

SHARE Project Monitoring and Evaluation Report

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About the author



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Andres has 18 years of experience in securing external research funding (mostly from the European Union) with a track record of over €2.4 million of direct funding secured for projects he was then principal investigator for with combined budgets to date in excess of €12 million. Over the last four years, he has led the research element of two major projects co-funded by the European Union: SHARE and GO TRADE.

Andres has published over 35 scholarly articles, book chapters and books, with his latest publication being the *Routledge Handbook of Tourism Cities*, published in September 2020. In addition to urban tourism, his main areas of interest include smart cities, smart tourism destinations, the management and competitiveness of places (including town centres, high streets and tourism destinations), place marketing & branding, and the management of sustainability in events and tourist destinations. Andres serves on the editorial board of a number of international academic journals, including the *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, the *Journal of Tourism Futures*, *Sustainability*, *Event Management*, the *Journal of Place Management and Development* and the *Journal of Urban Regeneration and Renewal*.

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this monitoring and evaluation report is to provide an evidence-based summary of the impact of the SHARE project on local and/or regional policies as a result of the implementation of Local Action Plans (LAPs) by the project's partner organisations during the period lasting from January 2019 to December 2020. In order to do so, the UK's Research Excellence Framework (REF) has been used as a template. This framework is used every seven years by the UK government to rank the country's universities in terms of the impact of their research, which often involves projects funded by the European Union and other funding bodies.

Given the long-term scales that policy development, implementation and evaluation involve, the framework used here for the evaluation of the impact of the SHARE project on local/regional policy involves a two-pronged approach, which includes process-related impacts as well as outcome-related ones. Process-related impacts tend to be more immediate and often, though not always, shorter-term impacts, often of a smaller magnitude. These project impacts often involve changes implemented (e.g. pilot interventions) along the journey towards actual policy changes, which are often beyond the time frame of most EU projects.

Similarly, the evidence-based approach adopted to evaluate impact correspond to the same pragmatic paradigm adopted by the REF to evaluate the impact of research carried out by UK universities. In line with this, evidence in the form of endorsements by key stakeholders of actions outlined in each project partner's Local Action Plan for policy change have been considered. In addition to endorsements, other forms of evidence of impact – process or outcome-related – have also been considered, provided they mentioned the SHARE project explicitly. These included evidence from local/regional press and media, or agreed minutes of

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meetings by policy makers and/or key local stakeholder groups, particularly if those minutes
mention SHARE and if they could be accessed in the public domain.

In each case, it was agreed that the evidence of impact should be linked to impact, wherever possible, by comparing the old policy document to the newer policy document, where available, and pin-pointing the actual changes proposed or made by relating them to the Local Action Plans (LAPs) developed by each project partner.

2. Methodology

2.1 Establishing the content and boundaries of what is to be monitored and evaluated

Before any monitoring or evaluation could take place with regards to the impact of LAPs on existing policies, SHARE project partners had to first re-visit the final agreed versions of their LAPs (approved by INTERREG Europe's Joint Secretariat) and answer in detail the following questions for each of their LAP's objectives:

1. What was the change indented by each LAP objective to relevant policies? In each case, the change had to be clearly defined in the knowledge that the more specific the changes intended, the easier it would be to identify what their exact impact on existing policies should be.
2. How would the intended impact on policy be described for each objective of the LAP? Having outlined earlier the exact nature of the changes required, this stage was focused on their impacts on existing policies. Wherever possible, the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) framework was used here.
3. How will each LAP objective impact existing policies? Some impacts may be readily measurable using numbers or statistics (e.g. increase in visitor numbers over a given period; surveys of residents/tourists/businesses to test behaviour change). In other cases, more qualitative measures such as public statements from local politicians or key stakeholder groups endorsing a specific part of the LAP were deemed to be more appropriate for a number of reasons, such as the length of time that the impact will take to materialise on the ground due to investment decisions that need to be approved through a majority vote by the local/county council, etc. The importance of



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specific LAP objectives was key here. For instance, if a LAP objective was set as “integrating existing decision-making mechanisms for the local economic development of the area”, the lack of specificity of this LAP objective would make it very difficult (if not impossible) to monitor and evaluate in terms of its actual impact on existing policies.

4. What was the situation before the policy impact took place? Although this element was addressed very well by each LAP developed by SHARE project partners, a higher level of specificity was required here in order for the final impact to be evaluated. It would be impossible to establish change to existing policies (i.e. the AFTER stage in evaluation) without a very good understanding of the situation before the intervention took place (i.e. the BEFORE stage in evaluation).
5. How did the situation change after the impact was achieved (or partly achieved) in Phase 2 of the project? In many cases, this may have been an issue directly related to policy. For instance, this could include discussions that had taken place (and a record of these discussions existed in meeting minutes) by local/regional policy makers to change existing policies and those discussions could be linked to the SHARE project as an instigator of those debates.
6. On the basis of the above steps, each SHARE project partner was left to ponder what kind of evidence they would seek to gather to demonstrate impact by the SHARE project for each LAP objective.

In spite of the above, it was agreed early in the development of this evaluation methodology that the impact of the SHARE project on existing policies was likely to be limited within the two-year period of Phase 2 of the project, particularly given the long-term time frames of

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policy making. However, it was deemed essential that SHARE partners should have a clear idea of what will be classed as "success" for each impact. It was also agreed that any policy impact achievements beyond December 2020 would not be evaluated as part of this process as that is the end date of the SHARE project.

2.2 Collection of evidence to evaluate LAP objectives' impact on existing policies

In order to operationalise the process outlined above, a step-by-step template was agreed with SHARE partners that would enable them to scope out the intended impacts of LAP objectives on existing policies, collect the evidence of those impacts methodically and evaluate the final (actual) impact of the project on existing policies using an evidence-based approach. In order to do this, the following four steps were agreed with SHARE project partners:

Step 1 – Specifying the intended policy change to be achieved for a specific LAP objective

Effectively, this step involved SHARE project partners focusing on specific objectives of their Local Action Plans (all of which were approved by Interreg Europe's Joint Secretariat) to build on them and prioritise how each policy relevant to that objective should be changed. Table 1 outlines the process followed by SHARE project partners as part of this scoping exercise.

Table 1. Description of expected change to existing policy (Step 1)

Local Action Plan (LAP)	[State title of LAP and SHARE partner name here]
Policy to be changed	[State existing policy to be changed here and include web link to policy document]
LAP objective	[State here LAP objective drawn from Local Action Plan]

Description of expected change to policy	<i>[Describe here in as much detail as possible the actual change expected in the policy outlined above. This change in the existing policy should be up to December 2020 and not beyond that date. Ensure that the description of the intended change on an existing policy follows the SMART principle, i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable (up to December 2020), Realistic and Time-bound (only up to December 2020)]</i>
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Step 2 – Explanation of the situation BEFORE the intervention (intended policy change)

In order to establish the nature and magnitude of the change to existing policies (i.e. the AFTER stage in the impact evaluation process), it was agreed among SHARE project partners that a good understanding of the situation before the intervention took place (i.e. the BEFORE stage in evaluation) was crucial. Importantly, it was established that any evidence feeding into this assessment of the BEFORE stage should include information gathered in Phase 1 of the project, i.e. before 1st January 2019. This evidence could include minutes of meetings with stakeholders, minutes of focus groups, written case studies for each location, SHARE project survey results, SHARE project benchmarking exercise results, outcomes from the peer review process, feedback from stakeholder groups on drafts of the Local Action Plan, etc.

Table 2. Description of the situation BEFORE the intervention (Step 2).

Local Action Plan (LAP)	<i>[This should be the same entry as in Table 1]</i>
Policy to be changed	<i>[This should be the same entry as in Table 1]</i>
LAP objective	<i>[This should be the same entry as in Table 1]</i>
Description of the situation BEFORE the intervention of the SHARE project	<i>[Using the relevant section of the LAP document but focusing specifically on the LAP objective above and the policy to be targeted, explain the situation BEFORE the intended policy impact (Table 1) should take place]</i>

Step 3 – Assessing the impact of a LAP objective on an existing policy

This step involves the measurement of impact, which may be quantitative in nature (e.g. number of sentences/paragraphs changed in an existing policy or added to it directly as a result of the SHARE project before December 2020) or qualitative (e.g. a letter of support from a local politician or key stakeholder group endorsing this specific objective of the LAP; a statement by a local policy maker recorded in the minutes of a meeting and supporting this specific objective of the LAP).

Table 3. Description of evidence if impact to be collected (Step 3)

Local Action Plan (LAP)	<i>[This should be the same entry as in Table 1]</i>
Policy to be changed	<i>[This should be the same entry as in Table 1]</i>
LAP objective	<i>[This should be the same entry as in Table 1]</i>
Description of the type of evidence to be collected to prove impact on the above policy	<i>[Describe here in as much detail as possible the different types and sources of evidence to be collected to prove impact on the above policy. Evidence of change beyond December 2020 will not count for the purposes of the evaluation of the SHARE project's impact]</i>

Step 4 – Explanation of the situation AFTER the intervention (intended policy change)

The focus at this stage turns towards how the situation changed AFTER the intervention (policy change) was achieved in Phase 2 of the project. The nature of this change may be tangible and direct (e.g. a new accessibility plan for a whole section of the town centre, which can be attributed directly to the SHARE project) or more indirect and intangible (e.g. minutes of discussions with local policy makers about intended changes to existing policies, provided those discussions can be attributed directly to the SHARE project). This reflective stage of the process is crucial as it allows to evaluate, based on the evidence gathered, the degree to which the targets set out in Stage 1 were achieved.

Table 4. Description of the situation AFTER the intervention (Step 4)

Local Action Plan (LAP)	[This should be the same entry as in Table 1]
Policy to be changed	[This should be the same entry as in Table 1]
LAP objective	[This should be the same entry as in Table 1]
Description of the situation AFTER the intervention of the SHARE project	[Using the information from earlier tables but specifically from Table 2, explain the situation AFTER the policy change took place]

This methodology (steps 1-4) is applied below to each SHARE partner to assess the impact of their chosen LAP objectives on local/regional policies.

3. Assessment of SHARE project impact – North East Regional Development Agency (Romania)

3.1 City of Iasi

3.1.1 Step 1 - Description of intended change to existing policy

The policy targeted for change as part of the Local Action Plan (LAP) developed by Romania's North-East Regional Development Agency was the Tourism Strategy for the City of Iasi and of the Metropolitan Area of Iasi¹. More specifically the LAP objective focused on by this intervention was the following:

O.2. Develop a competitive national economy with a distinct identity supported by the key economic domains and emerging / new, innovative activities

M.2.2. Ensure the presence of the local offer in the online environment and at specific fairs and exhibitions

The intended change revolved around the creation of a well-rounded online and physical destination promotion package for the city of Iasi. As part of this, firstly a visual concept for the city's tourism product was required (online or physical) within the "Visit Iași" framework. The intention of this visual concept was to enable the destination to be easily recognised by visitors and investors alike.

In addition to this, an online destination presence plan was needed with a focus on easy maintenance (e.g. easy to update) and a clearly defined customer offer with an emphasis on

¹ <http://www.primaria-iasi.ro/portal-primaria-municipiului-iasi/strategia-de-turism-a-municipiului-iasi-si-zonei-metropolitane-iasi-aprobata-prin-hcl-nr189-2018-/7495/strategie-si-proiecte-europene>

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new consumption trends and innovation. From the outset, the following targets were set for the city's online destination presence plan:

- *Creation of a new online destination - "Visit Iași" website -, in line with existing international standards, with the SHARE project logo (deadline: 31.12.2020).*
- *Revitalisation of the existing official destination app (deadline: 31.12.2020).*
- *Creating a destination promotion video with a shorter version (15 seconds) for use as part of social media and TV promotions and a longer 2-minute version and a Virtual Reality version, both with subtitles in English for use in Youtube, Facebook and Instagram with a specific focus on lone tourists, social media influencers, photographers and other similar segments (deadline: 31.12.2020).*
- Development of a photo kit with 200 high definition (HD) photos of Iasi's best attractions (deadline: 31.12.2020).
- Creation of online social media channels and accounts: Youtube, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, with the SHARE project logo clearly visible (deadline: 31.12.2020).

In addition to these online resources, an improved quality service plan was deemed necessary for the city with the following objectives:

- Appointing a Tourism Office clerk responsible for updating daily the destination website as well as the official app with local events, experiences, initiatives, changes of museum schedules, etc.
- The development of an integrated networking approach for the Tourism Office and incoming tourism operators for a better online presence and an enhanced level of promotion.

- Innovative customer service – creation of a real-time call-centre and customer service response point for website and app users who are not local to Lasi and who require assistance.

A decision was also made for the physical (offline) package to be developed as a modular kit, adaptable for all kinds of events, including travel and inbound tourism fairs, business or academic conferences, political and diplomatic meetings, cultural and sports festivals, business-to-business and business-to-consumer events, press releases. For this purpose, two types of deliverables were agreed, namely:

- Promotional non-deliverable props: modular stand with specific modular furniture, banner, VR device, staff costume.
- Consumables (e.g. A5 brochure and leaflet).

3.1.2 Step 2 - Description of the situation before the intervention

The situation in Lasi before this intervention was characterised by the following:

- Low external visibility and awareness of the city as a tourism destination;
- Low online presence of local offer and services, including trade fairs and exhibitions;
- Insufficient and ineffective promotion and advertising of the destination's potential;
- A low number of tourist arrivals compared to other cities in the country (e.g. Oradea, Timisoara, Cluj, Napoca or Brasov).

According to the Iasi County Institute of Statistics, there were 333,021 tourist arrivals in the city in 2018. In the same year, Bihor County received 549,171 arrivals, with Timisoara registering 379,084 arrivals, 656,508 in Cluj and 1,380,277 in Brasov².

Short duration of tourist stays

In 2018, the average length of stay in Iasi was 1.7 nights/tourist, compared with 2.7 in Oradea, 2.3 in Timisoara, 2 in Brasov or 1.9 in Cluj. Iasi's target for 2023 is 2 nights/tourist³.

Fewer jobs created in the hospitality sector

According to the Iasi County Institute of Statistics, in 2016 only 2.31% of the area's active population was working in hotels and restaurants. In 2018, the proportion was 2.54%⁴.

Furthermore, other issues were also affecting Iasi's competitiveness as a tourism destination, including:

- Low visibility of tourist information centres;
- Insufficient promotion of local gastronomy among tourists and visitors;
- A focus on the promotion of the destination primarily for religious tourism.

In 2018, Iasi did not have a dedicated Destination Management Organisation for the promotion, management and strategic planning of this destination.

² Sources: <https://iasi.insse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Buletin-statistic-lunar-lasi-01-2020.pdf>

<https://timis.insse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Anuarul-Judetului-Timis-2018-FINAL-fara-poza.pdf>

<https://cluj.insse.ro/produse-si-servicii/publicatii-statistice/>

³ Sources: <https://iasi.insse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Buletin-statistic-lunar-lasi-01-2020.pdf>
<https://timis.insse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Anuarul-Judetului-Timis-2018-FINAL-fara-poza.pdf>
<https://cluj.insse.ro/produse-si-servicii/publicatii-statistice/>

⁴ Source: <https://iasi.insse.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Buletin-statistic-lunar-lasi-01-2020.pdf>

3.1.3 Step 3 – Plans for collection of project impact evidence

It was agreed that evidence for the evaluation of the impact of this intervention on Iasi would include the following sources:

- Events (e.g. tourism bloggers symposium organised by the City of Iasi)
- Online evidence (e.g. Instagram posts on #visitiasi, InstaStories, social media reach for #cronicaridigitali & #visitiasi 1.530.983)
- Media news appearances on Pro TV, Digi24 TV, Radio Romania, Pulsul zilei, Viva FM, ultimele-stiri.eu, allevents.in, 7est.ro, realitateadeiasi.net
- Documentary evidence (either private or in the public domain) of activities planned and carried out by the city's newly created Destination Management Organisation: "Destination Iasi".
- Performance and usage statistics (IOS & Android) for Iasi's Official App
- Online promotional video for the City of Iasi

3.1.4 Step 4 - Description of the situation after the intervention

{Ana, in this section we need a qualitative description of how things have changed for Iasi as a tourism destination after the implementation of the interventions you now have evidence for. For instance, does the city have a higher number of visitors? How did the Covid-19 pandemic affect the attainment of the goals set out in Step 1 as regards the interventions? Also, this part (Step 4) is crucial for evaluation purposes, so it needs to contain footnotes with URL web addresses that provide evidence for each of the evidence pieces mentioned. This is necessary in the report to show that the evidence actually exists and, where possible, it is available in the public domain (normally online)}

The intervention planned for the city of Iasi aimed at improving the planning, promotion, management and market competitiveness of this emerging tourism destination was successful as evidenced by the following achievements to date:

(a) Visit Iasi – Heritage Instameet Iasi 19th October 2019 - a documentation visit for tourism bloggers.

This included the following outcomes and achievements:

- 176 posts on Instagram with #visitiasi
- 392 InstaStories from 19th to 19th October 2019
- Impressions and reach on social media for #cronicaridigitali & #visitiasi 1.530.983
- 8 Media news appearance on Pro TV, Digi24 TV, Radio Romania, Pulsul zilei, Viva FM, ultimele-stiri.eu, allevents.in, 7est.ro, realitateadeiasi.net

(b) The Association of Management of the Tourist Destination of Iasi and the Region of Moldova (DESTINATIONIASI)

The SHARE project was key in the creation of this association by introducing it in the project's Local Action Plan for Iasi. The main objective of this association is to increase the competitiveness of Iasi as a tourism destination for domestic tourism in Romania and the wider Eastern Europe region. The association was formed by the City Hall of Iasi, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi, Incoming Roland Agency of Iasi, R.A. Iasi Airport, S.C. MCM Boutique Resort SRL (Hotel Pleiada), S.C. Hotel Orizont SRL (Hotel Ramada) and S.C. Complex Onyx SRL (Hotel Bellaria).

The activities of the "Destination Iasi" Association include increasing the visibility and prestige of Iasi as a tourism destination through destination promotion campaigns. Key to this is the creation of a tourism brand for Iasi, facilitating a stronger collaboration between key stakeholders (e.g. hotels, tourism agencies, food units, leisure units, cultural institutions, academic environment), promoting measures to protect the environment,

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preserving and rehabilitating the cultural, historical and tourist heritage of Iasi and the area of influence, etc.

(c) Iasi Official App (IOS & Android)

Iasi Official App is a tourist application administered by the Cityhall of Iasi. It focuses on tourists as well as local residents with information about POIs and events in the area, as well as local services (e.g. accommodation, restaurants, bars, tourist info points and offices) or local news (city hall press reports). The content of this app is updated in real-time. At present, the app offers the following themes:

- Accommodation: places in Iasi city that offer accommodation to tourists;
- Culture & Leisure: places in and around Iasi that offer cultural and leisure activities;
- Events Calendar: events that take place in Iasi city;
- Food & Drink: places in Iasi that serve food and drinks;
- Press Report: news that can be found on the City Hall website;
- Sightseeing: places that are worth visiting in and around Iasi;
- Tourist Info: official tourist info points and offices where a tourist can get information on what to see and to do in and around the city of Iasi;
- Other themes (f. ex. shopping, citizen services) can be added to the app by the local authority once they have relevant content; the app will update itself when new themes are added.

All POIs contain relevant information (e.g. photos, text, address, telephone and cell phone number with the possibility to call using the call function of the device, email address with the possibility to send a message using the email function of the device, website, opening hours, location of the POIs shown on Google maps, routing options). Language options include Romanian, English and German.

(d) Come to Invest in Iasi City 4K – a video presentation of Iasi city

This video⁵ has already received over 6,200 views on YouTube and will be updated and amended to a new version that will include the SHARE project logo and the Interreg logo (deadline: 31.12.2020).

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnBgKOU0u-o>