100%
	ACC02_16	Accessible local transport	96%
	ACC02_17	Assessment of the accessibility of tourism resources, services, and activities	72%

Source: Prepared by the Department of Tourism and City Promotion, Malaga City Council. Based on Diagnostic Report: Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination, SEGITTUR, 2024.

Figure 23: Recommendations for Malaga as a Smart Tourist Destination

ACTION CODE	DESCRIPTION OF RECOMMENDATIONS
ACC01_04_01_R04	Promotion of high-quality training in accessibility
ACC01_05_01_R03	Expansion of the accessibility diagnostic to cover the majority of tourist points of interest
ACC01_05_02_R03	Extension of the accessibility inventory to include most key tourist sites
ACC01_07_01_R01	Identification of accessible emergency infrastructures
ACC01_07_02_R01	Inclusion of accessibility in evacuation protocols
ACC01_07_03_R01	Development of accessibility protocols for exceptional situations involving non-residents
ACC01_09_01_R01	Promotion of support and incentive programmes to improve the accessibility of tourism establishments and resources
ACC01_09_02_R01	Design and dissemination of campaigns supporting accessible establishments and resources
ACC01_10_01_R01	Implementation of awareness campaigns on accessibility
ACC01_10_02_R02	Promotion of accessible tourism offerings through various channels
ACC01_10_02_R03	Implementation of promoted offerings featuring resources with accessible services and activities
ACC01_11_02_R02	Update and implementation of technological initiatives to improve mobility-related accessibility within the destination
ACC02_12_01_R01	Improvements to website accessibility
ACC02_12_01_R02	Improvements to accessibility in the tourism app
ACC02_13_01_R01	Enhancement of web-based information about the destination's accessibility
ACC02_13_01_R02	Enhancement of accessibility information provided via the mobile app
ACC02_13_02_R01	Implementation of measures to enable accessible interaction for bookings, purchases, and information
ACC02_14_01_R04	Improvement of information related to unforeseen accessibility needs
ACC02_16_05_R02	Better provision of parking spaces for people with reduced mobility (PRM)

ACTION CODE	DESCRIPTION OF RECOMMENDATIONS
ACC02_17_02_R01	General improvement of accessibility in natural areas of tourist interest
ACC02_17_03_R03	Improvement of urban pedestrian signage
ACC02_17_04_R01	Improvement of the accessibility of urban furniture
ACC02_17_04_R02	Improvement of usability and interaction with urban elements
ACC02_17_05_R05	Accessibility improvements in the waiting area of the Tourist Information Office
ACC02_17_07_R02	Possibility for people with visual impairments to visit key tourist attractions

Source: Proposed Smart Tourist Destination Action Plan for Monitoring 2024–2026, SEGITTUR.



Global trends in sustainable tourism (UN Tourism)

Travel to closer destinations

In light of recent international developments and the uncertainty arising from geopolitical and trade tensions, confidence in long-distance travel has been shaken.

According to the latest survey conducted by the Tourism Expert Group, economic factors are highlighted as key challenges, including slower economic growth, rising travel costs, and increased tariffs, all of which may impact international tourism in the coming years.

Other factors shaping destination choices include decreased consumer confidence, a pronounced emphasis on value for money, and geopolitical risks.

In this context, tourists are expected to maximise the value of their spending by opting for closer destinations and favouring shorter trips.

This context is likely to drive a growing demand for sustainable tourism practices and greater flexibility, which will become important considerations in consumer decision-making.

Rural tourism on the rise

UN Tourism's *Best Tourism Villages* initiative celebrates rural destinations where tourism acts as a catalyst for opportunity creation, cultural preservation, and sustainable development. This initiative underscores the role of rural tourism as a key driver for sustainable development and social inclusion, as participating communities harness their unique attributes to promote economic growth, safeguard local traditions, and enhance quality of life.

Given the significant role rural tourism plays in fostering rural development, wellbeing, and resilience—while protecting rural landscapes, cultural diversity, and traditional knowledge systems—and in advancing innovative tourism strategies aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the preservation of cultural and natural heritage, community-based values, and sustainable practices are pivotal factors shaping the future sustainability of Smart Tourist Destinations.

Towards more accesible tourism

Social inclusion, both for businesses and individuals, is a cornerstone of smart destinations. Accessible tourism underscores the vital importance of sustained and sustainable development of tourism infrastructure, alongside leveraging innovation to enhance accessibility at all levels across the city. This is particularly critical in ensuring data accessibility, which supports improved destination planning and enables informed, evidence-based decision-making grounded in quantitative data.

A strong commitment to innovation, sustainability, and resilience

In line with the guidance provided by UN Tourism, the leading body for promoting responsible, sustainable, and accessible tourism for all, and in view of current challenges and future uncertainties, there is a pressing need to help shape the future of global tourism. This entails fostering new ideas and technologies, stimulating investment in the sector, building bridges between the public and private sectors, encouraging dialogue

and cooperation, and advancing common priorities focused on innovation, sustainability, and resilience. The ultimate goal is to establish the destination as sustainable, resilient, and inclusive.





FABRICA DE TABACOS

museo
automovilístico
Málaga

Management tools for the smart tourist destination

As outlined earlier, and following the Smart Tourist Destination framework, a substantial number of initiatives and activities were undertaken throughout 2024, based on the strategic management methodology advocated by the State Secretariat for Tourism.

The following section details the key actions carried out in managing the Smart Tourist Destination in 2024, within the framework of Sustainability, as further elaborated in Annex: 2024 REPORT. Section on Special Programmes, Tourism Business Development, and Relations with Governing and Collegiate Bodies. Department of Tourism and City Promotion. Malaga City Council.

Given Malaga's participation in the Digitalisation and Intelligence Programme for Destinations and the Tourism Sector, funded through the PRTR – NEXT GENERATION initiative (2024 call), and promoted by SEGLTTUR, the following smart tourism management tools have been developed as part of Malaga's Smart Tourist Destination strategy:

- Collaboration agreements.
- General protocols of action.
- Memberships.
- Sponsorships.
- Subsidies awarded.
- Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan: Sustainable Decentralisation of Tourism in the city of Malaga:
- STO Malaga as a member of the Insto Network
- Malaga as a member of the Smart Tourist Destination Network
- Smart Destination Platform
- Accessible Tourism Plan
- Tourism marketing and development actions
- Quality initiatives
- Malaga Convention Bureau activities

Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan: Sustainable Decentralisation of Tourism in the city of Malaga

In 2024, the following actions were implemented under the Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan:

Pillar 1: Green and Sustainable Transition:

Contracting of technical assistance for the study and design of needs and requirements for:

- Equipment for the Environmental Route.
- Environmental Seal Certification.
- Launch of MTB Centres.
- Urban Shelters.

Pillar 2: Improving Energy Efficiency:

Contracting of technical assistance for the study and design of needs and requirements for:

- Tourist Carbon Footprint Analysis.
- Transition Plan towards a Renewable Energy System.

Pillar 3: Digital Transition:

Contracting of technical assistance for the study and design of needs and requirements for:

- Transformation of two Municipal Tourist Information Offices into sustainable, smart, and accessible spaces.

In addition to the preparation of dossiers for:

- Route digitalisation.
- Content development and storytelling for route enhancement.

Pillar 4: Enhancing Competitiveness:

Contracting of technical assistance for the study and design of needs and requirements for:

- Improvement of route facilities.

In addition to the preparation of dossiers for:

- Project Technical Office.
- Expansion of SICTED-affiliated establishments.

STO Malaga as a member of the Insto Network

Launch and promotion of STO Malaga within the Support Programme for the Digital Transformation and Modernisation of Local Entities forming part of the Smart Tourist Destinations Network. As STO Malaga’s activities must be aligned with the requirements set out by UN Tourism, the Department of Tourism and City Promotion has carried out a series of initiatives and actions. These are detailed under each milestone corresponding to the UN Tourism requirements (see Figure 24).

Figure 24: STO Malaga activities in accordance with UN Tourism requirements

UN Tourism Requirements	Activities eligible for funding	STO Malaga project milestones	STO Malaga activities completed
Stakeholder engagement (workshops)	Workshops Training sessions Necessary materials (technical, etc.) Speakers Rental of venues, equipment, and materials	MILESTONES 1: Definition of the STO Malaga management model	Activities and workshops have been carried out involving both internal stakeholders (management groups) and external stakeholders.
Development of thematic areas and indicators	Web platform Database Digital tools	MILESTONES 2: Development of the technological supports for STO Malaga	Creation of the dedicated STO Malaga website: sto.malaga.eu Digital support tools developed, including specific dashboards for each thematic area, integrated into the website.
Monitoring and reporting	Satisfaction surveys Reports Data analysis	MILESTONES 3: Knowledge management	Reports produced include: - Annual reports - Reports covering the mandatory thematic areas as well as those of particular interest for Malaga Specific reports such as: - Water management in tourism - Adaptation of signage for easy reading. - User satisfaction surveys, such as airline surveys. - Strategic Plan for STO Malaga.
Communication and information sharing	Marketing and promotion plans Digital and adapted promotional materials	MILESTONES 4: Communication and Marketing Plan	As part of STO Malaga’s communication and marketing plans, activities related to the corporate image have been undertaken, including photography, videos, merchandising, etc.

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

Below are the activities carried out at each milestone, in accordance with the requirements established by UN Tourism.

MILESTONE 1: DEFINITION OF THE MANAGEMENT MODEL FOR STO MALAGA: REGULATORY, OPERATIONAL, AND STRUCTURAL

As established by UN Tourism, all new Sustainable Tourism Observatories must organise a workshop for destination stakeholders during their first year of operation. This workshop aims to help all parties gain a clear understanding of the Observatory's needs, vision, value, approach, and methodology, fostering shared knowledge to ensure agreement and commitment to the INSTO Network. From the second year onwards, at least one annual workshop must be held.

Within the activities funded by the grants, meetings have been held with both internal stakeholders (management groups) and external stakeholders. Between 2023 and 2024, the following activities took place:

2023:

STO Malaga Expert Panels. A fundamental pillar of the Network is the participation of the entire sector in decision-making processes. Accordingly, these panels—organised into thematic blocks—enable participants to identify needs, information sources, indicators, and make proposals related to various areas of study.

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.** Focusing on the following 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

Organisation of the first Stakeholders Workshop: 'Present and Future of Sustainable Tourist Destinations'.

2024:

- Organisation of the Annual Stakeholders Workshop: 'Water Management in Destinations'.
- Collaboration in organising the international online consultation of INSTO Network members on 'Water Management in Destinations'.
- Organisation of the event presenting the report 'Water Management in Tourism'.

MILESTONE 2: DEVELOPMENT OF THE TECHNOLOGICAL SUPPORTS FOR STO MALAGA

As a member of the INSTO Network, members are obliged to develop and maintain a publicly accessible Observatory website, which must include at least a summary in English.

The website is required to be regularly updated with current information, provide analysis of monitoring results, and clearly present the data sources and methodologies employed.

Thanks to funding support, the dedicated STO Malaga website has been launched:

<https://sto.malaga.eu/> (including content, website design ensuring consistency with the visual and corporate identity, etc.).

Notably, the website's architectural design for data integration, corresponding dashboards, and data source management was developed in close collaboration with the former Municipal IT Centre (Centro Municipal de Informática, CEMI) and the University of Malaga (UMA).

MILESTONE 3: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Another requirement established by the INSTO Network is that each Observatory must provide annual reports on progress in both mandatory thematic areas and those of specific interest. To enhance understanding of tourism's links with other sectors, its impact on the destination, and to enable efficient, evidence-based decision-making, it is essential to analyse and interpret the data collected.

In this regard, the main research partner for knowledge management has been the University of Malaga (UMA), through the IATUR team — the Andalusian Institute for Tourism Research and Innovation. Specifically, with the support of the funding programme, the following reports have been produced:

2023:

- Annual Report 2023. The first annual report following STO Malaga's membership in the INSTO Network in 2022.

- Reports covering the mandatory thematic areas as well as those of particular interest for Malaga.

The 11 mandatory thematic areas for all network members are:

- 1) Tourism seasonality
- 2) Employment
- 3) Energy management
- 4) Water management
- 5) Wastewater management
- 6) Solid waste management
- 7) Climate change
- 8) Economic benefits
- 9) Local satisfaction
- 10) Accessibility
- 11) Governance

The six specific focus areas for the Malaga destination are as follows:

- 1) Mobility
- 2) Sustainable production
- 3) Sustainable events
- 4) Education and training in sustainability
- 5) Health-related information
- 6) Tourism offer

2024:

- Final annual report
- Research and studies on the mandatory thematic areas
- Preparation of reports, particularly those addressing the high-priority challenges identified by STO Malaga, such as:
 - Water management in tourism destinations.
 - A specific report on the adaptation of tourist signage to easy-to-read formats, as accessibility is one of the identified challenges—especially since the city positions itself as an inclusive destination.
 - Specific Strategic Plan for STO Malaga: PESTO 2025–2029.
- Preparation of an infographic featuring the main sustainable tourism indicators for the city of Malaga, based on 2023 data.

MILESTONE 4: COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING PLAN

The main objective of this milestone is to raise awareness of STO Malaga, facilitating communication and access to information for all users—including collaborators, residents, tourists, and other stakeholders.

The activities carried out include:

- > Development of a corporate identity and stationery for STO Malaga (presentation templates, reports, document formats, etc.), aligned with the branding and advertising image of the Malaga City Council.
- > Publication of photos and videos from major events on the STO Malaga website.
- > Communication of STO Malaga's work to all stakeholders through the official corporate video of the Sustainable Tourism Observatory of Malaga.
- > Preparation and distribution of promotional materials (merchandise).
- > Participation in the 2024 Global INSTO Meeting and the III Sustainable Destinations Summit, held in Mallorca on 16, 17, and 18 October, respectively.

Malaga as a member of the Smart Tourist Destination Network

As part of the Smart Tourist Destination Network, in addition to participating in various webinars and completing both basic and advanced Smart Tourist Destination management courses, the following key activities were undertaken in 2024:

- > Renewal of Malaga's membership in the Smart Tourist Destination Network, accompanied by a Diagnostic Report from SEGITTUR containing the main recommendations across the network's pillars. This report will serve as a strategic roadmap for continuing the city's development as a Smart Tourist Destination.
- > Development of the operational guidelines of the Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga.

On 21 June 2024, the Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga was officially established. Among other agenda points, the meeting included:

1. Summary of actions carried out by the destination as a Smart Tourist Destination Network member in preparation for the certification renewal.
2. Protocol signed with SEGITTUR.
3. Introduction of the Monitoring Commission members.
4. Approval of the operational guidelines for the Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga.
5. Formal constitution of the Commission.

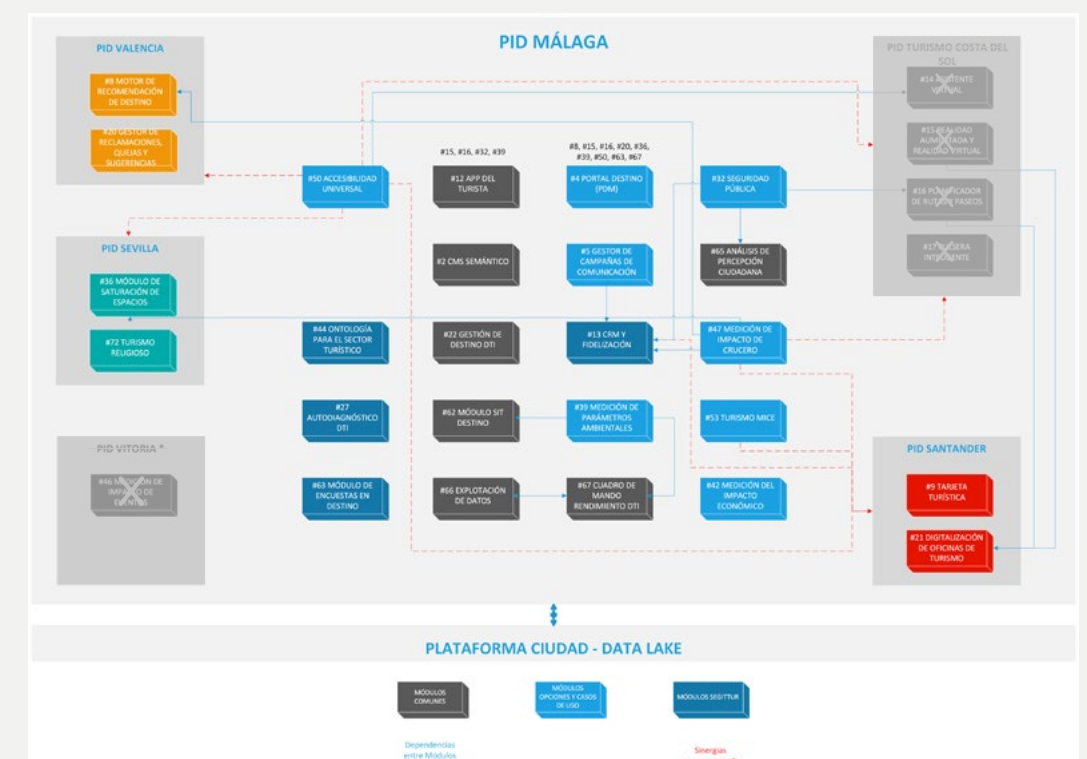


Smart Destination Platform

In July 2024, an application for funding was submitted to support the implementation of a Smart Destination Platform. The proposal was prepared by a collaborative team representing three municipal departments: Tourism and City Promotion, Innovation and New Technologies, and European Funds.

The aim of these grants is to fund the development and deployment of smart destination modules and/or optional reference modules within existing platforms by potentially eligible entities, as specified in Article 6 of the call for proposals. Additionally, the grants support the interconnection and integration of the various platforms and solutions with the national platform, which will act as the central node of the Smart Destination Platform.

Figure 25: Common and optional modules of Malaga's Smart Destination Platform, creating synergies with other destinations



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

Accessible Tourism Plan

On 20 June 2024, the Accessible Tourism Panel convened with representatives from the Department of Tourism and City Promotion, the Department of Accessibility, and the Development Group. The meeting focused on reviewing priority actions outlined in the Accessible Tourism Plan, as well as initiatives related to other projects such as the Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan and the Smart Destination Platform.

Figure 26: The Accessible Tourism Panel drives strategic and priority actions



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

Tourism marketing and development actions

In line with Malaga's vision to evolve towards more sustainable, diversified, and high-quality tourism, and with the aim of strengthening its appeal by enhancing the quality of local life and highlighting the authenticity of the destination, the city aspires to become a premium Smart Tourist Destination. The objective is to attract high-value tourism that seeks luxury and authentic experiences.

Throughout 2024, numerous marketing and tourism development actions were carried out to support the destination's evolution into a premium Smart Tourist Destination, including:

- **Marketing Digital:**
 - Content
 - Social media
 - Visita.malaga.eu website
- **Promoción:**
 - Actions at origin
 - Actions at destination
- **Destination promotion events.**
- **Creation of the annual infographic featuring key figures and main tourism indicators (see Annex).**
- **Convening of technical panels for tourism segments.**
- **Communication. Issuing of press releases.**

The Department of Tourism and City Promotion of the Malaga City Council is more committed than ever to promoting the destination in key markets such as Asia, the Middle East, the United States, and other strategically important markets for Malaga. This effort is aligned with various key initiatives under the current Malaga Tourism Strategic Plan and aims to consolidate the attraction of high-spending tourists, premium and luxury tourism, while also focusing on developing segments linked to high-value visitors. As part of this strategy, a range of marketing and tourism development actions have been actively pursued, including but not limited to the following:

- TURESPAÑA DIRECT WORKSHOPS IN JAPAN, KOREA, AND TAIWAN - Tokyo, Seoul, Taiwan, 11-14 March 2024.

- > MCARTHURGLEN CENTRE IN PARNDORF (AUSTRIA) - Parndorf, Austria, 13 March 2024.
- > SEATRADE MIAMI. Miami, Florida, 8–11 April 2024.
- > DIRECT CONFERENCES SUPPORTING THE MARKETING OF SPANISH TOURISM IN THE US AND CANADIAN MARKETS 2024 - Monterey, California, 15–18 April 2024.
- > TURESPAÑA GULF CONFERENCES - Abu Dhabi, 2–5 May 2024.
- > MIDDLE EAST ROADSHOW - Doha, Abu Dhabi, Riyadh and Bahrain, 13–16 May 2024.
- > MALAGA PROMOTION IN SEOUL. MALAGA LOVES SEOUL MURAL - Seoul, 9 July 2024.
- > MALAGA IS HERE...LONDON 2024. London, 11 December 2024, etc.

Qualities initiatives

In 2024, Malaga became, for the fourth consecutive year, the leading city in the number of tourism services awarded the SICTED quality certification. Throughout 2024, Quality Actions at the destination have been developed to strengthen Malaga's positioning as a Smart Tourist Destination within the framework of Sustainability. These actions align with the core objectives of SICTED, which are to:

- > Establish a permanent management structure that ensures the continuous improvement of the competitiveness of the destination's tourism services.
- > Provide a consistent quality level across all tourism services.
- > Increase tourist satisfaction and promote their loyalty.

The key actions carried out during 2024 include:

- > Ceremonial event for the 15th edition of the SICTED diploma and recognition awards.
- > 16th SICTED Forum.
- > SICTED improvement workshop: Tourism in the Future.
- > SICTED–Destination Malaga training activities:
 - The Future of Tourism with AI.
 - Customer Success Fundamentals and NoCode Tools for - Tourism SMEs.
 - Applying NoCode to Improve Customer Success in 2024.





Malaga Convention Bureau activities

MICE tourism in Malaga not only generates significant economic benefits but also fosters professional development, knowledge exchange, technological innovation, and social cohesion—leaving a lasting legacy for the city. In 2024, Malaga has further established itself as a leading Smart Tourist Destination for business tourism at both national and international levels. According to the Malaga Convention Bureau report, the city hosted a total of 2,190 meetings with 323,100 participants throughout the year.

A total of 94 initiatives were carried out across various strategic areas, including:

- Participation in specialised trade fairs and congresses.
- Organisation of inbound and outbound workshops.
- Institutional meetings.
- Site inspections.
- Marketing and promotional campaigns.
- Familiarisation (fam) trips.
- Press trips.
- Technical training aimed at enhancing destination competitiveness.

Consequently, 2024 was a period of dynamic activity for the Malaga Convention Bureau, marked by the consolidation of Malaga as a competitive player in the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) sector.

Participation in flagship events such as IBTM World, IMEX America, and the ICCA Congress, alongside collaboration with key organisations including the Spain Convention Bureau, Turismo Andaluz, the Spanish Tourist Office abroad, and the EMA, has bolstered Malaga's international profile, enabling the city to showcase its MICE offering to the world's leading event organisers and influencers.

Locally, efforts have focused on strengthening alliances with Convention Bureau partners, consolidating the local business fabric within the sector, and promoting Malaga's capacity as a premier venue for congresses and events.

Furthermore, Malaga has been selected as a pilot destination in a project led by the FEMP / Spain Convention Bureau to design and implement an ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) Actions Guide tailored to the MICE sector. This initiative is promoted by the FEMP (Federación

Española de Municipios y Provincias, the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces) through the Spain Convention Bureau. Its aim is to foster sustainability and the generation of positive legacy within the MICE sector (meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions) across Spanish tourist destinations.

During a working session held on 7 October 2024, the Malaga Convention Bureau team met with representatives from the Malaga City Council (social rights, citizen participation, social welfare departments) and local social organisations. Specialised consultants involved in the project also took part. The group shared a common local objective: To design a practical catalogue of social and sustainable initiatives that professional event organisers can incorporate into their programmes, thereby leaving a positive legacy in the Malaga community.

Within the framework of the FEMP project, the following key actions were promoted:

- Mapping local social organisations with potential to collaborate on events (such as Red Cross, food banks, diversity associations, health groups, etc.).
- Designing a project management Canvas to structure objectives, stakeholders, resources, tasks, and risks.
- Defining a Project Plan with clear phases: selection criteria, identification and contact with associations, mutual training, development of the directory, and communication plan.
- Creating a digital ESG guide to be published on the Convention Bureau's website, including visual resources, an association directory, and an impact assessment system.

These actions aim to achieve the following objectives:

- Encourage collaboration between the MICE sector and local associations.
- Highlight the social commitment of events organised in Malaga.
- Position Malaga as a responsible MICE destination and a benchmark in sustainability.
- Establish a replicable methodology for other SCB destinations.

Therefore, Malaga will continue to commit to sustainability, decentralisation, diversification of its offer, and communicating the real benefits this industry generates for the city. Malaga has not only positioned itself as a competitive alternative to major national destinations like Madrid and Barcelona, but its international recognition for generating positive legacy in the destination continues to grow.





Challenges for 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:

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.

Governance

A key takeaway from Malaga's new tourism strategy is the vital need to strengthen destination governance, especially regarding the monitoring of 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.

This includes crucial data for the city such as local resident satisfaction, energy and water management, climate change adaptation, accessibility, and more.

The Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga has been established to drive the efficient management of the tourism strategy by regularly producing and making this information easily accessible to all stakeholders. This, in turn, supports both public and private sectors in their decision-making processes.

Consequently, participatory processes are fundamental to effective tourism governance in the destination. 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
- > Accessible Tourism Panel

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. The development of the new tourism strategy and Malaga's Climate Plan 2050 employed participatory methodologies, including multiple stakeholder workshops and ongoing feedback mechanisms throughout the 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—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.

Tourism flows and density management

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.

It is crucial that STO Malaga consistently monitors and communicates the latest developments and future trends to all tourism stakeholders. Since 2016, significant groundwork has been laid through the Interreg project 'Alter-Eco', which has gathered extensive data over the years, including visitor density across different neighbourhoods and current capacity metrics.

Building on this, STO Malaga will utilise the Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan project, 'Sustainable Decentralisation of Tourism in the City of Malaga', to collect and analyse data aligned with the Smart Tourist Destination framework. This approach ensures smart and sustainable destination management at all levels throughout the city, strengthening Malaga's competitive edge.

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

Climate change

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

However, rising temperatures and fewer rainy days have increased the risk of wildfires around the destination, posing one of the biggest challenges for the tourism sector.

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.

Impact of cruise ships

Passenger arrivals through the Port of Malaga have grown significantly in recent years. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2019, the city received a total of 288 cruise ships, bringing approximately 476,085 passengers to Malaga. The number of cruise passengers has increased by 20%, rising from 19,858,656 in 2019 to 24,923,774 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 emphasizes positioning Malaga as a 'green port', fully aligned with the destination's sustainability goals.

In addition to the key monitoring areas already mentioned for Malaga, other follow-up topics derived from the initial tourism strategy have been integrated into the ongoing work of the Sustainable Tourism Observatory of Malaga.



Identifying future challenges for STO Malaga

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:

Improving data quality and accesibility

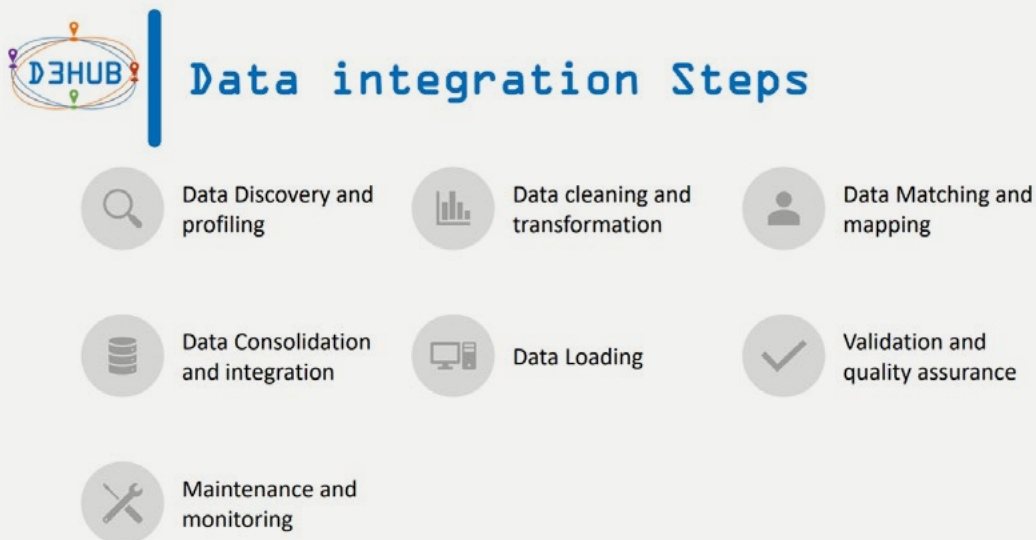
For better planning and informed decision-making based on quantitative evidence, it is essential to ensure comprehensive data collection that goes beyond traditional qualitative information. Additionally, the real-time automated updating of this data would benefit all stakeholders involved in the tourism 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 organising data and statistics using common concepts, definitions, classifications, and 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 27):

- 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 27: Steps for data integration in the Smart Destination Platform



Source: D3Hub Cross-Cluster Session, 2025.

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

Malaga’s tourism 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 exclusively dedicated to destination sustainability, the Malaga City Council fosters close collaboration between departments such as Tourism and City Promotion, Environmental Sustainability, Innovation and Digitalisation, among others. Additionally, the City Council has STO Malaga, which seeks to support tourism stakeholders in the city through its operations and management, enabling them to make data-driven decisions in real time.

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.

The Malaga Tourism Forum is a consultative body that, with nearly two decades of activity, continues to bring together various departments of the City Council and stakeholders from the tourism sector to 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.

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.

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.

Promoting regenerative tourism

The city must progress in areas such as improving infrastructure, green spaces, climate shelters, and sustainable mobility—fields where further development is still possible. The approach should be regenerative, not only minimising environmental impact but also helping to restore the environment, positively affecting 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.

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 response 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 and the Department of Environmental Sustainability are implementing various actions within the Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan project aimed at mitigating the consequences of the climate crisis: Urban shelters in city parks; equipment for the Environmental Route; analysis of the evolution of the tourist footprint; plans for the transition to and implementation of renewable energy production systems; among others.

Tourism flows and density

The Department of Tourism and City Promotion is developing the project 'Sustainable Decentralisation of Tourism in the City of Malaga', which aims to distribute the city's tourist flows from areas of higher concentration to other spaces and resources across the city through various alternative routes. This is done with respect for the essence, cultural tradition, and sustainability of both the resource itself and the surrounding social, cultural, and residential environment. All actions take into account the main transversal strategic pillars: accessibility, sustainability, digitalisation, and the conservation of cultural heritage.

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 Production and Heritage Route
- Nature Trail Route
- Historic Neighbourhoods Route
- Wine Press 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

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.



Lines of action for STO Malaga

Given that the main objective of STO Malaga is to transform the destination into a hub for knowledge and information transfer in the sustainable tourism sector, Malaga's vision is to become a benchmark sustainable city, inspiring other destinations to follow a governance model based on data management and evidence-based decision-making.

Therefore, it is essential to develop initiatives focused on the active participation of citizens, businesses, and public organisations, promoting sustainable development that preserves social and economic well-being.

From the lines of action outlined below, it is clear that to promote and strengthen collaboration among stakeholders, encourage citizen participation, and ensure the satisfaction of both the local population and visitors—while deploying Malaga's tourism strategy based on data governance and sustainability—the right tools for sustainable tourism planning and management are necessary:

1. Improve participation of all tourism stakeholders at local and international levels and increase collaboration among key tourism actors.

- Enhance public-private communication.
- Ensure continuous communication and exchange with relevant stakeholders to foster trust, understanding, commitment, collaboration, and support for the initiative.
- Guarantee regular exchange of experiences with other international destinations.

2. Identify new information sources and optimise real-time data collection and processing.

- Continuously review, adjust, and improve knowledge from internal and external data sources.
- Regularly review thematic indicators and design new proposals for topics to be monitored.
- Share evidence-based data generated for the different destination actors.
- Continuously strengthen and expand alliances for research and data analysis.
- Integrate data into the Smart Destination Platform, ensuring proper storage, processing, and analysis to support evidence-based decision-making.

3. Strengthen citizen participation in tourism planning processes.

- Organise regular meetings between representatives of the local community, tourism businesses, municipal authorities, and other key actors to discuss and co-create tourism strategies.
- Develop an online platform where residents can engage in consultations and surveys on key tourism projects (Smart Destination Platform).

4. Evaluate and improve the perception and satisfaction of citizens and tourism sector agents.

- Conduct surveys to gauge residents' satisfaction with tourism, defining questions, approach, continuity, and key indicators.

5. Support the city of Malaga in its sustainable tourism objectives.

- Assist in the Sustainable Tourism Decentralisation Project developed by the Department of Tourism and City Promotion.
- Strengthen collaboration to achieve the Climate Action Plan's targets, including emission reduction goals that incorporate tourism.
- Coordinate with IATUR in developing indicators related to climate risk and other environmental, social, and economic sustainability issues.
- Support the development of regenerative tourism practices.

The lines of action and initiatives presented here are ongoing and subject to continuous review and adaptation according to the destination's needs and circumstances, considering potential changes to short-, medium-, and long-term actions.



reflexiones del día



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Plan de
Recuperación
Transformación
y Resiliencia

Final reflections

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

In terms of collecting and monitoring tourism data, Malaga draws on established platforms at both national and regional levels. Key among these are DATAESTUR and the Tourism Intelligence System (Sistema de Inteligencia Turística, SIT), both supported by the State Secretariat for Tourism, as well as SMART TOURIST DATA, promoted by Turismo Andaluz through the Regional Government of Andalusia. These platforms provide access to a wide range of key indicators, including those related to tourism supply, demand, and mobility, among others.

Malaga is also making strides towards the development of its own digital tourism platform: the Smart Destination Platform. This integrated, multi-modular system is designed to improve tourism management through the centralised collection, storage, processing, and analysis of a new generation of data. The platform will enable more effective, evidence-based decision-making while enhancing Malaga's resilience and sustainability as a digitally transformed destination.

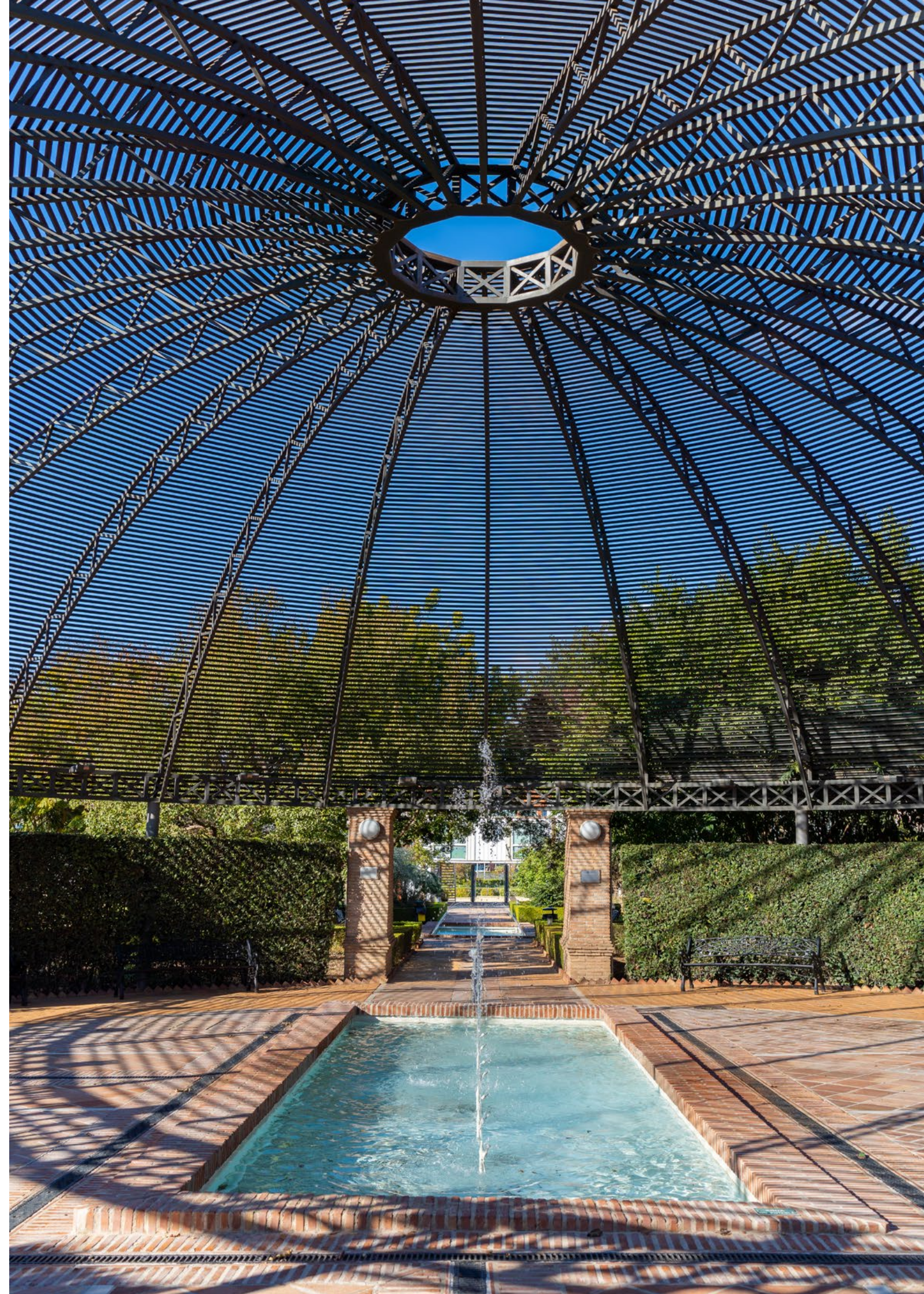
Malaga's ambition is not only to meet current environmental and social challenges, but to serve as an inspiration for other cities by adopting a model that is balanced, forward-thinking, and environmentally responsible.

The city continues to strengthen its advanced model of tourism governance, where strategic planning, intensive data use, and cross-sector collaboration come together to build a more competitive and sustainable destination.

The creation of the Technical Monitoring Commission for Smart Tourist Destination Malaga, close cooperation with academic and research partners such as IATUR and UMA, and the active involvement of key tourism stakeholders through bodies like the Malaga Tourism Forum, all highlight the city's ongoing commitment to robust, inclusive, and future-facing destination governance.

The city's commitment to quality, innovation, and multisectoral cooperation positions Malaga as a benchmark for smart tourism management—one that is firmly focused on the well-being of its residents and the quality of experience offered to visitors.

Given that the main objective of the Tourism Sustainability Observatory (STO) is to establish Malaga as a centre for knowledge and information transfer in the field of sustainable tourism, the creation of the Smart Destination Platform marks a turning point in the city's strategic management as a Smart Tourist Destination. The integration of Malaga's Smart Destination Platform into the National Central Node is a key milestone in the city's journey towards becoming a smart, resilient, sustainable, and inclusive tourism destination, enabled through comprehensive digital transformation.



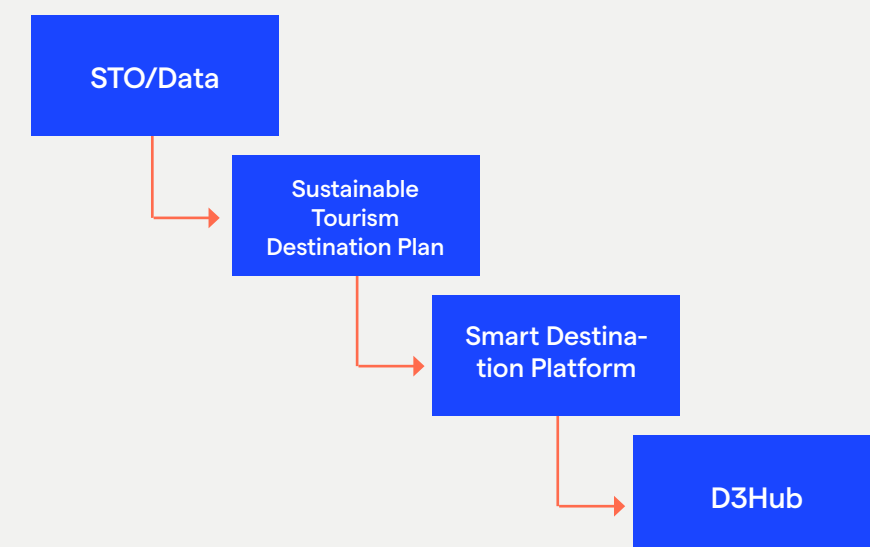


Future projects - STO Malaga

The Malaga Strategic Tourism Plan 2021–2024 has provided a solid foundation for driving current strategic planning initiatives, as well as for the monitoring and oversight of tourism activity. It represents a set of important tools developed through careful reflection, with the aim of securing the future of tourism, Malaga’s key industry. It supports the adoption of a management, governance, and tourism promotion model in line with the principles of the Smart Tourist Destination Network.

In addition to the Strategic Plan for STO Malaga, several key projects are currently being developed at both local and international levels (see Figure 28).

Figure 28: Key projects in the data-driven strategic planning and management of sustainable tourism in Malaga



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

Strategic Plan for the Sustainable Tourism Observatory of Malaga

The Strategic Plan for the Sustainable Tourism Observatory of Malaga (*Plan Estratégico del Observatorio de Turismo Sostenible de Málaga, PESTO*) 2025–2029 aims to lay the foundation for promoting a Smart Tourist Destination model based on sustainable tourism. Its goal is to support the balanced development of the city of Malaga, in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the demands of today's global context.

It is important to remember that the role of Sustainable Tourism Observatories is to provide data and feedback mechanisms that support adaptive management. These tools help destinations refine their strategies and respond to shifting challenges, while also ensuring that data production supports governance structures and reflects 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.

This plan is being launched as a living and 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.

PESTO Malaga 2025–2029 has been designed with flexibility in mind, allowing it to adapt to new trends, projects, and technological developments—ensuring its long-term relevance and effectiveness. With the coordinated efforts of all stakeholders involved, this Strategic Tourism Sustainability Planning document will serve as a key pillar in guiding Malaga's digital and sustainable transformation of tourism, benefiting both its residents and its visitors.

Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan

The Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan of the Malaga City Council—developed within the framework of Spain's Recovery, Transformation, and Resilience Plan and funded by the European Union through Next Generation EU—is being implemented by the Department of Tourism and City Promotion as the 'Sustainable Decentralisation of Tourism in the City of Malaga' project. The objective is to promote alternative tourism experiences by encouraging visitors to explore areas beyond the traditional tourist core that also hold strong tourism potential.

The Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan will serve as a foundation for STO Malaga in the process of data collection and analysis, following the Smart Tourist Destination model. This ensures that destination management is intelligent and sustainable across all levels of the city, helping to strengthen Malaga's competitiveness.

Smart Destination Platform

The Smart Destination Platform 2024 aims to enhance tourism management in Malaga through the implementation of an integrated, multimodule 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.

This project seeks improvements across Malaga's five Smart Tourist Destination pillars:

- **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 represents a necessary commitment to consolidating 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 Smart Destination Platform will contribute to establishing synergies with other destinations and organisations, consolidating the national strategy outlined since the beginning of the 2024 initiative.

D3HUB

One of the most important tools for Malaga as a data-driven destination is the D3HUB project (Data-Driven Destinations HUB).

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 aim is to gain training and skills to be prepared for aligning all data sources and efficiently analysing the information gathered across various institutions. The importance of learning from how other destinations in similar situations operate is also highlighted—being more effective, minimising resources, and maximising results by selecting different tools and methodologies based on benchmarking and best practice analysis.

As Malaga is leading the project 'Sustainable Decentralisation of Tourism in Malaga', under the Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan framework, the city is participating in one of the clusters: 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 encoura-

ging 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.





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