Use Case Scenario for Community-Led Actions:

ECOTURISM AS A POSITIVE CHANGE FOR NATURE AND PEOPLE

EMPOWERING COMMUNITY- LED ACTION IN THE ATLANTIC & ARCTIC

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe Research and Innovation programme under Grant Agreement number 101215504

BLUEACTIONAA

Disclaimer:

This document is NOT a BlueActionAA's deliverable. The information contained in this document has been collected ONLY with the purpose of developing the use case scenarios catalogue to inspire potential applicants to BAAC-01. Potential applicants are NOT allowed to use this information for their applications to BAAC-01 or for other purposes. The information contained in this document is presented as provided by the use case promoter. The information contained in this document has not been changed and has been presented below as received. For any further questions regarding the use of this use case, please contact the BlueActionAA's data controller at info@blueactionaa.eu.

SUPPORTED BY | IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

AIR CENTRE

Foras na Mara Marine Institute

ESF Your Partner in Science

SINTEF

PLOCAN Plataforma Oceánica de Canarias

NIVA Norwegian Institute for Water Research

universidade de aveiro

SDU University of Southern Denmark

Funded by the European Union

Use case Overview

Use case title

Ecotourism as a positive change for nature and people

Short Description

This use case presents an ecotourism-based approach to fostering environmental stewardship, community engagement, and sustainable economic development in coastal and marine areas. By integrating conservation practices, citizen science, and responsible tourism guidelines, the initiative promotes low-impact experiences while enhancing ocean literacy. A "Living Lab" approach brings together local communities, researchers, tourism operators, and conservation groups to co-develop ecotourism concepts adapted to local contexts. The solution supports biodiversity protection, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable livelihoods, particularly in nature-rich and protected areas. Tested in Arctic environments, the model is scalable and adaptable to other coastal regions, contributing to long-term sustainability and community resilience.

Country and Region

Norway/Arctic.

Domain/Sector

Environmental Protection; Coastal Management; Tourism.

Current status

Advanced/Pilot tested.

Geographical scope

Coastal/EEZ.

Organisation's categorisaton

NGOs, foundations (public and private), professional association, community-based organisations including civil society and citizen associations; SMEs and Large Entreprises; Research organisations and academia.

Promoter's information

- Organisation's name: UIT – The Arctic University of Norway.
- Place: Norway.
- EU Mission Restore Our Oceans and Seas related project: AAGORA.

Use case duration

- From Year 2023 to Year 2026.
- Number of Months: 42.

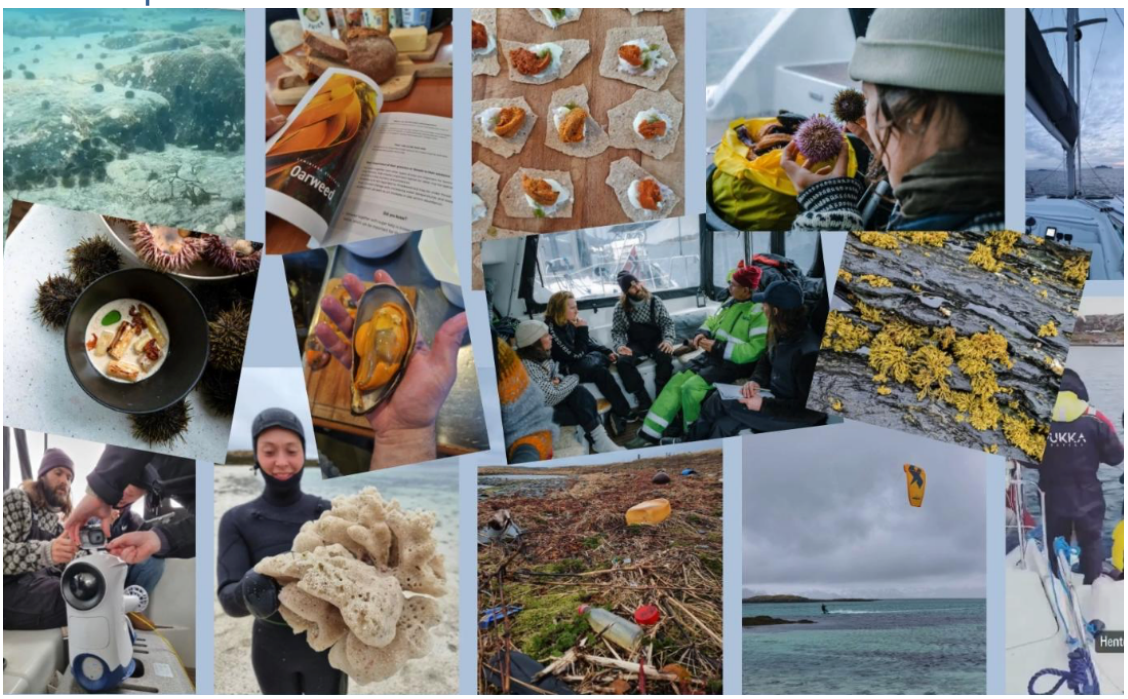
Keywords

Ecotourism/Community engagement/Ocean Literacy

Website link

https://a-aagora.konnektable.com/troms/ecotourism-as-a-positive-change-for-nature-and-people?fullscreen=true

Use case picture



Design

Briefly describe how the use case is aligned/contributes to the objectives of the EU Mission Restore Our Oceans and Waters 2030

This project contributes to the EU Mission "Restore Our Ocean and Waters" by promoting a sustainable Blue Economy approach that integrates ecosystem restoration with economic activities. It supports the transition towards a carbon-neutral and circular blue economy by developing low-impact tourism models that generate value while preserving marine ecosystems. The inclusion of citizen science, ecosystem monitoring, and nature-based solutions directly contributes to biodiversity protection, pollution reduction, and improved ocean knowledge.

Challenge's definition and Primary Objective

Coastal and marine regions face increasing pressure from unsustainable tourism models that generate limited local value while degrading ecosystems. At the same time, many coastal communities struggle to access diversified and resilient income streams within the Blue Economy. This use case addresses these challenges by developing an innovative ecotourism model embedded within the Blue Economy framework. The objective is to create sustainable, nature-based tourism value chains that support ecosystem restoration, promote circular economic practices, and generate inclusive economic opportunities for local communities. By linking tourism with conservation, education, and small-scale blue businesses, the model strengthens both environmental resilience and local economies.

End users

Coastal communities, blue economy SMEs, tourism operators, marine protected area managers, researchers, visitors, environmental NGOs.

Gender equality and diversity

The project promotes inclusive participation by ensuring equal access to opportunities across gender and social groups. It supports capacity-building and entrepreneurship in coastal communities, encouraging participation of women and youth in emerging blue sectors such as sustainable tourism, environmental monitoring, and nature-based services.

Implementation

Implementers

Regional or local (public) authority; NGOs, community organisations; SMEs Research organisations and academia.

Concrete Solutions and Actions taken

The use case implements a Blue Economy-oriented ecotourism model that connects environmental conservation with sustainable economic activities. Key actions include the development of nature-based tourism products linked to marine ecosystems, such as guided biodiversity experiences, restoration activities (e.g., kelp forests), and ocean literacy programs. Citizen science initiatives are integrated to generate environmental data and engage visitors in ecosystem monitoring. A Living Lab approach enables co-creation between stakeholders, fostering innovation and aligning tourism services with local needs and environmental limits. Sustainable business models are developed for small-scale operators, promoting circular practices, local supply chains, and low-impact operations. The use case also supports the creation of blue value chains by linking tourism with other sectors such as local fisheries, sustainable food systems, and conservation services, enhancing economic diversification and resilience.

Community Engagement Needs

The project responds to the need for stronger participation of coastal communities in the Blue Economy, ensuring that economic benefits remain local while safeguarding marine resources. It addresses the gap between economic development and environmental sustainability.

Community Engagement Measures

Co-creation workshops, digital platforms, training, citizen science programs, and partnerships with local actors ensure active and continuous engagement.

Community Engagement benefits

Diversified income opportunities, increased local ownership of marine resources, improved skills and employment, strengthened community resilience, and enhanced stewardship of coastal ecosystems.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Technical Risks

One technical risk relates to the implementation and consistency of citizen science and environmental monitoring activities. Variability in participants' skills, data collection methods, and seasonal accessibility of sites may affect data quality and continuity. Additionally, adapting ecotourism activities to different environmental contexts (e.g., protected vs non-protected areas) may require continuous refinement of tools, guidelines, and methodologies.

Operational constraints

Operational challenges include seasonality of tourism demand, weather conditions, and accessibility of remote or coastal areas. Limited infrastructure in smaller communities may constrain the implementation of tourism services and restoration activities. Furthermore, balancing visitor access with ecosystem protection requires careful planning, capacity limits, and ongoing management.

Legal/Regulatory Constraints

Activities taking place in marine protected areas or sensitive coastal zones must comply with environmental regulations and conservation policies. Differences in national and regional governance frameworks may create administrative complexity. Ensuring alignment with tourism regulations, environmental protection laws, and safety standards is essential and may require coordination with multiple authorities.

Ethical and Social Considerations

The project promotes ethical engagement by ensuring that local communities are actively involved in decision-making and benefit fairly from economic opportunities. Inclusivity, gender equality, and respect for local culture and knowledge are central principles. Data collected through citizen science must be handled responsibly, ensuring transparency and appropriate use. Additionally, care must be taken to avoid over-tourism, cultural commodification, or unequal distribution of benefits within the community.

Results & Impacts

Outputs

The project delivers a set of integrated outputs combining nature-based,

social, and economic innovation. These include ecotourism concept packages tailored to coastal and marine environments, visitor guidelines for low-impact tourism, and citizen science frameworks for biodiversity monitoring and ecosystem restoration. Additional outputs include educational and ocean literacy materials, co-created through a Living Lab approach, and sustainable business models designed for small-scale operators within the Blue Economy. The project also establishes collaborative governance mechanisms that connect local communities, researchers, tourism actors, and conservation organisations, enabling long-term coordination and adaptive management.

Outcomes

- Environmental impacts: Improved protection and restoration of coastal and marine ecosystems through low-impact tourism practices and active conservation efforts. Increased data availability from citizen science contributes to better ecosystem monitoring and management. Reduced environmental pressure from tourism and enhanced awareness of biodiversity conservation;
- Economic impacts: Creation of diversified and sustainable opportunities for local communities through ecotourism and related Blue Economy activities. Strengthening of local value chains by linking tourism with conservation services, local products, and small-scale businesses;
- Social impacts: Enhanced community engagement, ownership, and participation in local development and environmental stewardship. Improved skills, knowledge, and capacity-building opportunities, particularly in sustainable tourism and conservation. Strengthened social cohesion and increased awareness of environmental and cultural values.

Operational benefits

The project promotes efficient use of local resources and low-impact operational models. Clear visitor guidelines and structured activities improve safety and reduce risks associated with unregulated tourism. The Living Lab approach enhances coordination among stakeholders, improving decision-making and operational efficiency.

Lessons learned and take aways for the future

Key lessons include the importance of early and continuous community involvement, the value of co-creation in designing locally adapted solutions, and the need for balancing economic opportunities with environmental limits. Flexibility and adaptive management are essential to respond to changing environmental and social conditions. Integrating education and citizen science significantly enhances long-term impact and stakeholder engagement.

Scalability

Local -> Regional; Regional -> Global.

Replicability

The project is replicable in coastal and marine regions with similar characteristics, particularly in areas with strong natural assets and community interest in sustainable development. The modular design of ecotourism concepts and guidelines allows adaptation to different environmental, cultural, and regulatory contexts.

Transferability

The approach can be adaptable to other Blue Economy sectors such as sustainable fisheries, marine conservation services, environmental education, and nature-based solutions. The Living Lab model and community engagement strategies are also applicable to broader sustainability and rural development initiatives.

Post project sustainability

The sustainability of the project could be supported through the development of viable business models, strong local ownership, and integration within existing Blue Economy value chains. By empowering local stakeholders and building capacity, the project has created favourable conditions for continued operation beyond the initial funding period. Revenue generated through ecotourism activities could contribute to supporting ongoing conservation and community initiatives, potentially creating a self-reinforcing system over time. Partnerships with local authorities, NGOs, and private sector actors may further strengthen institutional support and continuity. Additionally, the use of scalable and adaptable tools, such as guidelines, educational materials, and citizen science frameworks, could

enable the model to evolve and expand. Continuous monitoring and feedback mechanisms may support adaptive management, helping ensure that the use case remains relevant, effective, and aligned with environmental and socio-economic needs.

BLUEACTIONAA

EMPOWERING COMMUNITY-LED ACTION IN THE ATLANTIC & ARCTIC

This project has received funding from the European Union´s Horizon Europe Research and Innovation programme under **Grant Agreement 101215504**