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 **SOCRAT**

A decorative graphic consisting of a green line that curves into a blue swirl, then continues as a blue line that curves into a green swirl, all set against a white background.

# INTERREG ITALY-CROATIA PROGRAMME 2021-2027 PROJECT SOCRAT

## D.1.3.1 Joint Cross-border Methodology

Final Version – October 2025

# SOCRAT

Socializing Craft & contemporary Art for sustainable Tourism

## D1.3.1 Joint Cross-border Methodology

### WP1 – Act. 1.3

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## INTRODUCTION

The SOCRAT Methodology provides the operational foundation for activating the project's core vision: fostering sustainable, community-based cultural tourism through a triangular collaboration model that connects Artists, Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs), and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

Developed as a cross-border joint framework, it translates the strategic ambition of SOCRAT into a set of coherent, actionable methods that all partners can apply across the Italy–Croatia programme area.

This methodology is rooted in the findings of Work Package 1, which involved extensive territorial mapping, interviews, participatory meetings, and contextual analyses across the involved regions.

The regional reports highlighted the diversity and richness of cultural and artistic ecosystems, as well as the structural challenges they face, ranging from limited funding and fragmented collaboration networks to variations in community engagement and administrative complexity. By integrating these insights, the methodology ensures that SOCRAT's operational model is not abstract or prescriptive, but rather responsive to the real needs, opportunities, and conditions of the territories.

Structured around six strategic pillars, the SOCRAT Methodology provides both the conceptual and practical tools required to guide the creation of interdisciplinary innovation hubs, facilitate collaborative co-creation, support sustainable business models, strengthen local capacities, and foster policy and communication environments conducive to long-term impact. It also includes guidelines for designing and implementing the Creative Living Labs (CLLs), which serve as real-world experimentation spaces where cross-sector teams explore new cultural tourism experiences grounded in local identity and heritage.

By offering a shared framework, the methodology ensures coherence across all partners



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while remaining flexible enough to be adapted to specific territorial contexts. It constitutes a key reference for the implementation of the next work packages and sets the foundation for building sustainable, inclusive, and community-centred cultural tourism models across the Adriatic region.



## The SOCRAT methodology

This document outlines the methodological framework for achieving the objectives of the SOCRAT project by developing a joint cross-border approach to support triangular collaboration among artists, local industry, and civil society. Drawing directly from the insights and lessons of the WP1 regional reports, it functions as a practical guide that defines the steps and methods required to translate the project's strategic vision into action. The methodology articulates the key principles and approaches that will shape the operationalisation of SOCRAT's pillars across different initiatives, including the creation of innovative, experience-based tourism prototypes. It includes guidelines for organising laboratories and identifying shared themes rooted in the cultural heritage and traditions of the involved territories. While the SOCRAT strategy sets the overall mission, this methodology is grounded in the concrete needs and opportunities identified by stakeholders and paves the way for detailed, context-specific implementation plans in the following work packages.

### Guiding Principles

Core principles of inter-sectoral collaboration, community-centric development, heritage preservation, innovation, and long-term sustainability underpin the SOCRAT Methodology. The project's approach prioritises adaptability, iterative learning, and the active involvement of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs), and Artists in every stage of development. This approach is continually informed by contextual insights and lessons learned from the programme area, ensuring its relevance and adaptability to real-world challenges.



## Methodological Framework

This framework details the general approaches for operationalising each of the six strategic pillars of SOCRAT:

### 1. Cultivating interdisciplinary innovation hubs

This pillar establishes the methodological framework for fostering environments where diverse stakeholders can converge to co-create and test new tourism concepts.

**Design and establishment of collaborative places/spaces:** Develop a flexible framework for setting up physical and virtual collaborative hubs (e.g., Creative Living Labs) that are accessible and conducive to interdisciplinary work. This includes guidelines for place or space configuration, resource provision, and technological infrastructure, considering initial phases of **stakeholder identification and matching** to ensure optimal collaboration compositions. This approach learns from the identified need for dedicated, flexible collaborative spaces where multi-sectoral interaction can genuinely flourish, as expressed by stakeholders across the regions.

The CLLs are intended as temporary, collaborative, and immersive environments designed to explore new forms of sustainable cultural tourism through the direct involvement of artists, craft or cultural enterprises, and civil society organizations. Each lab is grounded in a specific local identity and functions as a space for co-creation, where tradition meets contemporary artistic innovation, and where local communities become active participants in the creative process. Activities will take place in carefully selected venues within the host communities, chosen for their cultural, symbolic, or practical relevance to the local heritage, production, or community life. Each CLLs will be led by an artist/tutor, who will be selected through a cross-border call to be launched by the Lead Partner.



CLLs are inspired by the triangular collaborative strategy among artists, artisans/CCIs, and CSOs, that is the core of the SOCRAT project. During the CLLs, participants will explore and experiment with new ideas and approaches in order to co-design innovative tourist experiences or products, inspired by the local context and aimed at sustainability and authenticity.

**Facilitated co-creation processes:** Implement structured processes for guiding multi-stakeholder ideation, concept development, and initial prototyping. This involves defining roles for impartial facilitators who can mediate discussions and encourage cross-pollination of ideas among CSOs, CCIs, and Artists, and includes defined phases for inspiration, co-creation, and prototyping of ideas. Drawing from stakeholder interest in diverse collaboration types, such as participatory art residencies and heritage-based products, the methodology emphasises structured co-design to foster tangible outcomes.

**Prototype development and testing protocols:** Establish general criteria and a phased approach for developing experience-based tourism prototypes. This includes methods for initial testing and validation of prototypes for their potential market sustainability, visitor appeal, and capacity to promote lesser-known destinations. The focus on developing prototypes for year-round appeal and diversification responds directly to the challenge of tourism seasonality and the ambition to highlight underserved areas, insights gained from regional reports.

## 2. Enabling sustainable funding and revenue streams

This pillar outlines the methodological approach to ensure robust and diversified financial support for collaborative cultural tourism initiatives and their outcomes.



**Comprehensive funding landscape assessment:** Develop a systematic approach to identify, evaluate, and pursue diverse funding and revenue stream opportunities from public, private, and market-based sources. This includes a framework for assessing project eligibility against various funding calls. *A key lesson learned is the pervasive challenge of limited and inaccessible financial resources faced by cultural and creative initiatives across the programme area, thus this methodology prioritises a systematic approach to identifying and securing diverse funding and revenue streams.*

**Business model development for prototypes:** Provide guidance on developing sustainable business models for the innovative tourism prototypes. This involves methodologies for market analysis, pricing strategies, and projections for revenue generation directly from visitor engagement.

**Resource allocation and compensation guidelines:** Establish transparent principles for allocating resources and ensuring fair compensation for all collaborating parties, particularly artists, to promote equitable partnerships. Acknowledging the importance of fair compensation for artists and the operational costs for all partners, as highlighted by regional stakeholders, this methodology establishes principles for transparent resource distribution.

### 3. Empowering stakeholders through enhanced capabilities

This pillar defines the methodological steps for strengthening the skills and knowledge base of CSOs, CCIs, and Artists to enhance their collaborative effectiveness and project leadership.



**Needs assessment for capacity building:** Implement a systematic method for identifying specific skill gaps and training needs across the various stakeholder groups, often informed by the profiles identified for participation in collaborative activities. Learning from the expressed need for technical support, IT skills, and project management capabilities among cultural and creative entities, this methodology prioritises a tailored approach to enhance stakeholder capacities.

**Design of cross-sectoral training programmes:** Develop principles for designing and delivering interdisciplinary training programmes. These programmes should cover key areas such as digital literacy, project management, marketing strategies, and effective fundraising.

**Peer-to-peer learning and mentorship frameworks:** Establish structures that facilitate knowledge exchange, best practice sharing, and mentorship relationships specifically tailored to connect CSOs, CCIs, and Artists.



#### 4. Anchoring tourism in authentic community values

This pillar outlines the methodological commitment to ensuring that all tourism initiatives are deeply integrated with and genuinely benefit local communities.

**Participatory engagement frameworks:** Develop approaches for engaging local communities and residents as active co-creators from the initial stages of project conceptualisation and implementation. This involves methodologies for inclusive dialogue and consultation, often initiated through **local participatory meetings** to gather initial proposals and insights. This methodology is inspired by the understanding, consistently articulated by stakeholders, that authentic and effective tourism development is centred on active community participation and local voice.

**Local identity and heritage integration:** Establish guidelines for identifying, valuing, and incorporating authentic local narratives, cultural assets, and traditional knowledge into the development of new tourism experiences. The emphasis on reinterpreting tradition and valorising cultural heritage stems directly from stakeholders' commitment to authenticity and preserving local identities.

**Benefit-sharing and impact mitigation protocols:** Design transparent mechanisms for ensuring equitable distribution of social and economic benefits within communities. This also includes methodologies for assessing and mitigating potential negative impacts such as gentrification or cultural commodification. Addressing concerns raised by stakeholders regarding potential negative impacts such as overtourism, gentrification, and loss of authenticity, this methodology integrates proactive measures for impact assessment and equitable benefit distribution.



## 5. Enabling policy environments and streamlined governance

This pillar focuses on the methodological approach for engaging with policy makers and addressing administrative barriers to foster a more supportive operational context.

**Policy landscape analysis:** Analyse existing policy frameworks and identifying legislative or administrative hurdles that impede cross-sectoral collaboration, drawing lessons from **identified implementation risks** related to administrative processes. A core lesson from the programme area is the presence of bureaucratic complexities and an underdeveloped system of incentives for cultural and tourism projects; thus, this methodology includes a dedicated focus on identifying and addressing these policy barriers.

**Evidence-based policy recommendation development:** Outline an approach for collecting data and evidence from project implementation to inform and develop actionable policy recommendations.

**Multi-level dialogue and advocacy strategies:** Establish guidelines for engaging in constructive dialogue with local, regional, and national authorities to advocate for streamlined administrative procedures and favourable legislative conditions that recognise and facilitate **triangular partnerships**.

## 6. Strengthening networks and fostering effective communication

**Network building and management protocols:** Develop approaches for identifying, onboarding, and actively managing a diverse network of CSOs, CCIs, and Artists across the programme area.

Responding to the identified need for broader networking opportunities and the desire for cross-border collaborations, this methodology prioritises systematic network development.



**Cross-platform communication strategy:** Establish guidelines for designing and implementing effective communication channels (both digital and offline) that facilitate ongoing information sharing, collaboration, and mutual understanding, including standards for documenting collaborative activities and outputs. Acknowledging challenges related to fragmented marketing strategies and communication gaps between stakeholders, this methodology emphasises clear, consistent, and well-documented communication across the network.

**Facilitated dialogue and feedback mechanisms:** Implement methodologies for organising regular dialogue sessions, workshops, and feedback loops to ensure continuous interaction and joint problem-solving across the CSO, CCI, and Artist communities.



## Conclusion

The hereby presented SOCRAT Methodology establishes a unified and practical framework for operationalising the project's cross-border, cross-sector vision. By grounding its approaches in the insights gathered through WP1, it ensures that all subsequent activities, from the implementation of Creative Living Labs to the prototyping of new cultural tourism experiences, are informed by real territorial needs and aligned with stakeholder expectations.

The six strategic pillars form a coherent pathway that links innovation, sustainability, capacity building, policy engagement, and communication into a single integrated model. Together, they support the creation of collaborative environments in which Artists, CCIs, and CSOs can work collectively to enhance cultural heritage, stimulate community participation, and develop tourism practices that are authentic, equitable, and resilient.

As the project moves into its next phases, this methodology provides the necessary structure for experimentation, learning, and co-creation, while remaining flexible enough to adapt to the distinct cultural identities and operational contexts of each territory. It reinforces SOCRAT's commitment to building a long-lasting cooperation ecosystem: one that strengthens local communities, encourages cultural innovation, and lays the groundwork for sustainable tourism development across the Italy-Croatia programme area.

