

**SUSTAINABLE URBAN TOURISM**  
Involving Local Agents and Partnerships for New Forms of Governance



**EUROPEAN GOVERNANCE FOR  
SUSTAINABLE URBAN TOURISM**

**Benchmarking Report**

Francois Burhin , Krassimira Paskaleva -Shapira and Silvia Santamaria

July 2003



Research project of Key Action 4 “City of Tomorrow and Cultural Heritage” of the “Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development” Program within the “Fifth Framework Program” of the European Union  
Contract n° EVK4-CT-1999-00001

## CONTENT

1. Executive summary	3
2. Overview of the SUT-Governance research project	4
3. Benchmarking SUT Partnerships	5
3.1. Benchmarking as quality management tool	5
3.2. Benchmarking in tourism	8
4. SUT-Partnership Benchmarking: Tool design and implementation	11
4.1. Benchmarking approach	11
4.1.1. Objectives and expected outcomes	11
4.1.2. Selection of participating cities	13
4.2. Implementation	14
4.2.1. Methodological approach	14
4.2.2. Methodology	15
4.2.3. Benchmarking process	17
4.2.4. Benchmarking tool enhancement	20
5. Benchmarking results	20
5.1. Main trends	
5.2. Guidance for interpretation of results	21
5.3. Analysis of the results	22
5.4. Improving benchmarking of SUT Partnerships	30
6. Conclusion	31
6.1. Benchmarking SUT Partnerships: Key elements of success	31
6.2. Towards European Benchmarking System in Tourism	32

# 1. Executive Summary

The **SUT-Governance Project** is an international R&D initiative funded by Key Action 4 "City of Tomorrow and Cultural Heritage" within the "Fifth Framework Program" of the European Union. The overall goal of the project is to develop, validate, and deploy a general framework for sustainable urban tourism partnerships, applicable to a variety of urban municipal contexts. A key objective is to develop a Benchmarking Tool to assess current and future performance in developing participatory sustainable urban tourism practice, which can guide destinations and localities in identifying strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for further tourism and community development.

The **Benchmarking Tool**, developed and administered by the Institute for Technology Assessment and System Analysis (ITAS) of the Forschungszentrum Karlsruhe (D) in cooperation with OGM (B) and external experts, draws on European 'Best Practice' Partnerships for sustainable urban tourism (SUT Partnerships). It provides a set of key factors of success, lead indicators and benchmark targets based on the 'Integrated Framework Model of Partnership Success' promoted by the SUT-Governance project.

The **Benchmarking Survey**, administered in 2003 in 120 European cities, invited local administrations to self-assess their experience and success in promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships, including the different activities and processes involved in the establishment, management, implementation, evaluation and collaboration with regard to urban sustainability.

The **Benchmarking Questionnaire**, forwarded to selected contact officials, was complemented by a set of support documents: Cover Letter inviting the cities to participate and respond; Introductory Notes explaining the purpose of the project and the survey, and a Glossary including definitions of the key concepts and terms. As a result, thirty-four responses were received from twenty countries across Europe.

The **Customized Back Reports** which was sent out to all survey respondents provided summary information on the city performance and success in building and maintaining effective partnerships for sustainable urban tourism in regard to the framework conditions, the partnership process and activity and the implications for urban sustainability.

The analysis of the **Survey Results** indicates that Sustainable Urban Tourism, as of yet, remains an innovative practice known to only few urban tourism destinations in Europe. In this regard, partnerships appear key to linking urban tourism with long-term sustainability of the local communities in context of broad-based governance and stakeholder participation.

Overall, the **SUT-Governance Benchmarking Survey** has demonstrated the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable urban tourism, the need for exchange of information and learning from others to improve practice towards enhancing tourism actions, social fabric and the environment in the European cities.

Finally, the Survey has reinforced the need of **European-wide Tourism Benchmarking System** where the present initiative of Benchmarking Partnerships of Sustainable Urban Tourism can be considered an important step toward its achievement.

## 2. Overview of the SUT-Governance Project

The 'Sustainable Urban Tourism: Involving Local Agents and Partnerships for New Forms of Governance' (SUT-Governance) Project is an international multidisciplinary R&D initiative funded by Key Action 4 "City of Tomorrow and Cultural Heritage" of the "Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development" Program within the "Fifth Framework Program" of the European Union.

Five European institutions are involved in this long-year initiative: The Forschungszentrum Karlsruhe GmbH, Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration, Regional Consulting Ziviltechniker Gesellschaft GmbH, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the 'Saints Cyril and Methodius' University of Veliko Turnovo.

The overall goal of the project is to work with public-private partnerships and urban governments in Europe to develop, validate, and deploy a general framework for sustainable urban tourism (SUT) partnerships that is applicable to a variety of urban municipal and development contexts.

In order to define the set of attributes and the key elements for the success of partnerships, twelve pilot cases from across Europe and eight detailed multi-stakeholder partnerships from Germany, Austria, Greece and Bulgaria were studied. The research reinforced the originally established theoretical framework model of partnerships advancing the role of the framework conditions, the process and the activity and the implications for local integrated sustainability.

A key objective of the project is to build and implement a Benchmarking Tool for multiple localities to assess performance in developing participatory sustainable urban tourism practices, which can guide them in identifying strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for further development.

Drawing on a 3-year study, the SUT-Governance project has affirmed that (1) multi-stakeholder partnerships are an effective means of promoting sustainable tourism and governance in urban environments and (2) the success of the partnerships depends on the efficacy of the partnership process, the tourism activity and its implementation and the resolutions for long-term urban sustainability. The project intertwines these factors holistically in an 'Integrated Framework Model of Partnership Success'.

The SUT Partnership Benchmarking Survey developed by the project and drawing on the Partnership Framework Model, aims to provide urban localities and other stakeholder groups in Europe to assess and improve performance in developing participatory sustainable tourism.

### 3. Benchmarking SUT Partnerships

#### 3.1. Benchmarking as quality management tool

##### Origins and definitions of Benchmarking

Benchmarking, as it is known today, was initially developed in its modern form in the USA in the 1970s. However, the underlying concept has been in existence for considerably longer and derives from principles accepted within Anglo Saxon law.

The following are some commonly used definitions of Benchmarking:

*"Benchmarking is the means by which we attempt to locate a level of performance in a certain area that is superior to ours, then to change the way we do certain activities in order to improve our performance"* (Paul Leonard, Benchmarking expert)

*"The continuous, systematic search for, and implementation of, best practices which lead to superior performance"* (Benchmarking Centre)

*"A continuous systematic process for comparing performances of organisations, functions or process against the "best in the world" aiming to not only match those performances levels but to exceed them"* (Ex DG III, current DG Enterprise 1996)

*"The benchmarking is the process of identifying, understanding and adapting outstanding practices from organisations anywhere in the world to help your organisation improve its performance"* (The Benchmarking Exchange, TBE)

*"Benchmarking is simply about making comparisons with other organisations and then learning the lessons that those comparisons throw up"* (European Benchmarking Code of Conduct)

In summary, Benchmarking can be viewed as:

- An ongoing process for continuous improvement
- A process that implies learning "with and from others", changing and improving
- Adapting and applying lessons learnt from best performers and aiming to meet and exceed their achievements?

## **Benchmarking at the European Level**

In its strategic communication (where the concept of Benchmarking appeared for the first time): *“Benchmarking-Implementation of an instrument available to economic actors and public authorities”* (COM/97/0153), the European Commission stated that benchmarking is an important tool to improve competitiveness and it is based on two elements:

- ✓ Comparison of social behaviour, commercial practices, market structures and public institutions among countries, regions and enterprises with the aim of identifying best practice.
- ✓ The utilisation of a reference to best practice as a tool to identify necessary changes and to encourage social and economic initiatives and actors in order to progress in that direction.

## **Key benefits of Benchmarking**

Overall, Benchmarking requires significant resources in terms of time, money and staff. It is not easy and can be daunting for those who have never been involved in such an exercise. The key is to convince potential participants that the benefits gained from benchmarking will repay the effort/expenditure put into the process. The more one puts into benchmarking, the more he will get out of it. In addition, there is a clear management imperative for benchmarking: the user needs to know what is happening in your activity or business, otherwise he cannot expect to manage it as well as others.

*These are being considered as the key benefits for the user:*

- Benchmarking will require you to start asking questions about how and why you do the things you do and to think of ways to do tasks better, whether it involves policy-making, strategic planning, administration, maintenance, operational processes or any other task.
- Benchmarking is practical and efficient:
- Benchmarking offers a valuable opportunity to gain insights into the practices of others, giving you an accurate and objective understanding of your own performance in relation to others. At the same time it encourages open-mindedness to new ideas and ways of doing things.
- Benchmarking can help you to set targets and standards
- Benchmarking increases the involvement and commitment of stakeholders.
- Benchmarking enables you to build networks and partnerships, which often result in productive working relationships in the future.
- Benchmarking enables you to learn about the good practices of others, but also to promote or ‘market’ the successes of your own organisation, city, region etc.

## The Benchmarking process

When starting a benchmarking project, the aims and objectives need to be clearly stated at the outset and agreed with Senior Managers. As the Public Sector Benchmarking Service documents recommend<sup>1</sup>, objectives need to be **SMART**:

- o **S**pecific: Expressed so that they are unlikely to be misunderstood
- o **M**easurable: Possible to tell whether or not they have been achieved
- o **A**ction Oriented: Focused on improving a specific process or activity
- o **R**ealistic: can be tackled with the available time and resources
- o **T**ime related: can be carried out within a reasonable period of time

It is important to remember that benchmarking alone cannot achieve miracles; it is a tool that should be used as part of an integrated management process focused on continual improvement. There are many variations of the benchmarking methodology but basically all contain the same steps:

Planning:

- Select subject area to be benchmarked
- Define the objective of the benchmarking exercise
- Identify potential benchmarking partners
- Seek approval commitment and support of senior management
- Establish a work plan to determine time-scheduled, tasks and team
- Identify data required, sources and appropriate methods of collection
- Agree on a common code of conduct to ensure all partners have the same expectations and commitment. A basis for this could be the European Benchmarking Code of Conduct in Annex I of this guide.

Some of the key words of the benchmarking process important to keep in mind are:

- Co-operation
- Understanding
- Sharing and comparing experience
- Involving all relevant people
- Commitment
- Clear targets
- Regular assessment
- Detailed and unambiguous indicators
- Having an answer for the key questions: "where we are", "where are we going" and "how will we get there"
- Code of Conduct: it could contribute to efficient, effective and ethical benchmarking

---

<sup>1</sup> "Benchmarking for Public Services" published by the PSBS: [www.benchmarking.gov.uk/about\\_bench](http://www.benchmarking.gov.uk/about_bench)

### 3.2. Benchmarking in tourism

As of yet, Benchmarking in tourism is still in its onset. It has been limitedly used in tourism destinations and less in industry, particularly in assessing specific performance of hotels, resorts, attractions, and transport.

In tourism destinations, regular monitoring of performance against plans and the assembly of up to date information and data should be a fundamental component of the management process. At the very simplest level it should be a checklist of actions completed but to be effective it needs to encompass a broader range of activities and interrogate performance. The process needs to be seen as an integral part of an effective management system. It should be formulated to suit the needs, aspirations and resources of the individual destination but most importantly it should be simple, effective easy to administer and be seen as a continuous process.

Key components of monitoring the performance should cover:

- Performance against strategies. Actions plans should:
  - Include target dates for delivery and regular monitoring (at least monthly)
  - Review progress towards the completion of these actions
  - Set out the responsibilities for delivery and any remedial action or plan change required to meet changing or emerging situations or opportunities
- Volume and value of tourism data
  - An assessment of the number of visitors to a destination and the value of the economy of these visits is the most basic but significant piece of information required for an area. It is an essential part of the understanding process. Once collected the information needs to be regularly updated so that basic trends can be established.
- Overall visitor satisfaction
  - Visitor surveys are essential to evaluate customer perceptions of the destination and to identify needs. Again, it is imperative that surveys are carried out on a regular basis and that the data collected is consistent to allow for comparison to enable the monitoring of trends, to evaluate the impact of new developments and the assess changing needs.
- Stakeholder satisfaction (industry, local community, etc.)
  - Regular surveys of the local tourism service providers are essential to ensure that the resources devoted to tourism are being used to best effect and satisfying the needs of local businesses.
- Environmental considerations
  - These should be an integral part of the service planning and delivery process. Monitoring systems need to be put in place to ensure that sustainability issues are adequately addressed. At the simplest level, the impact of each new development needs to be assessed in broad environmental terms. An evaluation of the effectiveness of environmental management processes instituted; ed energy management systems, local produce sourcing, recycling programmes of carrying capacity, needs to be a key part of the monitoring process and benchmarking.

- Performance / comparative indicators
  - ✓ Recognising that monitoring is an important process is one thing but organising and managing it is another. It can be tempting to try to quantify and measure everything that happens, but in essence all that is needed is the identification of a few key performance measures that you know can be easily collected, that are reliable and that can be compared year on year; hence the emergence of performance indicators.
  - ✓ At a basic level indicators can be a simple numerical record of activity. More complex ones can be used to evaluate the outcomes of particular activities. Whatever process is used, they are, as the name implies, simply a relative indication of activity to assess trends and evaluate relative positioning. Through benchmarking to be of any benefit to the monitoring process indicators or performance measures are needed that relate to key areas of activity. These can be identified as:
    - Strategic objectives
    - Cost/efficiency
    - Service delivery outcomes
    - Satisfaction and quality
    - Access
    - Sustainability

### *Benchmarking*

The collection of key and core performance data in a standardised format agreed with other destinations enables a direct comparison to be made of overall performance within a specific section or grouping. Benchmarking clubs have been in existence for a number of years but their distribution is patchy and they have highlighted the lack of accurate, simple and timely locally based comparative data. The emergence of individual benchmarking clubs has also highlighted the need for more universal recognition of the role and value of core comparable information to support more effective performance management in destinations.

### *Examples of benchmarking activities in Europe*

Benchmarking also has a much broader application. Across Europe destinations groupings and networks have been seeking the 'holy grail' of the perfect set of sustainable performance indicators to be used for Europe-wide benchmarking. Without a co-ordination a plethora of different processes have been emerging.

In addition the apparent need to be exhaustive and visibly rigorous has led to the creation of endless sets of potential indicators that do not pass the acid tests of simplicity, collectability, comparability and reliance. There is much to be learnt from fellow practitioners across Europe and there are benefits to be gained from the ability to share information with a much broader range of destinations.

Recognising the need for improved co-ordination and consistency, the European Commission is now funding a study to identify "Measurement tools and methods needed for monitoring the availability of tourist destinations and services indicators and benchmarking". The study is expected to formulate and test a framework for the establishment of a European benchmarking system that will allow core information to be entered and analysed online, with additional sections tailored to meet the data and performance management needs of specific types of destination.

1. The British government created the Best Value initiative to assess the local authorities performance in delivering their services and appraise the Value for money. The starting point is an authority-wide Best Value Performance Plan that has to be drawn up each year. This must include current and expected performance against a series of statutory indicators set by the Audit commission together with a range of local indicators than an authority considers best demonstrates their effectiveness at service delivery. Despite the few number of authorities having set up tourism performance indicators, The Audit Commission has identified the areas of performance that it will focus on and for which they will expect some performance measurement to be in place for tourism services.
2. In Austria, TourMIS is a successful implementation of a Marketing-Information-System for tourism management. The major aim of TourMIS is an optimal information supply and decision support for the tourism industry. TourMIS provides on-line tourism survey data, as well as an evaluation program to transform data into precious management information.

Since 2000 this initiative has provided the tourism industry with predominantly free access to overall data and functions of TourMIS (registration is required). TourMIS is open to all authorized tourism organizations, societies, tourism consultants, companies, tourism training centres, pressure groups, etc. in Austria and abroad. The development of TourMIS is financially supported by the Austrian National Tourist Office and the European Travel Commission.

3. Interesting examples related to the core of the SUT-Governance research could be found in the ECT<sup>2</sup> initiative developed by professor Karl Wöber, Wien University as an extension of TourMIS initiative.

Recently, European Cities Tourism participated to the TourMIS initiative by asking its 80 members (Major European Cities Tourism Offices) to provide regular statistics to compare performance and market trends in several areas such as visits, stays, visitors arrivals, foreign and domestic markets, etc.

4. The Marca de Calidad Turística Española initiative (Spain) is based on a management model approach – the criteria are developed for 6 different sectors including collective accommodation

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://tourmis.wu.edu/>

5. The Q1000 from the Travel development Centre in Finland is a set of common quality criteria and instruments for SME tourism businesses. It is based on 4 core areas: Customer satisfaction, Professionalism, Efficiency and Ethics.
6. Destination 21 (Denmark) is a labelling scheme for tourist destinations with sustainable development.

In addition, the World Tourism Organization is also working on a set of indicators for sustainable development in tourism<sup>3</sup>. The preliminary survey identified not less than 36 national, regional or local initiatives worldwide for developing sets of indicators of sustainability in tourism.

## **4. SUT Partnership Benchmarking: Tool design and implementation**

### **4.1. Benchmarking approach**

#### **4.1.1. Objectives and expected outcomes**

##### **Objectives**

The objective of the Benchmarking exercise is to build and implement a benchmarking tool through which multiple localities can assess their performance in developing participatory sustainable tourism, and which can guide them in identifying strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for further development in this field. The 'Best Practice' Partnerships, the Partnership Framework Model and other outcomes from the previous phases of the project form the basis for this step. The key objectives are to:

- (1) Assist urban government decision-makers in benchmarking, evaluating and designing strategies to improve the decision-making processes for successful partnerships in urban sustainable tourism
- (2) Help other key stakeholders in the assessment of existing policies and strategies of partnership collaboration for multiple benefits
- (3) In the broader context, to encourage local governments to put the Local agenda 21 on to the political agenda, and motivate those, which have made a significant progress in developing long-term action, plans for sustainable tourism with the view to implementing concrete partnership projects.

The Benchmarking documents are to be administered by mail to different cities in Europe, including cities in European Union accession countries. This process will allow sharing information and Best Practice across Europe, assessing conditions and capabilities, and providing feedback to the participating localities. The

---

<sup>3</sup> Background paper prepared for WTO by Consulting and Audit Canada, January 2003

implementation of the benchmarking Survey is aimed at selected cities with known tourism activities and potentials. A concise set of guidelines accompanies the Tool administration. The Guidelines and the Tool are made available electronically on the project web site for the larger public.

### **Outcomes**

Each locality completing the benchmarking tool will receive a customized report comparing its sustainable tourism partnership strategies, methods, capabilities, and performance against the whole database and against one or more specially customized city subsets with similar characteristics.

Examples of possible subsets could be coastal cities of comparable population size, historic urban centres, or winter tourism locations. To enable these subsets, the benchmarking tool will also collect essential city characteristics, using systematized procedures and approaches. The customized benchmark report will be mailed back to the respondents supported by information guide for results interpretation and an overview of the benchmarking results of the partnership case.

The tool is expected to provide urban local authorities an opportunity to share experience with other multi-stakeholder urban partnerships and networks as well as campaigns in working towards sustainable urban tourism. It will also provide them and other interested actors with the methodology (basic steps to success) divided into specific steps towards starting and implementing a successful multi-sector partnership. As in previous phases, appropriate measures of confidentiality will be employed to protect the privacy of specific stakeholders providing data and evaluations for the project. A report providing details, analysis, and results from the benchmarking will be prepared as an end deliverable.

### **Deliverables**

- Benchmarking tool and method
- Analysis and report of benchmarking results

### **Milestones and expected results**

- Benchmarking method and tool
- Pilot testing
- Revise and finalize benchmark tool
- Administration of benchmarking (50 European cities)
- Complete customized reporting procedure and guide to interpretation
- Summary version of unified framework paper with resource listing
- Analysis and report of benchmark results
- Mail back to benchmarking respondents
- Web site posting of benchmark results

#### 4.1.2. Selection of participating cities

The four national teams of the SUT-Governance Project conducted extensive research to identify city cases most suitable for the implementation of the Benchmarking tool and willing to collaborate in the Survey. Two main venues were used in the search:

- a. Identification of Internet sources such as Annual Reports of the European Union (Regional Policy and Cohesion), 1996, 1997; "Urban Pilot Projects" under the Article 10 of the European Regional Development Fund and other urban and tourism data bases and information
- b. Personal contacts and network links of each national groups

Some of the Internet sites used for the selection of the participating cities include:

- <http://www.bestpractices.org> (*Best Practice Database*)
- <http://www3.iclei.org> (*European Good Practice- Local Sustainability*)
- <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/urban/casestudies/> (*Database on Good Practice in Urban Management and Sustainability*)
- <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/success/> (*United Nations Sustainable Development – Success*)
- <http://www.ccre.org/index.html>
- <http://www.eurocities.org/masterIndex.html>
- <http://www.staedtebund.at/> (*specially for Austrian Cities*)
- [www.minenv.gr](http://www.minenv.gr) (*specially for Greek cases*)

The Cities were selected based on the following criteria:

1. Proportional geographical coverage
2. Established contacts and secured participation
3. Active in sustainable tourism
4. Existing sustainable development programs and recognition in the field
5. Active SUT Partnership experience (multi-stakeholder tourism partnerships that explicitly or implicitly promote the principles of sustainable development)
6. Participation in networks (sustainable cities, sustainable tourism networks, etc.) relevant to urban and tourism sustainability and local governance
7. English language communication skills
8. Openness to networking and willingness to collaborate

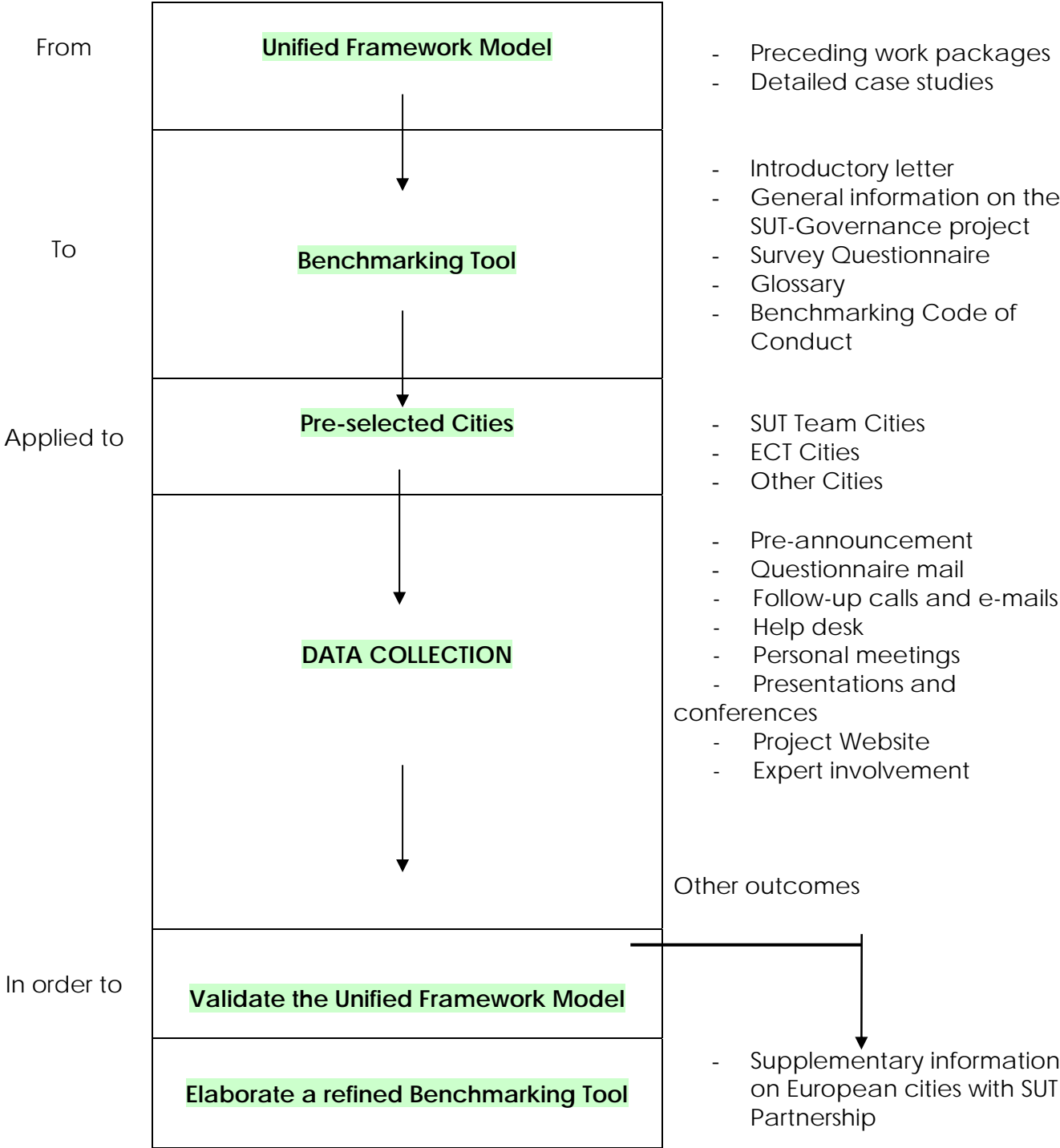
These were criteria identified and employed in the previous phases of the project and specifically in the case study work. However, additional efforts were employed in this stage to identify some specific details and information on, for example, whether the specific partnerships were public-private or public-public or the size of the population of some small cities, etc. Personal contacts and arrangements were established to fill in the existing gaps and facilitate Survey implementation.

To secure the appropriate response rate and ensure Benchmarking success, a categorization of the cities was made considering the selection criteria, and the diversity of the cities in regard to size, specialization in tourism, geographical location,

type of government practice, etc. Cities were approached accordingly, targeting with priority those most likely to participate. Key to the implementation was considered the commitment of the contact person to coordinate the survey completion and delivery.

**4.2. Survey implementation**

**4.2.1. Methodological approach**



**Design and administration of Customized  
Benchmark Report**

- Feedback for improving the Survey
- Promotion and dissemination of the Project and the research objectives

#### 4.2.2. Benchmarking methodology

##### Introduction

The Benchmarking Survey developed by ITAS and OGM draws on European 'Best Practice' Partnerships for Sustainable Urban Tourism (SUT Partnerships) and provides a set of key factors of success, lead indicators and benchmark targets based on the Integrated Framework Model of Partnership Success promoted by the SUT-Governance project.

The Survey was developed using quality management models (IQM) such as EFQM, Malcolm Baldrige and Deming or Common Assessment Framework (CAF), which have proven successful benchmarking tools in various industries. These also employ the potential to comparatively measure the success of urban tourism destinations and other stakeholder groups aiming to achieve continuous improvement in their practices and help identify new forms of governance in SUT through public-private partnerships.

## Benchmark team

Name, Organisation, Function	1 <sup>st</sup> Draft	2 <sup>nd</sup> - 4 <sup>th</sup> Draft	5 <sup>th</sup> draft	Final Draft
Krassimira Paskaleva – Shapira, Forschungszentrum Karlsruhe, Coordinator	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reinhard Coenen, Forschungszentrum Karlsruhe				✓
François Burhin, OGM, Managing Director	✓	✓	✓	✓
Malika Hamza, OGM, Consultant	✓	✓	✓	✓
Silvia Santamaria, OGM, Consultant	✓	✓		
Narjiss Chikhi, OGM, Consultant	✓	✓	✓	✓
Peter Lane, National Tourism Best Value Management Group (Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council), Chairman			✓	✓
André Vrydagh, Brussels International Tourism and Congress, Manager				✓

### 4.2.3. Benchmarking process

#### Survey development

##### *Process (1<sup>st</sup> Draft)*

The benchmark team undertook a set of steps to develop the Survey Questionnaire.

The team first met to reach a consensus on the content and approach following the individual assessments of the International Partnership Cross-case Synthesis. The process of agreement involved the following steps:

- Presentation of the key indicators of success identified by each team member
- Identification of the significant points of consensus and differences
- Discussion of background of significant cases of differences
- Overcoming differences and reaching consensus on the key elements

During this process, the team aimed at:

- Reflecting the nature of the research and the Partnership Framework Model
- Identify the appropriate benchmarks for the identified indicators of partnership success
- Elaborate user-friendly Questionnaire serving variety of tourism stakeholder groups in different urban environments

Several internal meetings and drafts were undertaken to improve the Questionnaire and achieve consistency and logics with the Unified Framework Model. Special attention was given to the sequence of the questions leading to grouping the factual questions and placing them at the beginning of the questionnaire as they were considered the foundation of the overall Questionnaire.

## *2<sup>nd</sup>-Final Draft*

Four consequent reiterations were made all subject to the same process of agreement, procedure and objectives of the Survey development. The effort was driven, facilitated, and coordinated by the Project Coordinator Krassimira Paskaleva-Shapira of ITAS. Frnacois Burhin of OGM was key to the OGM contribution in completing and administering the Benchmark Survey.

### *Survey Questionnaire*

The Questionnaire consists of two main parts, the first, being more factual, aims at collecting general data and statistics signifying of whether the participating city has experience and objectives in developing partnerships for sustainable urban tourism. The second part, requiring a more comprehensive interpretation (opinion, attitude), is the core part of the Survey reflecting the main aspects of the SUT Partnership Framework model questionnaire, the completion of which requires prior or current involvement in urban tourism partnerships leading to local sustainability. Non-involvement of the respondent leads to the end of the questionnaire. In principal, the second part of the Questionnaire allows the participating institution to self-assess its experience in partnership(s), including the different activities revolving around management, implementation, evaluation and collaboration with regard to sustainability.

Concerning the design of the Survey Questionnaire, the Benchmark team agreed to employ two types of questions, each one requiring a particular type of answer.

Type of Questions	Type of Answer
YES/NO Questions	Provide quantitative information
Scoring Questions (e.g. 1-not successful, 5-successful), often including a set of options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Provide rating</li><li>- Elicit reliable and optional responses</li><li>- Provide sought information</li></ul>
Open questions (only one at end)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Allows personal elaboration and choice</li></ul>

The first two main types of questions facilitate the data collection and analysis with respect to accuracy and efficiency and support to the respondents in their replies matching their opinion, attitude and/or experience with others while at the same time saving time and encouraging participation.

Overall, the Questionnaire helps the individual respondent to understand their own process and performance in forming tourism partnerships towards urban sustainability and specifically in:

- **Analysing** the factors of success uniformly;
- **Compare** performance with best practice cases;
- **Implement** the necessary changes to overcome performance gaps.

Following the completion of the Questionnaire, the Survey was mailed to all to the earlier identified by the SUT-Governance project national teams cities. A second group of cities was secured by André Vrydagh of European Cities Tourism Organisation (ECT), which potentially increased the number of the expected responses.

## **Survey implementation**

### ***Mail of Questionnaires***

The Questionnaire was sent to 60 cities provided by the SUT-Governance project and 60 additional cities suggested by ECT. Four support documents accompanied the Questionnaire Cover letter inviting the cities to respond, an Introduction Information explaining the purpose of the project, Glossary with definitions for the main concepts and terms, and European Conduct of Benchmarking for guidance on main principles and conduct of respondents and surveyors.

### ***Data collection***

Of 120 Questionnaires mailed, 33 responses were received. This was achieved based on the extensive effort on behalf of OGM involving reminder emails, telephone calls and personal persuasion of respondents. The collection of the responses was secured in the period of nearly 4 months, which indicates the difficulty of implementing surveys of that type where public officials are asked to invest time and effort to improve their practices. The issue of incentives here thus rises strongly.

### ***Date Analysis***

To accommodate the data analysis, the Questionnaire was set out as an Excel document. The information of the returned completed forms was then transferred to the Excel sheets.

The Benchmark team chose 3 statistical parameters to analyse the data and provide feedback information to the respondents:

- **Average** (returns the average (arithmetic mean) of its arguments)
- **Median** (indices of central tendency that indicates the point on the scale of measures where the population is centred)
- **Standard deviation** (statistical parameter that shows how tightly the various examples are clustered around the mean in a set of data)

The statistical analysis of the data interpretation highlighted the most significant and relevant trends in European governance for sustainable urban tourism and identified the key features and lessons learnt from the SUT Partnership Benchmarking Survey.

### **4.2.3. Benchmarking tool enhancement**

Based on the received responses, the Benchmarking Tool was further revised and further enhanced in regard to structure, content, and length. The aim was to make it more user friendly, easy to understand and complete and to attract more attention and use of tourism stakeholder across Europe. Ultimately, the improvement was in support of the e-version of the Survey to be further developed and provided online on the SUT-Governance project web site. These were the main principles considered in the revised and refined Survey:

1. All information and results must be kept anonymous and confidential
2. Providing samples of Customized feedback reports to the respondents will help understand the expected outcomes of the survey
3. Concepts such as sustainability, governance, partnership and benchmarking require precise definition and may be illustrated by relevant examples
4. The survey key respondent should be precisely identified and his coordination in the completion and mail back well secured
5. The Tool should clarify that the first part of the Questionnaire should be addressed to the Destination/Tourism Manager and the second, to city officials or others involved directly in the SUT partnership.
6. Strong endorsement and support of a well known professional organisation in tourism (like ECT) will help Survey participation
7. Language difficulties will be overcome if Survey is translated into the original country language

## **5. Benchmarking Results**

### **5.1. Main trends**

#### **Introduction**

The overall goal of the SUT-Governance Project is to develop and to validate a general framework for multi-stakeholder partnerships in sustainable urban tourism. A key objective is to build and implement a benchmarking tool for the assessment of the partnership success.

This benchmarking tool draws on results of the project's preceding steps (especially WP3 and WP4 focusing on Best Practice partnerships in Europe) and has specifically been based on the 'Unified Framework Model of SUT Partnership Success'. The tool reflects the objectives and the requirements of Workpackage 5 'Benchmarking' with respect to the necessary procedures, steps, structure, documentation, and final

deliverables. This activity was conducted by OGM (B) on the scientific supervision, guidance and coordination of Dr K. Paskaleva-Shapira, the Project Director.

This chapter provides analysis of the results collected through the application of the Benchmarking Tool to a sample of 120 cities in Europe. A Customized Feed back Report has been designed to provide an individual assessment to each responding city. The Report aims to help each city in developing sustainable urban tourism partnerships by comparing their practices and their performances against the rest of the participating cities using benchmarks based on Best Practice experience.

Overall, the Benchmarking exercise demonstrated the importance of partnerships for sustainability in urban tourism development, the need for information exchange and the potential of learning from other urban destinations to improve practices that will enhance tourism economic actions, the social fabric and the environment in the European cities.

For more details see presentations on SUT Partnerships Benchmarking given at the SUT-Governance project final conference in Heidelberg, Germany, June 23rd - 24<sup>th</sup>, 2003 (<http://sut.itas.fzk.de>).

### **Milestones of Benchmarking Development and Implementation**

Benchmarking development: 02.05.2003 to 06.05.2003

Sample: 120 Questionnaires, 35 countries

Respondents: 34 responses / 20 countries

Technique:

- Selection process based on defined criteria,
- Survey pre-announcement
- Electronically mailed questionnaires and guidelines,
- Four months supporting help desk,
- Additional phone calls and e-mails,
- Face-to-face discussions during ad hoc meetings

## **5.2. Guidance for results interpretation**

First, it should be mentioned that the data and the analysis presented in the current report should be considered with care, due to the potential "margin of error" deriving of the number and the 'quality' of the responses (in view of the comprehensiveness of their completion) as well as the complexity of the questionnaire in the Benchmarking tool.

Second, despite the large number of urban destinations contacted and invited to participate in the benchmarking Survey, along with the care to ensure a high response rate, only 34 of them responded (25% rate), which could still be considered successful, regarding the uniqueness of the Survey and the targeted issues yet generally unknown to city officials in their comprehensiveness and uniformity. Overall, among the respondents, these were mainly cities with strong aspirations for tourism development and sustainability or cities experiences in partnerships activities in tourism. In result, some of the Survey results can be considered somewhat 'behaviourally' or 'psychologically' distorted.

Third, a number of major European cities participated in this Benchmarking pilot exercise secured by ECT (European Cities Tourism network). Therefore their influence is substantial in pulling some parameters up, like the average. This fact was considered key to applying other parameters in analysing the results as well as in the interpretation of the results.

In any case, however, the results of the Survey can be useful for both, those who have been already involved in SUT partnerships as well as those willing or planning to establish and participate in such activities in their cities. The detailed statistical analysis of the results offers in-depth insights of the success factors and indicators of forming and maintaining multi-stakeholder tourism partnership as identified in the Unified Framework Model (appendix DD).

The refined Benchmarking Tool offers several perspectives for consideration in the website platform, further dissemination and broad utilization of the Tool in European tourism practices.

### **5.3. Analysis of the results**

On the map below, the contacted 120 cities of 35 European countries are indicated in black while the 34 participating cities from 20 countries are pointed in red. As it can be seen, the Survey covered a large part of proportionally located states across the continent including many from the Assessment countries.



Further on, in Table 1, the socio-economic characteristics of the participating cities are summarized. It should be mentioned that eight cities have a population larger than a million. Which leads to a degree of general distortion of the survey results. Looking at the median compared to the average, the first parameter tends to be generally higher than the second. This attests to the influence of the extreme values on the whole, leading to a misinterpretation corrected by the moderate use of the median. For example, if the average population of the sampled cities is around 600.000, the median is 230.000. In this case, the median represents more accurately the respondents from predominantly the mid-sized cities.

Overall, all surveyed indicators respond analogically due to the participation of the large cities such as Paris, Lyon, Vienna, etc. In further development of this or other similar Benchmarking Surveys, it would be adequate to introduce sub clusters of cities based on the population size. Yet, in the present survey, the 34 responses are not sufficient to justify such clustering.

The cross-analysis of the primary data (table 2) is indicative of both, the diversity of the cities in regard to size and tourism intensity and the impacts of the sector on the urban economies.

Three types of data were cross-examined:

Tourism intensity was measured through the tourism pressure (visitors/population), which shows a wide range of situations - from almost 50 to less than 1. This ratio is to be used with a consideration due to the variations in using the term "visitor". Level of tourism development is also reflected in the intensity of the tourism infrastructure (Overnights/beds). This is one of the indicators which value is similar in the average and median parameters (44 and 41%). Despite this, however, some of the values are strikingly different (e.g. Lyon or Copenhagen).

Economic importance of tourism is considered key for strong local policy in tourism and consequently, for forming partnerships towards sustainable urban tourism. The relation between jobs in tourism and jobs in the city refers to the labour factor and indirectly to the added value of the tourism sector. With an average around 7,5%, the tourism intensity is consistent with the generally widely used and regularly quoted by WTO key numbers. Nevertheless, two responding cities (Chester, Lyon) gave rather extreme responses, a fact underlining the challenges of generalizing the results of the current, piloting by its nature, Benchmarking Survey.

Tourism investment is described by the budget allocation in urban tourism development in relation to the size of the population in the city. The indicator is also indicative of the potentials and strength of tourism policy in the locality. The wide range of the standard deviation and the gap between the average and the median is likely a consequence of the national differences in interpreting the concept "Tourism budget" coupled by the difficulty to collect the necessary data to define it.

N°	City	Code	Population	Day Visitors	Overnight 2001	Numbers of beds	Budget of tourism 2002	Jobs of tourism 2002	Total of Job in the town
1	Amsterdam	NL	734.540	3.334.600	8.088.000	36.067		29.000	417.711
2	Basel	CH	180.000		647.390	4.520	5.600.000		
3	Berlin (Trepto	DE	233.128		437.462	2.850	13.300		
4	Birmingham	UK	977.091	2.132.000		16.000	1.500.000	30.700	475.000
5	Brussels	BE	964.405			28.765	4.441.260	32.000	338.000
6	Bursa	TR	1.200.000	428.566	644.644	7.000	7.000	5.000	4.000
7	Chester	UK	120.000	4.500.000	1.500.000	4.500	724.700	18.000	60.000
8	Cologne	DE	1.020.100	50.000.000	3.200.000	22.700	3.700.000	39.000	463.000
9	Eksjo	SE	16.800	300.000		4.566	2.000.000	155	8.515
10	Evora	PT	56.359	450.000	200.000	1.350	1.330.000	2.380	22.540
11	Gdansk	PL	455.500	272.328		13.500	389.100	2.139	162.627
12	Gmunden	AT	35.156	1.250.000	296.310	4.668	782.853	2.164	12.180
13	Goteborg	SE	852.110	900.000	670.000	15.883			
14	Graz	AT	230.000		620.000	5.100	1.900.000	4.000	180.000
15	Heidelberg	DE							
16	Jurmala	LV	56.000		298.028	4.000	38.000		
17	Kopenhagen	DK	1.300.000		3.957.000	12.000	8.200.000	17.000	713.000
18	Lyon	FR	1.410.000	3.258.611	3.258.612	107.003	4.500.000	14.000	2.430.000
19	Munchen	DE	1.260.597	56.000.000	7.595.227	38.565		62.000	700.000
20	Nantes	FR	570.000		1.500.000	5.300	1.500.000		
21	Olomuc	CZ	103.000		173.260	1.875	150.000		
22	Paris	FR	2.125.250	39.000.000	33.000.000	147.250	7.500.000	134.100	1.299.500
23	Parnu	EE	44.978	400.000	700.000	3.000	1.000.000	1.700	22.000
24	Redcar	UK	135.600	1.466.000		1.265	415.033	1.271	
25	Reythmo	GR	28.987	245.402		90.115			
26	St.Etienne	FR	380.000	1.000	450.000	2.000	1.075.125		
27	Tartu	EE	101.169		101.585	949	100.000	1.000	43.000
28	Thermi	GR	16.546						
29	Toledo	ES	71.110		500.000	2.358	138.300		18.000
30	Troyan	BG	38.895	4.827	15.500	1.651	1.200	430	20.678
31	Turin	IT	1.000.000	1.500.000		13.000	3.000.000	10.000	
32	Turku	FI	180.000		700.000	4.000	3.000.000		
33	Vienna	AT	1.562.482		7.687.546	41.834	1.670.000	31.293	767.491
34	Voru	EE	14.801	14.286		237			5.800
	<b>Average</b>		609.290	8.272.881	3.176.690	20.121	2.025.032	20.825	247.365
	<b>Median</b>		230.000	1.075.000	658.695	4.884	1.330.000	10.000	18.000
	<b>STDEV</b>		805.638	17.535.325	6.832.068	33.811	2.288.206	30.820	498.648

N°	City	Code	Ratio Visitors/ population	Ratio Overnight 2001/Total bedsx365	€ Budget/ population	Jobs total/ population	Jobs tourism/ Numbers of beds	Jobs tourism/ jobs total
1	Amsterdam	NL	4,54	61%		56,87%	0,80	6,94%
2	Basel	CH		39%	31,11			
3	Berlin (Trepto	DE		42%	0,06			
4	Birmingham	UK	2,18		1,54	48,61%	1,92	6,46%
5	Brussels	BE			4,61	35,05%	1,11	9,47%
6	Bursa	TR		25%			0,71	
7	Chester	UK	37,50	91%	6,04	50,00%	4,00	30,00%
8	Cologne	DE	49,01	39%	3,63	45,39%	1,72	8,42%
9	Eksjo	SE	17,86		119,05	50,68%	0,03	1,82%
10	Evora	PT	7,98	41%	23,60	39,99%	1,76	10,56%
11	Gdansk	PL	0,60		0,85	35,70%	0,16	1,32%
12	Gmunden	AT	35,56	17%	22,27	34,65%	0,46	17,77%
13	Goteborg	SE	1,06	12%				
14	Graz	AT		33%	8,26	78,26%	0,78	2,22%
15	Heidelberg	DE						
16	Jurmala	LV		20%	0,68			
17	Kopenhagen	DK		90%	6,31	54,85%	1,42	2,38%
18	Lyon	FR	2,31	8%	3,19	172,34%	0,13	0,58%
19	Munchen	DE	44,42	54%		55,53%	1,61	8,86%
20	Nantes	FR		78%	2,63			
21	Olomuc	CZ		25%	1,46			
22	Paris	FR	18,35	61%	3,53	61,15%	0,91	10,32%
23	Parnu	EE	8,89	64%	22,23	48,91%	0,57	7,73%
24	Redcar	UK	10,81		3,06		1,00	
25	Reythmo	GR	8,47					
26	St.Etienne	FR		62%	2,83			
27	Tartu	EE		29%	0,99	42,50%	1,05	2,33%
28	Thermi	GR						
29	Toledo	ES		58%	1,94	25,31%		
30	Troyan	BG	0,12	3%	0,03	53,16%	0,26	2,08%
31	Turin	IT	1,50		3,00		0,77	
32	Turku	FI		48%	16,67			
33	Vienna	AT		50%	1,07	49,12%	0,75	4,08%
34	Voru	EE	0,97			39,19%		
	<b>Average</b>		14,01	44%	11,18	53,86%	1,04	7,41%
	<b>Median</b>		8,23	41%	3,13	49,02%	0,80	6,70%
	<b>STDEV</b>		16,34	24%	23,63	30,15%	0,87	7,18%

The core results of the Benchmarking Survey are analysed in context of the SUT-Governance Project's 'Unified Framework Model of SUT Partnerships', affirming three main dimensions affecting their success:

- **Urban framework conditions**
- **Partnership process and activity**
- **Implications for community sustainability**

### *Part I: Urban framework conditions*

The analysis of the key indicators describing the Framework Conditions identified by the project is presented in the table below. As it can be seen, majority of the surveyed cities are concerned with cultural, business and congress tourism while leisure, recreation, events, sight seeing and spa tourism are far less represented. Partnerships in urban tourism are only recently emerging.

<b>INDICATORS</b>	Average	Median	Stdev
Day visitors / inhabitants	14.01	8.23	16.34
Local tourism budget/ inhabitants (€)	11.18	3.13	23.63
Number of jobs in tourism/number of jobs in the town (%)	7.41%	6.70%	7.18%
Culture and tradition of partnership in the urban tourism sector (1 = very new, 3 = recent; 5= long tradition)	3	3	1.16
The partnership is based on (1 = not at all; 5 = fully)			
- public policy for sustainability (e.g. local agenda 21)	2.52	3	1.20
- tourism sector concerns about sustainability	3.56	4	1.16
- public awareness and pressure for sustainable development	2.91	3	1.04
- other	1.57	1	1.72
Framework factors considered as key to the partnership success (1 = not important at all; 5 = very important)			
- Commitment to partnership activity	4.19	5	0.98
- leadership	4	4	0.94
- legal framework	3.04	3	1.27
- technical support	3.2	3	1.12
- finance/funding	4.12	4	1.03
- political support	4.23	4	0.65
- past successful experience	3.88	4	1.21
- other	4.5	5	
Does a sustainable urban development exist (% of Yes)	61%	1	50%
Does it include tourism issues (% of the Yes answers)	60%	1	50%
Does a local agenda 21 exist (% of Yes)	56%	1	51%
Does it include sustainable tourism (% of the Yes answers)	44%	0	51%

As it shows above, the results of the Survey are much optimistic regarding urban activities in sustainable development - almost 2/3 of the responding cities indicate sustainable urban development plan exist and as many state sustainable tourism issues are being considered in their local policies. Further on, the same number of cities affirm they have employed Local Agenda 21 Programs but less - about 44% of them say sustainable tourism is also a community objectives. In the same context, 80% of the cities declare their urban tourism policy/strategy is formal but only 65% of them consider sustainable tourism issues important. The above is not surprising, considering that majority of the participating cites are those with established sustainability policy and actions.

Less optimistic is the situation of stakeholder participation and collaboration in urban tourism. Overall, only 50% of the cities participate in partnership activities with other local stakeholders. Majority of these are in tourism in general (61%) and only few (14%) are pursuing sustainable objectives. In some cases, a local sustainable development plan and a formal tourism strategy exist but these are not necessarily linked and mutually coordinated.

Overall, it appears that among the framework indicators, key to partnership success are partner commitment to collaborative action, competent and strong leadership, local political support and availability of financial and other resources. In this, driving are the local authorities and lead tourism entrepreneurs.

Interestingly, majority of the respondents state, partnerships in tourism, though only a recent phenomenon, are largely considered in urban decision making, but far less in Local Agenda 21 for Tourism. This raises the issue of further promoting the latter since it provides the necessary framework to develop tourism in context of integrated community sustainability, which gives long-term development perspectives to the sector.

### ***Part II: Partnership process and activity***

The Benchmarking Survey affirms one of the key notions advanced by the SUT-Governance project, i.e. the important role of stakeholder participation in urban tourism in the pursuit of local sustainability. The analysis of the results confirm previously established finding that local authorities are key to promoting partnerships, followed by the hotel industry and some tourism professionals. Regrettably, the local community and the residents are almost uninvolved in the process. In the few case where the community as social organism is working in such partnerships, its role is limited to supporting industry or government rather than the interest of civil society in general. Urban communities are yet to engage in action towards sustainable tourism in Europe.

Next, unsurprisingly, considering the leadership role of the public sector in forming SUT partnerships, the Survey indicates that 35% of the funding of the partnership activities is provided by the local governments despite the fact that a large number of the initiatives are finance by both, the private and the public sectors. The above, however, explains the fact that currently the public sector maintains a key and lead role in the decision-making process of the tourism partnerships. Considering its steadily decreasing financial resources, however, promoting more initiatives by the industry could lead to more partnership collaborations with more resources and presumably greater positive impacts on the urban communities.

Overall, key to success of the partnership process and the activity appear the strong partner motivation to collaborative action, effective leadership and, again, sufficient political commitment of the local authorities.

	Average	Median	Stdev
Are the local stakeholders are involved in (YES = 1; NO = 0)			
- decision-making process	90%	1	31%
- promotions of partnerships	90%	1	31%
- communication with the public	78%	1	42%
- Local agenda 21 (for tourism)	41%	0	50%
Types of organizations / actors groups form part of the partnership (% of occurrences)			
- local businesses	50%	1	51%
- hotel sector	83%	1	38%
- travel agents	33%	0	48%
- community groups	17%	0	38%
- Regional agencies	33%	0	48%
- National agencies	21%	0	41%
- Local authorities	88%	1	34%
- tourism professionals	67%	1	48%
- local residents	17%	0	38%
- other public agencies	21%	0	41%
- research institutions/consultants	33%	0	48%
How is the partnership funded ? (% of occurrences)			
- entirely funded by public sector	35%	0	49%
- entirely funded by private sector	0	0	0
- a mix of public and private sector	65%	1	49%
Partnership process and activity factors considered key to the partnerships success (1 = low; 5 = very high)			
- clearly identified community policy and objectives	3,96	4	1,02
- creativity and personal motivation	4,24	4	0,88
- partner confidence	3,96	4	0,81
- previous successful experience	3,76	4	1,13
- political commitment	4,17	4	0,64
- effective leadership	4,21	4	0,88
- mutual advantages and benefits	4,5	5	0,66
Does a contract or written agreement exist between partners (% of occurrences)	58%	1	50%
Is the effectiveness of the partnership evaluated (% of occurrences)	76%	1	44%
Main areas of activity adressed by the partnership (% of occurrences)			
- tourism development	88%	1	34%
- tourism marketing	79%	1	41%
- job creation	29%	0	46%
- urban sustainability	42%	0	50%
- community development	17%	0	38%
- regional integration	21%	0	41%

In regard to the partnership arrangements, formalized agreements between the partners are evident in 58% of the cases. Three quarters of the cities report 'the effectiveness of the partnership' is regularly evaluated but strangely enough, 60% of all indicate they do not monitor the effectiveness of the partnership process. This fact could be due to some ambiguities in understanding these two concepts. More likely, however, this inconsistency is a result of the lack of appropriate monitoring mechanisms and indicator system for evaluation and follow up. Lastly, but highly possible is that periodical assessment is preferred to continues monitoring since less resources and efforts are necessary. Yet, it should be mentioned, that among the assessed indicators of partnership effectiveness, most common are the 'partner satisfaction', and 'gal achieving. Considering issues of 'mutual trust' and 'sufficiency of management capacity' are not of much interest to the respondents. Finally, it is important to underline, that a very small number of cities employ an established indicator system for the evaluation of the partnership effectiveness.

### Part III: Implications for sustainability

With all the cautions regarding interpretation of the Survey results (mentioned earlier in the report<sup>4</sup>) in mind, yet, it is apparent that the surveyed partnerships impact primarily the local urban economies. Tests of statistical inference make little sense in this case, and the way to explain the difference is to consider the gap between the values as an indication of the ranking in terms of priority. It should not be surprising, however, that, in regard to overall urban sustainability, economic development is a priority over scoring the social fabric and the environment. Yet, the results also indicate that partnerships are much important to improving the urban eco-system, townscape development, protection of historic heritage or preservation of green spaces, areas earlier identified in the project by the study of the 'Best Practice' SUT Partnerships in Europe.

	Average	Median	Stdev
Greatest impact of the partnership in relation to integrated urban sustainable development (1 = very low; 5 = very high)			
- on the environment	3,24	3	1,2
- on the economy	4,15	4	0,73
- on the social fabric	2,92	3	0,83
- on the stakeholder integration	1,57	3	1,07
Importance of the partnership contribution to (1 = no contribution; 5 = strong contribution)			
- urban eco-system	2,96	3	1,27
- townscape development	3,58	4	0,97
- protection of historic/cultural heritage	3,65	4	1,32
- preservation/improvement of green spaces	3,36	4	1,32
Benchmarking of the effectiveness of partnership process (% of Yes occurrence)	21%	0	21%

Overall, we should be noted though, that benchmarking in tourism, let alone in SUT partnerships is largely a new phenomenon and practice is yet limited in urban and other European destinations and localities. The unfamiliarity of the respondents in the present Survey and, yet, their willingness to participate, deserves a special 'pioneers' credit. With more experience, benchmarking will likely be improved and the results will become more accurate.

#### 5.4. Improving further SUT Partnerships

To the benchmark team satisfaction, 70% of the urban tourism destinations responded that they are committed to further develop partnership activities in tourism considering local sustainability issues. Some of the actions indicated as important for future improvements are:

- Tourism growth
- Political support
- Win-win conditions
- Funding
- Mutual understanding and cooperation
- Clear division of partner roles and responsibilities

<sup>4</sup> Sample size, standard deviation, possible distortions

- Exchange of experience and development of team spirit based on previous collaborations
- Internal links and communication between the public institutions and openness to the public
- Education in the field of tourism and sustainable development, effective tourism management and public relations
- Collaboration in organization of big events
- Elevated presence of tourism issues in the regional and local media
- Greater participation and leadership of the private sector
- Environmental and cultural heritage protection

Overall, it can be concluded that despite its pioneering nature, the present Benchmarking Survey provides a preliminary, yet, inclusive picture of the development and role of partnerships for sustainable urban tourism in Europe. Here, it is important to note, that even if tourism planning is already an established practice in many tourism destinations, sustainability of the sector in contact of overall and long-term community development remains an innovative practice considered in only few of our tourist cities. In this regard, multi-stakeholder partnerships appear key to linking urban tourism with long-term sustainability of the local communities in context of governance and stakeholder participation. As advanced by a large number of respondents, partnerships should be much more considered in the future of European urban tourism and the role of Best Practice examples and well-formulated implementation guidance is critical for the desired success.

## 6. Conclusions

### 6.1. Conditions for success of benchmarking

Benchmarking as an indispensable tool for comparison between different processes and activities, including SUT partnerships, depends on a wide range of conditions securing its success. As the benchmark team of the SUT Partnership Benchmarking Survey learnt, these are some of the conditions key to the success of any such or similar initiative:

- **Management support:** The commitment and active support from the management is necessary to ensure that human and financial support is provided to carry out the benchmarking exercise, and that future recommendations are implemented
- **Clear objectives:** The objectives of the Benchmarking exercise have to be clearly defined from the beginning on, and the expected outputs should be achievable and practical
- **Training:** Those carrying out the Benchmarking exercise should be trained to ensure that the work is properly carried out

- **Planning and recording:** It is important to carefully plan the work that has to be done, to be able to manage the timescale, the different steps and outcomes of the benchmarking exercise must be recorded in sufficient detail to allow to support the recommendations
- **Credible recommendations:** The recommendations of the Benchmarking Exercise must be facts-based in order to ensure their credibility
- **Good communication flow:** Good communication between those carrying out the benchmarking is essential for the success of the exercise, this will ensure comprehensive support and commitment to the process
- **Integrated management process:** The benchmarking tool should be used as part of an integrated management tool focused on continuous improvement
- **Simplicity of the Benchmarks:** The data requested in the Benchmarking exercise has to be clear and easy to understand
- **Practical benefit:** The participants in the benchmarking exercise have to see the clear benefit of participation; it has to be relevant for them
- **Ease of comparability:** The data has to be easy to compare to facilitate analysis

Considering the above would help others willing to evaluate and improve practice in tourism through learning from others and innovation.

## 6.2. Towards European Benchmarking System in Tourism

Globalisation, increasing market liberalisation and competition, and the need for better quality services, whether in the public or in the private sector in tourism, sustainable development, or other spheres of life, have resulted in a growing demand for benchmarking in the sense of undertaking international comparisons and learning from good practices. The European Union's 'White Paper on European Governance' (2001) refers to 'benchmarking' as one of the main tools for improving governance in Europe and contributor to the relevant national policies in the member states. Benchmarking can therefore be considered as one of the key mechanism of cooperation, learning and innovation in Europe's future.

As asserted in chapter 3.2. of this Report, Benchmarking is fundamental for achieving sustainable tourism in the host communities. In recent years, many tourism destinations, institutions and networks in Europe have been aiming the development of benchmarking indicator systems for different tourism sectors and activities. A number of performance indicators and benchmarking models have been thus far established. Fragmentation among these is, however, large and links are limited. Considering the growing importance of tourism in European development, the diversity of the sector activities and their interactions with other sectors and functions of the local economies and the communities, and finally, but not least, the

importance given to sustainable development in the future of Europe, the need of a European wide Tourism Benchmarking System becomes more apparent.

The call becomes stronger considering the complexity, inconsistency and the diversity of the benchmark indicators used in tourism to-date. The latter has made data collection, comparisons, and evaluations difficult and results are often inaccurate. All this makes Tourism Benchmarking difficult, if not impossible.

Establishing a Unified Indicator System in Tourism where core data is consistent in all countries and sectors, allowing for adjustments to the specific conditions and actions, would make Benchmarking between different countries and sectoral branches in Europe doable and effective.

In this regard, the SUT-Governance Project initiative of Benchmarking Partnerships for Sustainable urban Tourism can be considered an important step towards achieving a European-wide Benchmarking Model for Sustainable Tourism. The latter will assist promoting further European Governance for Sustainable Urban Tourism, the main focus of the currently discussed project.