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Developing Community Based Innovative Business Models for the Revival of the Internal Areas in the Mediterranean- REVIVE



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Output 2.1 Community based innovative business model



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**List of abbreviations used in the document**

Abbreviation	Full name / meaning
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ANCI	National Association of Italian Municipalities (<i>Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani</i>)
ANETEL	Larnaca and Famagusta Districts Development Agency
API	Application Programming Interface
AR	Augmented Reality
AETIB	Balearic Islands Agency for Tourism
B2B	Business-to-Business
BIPLAN	Acronym used in the document; full name not explicitly spelled out
BMC	Business Model Canvas
C2B	Consumer-to-Business
CNR-IBE	National Research Council-Institute for BioEconomy (<i>Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche</i>)
DMOs	Destination Management Organisations
EDIH	European Digital Innovation Hub
E-Zavod	Institute for Comprehensive Development Solutions
HORECA	Hotel/Restaurant/Café sector
ICC	Innovative Community Cooperative
IPTPO	Institute of Agriculture and Tourism
IT	Information Technology
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LAGs	Local Action Groups
MCC	Mallorca Chamber of Commerce



MEA	Millennium Ecosystem Assessment
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
QR	Quick-Response (QR code)
READ SA	Development Agency of South Aegean Region
REVIVE	Project acronym: Developing community based innovative business models for the revival of the internal areas in the Mediterranean
RIS3	Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation
SWG RRD	Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in SEE
SGX	Slovenske Gorice Experience
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
TBM	Territorial Business Model
VR	Virtual Reality



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Executive Summary

Mediterranean rural and inland territories are increasingly affected by structural challenges such as depopulation, ageing populations, weak service provision, fragmented local economies and limited opportunities for sustainable growth. In response to these dynamics, the REVIVE project developed and tested an innovative, community-based approach to territorial revitalisation, aimed at strengthening local resilience through cooperation, social innovation and the uptake of advanced technologies. At the core of the project is the **Territorial Business Model** (TBM), conceived not as a firm-centred business tool, but as a collaborative framework that helps organise local actors, resources and services around a shared development vision.

Through seven pilot areas in Cyprus, Italy, Croatia, Spain, North Macedonia, Greece and Slovenia, REVIVE supported the creation or strengthening of **Innovative Community Cooperatives** (ICCs) and similar collaborative structures tailored to different territorial contexts. Despite their diversity, all pilots demonstrated the value of combining participatory governance, cross-sector cooperation and digital innovation to generate local economic, social and environmental benefits. Agriculture, gastronomy, tourism, culture, crafts and digital services were connected into integrated territorial ecosystems, helping local actors overcome fragmentation, improve visibility and retain greater value within their communities.

A major contribution of REVIVE lies in showing that community-based business models can go beyond purely economic aims. The ICCs developed within the project also provide wider community services, including coordination, training, knowledge exchange, branding, digital support and territorial promotion. These services strengthen local cohesion, improve organisational capacity and enhance the attractiveness of inland areas for residents, visitors and future business initiatives. In this sense, the project demonstrates that collaborative economic structures can also function as instruments of broader territorial development.

Altogether, REVIVE delivers a practical and transferable model for community-led revitalisation in Mediterranean inland areas. The REVIVE TBM offers a flexible framework that can be adapted to different rural, mountain, peripheral and island contexts, helping territories build stronger cooperation, stimulate innovation and create more resilient and sustainable local development pathways.

Innovative Community Cooperatives in REVIVE project

Context and approach for territorial revitalisation

Mediterranean rural and inland areas are increasingly facing structural challenges such as demographic decline, economic marginalisation, ageing populations and the progressive weakening of local services and economic opportunities (Candeloro & Tartari, 2025). These dynamics are widely recognised as complex territorial phenomena that require integrated, place-based development strategies capable of mobilising local resources, skills and networks of actors operating within the territory (Yang et al., 2025).

Within this context, local communities have progressively emerged as key actors in rural revitalisation processes. Community-based initiatives have shown significant potential to support sustainable local development and strengthen the resilience of rural territories. Research shows that initiatives rooted in local communities can contribute to poverty reduction (Tobias et al., 2013), support collective responses to economic and social shocks (McKeever et al., 2015), and enhance the resilience of communities facing structural transformations (Bakas, 2017). Moreover, communities often provide essential forms of capital - including social, human, cultural and natural resources - that support entrepreneurial initiatives embedded within local contexts (Hertel et al., 2019). In these processes, community members can actively participate as co-decision makers, co-developers and contributors to collective initiatives, thereby strengthening local development capacities.

These dynamics highlight the growing relevance of community-based approaches for addressing structural challenges affecting rural and inland territories.

Building on this perspective, the Interreg Euro-MED project REVIVE aims to support the revitalisation of Mediterranean inland areas by actively engaging local communities through bottom-up approaches. The project focuses on strengthening collaboration among territorial actors and supporting initiatives that enhance local resources and opportunities for sustainable and innovative development. To achieve this objective, REVIVE developed and applied a Territorial Business Model (TBM) approach as a framework for collaborative territorial development and for structuring cooperation among stakeholders

within the same local ecosystem. Through the implementation of seven regional pilots, the project supported the creation and start-up of Innovative Community Cooperatives (ICCs) based on collaborative business models, with the aim of consolidating a REVIVE Cluster of ICCs across the Mediterranean area. In parallel, the pilots also worked on the establishment of a network of Mediterranean Digital Innovation Hubs (MDIHs), considered essential for strengthening the digital skills needed to uptake advanced technologies and integrate innovation within the REVIVE ICC ecosystem. Building on the experiences and results emerging from the pilot activities, REVIVE ultimately refined and consolidated the TBM as a shared framework for supporting collaborative territorial development across Mediterranean inland regions.

The REVIVE Approach to TBM Development

Consistent with this perspective, the REVIVE TBM framework was developed drawing on literature that extends the concept of the business model beyond the boundaries of the firm and reinterprets it at the territorial scale (Osterwalder et al., 2005; Pisano et al., 2016; Saebi et al., 2017). In this approach, the business model is not understood as a tool for analysing the performance of a single organisation, but rather an orchestration framework that supports collective development processes and coordinates the actions of heterogeneous actors operating within a specific territorial context. In line with this view, the development of the REVIVE TBM also draws on literature on multi-actor cooperation and collaborative governance in territorial development processes, which emphasises the importance of interaction among public actors, firms, academia and local communities in managing complex place-based development initiatives (Torfing & Ansell, 2017; Mariani et al., 2022).

Within the REVIVE project, the TBM was developed through a participatory process carried out in the pilot territories involved in the project. This process engaged local authorities, businesses, civil society organisations and community members through meetings, co-design workshops and collaborative activities. These interactions enabled the identification of local priorities, resources and development opportunities, while supporting the emergence of collaborative configurations tailored to the specific characteristics of each territory. The experiences emerging from the seven pilot areas were subsequently analysed to identify recurring patterns and common dynamics, which were synthesised into a shared framework representing the REVIVE TBM.

To support the development and visualisation of the model, the Business Model Canvas (BMC) was adopted as a practical facilitation tool during the participatory process. The BMC provides a visual and intuitive framework that represents the main components of a business model and facilitates dialogue among



stakeholders (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010; Sort & Nielsen, 2018; Palmaccio et al., 2021). In the REVIVE context, the canvas was adapted to reflect the specific characteristics of community-based territorial development processes in Mediterranean inland areas. In particular, the traditional building blocks were interpreted in relation to multi-actor value creation dynamics, and an additional block labelled “Community services” was introduced to capture services and initiatives developed by the community and their contribution to local well-being, social cohesion and territorial resilience (Bacq et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023; Boston et al., 2024).

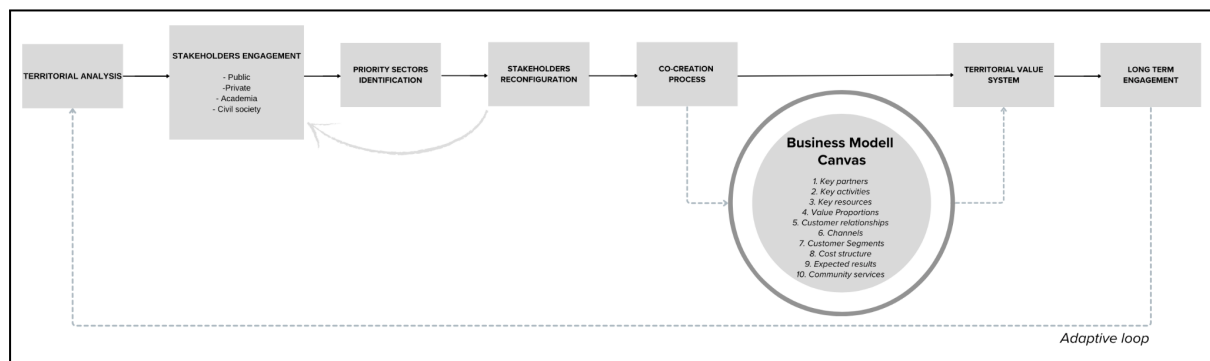


Figure 1. The TBM as a process-based framework and the supporting role of the Business Model Canvas.

More specifically, in each of the seven pilot areas a structured process was followed for the development and experimentation of the REVIVE TBM. This process consisted of seven steps and included the use of the BMC as a practical tool to support and structure the collaborative design activities carried out in the pilot territories (Figure 1). This structured process ensured that the TBM was grounded in real territorial experiences and reflected the diversity of local contexts involved in the REVIVE project.

The experimentation phase led to the establishment of local communities involving a wide range of stakeholders, including public authorities, businesses, civil society organisations and community members. These collaborative initiatives aimed to support the economic, social and environmental revitalisation of the inland areas involved in the project.

Furthermore, specific activities were implemented within each pilot community to strengthen digitalisation and innovation capacities. These activities included the adoption of digital tools, platforms and immersive technologies designed to improve coordination among stakeholders, increase the visibility of local initiatives and facilitate market access for local producers and service providers. The role of digital solutions and innovation processes in supporting the development and long-term sustainability of the community-based models developed within the REVIVE project is further analysed in the following sections.



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The next sections present the results of this process through an analysis of the TBM developed in each REVIVE pilot area, illustrating how the TBM approach was implemented in practice and highlighting the main initiatives and collaborative configurations that emerged in each territory.

REVIVE Regional pilots

Cluster of Rural Larnaca

Larnaca District - Cyprus

Pilot Overview

The Cyprus pilot of the REVIVE project is located in the rural area of Larnaca District and encompasses a network of inland villages characterised by traditional architecture, narrow streets and a strong heritage of local craftsmanship. These villages actively contribute to the cultural life of the region through annual festivals, museums, monuments, and other local attractions. The pilot territory includes 2 municipalities and 39 small rural communities supported by the Larnaca and Famagusta Districts Development Agency (ANETEL).

Rural Larnaca faces a set of structural and persistent challenges that are common across many Mediterranean inland areas, but also intensified by the region's specific socio-economic conditions. The area is characterised by depopulation, youth outmigration, limited infrastructure, fragmented production chains, low levels of digitalisation, and reduced visibility of traditional products. These constraints continue to limit competitiveness, market reach, and long-term sustainability for local producers and SMEs. A major challenge concerns the seasonality of tourism, which creates fluctuations in demand for local products and restricts year-round income stability. At the same time, the producer landscape is highly fragmented, with many micro-producers operating independently, lacking coordinated promotion, collective branding, or shared distribution channels. This fragmentation further reduces economies of scale and weakens overall market presence. Digital transformation also remains uneven across the territory. Several SMEs experience digital maturity gaps, especially in villages where technical skills and confidence in adopting digital tools (AI, AR, VR, online platforms) remain limited. In addition, administrative and regulatory complexities slow down the establishment of new community-based structures such as the Cluster of Rural Larnaca. Legal procedures, coordination between municipalities and local councils, and the absence of pre-existing collaborative frameworks often require significant time, guidance, and institutional support. Finally, youth outmigration continues to reduce generational renewal in agri-food production, crafts and tourism-related activities. Younger residents frequently relocate to urban or coastal areas in search of more diverse



employment opportunities, leaving behind an ageing population that faces increasing difficulty in sustaining local economic activities.

The pilot was designed to address these challenges through the establishment of the Cluster of Rural Larnaca, a community-based innovative cooperative model aimed at revitalising the local economy. The initiative focuses on promoting local food products and craftsmanship, strengthening short supply chains, and developing educational and marketing content through immersive and experiential digital technologies.

The Innovative Community Cooperative Model

The Cluster of Rural Larnaca was developed through a participatory process launched in 2024. The process brought together stakeholders from key economic sectors – including tourism and hospitality, agricultural and primary production, food processing and local product manufacturing, and handicrafts – as well as representatives from public institutions, local councils, NGOs, and academic partners. This ensured broad representation across the local economic and governance ecosystem.

As a result of this collaborative process, an action plan was developed to provide a clear roadmap for the establishment and operation of the Cluster. Within the REVIVE pilot testing phase, several key activities were implemented to activate the TBM in Rural Larnaca:

- 1)** Establishment of the Cluster of Rural Larnaca: Creation of a cooperative governance structure, definition of the legal framework, drafting of cluster regulations, and establishment of management and advisory mechanisms.
- 2)** Branding and promotional strategy: Development of a unified branding identity for Rural Larnaca, aligned with the regional brand, to strengthen recognition of local products and territorial experiences.
- 3)** Gastronomy and cultural events: Organization of “We Eat Locally” events, showcasing traditional food, cooking demonstrations, and exhibitions of local products.
- 4)** Communication campaign: involvement of influencers and journalists, production of promotional articles, and strengthening of the region’s visibility through tourism and media channels.
- 5)** Immersive digital solutions: Development of digital tools such as the AI Holographic Avatar, digital exhibitions, and an online booking platform for local experiences.
- 6)** Digital skills training: Implementation of capacity-building sessions in collaboration with DiGiNN (EDIH Cyprus) aimed at strengthening digital competences among local stakeholders.

The TBM developed for Rural Larnaca aims to reorganize the local economy around coordinated collaboration and streamlined value chains. It prioritizes short supply chains, enabling producers to sell directly to consumers, tourism businesses, and experiential service providers, thereby reducing intermediaries and increasing the share of value retained locally.

At the same time, shared promotion and joint development of products and experiences allow small enterprises to strengthen their market presence collectively, create integrated offers linked to gastronomy, culture, and rural activities, and communicate a unified territorial identity. A key element of the model is the introduction of immersive digital tools, including the AI holographic Avatar, VR content, and AR heritage QR codes, which modernize the way local products and experiences are presented and accessed. Branding initiatives and digital skills programmes further enhance professionalism and digital readiness within the region.

The Cluster supports its members through coordinated marketing activities, training programmes, participation in events, digital upgrading, and the facilitation of collaboration among stakeholders.

Impacts Generated

Economic impacts. The model contributes to local economic growth by strengthening cooperation among SMEs and local producers and by improving market access through short supply chains and shared promotion. Immersive digital tools expand visibility and sales channels, diversify revenue streams, and attract visitors. Overall, the initiative supports job creation, enhances competitiveness and economic sustainability, and contributes to the revitalisation of the local economy.

Social impacts. The model strengthens social cohesion by fostering collaboration among producers, SMEs, associations, and local authorities. It promotes community engagement, inclusion and pride in local traditions through cultural and gastronomic events. Digital training activities also enhance skills – especially among young people and small producers – contributing to a more resilient, connected, and sustainable rural community.

Environmental impacts. The model supports sustainable rural development by promoting short supply chains that reduce transport emissions and environmental pressure. It encourages responsible production and local consumption, helping to reduce waste and protect landscapes and biodiversity. At the same time, digital tools such as AI, VR, and AR contribute to more sustainable tourism practices by reducing physical pressure on sensitive cultural and natural sites.



The Food Community of the Pistoiese Mountains

Tuscany (Italy)

Pilot Overview

The Tuscan pilot of the REVIVE project is located in the Pistoiese Apennines, a mountainous area in northern Tuscany characterized by extensive forests, small villages, and a strong agri-food tradition. The territory includes the municipalities of Abetone Cutigliano, San Marcello Piteglio and Sambuca Pistoiese. With fewer than 11,000 inhabitants, the area faces structural challenges common to many inland territories, including depopulation, an ageing population, fragmentation of local production chains, and limited market visibility for small-scale producers.

The pilot was designed to address these challenges through the establishment of the Food Community of the Pistoiese Mountains, a community-based cooperative model aimed at revitalising the local economy. The initiative focuses on promoting local food products, strengthening short supply chains and developing educational and marketing content supported by immersive and experiential digital technologies. The pilot was jointly coordinated by CNR-IBE and ANCI Tuscany.

The Innovative Community Cooperative Model

The Food Community was developed through a participatory process launched in 2024, involving more than 30 stakeholders in a series of co-design meetings and workshops. As a result of this process, an action plan was developed to provide a clear roadmap for the establishment and launch of the Food Community. Within the REVIVE pilot testing phase, several key activities were implemented:

- 1) Community cooperative governance setup: Identification and engagement of stakeholders, drafting and signing of a Charter of Values, definition of the legal framework and formal establishment of the Food Community as a third sector association, followed by the progressive expansion of the network.
- 2) Communication and marketing strategy: Development of the logo and visual identity, creation of the official website, production of promotional materials, identification of local sales points and organization of awareness-raising events, workshops and tasting activities.
- 3) Recovery and enhancement of local products: Mapping of local agri-food biodiversity, development of a shared catalogue of native varieties, creation



of seasonal harvesting calendars and promotion of thematic itineraries linked to gastronomy and sustainable tourism.

- 4) Immersive digital experiences: Implementation of digital skills training and co-design of immersive digital tools aimed at promoting the Food Community and enhancing visitor engagement, including the production of 360° VR videos.

The Food Community model is inclusive and open, allowing new members to join and ensuring long-term sustainability beyond the duration of the project. Initially established by 13 founding members, the Tuscan ICC has already grown to 21 members, with additional stakeholders expressing interest in joining. After just one year of activity, the Food Community is already experiencing tangible benefits from collaboration. The introduction of local sales points during peak tourist seasons and the collective participation in fairs and markets have generated immediate economic benefits across the supply chain.

The territorial business model of the Food Community is based on the integration of local agriculture, food processing, gastronomy, tourism, and digital promotion within a single collaborative ecosystem. This cross-sectoral approach strengthens local value chains while supporting collective territorial promotion.

At its core, local farmers and producers supply restaurants, agritourism operators, and retail outlets through short supply chains coordinated by the Food Community. The association provides shared services including branding, collective marketing, a seasonal product catalogue, participation in fairs and local-regional markets, and immersive digital storytelling through VR experiences and online promotion.

Revenue streams are generated through increased direct and collective sales of local products, tourism-related services (i.e. farm visits, tasting experiences, itineraries) and digital visibility and promotion.

Value is retained locally by reducing intermediaries, strengthening producer-restaurant linkages, and increasing the attractiveness of the territory as a gastronomic destination. The governance model ensures participatory decision-making, open membership, and the reinvestment of benefits into community development initiatives.

Impacts Generated

Economic impacts. The model improves market visibility and competitiveness for local producers, supports diversification and strengthens cooperation among SMEs. The promotion of short supply chains and digital marketing increases the share of value retained within the territory. The initiative also creates the opportunities for new employment in agriculture, food processing, tourism, and digital services.



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Social impacts. The Food Community fosters collaboration and participatory governance, strengthening the sense of belonging and territorial identity. Digital training initiatives enhance skills and future employment opportunities, contributing to community resilience and improving quality of life in a fragile mountain context.

Environmental impacts. The mapping of agri-food biodiversity and the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices contribute to biodiversity conservation and help prevent land abandonment. Short supply chains reduce transport-related emissions, while the integration of digital tools supports more sustainable marketing and promotion practices.

Istria, Croatia

Pilot Overview

The Istrian pilot of the REVIVE project is implemented in northern and central Istria, covering the City of Buzet and the municipalities of Oprtalj-Portole, Lanišće, Cerovlje and Lupoglav. The pilot is coordinated by the Institute of Agriculture and Tourism from Poreč (IPTPO).

This rural part of Istria County is characterised by numerous small businesses operating in agriculture, tourism and hospitality and other service sectors. The area benefits from rich natural assets and cultural heritage. However, it also faces several structural challenges, including depopulation, an aging workforce, limited digitalisation, and weak communication and collaboration among stakeholders.

The pilot was designed to address these challenges through the development, together with the regional European Digital Innovation Hub - EDIH Adria (<https://edihadria.eu/>), of an innovative community cooperative based on a B2B digital web platform designed to connect local stakeholders, increase their visibility and support cooperation. It creates a digital network, or virtual “community”, where users can share information regarding their offer and demand, as well as exchange knowledge and other relevant information related to their business.

The Innovative Community Cooperative Model

The ICC in rural Istria was developed through a participatory process involving local public authorities, Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), Local Action Groups (LAGs), associations, local businesses, and higher education and research institutions. During this process, several common territorial challenges were identified, including depopulation, an ageing population, declining social engagement, low economic activity, and weak connectivity among local businesses. In response, the ICC model was conceived as a digital network designed to facilitate the exchange of goods, services, information and knowledge.

Within the REVIVE pilot testing phase, three main actions were implemented:

- 1) Community cooperative governance setup. Establishment of a community cooperative aimed at strengthening collaboration among local stakeholders. During the pilot testing phase, IPTPO assumed the role of coordinator, supported by local authorities, the Tourist Board and other relevant local stakeholders. The objective is to create a self-sustaining



community whose governance will gradually rely on active user engagement and continuous use of the platform.

- 2) Pilot activity related to the economic model. The web platform functions as a tool supporting daily business operations and communication. Registered users can publish offers and requests for products and services, enabling real-time exchange and reducing dependence on external markets. The goal is to demonstrate how the platform can operate as a sustainable economic tool that strengthens local supply chains.
- 3) Development of digital experiences. This action focuses on the creation of the REVIVE Istria web platform, developed with the support of EDIH Adria and external IT experts. A Digitalisation Action Plan was prepared following participation in a bootcamp and consultancy process. In addition, an immersive audio-visual "digital postcard" has been developed to enhance visibility and promote the attractiveness of the territory.

The ICC integrates a wide range of territorial actors, including public authorities (City of Buzet, and the municipalities of Cerovlje, Lanišće, Lupoglav and Oprtalj-Portole), the Buzet Tourist Board, LAGs, associations, research institutions, and registered businesses from agriculture, tourism, hospitality, creative industries and other sectors.

The TBM is centered on the platform REVIVE Istria (www.reviveistria.com), which functions as a centralized B2B digital marketplace, catalogue and networking hub. It enables the creation of user profiles, posting of offers and demands, searchable databases, news and information sections managed by development organisations, and automated email notifications. The REVIVE Istria platform is open to all registered businesses operating in agriculture, tourism and hospitality, creative industries and other sectors within the territory and it is not limited to specific user groups.

It connects stakeholders within the same territory, for example local producers, accommodation providers, restaurateurs, artisans, associations, as well as development support entities (e.g., local authorities, DMOs, LAGs, associations, organisations, institutions, etc.) that provide support to business actors. The aim is to strengthen local economic circulation, foster intersectoral collaboration, and create opportunities for joint initiatives, shared resource use, collective procurement, and promotional cooperation.

The ultimate objective is to create a large network of connected users, ensure active platform use, and generate measurable economic, social, and innovation impacts within the pilot area.

Impacts Generated

Economic impacts. The model improves business opportunities, increases the visibility of local products and services, and optimises business processes. It



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reduces costs, saves time and creates new opportunities for networking and collaboration. By strengthening digitalisation and facilitating connections among local actors, the model stimulates local consumption and enhances the competitiveness of local businesses while reinforcing local value chains.

Social impacts. The Istrian ICC contributes to building a sustainable local business community by fostering mutual cooperation and networking among stakeholders. It facilitates seller-buyer relationships, advisory interactions and collaborative partnerships, strengthening social cohesion and reinforcing connections among local businesses, customers and public institutions.

Environmental impacts. By promoting local production and consumption, the model reduces environmental impacts associated with global supply chains (i.e. logistics warehousing). Improved matching of supply and demand helps reduce waste of unsold goods, while intersectoral cooperation supports circular economy principles and reduces the environmental footprint of services.



Pla de Mallorca Pilot

Balearic Islands, Spain

Pilot Overview

The Balearic Islands pilot of the REVIVE project is implemented in the Pla de Mallorca, a group of municipalities from the center of Mallorca island. The main stakeholder is the Mancomunitat del Pla de Mallorca, a supramunicipal entity grouping the 14 inland municipalities that form the Pla de Mallorca region. This territory is characterised by a strong agricultural identity, traditional landscapes, local gastronomy, and well-preserved cultural heritage, while progressively integrating tourism as a complementary economic driver.

Despite its potential, Pla de Mallorca faces several challenges related to economic diversification, digitalisation gaps, and limited integration between the agricultural and tourism sectors. At the same time, regional legislation, including sustainability and circularity frameworks, encourages the increased use of local products within tourist establishments.

The pilot was designed to address these challenges by fostering stronger collaboration between the agriculture and tourism sectors through innovative business models and digital tools. Its core objective is to strengthen local supply chains, improve the commercialisation of locally produced food, and accelerate digital transition while reinforcing sustainable and responsible tourism practices.

The Innovative Community Cooperative Model

The Balearic Islands pilot is built on a participatory governance approach coordinated by the Balearic Islands Agency for Tourism (AETIB) and the Mallorca Chamber of Commerce. The cooperative model aligns local needs with regional innovation strategies (RIS3) and sustainability legislation, ensuring coherence between territorial development initiatives and policy objectives. During the first phase of implementation, extensive engagement activities were carried out, including more than 20 stakeholder meetings, joint ICC sessions, training workshops, and dissemination events, strengthening cross-sector collaboration and governance capacity.

Through this participatory process, local stakeholders contributed to defining priorities and solutions of the ICC Pla de Mallorca and implemented the Action Plan (BIPLAN) structured around three Strategic Lines:

- 1) Tourism, cultural and creative industry. Promotion of the use of local products in tourist accommodations and restaurants, fostering synergies with regional initiatives and organizing matchmaking events and workshops.
- 2) Agriculture and local products linked to tourism. Improvement of access to and commercialisation of local products through the promotion of B2B digital platforms connecting producers with the HORECA (hotels-restaurants-cafés) sector; implementation of targeted capacity-building initiatives.
- 3) Governance and acceptance. Strengthening communication, dissemination, advocacy, business model analysis, and immersive experiences to ensure long-term sustainability and the adoption of digital solutions. Furthermore, governance has been strengthened since REVIVE started, between AETIB (DGTourism) and DG Agriculture -two entities that belong to the regional government of the Balearic Islands- which collaborate now for the first time, in the organisation of workshops and conferences and in promoting local products and enogastronomy at international tourism fairs.

The Pla de Mallorca pilot integrates agriculture, food production, tourism businesses (hotels, agritourism units, restaurants), cooperatives, public authorities, and cultural actors within a collaborative territorial ecosystem. A central element of the economic model is the development (or adoption through collaboration) of a B2B digital marketplace that directly connects producers with hotels, restaurants and other tourism businesses, supporting short supply chains and conscious purchasing through sustainability criteria. This model aims to increase direct sales, improve demand predictability for producers, reduce intermediaries and retain added value within the territory.

Complementary actions such as the development of immersive content of 360° videos and VR experiences, showcases production processes and enhances the perceived value of local products. Through a structured participatory approach involving local and regional stakeholders, the model supports cross-sector coordination and long-term adoption, contributing to a more resilient inland economy in a highly tourism-driven island context.

Impacts Generated

Economic impacts. The pilot strengthens coordination between sectors, enhancing economic resilience by fostering stronger synergies between tourism businesses and local producers. It increases direct sales opportunities, improves



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demand predictability for producers, optimises supply chains, and contributes to boosting the local economy.

Social impacts. The initiative fosters cross-sector collaboration, supports local entrepreneurship, and strengthens the sense of belonging linked to local gastronomy and cultural identity. Participatory governance mechanisms enhance stakeholder engagement and shared decision-making. Digital training and immersive tools also contribute to increasing digital skills and innovation culture within the region.

Environmental impacts. By promoting Km0 products and short supply chains, the pilot reduces reliance on imported goods and lowers the environmental footprint associated with logistics and transportation. The integration of sustainability criteria within the digital marketplace further supports a more circular and responsible consumption pattern.

Staro Nagorichane, Rankovce and Kriva Palanka Pilot

North Macedonia

Pilot Overview

The North Macedonia pilot of the REVIVE project is implemented in the rural municipalities of Staro Nagorichane, Rankovce, and Kriva Palanka, located in the north-eastern part of the country. The territory is characterised by rich natural resources, agricultural land, mountainous landscapes (Osogovo), and significant biodiversity, with strong potential for organic agriculture, particularly in beekeeping.

The three municipalities are characterised by low population density, an ageing population, limited economic diversification, and significant youth outmigration. At the same time, the area holds considerable untapped potential in organic honey production, wild herbs and fruits, eco-tourism, cultural heritage, and cross-municipal collaboration.

The pilot, coordinated by the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in SEE (SWG RRD), was designed to establish a community-based economic model supported by advanced digital technologies. The initiative combines local resources with innovation to improve quality of life and promote long-term sustainable rural development.

The Innovative Community Cooperative Model

Through a participatory process involving 4-helix stakeholders, the pilot established an informal Innovative Community Cooperative (ICC) bringing together local beekeepers, farmers, municipalities, NGOs, artisans, and youth. Focused on organic honey production, agrotourism, and digital innovation, the ICC acts as the collaborative backbone of the community-based economic model. It prioritizes collective welfare, sustainability, and inclusive growth, encouraging shared ownership, resource pooling, and reinvestment within the local community.

Within the REVIVE pilot testing phase, three main actions were implemented:

- 1) Innovative Community Cooperative set-up and support: The ICC was established as an informal collaborative structure pursuing the opportunity of formalisation based on Memorandum of Understanding among



participating stakeholders and eventually forming a legal entity or led by one.

- 2) Development and deployment of a digital platform with AR/VR features: A user-friendly digital platform is being developed to support promotion, collaboration and knowledge exchange. Key components include: a Digital Product & Producer Catalogue showcasing local products through AR-enhanced storytelling; an IoT-based Beekeeping Monitoring System using sensors and meteorological stations for real-time data; a Beekeeping Logbook Module supporting integrated farm management; and Immersive VR/360° Experiences such as “A Day in the Life of a Beekeeper”, designed to promote agrotourism. The digital platform will serve as a micro AKIS through the development of the Apiculture Knowledge Hub.
- 3) Capacity-building initiatives: Training workshops were organised on cooperative management, digital marketing, drone applications, and IoT technologies. Additional activities included pilot demonstrations such as drone field training and sensor deployment, the launch of digital marketing campaigns and the development of a monitoring framework based on KPIs. These activities also aim to support the replication of the model in neighboring communities and secure funding for long-term sustainability.

The TBM integrates organic honey production, wild herbs and fruits, artisanal crafts, eco-tourism and cultural heritage within a cooperative system supported by a central digital platform.

The model combines traditional rural practices with digital technologies to promote local products and develop immersive visitor experiences linked to beekeeping, nature and local identity. The digital platform supports promotion and storytelling through digital catalogues and interactive content, while the Apiculture Knowledge Hub provides training modules for beekeepers, young people and visitors. Advanced digital tools currently under development (AR/VR/IoT) further strengthen innovation capacity and support more informed production practices. By fostering cooperation across the three municipalities and reinforcing shared ownership, the model aims to diversify income sources, strengthen social cohesion, empower young people through skills development, and support environmentally responsible rural development.

Impacts Generated

Economic impacts. The pilot supports diversification of income sources through the sale of local honey and crafts, tourism services, immersive experiences, and digital promotion. Additional revenue streams are expected from training modules, branded products and experiential tourism offers. By encouraging shared resources and cooperative purchasing, the model helps rural SMEs reduce costs and improve competitiveness. It also aims to attract investment, create green jobs, and reduce economic vulnerability by lowering dependence on single sectors, thus fostering a more resilient and dynamic local economy.



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Social impacts. The initiative strengthens community cohesion and encourages greater collaboration across municipalities. It improves digital literacy and technical skills among youth, women, and farmers, while also promoting youth engagement and helping reduce outmigration by creating local opportunities for innovation and participation. At the same time, the pilot contributes to preserving and promoting cultural heritage through digital storytelling and artistic integration. The ICC encourages inclusive decision-making and empowers marginalised groups, strengthening social capital and ensuring that development benefits are widely shared.

Environmental impacts. The pilot promotes organic beekeeping, biodiversity protection, and sustainable land use. IoT monitoring systems and precision tools improve resource efficiency, while eco-trails and educational AR content raise awareness about environmental conservation and circular economy practices.

Aegean Cuisine Network

South Aegean region, Greece

Pilot Overview

The South Aegean pilot of the REVIVE project is implemented across the islands of the Cyclades and the Dodecanese, within the administrative region of the South Aegean. The region consists of 79 islands, of which 52 are inhabited, and 178 islets. It is characterised by strong tourism activity, small-scale agricultural production, and a rich gastronomic heritage shaped by local products and traditional recipes.

Unlike the other REVIVE pilots, the South Aegean Region did not create a new community cooperative. Instead, the pilot builds on an already established and recognised network: the Aegean Cuisine Network, founded in 2008 and managed by the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the Dodecanese and Cyclades, with the support of the Region of South Aegean.

The pilot, coordinated by READ S.A. (Development Agency of South Aegean Region), focuses on strengthening, digitally enhancing, and further structuring this existing network and certification cluster as a model of community-based innovative business governance.

The Innovative Community Cooperative Model

The Aegean Cuisine Network functions as a collaborative cluster and quality certification scheme that connects the primary sector (agriculture, fisheries, food production) with the tertiary sector (tourism and hospitality). The network represents a dynamic collaboration of chefs, culinary professionals, and institutions committed to preserving and promoting the gastronomic heritage of the Aegean region. Aegean cuisine is characterised by the use of fresh, local ingredients such as olive oil, seafood, vegetables, and herbs, reflecting the vibrant Mediterranean influences that shape its distinctive flavors. Through initiatives like culinary festivals, educational programs, and collaborative events, the network fosters knowledge exchange while supporting sustainable food practices that highlight seasonal products and traditional farming methods.

Within the REVIVE framework, the governance structure of the network was further strengthened through pilot actions focused on digital innovation, enhanced promotion and wider stakeholder engagement:



- 1) Aegean Cuisine's Network promotion. Promotional initiatives included the production of 20 social media videos featuring Spiros Margaritis (radio producer and influencer) highlighting the culinary heritage of 4 South Aegean islands (Rhodes, Leros, Syros and Tinos).
- 2) Digital and immersive experiences. A new dual digital portal was also developed, integrating content from both the Cyclades and Dodecanese Aegean Cuisine platforms. An AI-based virtual assistant with a custom avatar was created to represent Aegean hospitality and support users in navigating the platform. The AI system is connected via API to real-time content from both regional portals, allowing users to ask questions and receive immediate recommendations related to restaurants, producers and culinary experiences across the islands.

The Aegean Cuisine Network operates as a multidisciplinary ecosystem connecting agriculture, food processing, gastronomy, retail, tourism, and increasingly digital technology. It promotes synergies between local producers and hospitality businesses, encouraging restaurants to source ingredients locally and strengthening regional supply chains.

During the REVIVE pilot phase, this ecosystem was further enriched through a coordinated promotional strategy and the development of immersive digital experiences. Promotional activities included videos promoting local gastronomy in four Islands, Rhodes, Leros, Syros and Tinos, following a big social media campaign involving influencer to increase brand visibility.

The immersive experience focuses on the digital revitalization of the "Aegean Cuisine" network—a collaborative initiative managed by the Chambers of Cyclades and Dodecanese. To address the fragmented geography of the islands, a new comprehensive digital ecosystem was developed. This features a "Unified Gateway" (a common first page) that branches into dual, distinctly managed portals for the Cyclades and Dodecanese, allowing for decentralized management and targeted marketing.

To seamlessly bridge the gap between these two regional portals and eliminate user friction, an advanced Aegean Cuisine AI Assistant was developed and integrated as the core immersive technology.

Impacts Generated

Economic impacts. The Aegean Cuisine Network contributes to economic growth by strengthening the connection between the primary sector (agriculture and food production) and the tertiary sector (tourism and hospitality). By reinforcing local supply chains, the initiative helps retain economic value within the region and increases the export of regional food products. Promoting the South Aegean



as a gastronomic destination also contributes to extending the tourist season and attracting higher spending visitors.

Social impacts. The initiative supports the preservation of intangible cultural heritage by documenting and promoting traditional recipes and culinary practices. It fosters social cohesion and community pride by elevating local ingredients and traditions into a recognised gastronomic identity. Collaboration among chefs, farmers and hospitality businesses reinforces trust and participation, while creating local employment opportunities that can help mitigate youth outmigration and depopulation.

Environmental impacts. By promoting local sourcing and seasonal consumption, the network reduces food miles and supports sustainable agricultural practices adapted to island ecosystems. The emphasis on traditional, small-scale production contributes to biodiversity preservation and landscape conservation.

Slovenske Gorice Experience Cooperative (SGX Coop)

Podravje Region, Slovenia

Pilot Overview

The Slovenian pilot of the REVIVE project is located in Slovenske Gorice, in the Podravje region of north-eastern Slovenia. Covering 404 km² and home to approximately 44,000 inhabitants, the area includes nine municipalities: Benedikt, Cerkevjak, Duplek, Lenart, Pesnica, Sveta Ana, Sveta Andraž, Sveti Jurij and Šentilj. Characterised by rolling hills, vineyards, orchards, forests, rivers and lakes, Slovenske Gorice combines strong agricultural traditions with significant but still under-exploited tourism potential. The pilot is coordinated by the Institute for Comprehensive Development Solutions (E-zavod)

Despite its rich natural and cultural heritage, the region faces several structural challenges typical of rural areas, including depopulation, fragmented services, limited infrastructure (particularly in transport and accommodation), youth outmigration and relatively low levels of digitalisation among SMEs.

The pilot was designed to address these challenges through the establishment of the Slovenske Gorice Experience Cooperative (SGX Coop), a community-based model integrating tourism, agriculture, culture, and digital innovation under a shared governance and branding framework.

The Innovative Community Cooperative Model

The SGX Coop was developed through a participatory co-design process launched in 2024, involving workshops, consultations, and collaborative planning sessions across the nine municipalities. More than 40 stakeholders from the tourism, agricultural, cultural, public administration, civil society and innovation sectors contributed to defining the cooperative's vision and operational model. Within the REVIVE pilot testing phase, three main action lines were implemented:

- 1) Community cooperative governance setup. Establishment of a transparent and inclusive governance framework, including the drafting and adoption of a Charter of Values. An informal cooperative structure (cooperative partnership) was created and endorsed by the nine municipalities of



Slovenske Gorice. Capacity-building workshops were also organised to support community building and strengthen local collaboration.

- 2) Establishing the territorial business model. Development and testing of integrated tourism experiences such as wine and heritage tours, farm-to-table events, themed trails, and bundled service packages. The pilot also supported the creation of thematic clusters among local providers, joint promotion under a shared brand and continuous monitoring and refinement of services and business processes.
- 3) Development of digital experiences. Creation of a shared digital platform for promotion, integration of AR/VR storytelling tools and digital skills training delivered in cooperation with local EDIH providers and regional development organizations. The immersive content will include 360° videos and VR experiences of the Slovenske Gorice Area with the slogan: “Slovenske gorice simply beautiful”.

The Slovenian pilot is based on an informal community cooperative structure integrating tourism, agriculture, culture, and digital innovation into a shared value creation system. At its core is the Slovenske Gorice Experience Cooperative, which functions as a coordination Partnership connecting local farmers, winemakers, artisans, tourism providers, SMEs, public institutions, and civil society actors.

The model focuses on developing integrated experience-based tourism offers, such as farm-to-table culinary trails, heritage and wine tours, eco-tourism activities, and community-hosted stays. These services are supported by a common digital system for promotion, booking, and storytelling. Revenue streams are generated through cooperative memberships, bundled tourism services, local product sales, and public or project-based funding.

Collaboration with digital innovation actors further strengthens technological adoption and supports the development of new digital products and services. Overall, the pilot demonstrates how cooperative governance and digital transformation can jointly drive sustainable rural revitalisation.

Impacts Generated

Economic impacts. The cooperative model improves coordination among local businesses and tourism providers, generating new revenue streams through bundled offers and joint service delivery. Shared branding and digital promotion enhance visibility and access to wider markets. The model increases competitiveness of local products and services while supporting income diversification and long-term economic sustainability.

Social impacts. SGX Coop strengthens community cohesion and territorial identity by fostering collaboration across municipalities and sectors. Participatory



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governance increases citizen involvement in economic development. Training activities empower youth and entrepreneurs, supporting skills development and counteracting rural depopulation while preserving traditions and intergenerational knowledge transfer.

Environmental impacts. The model promotes low-impact, nature-based tourism and short supply chains, encouraging farm-to-table practices and sustainable agricultural production. Cooperative members are encouraged to adopt green mobility, circular economy solutions, and environmentally responsible business models. The integration of digital tools also helps reduce resource use and supports environmentally conscious visitor behaviour.

Main Challenges and Lessons Learned from the REVIVE Pilots

The pilot activities carried out within the REVIVE project confirmed a set of structural challenges that characterise many inland areas across the Euro-MED region, including rural, mountainous and peripheral territories. The analysis of these challenges, combined with the experience gained during pilot implementation, provided important insights for the development of the REVIVE Territorial Business Model (TBM). In particular, the pilots highlighted the importance of community-based governance mechanisms and territorial cooperation frameworks capable of generating not only economic benefits but also broader community services and territorial value.

Challenges Affecting Inland Territories

The pilot experience confirmed seven major structural challenges affecting inland territories across the Euro-MED region:

Weak stakeholder cooperation and limited collaboration culture: Effective cooperation among local stakeholders remains difficult due to fragmented interests, limited trust and the absence of established collaborative practices. In all pilot areas, the establishment of the REVIVE Inclusive Community Cooperatives (ICCs) required active facilitation by project partners and public authorities, as well as participatory processes aimed at strengthening local dialogue and building trust among actors.

Fragmented supply chains and logistical constraints: Local production systems in inland territories are often highly fragmented, with producers operating individually and facing difficulties in accessing markets and generating added value locally. This causes higher prices and scarce availability of locally produced goods, and over-reliance on the population to big market players that don't retain value to the territory. Geographical conditions, including mountainous terrain, island contexts, transport costs, seasonal demand and small production volumes further constrain competitiveness and reduce economies of scale.

Demographic decline and labour shortages: Many inland areas are experiencing structural depopulation, characterised by ageing populations and the outmigration of younger generations due to limited employment opportunities and reduced service availability. This trend generates labour shortages in key sectors and weakens knowledge transfer between generations, ultimately reducing innovation capacity and entrepreneurial renewal.

Limited digital competences and technological uptake: Many rural SMEs still face significant barriers in adopting digital technologies. Digital skills remain limited and awareness of advanced tools such as digital platforms, AR/VR solutions and artificial intelligence is often low. This digital gap constrains innovation and limits the ability of local businesses to develop effective marketing strategies and reach wider markets.

Administrative and regulatory complexity: The creation of community-based cooperatives, the authorisation of new economic activities and the deployment of technological solutions frequently involve complex administrative procedures. For small rural communities, these regulatory barriers represent a significant obstacle and require stronger institutional support from public authorities and business support organisations.

Climate change and environmental pressures: The South Aegean pilot highlighted the increasing impact of climate change and water scarcity, particularly in island territories. Although this challenge emerged most clearly in this pilot area, climate-related pressures are likely to become increasingly relevant across inland territories in the coming years and should therefore be integrated into future territorial development strategies.

Key Lessons for Territorial Revitalisation

The experience of the REVIVE pilots generated several lessons that can support the future replication and scaling-up of the REVIVE approach across the Euro-MED region.

Community-based governance requires sustained facilitation. Collective territorial initiatives do not emerge spontaneously. The creation of functioning community-based structures requires time, mediation and continuous support from local institutions and development actors. Public authorities therefore play a key role in facilitating collaboration and supporting local governance processes.

Territorial branding strengthens local value chains. Promoting products and services through a shared territorial identity proved significantly more effective than fragmented individual promotion. Collective branding enhances visibility, strengthens market recognition and supports the positioning of inland territories within wider tourism and food systems.

Cross-sector cooperation creates immediate territorial value. The integration of agriculture, tourism, gastronomy, crafts, culture and digital services created tangible benefits already during the pilot phase. Cross-sector collaboration increased market opportunities, improved product visibility and enabled the

creation of integrated visitor experiences. The capacity to connect sectors proved to be one of the main strengths of the REVIVE model.

Digital innovation requires capacity building. The introduction of digital tools, particularly advanced immersive technologies, requires targeted training and awareness-raising. Digital innovation must therefore be accompanied by capacity-building measures and user-oriented technological solutions in order to ensure effective adoption by local actors.

Existing territorial networks could be strengthened. The South Aegean pilot demonstrated that building on existing territorial networks can significantly accelerate implementation and increase impact. Replication efforts should therefore start by assessing existing territorial structures and social capital rather than assuming that a new organisation is always needed.

Community services are a key component of TBM. The pilots showed that ICCs generate value not only through economic activities but also through coordination, training, promotion and community support services. These functions are particularly important in fragile territories, where strengthening social networks and organisational capacity is a prerequisite for sustainable development.

Together, these lessons confirm that the REVIVE model is not simply a tool for economic cooperation, but a broader framework for community-led territorial revitalisation that combines governance, innovation, capacity building and local value creation.

Community Services Developed through the REVIVE ICCs

The community services developed through the REVIVE Innovative Community Cooperatives (ICCs) should be understood not only as services directly supporting participating local actors, but also as wider territorial functions generating social, cultural, environmental and economic benefits for the community as a whole. In this sense, the activities emerging within the REVIVE communities contribute to creating value that extends beyond the immediate interests of participating actors, producing positive effects on the wider territorial ecosystem. These community services play a key role in integrating dimensions of collective utility, social cohesion and local well-being within the territorial development processes activated in the pilot areas (Bacq et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023; Boston et al., 2024). In this perspective, ICCs act not only as collaborative business structures, but also as local service ecosystems that strengthen the resilience, attractiveness and cohesion of inland territories.

The direct services provided by ICCs to their members include coordination, networking, management of collaborative governance systems (formal or informal), training and capacity building, collective branding and promotion, support for digitalisation and creation of fertile environment for cross-sector collaboration. In several pilots, ICCs encouraged joint participation in fairs and markets, facilitated the organisation of local sales initiatives, developed common communication tools and, above all, created direct connections between local producers with tourism, culture, gastronomy and experiential offerings in the territories. Through these activities, the ICCs help small local actors overcome fragmentation, increase visibility, facilitate access to markets and participate in innovation processes. The services emerging from the REVIVE communities can be grouped into three main categories, broadly consistent with the ecosystem services framework proposed by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA).

These initiatives often take the form of economic and market-oriented services, aimed at strengthening local production systems and improving the commercialisation of territorial products. In line with the concept of provisioning ecosystem services described in the

MEA, these activities contribute to enhancing the production, accessibility and circulation of local goods within the territorial system. Their benefits extend not only to producers and SMEs but also to residents, who gain easier access to locally produced goods, while the promotion of territorial products increasingly reaches visitors and tourists. For example, in Tuscany the Food Community promoted local food production through the creation of dedicated sales points and direct

marketing initiatives, while in Greece the Aegean Cuisine Network developed the “Aegean Cuisine Recommended Product” label and established “Aegean Cuisine Corners” in local retail outlets, allowing both residents and visitors to purchase regional products. Similarly, in Spain the development of a B2B platform connecting local producers with tourism operators strengthened the link between agriculture and the tourism sector.

At the same time, the ICCs generate a broader set of indirect services for the territory. By connecting and supporting collaboration among 4-helix stakeholders (public and private actors, NGOs&citizens, academia) they strengthen local identity and values and reinforce the social and economic fabric of local communities.

A significant community service lies in the valorisation of local resources and heritage. The preservation of traditional knowledge and enhancement of local products, biodiversity and cultural practices are the core values of ICCs. This contributes to the preservation of local cultural and natural heritage and improves knowledge of both residents and visitors on the value of local resources.

Several of these initiatives can be associated with cultural ecosystem services (MEA), as they enhance the symbolic, cultural and experiential value of the territories. Territorial promotion and experiential activities increase the visibility and attractiveness of rural areas while reinforcing the cultural identity of local products, traditions and landscapes. By strengthening awareness and recognition of local resources, these initiatives can also contribute to the maintenance and safeguarding of rural territories, one of the key challenges faced by inland areas. Several communities organised food festivals, tasting events and cultural initiatives promoting local gastronomy and territorial heritage. For instance, in Cyprus the initiative “We Eat... Locally” promoted local gastronomy through community events and product exhibitions, while in Greece thematic events such as the Naxos Potato Festival and Tinos Food Paths helped strengthen the identity and international recognition of regional food cultures. In addition, immersive experiences based on digital storytelling tools were developed in several territories – including Spain, Italy and Slovenia – to showcase local production processes and landscapes, contributing to innovative forms of territorial marketing and visitor engagement.

ICCs also support digital and networking services, which can be interpreted as supporting ecosystem functions within the territorial system. These services provide the infrastructural conditions that enable interaction, information exchange and cooperation among stakeholders. They primarily benefit SMEs, entrepreneurs and local institutions by facilitating networking opportunities, improving access to information and strengthening collaborative initiatives. In Croatia, for example, the REVIVE Istria web platform provides a digital space where businesses can publish offers and requests, access information about events and funding opportunities and connect with other stakeholders through networking tools. Similarly, in North Macedonia a digital platform was created to

promote local products and tourism experiences, strengthening the visibility of local initiatives and supporting collaboration among actors. Complementary initiatives focus on knowledge sharing and community capacity building, including training programmes and advisory services supporting entrepreneurship, digital skills and sustainable production practices. For instance, in North Macedonia IoT-based advisory tools were introduced to support beekeepers in improving production management, while in Greece seminars such as “Tools to Success” helped restaurateurs adopt seasonal and sustainable ingredients. In Tuscany, digital training programmes supported SMEs in adopting innovative communication and marketing tools.

Beyond these direct and indirect services, ICCs also contribute to more sustainable patterns of production and consumption. By promoting short supply chains (B2B) and direct relations between producers and consumers (C2B) the attention is put to the quality and origin of local products and services. In addition, the joint branding and promotion, the direct sales points and improved links between agri-food production and hospitality structures help increase and maintain the revenues within the territory. In parallel, the promotion of sustainable practices supports the protection of natural landscapes and biodiversity, generating long-term environmental benefits.

A further indirect service concerns the attractiveness of the territory for visitors and for new business initiatives. The improved visibility of local assets and joint territorial storytelling contribute to overall destination branding. High quality integrated territorial offer attracts tourism activities and stimulates local economic development. The territory as a whole becomes recognisable and more competitive.

Finally, the ICCs support job creation and future-oriented opportunities, especially in activities linked to the green economy, sustainable tourism, local entrepreneurship, digital innovation and community services. By creating new value chains and strengthening the conditions for local enterprise development, they contribute to making inland areas more dynamic and liveable, particularly for younger generations. Their role is therefore not limited to preserving traditions and existing activities, but extends to turning local resources into drivers of long-term innovation and sustainable growth.

Overall, the community services developed within REVIVE show that ICCs can perform a function that goes well beyond the economic interests of their members. They act as enabling structures for cooperation, learning, territorial valorisation, sustainability and social cohesion, while generating benefits for residents, local businesses, visitors and the wider community. In this sense, the REVIVE ICC model demonstrates how community-based business structures can also serve as instruments of broader territorial development.

The REVIVE TBM as a Framework for Collaborative Territorial Revitalization

Building on the experimentation conducted across the seven REVIVE pilot areas, the project developed the REVIVE TBM as a structured framework to support community-based revitalisation processes in Mediterranean inland territories. The model synthesises the experiences emerging from the pilots into an operational approach capable of guiding territorial development initiatives based on collaboration among local actors.

Unlike traditional business models focused on individual organisations, the REVIVE TBM operates at the territorial ecosystem level, supporting cooperation among heterogeneous actors and enabling collective value creation within local communities. In this perspective, the model functions as an orchestration framework that coordinates the actions of public authorities, local businesses, research organisations and civil society actors within a shared territorial development process.

The REVIVE TBM was developed and refined through an extensive participatory process involving stakeholders across the four-helix ecosystem. Through co-design workshops, collaborative meetings and pilot testing activities conducted in the seven territories, recurring patterns and enabling conditions for successful territorial cooperation were identified and synthesised into a shared framework.

The experimentation of the REVIVE TBM in the pilot territories supported the creation and strengthening of ICCs as collaborative governance structures capable of implementing the territorial development processes activated through the model. In this perspective, the REVIVE TBM functions as a methodological framework guiding the establishment, coordination and long-term development of ICCs by structuring stakeholder collaboration, defining shared value creation mechanisms and supporting the organisation of community-based economic initiatives. Through this approach, ICCs translate the principles of participatory governance, cross-sector cooperation and community-led development embedded in the REVIVE TBM into concrete territorial actions.

These elements were synthesised and visualised through an adapted Territorial Business Model Canvas (Figure 2), which illustrates the main components of the REVIVE TBM and the mechanisms through which collaborative territorial value is created.

First, the model highlights the multi-actor ecosystem required to activate community-based territorial development. Rather than relying on a single leading organisation, the REVIVE TBM emphasises the coordinated involvement of heterogeneous actors including public authorities, local SMEs, research



organisations, civil society actors and innovation intermediaries. This diversity of partners constitutes a structural condition for territorial revitalisation, allowing local knowledge, institutional support and innovation capacities to converge.

Second, the model emphasises that territorial revitalisation is driven by collective processes rather than isolated economic activities. The functioning of the ecosystem depends on the capacity of stakeholders to engage in participatory governance, coordinate community initiatives and organise collaborative economic mechanisms such as short supply chains and joint territorial promotion. Within this perspective, digital tools and immersive technologies act as enabling infrastructures that strengthen the visibility and accessibility of local products, services and experience.

The value proposition of the REVIVE model lies in its ability to transform fragmented local resources into integrated territorial offerings. By connecting sectors such as agriculture, gastronomy, tourism, culture and heritage, the model allows territories to move from isolated economic activities to coordinated value chains capable of generating greater territorial visibility, stronger market positioning and more diversified economic opportunities.

A central dimension of the model concerns collaborative governance, which represents the relational infrastructure enabling the functioning of the territorial ecosystem. The REVIVE TBM emphasises the importance of trust-building processes, participatory decision-making and long-term cooperation among stakeholders. These relational dynamics are particularly important in inland areas, where economic fragmentation and limited institutional coordination often hinder the emergence of collective development initiatives.

From an operational perspective, the model also highlights the importance of integrated communication and market access mechanisms that connect local actors with broader audiences. Digital platforms, experiential tourism initiatives and immersive storytelling tools contribute to strengthening the visibility of territorial resources while creating new interfaces between producers, entrepreneurs, residents and visitors.

A distinctive element of the REVIVE TBM is the integration of community services, which represent the collective functions generated by the cooperative ecosystem. Beyond purely economic activities, these services include coordination mechanisms, knowledge exchange, digital training and territorial promotion initiatives that strengthen the organisational capacity of local communities and support the long-term sustainability of collaborative initiatives.

Through these interconnected components, the model generates benefits for a wide range of territorial beneficiaries, including local producers, tourism SMEs, entrepreneurs, public institutions, residents and visitors. By strengthening cooperation and improving access to markets and knowledge, the REVIVE TBM contributes to retaining economic value within the territory while reinforcing social cohesion and territorial identity.

The implementation of the REVIVE TBM is expected to generate multiple territorial impacts. By strengthening cooperation among local actors and



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structuring collaborative value chains, the model improves the visibility and competitiveness of local products and experiences while enhancing coordination among stakeholders operating within the same territorial ecosystem. In doing so, the REVIVE TBM supports the retention of economic value within the territory, reinforces local identity and increases the overall attractiveness of inland areas.

More broadly, the model contributes to strengthening the resilience of local communities by enabling more integrated forms of territorial organisation and supporting the diversification of local economic activities. Through the activation and consolidation of ICCs, the REVIVE TBM provides local actors with a governance and operational framework capable of sustaining long-term collaboration, innovation and collective value creation.

Beyond the specific contexts in which it was tested, the REVIVE TBM offers a replicable framework for community-based territorial development. The model does not prescribe a rigid organisational structure but provides a set of principles, processes and operational components that can be adapted to different territorial conditions. This flexibility allows other rural, mountain and peripheral areas to adopt the model and tailor it to their own resources, institutional settings and development priorities.

In this sense, the REVIVE TBM should be understood not as a static organisational scheme but as a dynamic framework for orchestrating collaborative territorial development processes. By translating the lessons emerging from the seven pilot territories into a coherent operational approach, REVIVE provides other inland regions with a practical tool to support the creation and strengthening of community-based initiatives such as ICCs and to foster more resilient and sustainable territorial development pathways.

Transferability and Replication Potential of the REVIVE TBM

The REVIVE experience shows that the community-based innovative business models can be adapted to a wide range of inland contexts of the Interreg Euro-MED cooperation area, including mountain areas, rural municipalities, peripheral islands and other dispersed territories. Although the pilots differ in terms of geography, economic specialisation, legal forms and governance models, they share a common logic: mobilising local actors around a collective territorial vision, strengthening cross-sector cooperation and introducing digital innovation. This makes the REVIVE ICC model highly transferable, provided that replication is understood as adaptation to context rather than simple duplication.

Five major transferable elements emerged from REVIVE pilot testing activities:

Participatory co-design process used to establish the ICCs and kick off the activities of local action plans. In all pilots, the governance model was built through multi-level stakeholder engagement (4-helix: public-private-academia-civil society), collaborative workshops, and the identification of shared needs and opportunities. This process and place-based dimensions allowed each territory to develop its own activities plan while following a common methodology.

Cross-sector integration within a territorial ecosystem. The pilots proved that stronger links between agriculture, agri-food production, tourism, culture, crafts and local services can both generate new value and increase the local retention of value. This cross-sector integration is particularly relevant for inland areas where micro and small economic operators often work in isolation and where competitiveness depends on creating synergies between sectors.

Territorial Business Model framework. The TBM framework represents a practical tool that can be adopted and adapted by other rural and inland territories seeking to promote social, economic and environmental revitalisation. Developed and tested across the seven REVIVE pilot areas, the model synthesises the main actions, governance mechanisms and collaborative processes that proved effective in activating community-based development initiatives. By providing a structured framework that highlights key actors, activities and value creation dynamics, the TBM offers other territories a concrete reference to support the design of locally grounded revitalisation strategies. Because the framework focuses on collaborative processes rather than prescribing rigid organisational solutions, it can be flexibly adapted to different territorial contexts while

maintaining its core principles of community engagement, cross-sector cooperation and territorial value creation.

Capacity-building and training. Across the pilots, the establishment of the ICCs was accompanied by activities aimed at strengthening local skills both in relation to collaborative and community-based economic models and to the use of digital and innovative tools. Training helped local actors better understand shared governance mechanisms, cooperative approaches, territorial value creation and new forms of service development, while also improving competences in areas such as digital communication, marketing, immersive technologies and online platforms. This proved essential not only for launching the ICCs, but also for supporting their longer-term sustainability. It also shows that replication of the REVIVE model depends not only on transferring an organisational concept, but also on building the capacities needed to manage it effectively.

Use of digital tools and advanced immersive technologies as enabling infrastructure. The pilots demonstrate that tools and technologies like B2B and C2B digital platforms, VR/AR immersive content and AI-supported communication tools can strengthen local business ecosystems and improve territorial marketing efforts. REVIVE pilots also proved that in order to be effective and adopted by local operators the digital innovation had to be introduced through training, facilitation and gradual adoption, especially in areas with low digital maturity.

In order for other territories to be able to replicate the REVIVE community based innovative business model, several enabling conditions have to be put in place. Strong local facilitation, usually by local and/or regional public authorities and other organisations strongly embedded on the territory is essential for the start-up phase. These local actors play a crucial role in mobilising stakeholders, providing technical support, facilitate administrative processes and legitimise the initiative. Replication also depends on the existence of at least a minimum base of local assets that can be valorised, whether linked to agri-food products, natural heritage, crafts, culture, tourism or local knowledge.

Another important lesson from REVIVE is that replication does not necessarily require creating a new legal entity from scratch. In some contexts, the most effective solution may be to formalise a new cooperative or association; in others, it may be preferable to strengthen an existing network, cluster or territorial partnership, as demonstrated by the South Aegean pilot. Informal organisational structures, like the North Macedonian pilot where participants are pursuing the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the future after initially coming together and establishing common ground through this informal organisation, also proved to be effective. This flexibility increases the practical applicability of the model across different communities and divergent regulatory and institutional backgrounds.



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Based on these arguments, the REVIVE business model can be considered not an organisational but a territorial business model that is replicable. The reasons are based on the combination of the methodological principles that support the REVIVE business model: participatory design, cooperative governance, cross-sector integration, community service provision, and digitalised territorial valorisation. Other rural, mountainous, and island territories that aim to revitalise their local development could follow this business model and adjust it according to their own needs and development strategies. Thus, the REVIVE business model could not only provide other territories with some experiences but also with an effective way to develop more resilient and innovative local development models in the inland areas of the Mediterranean.



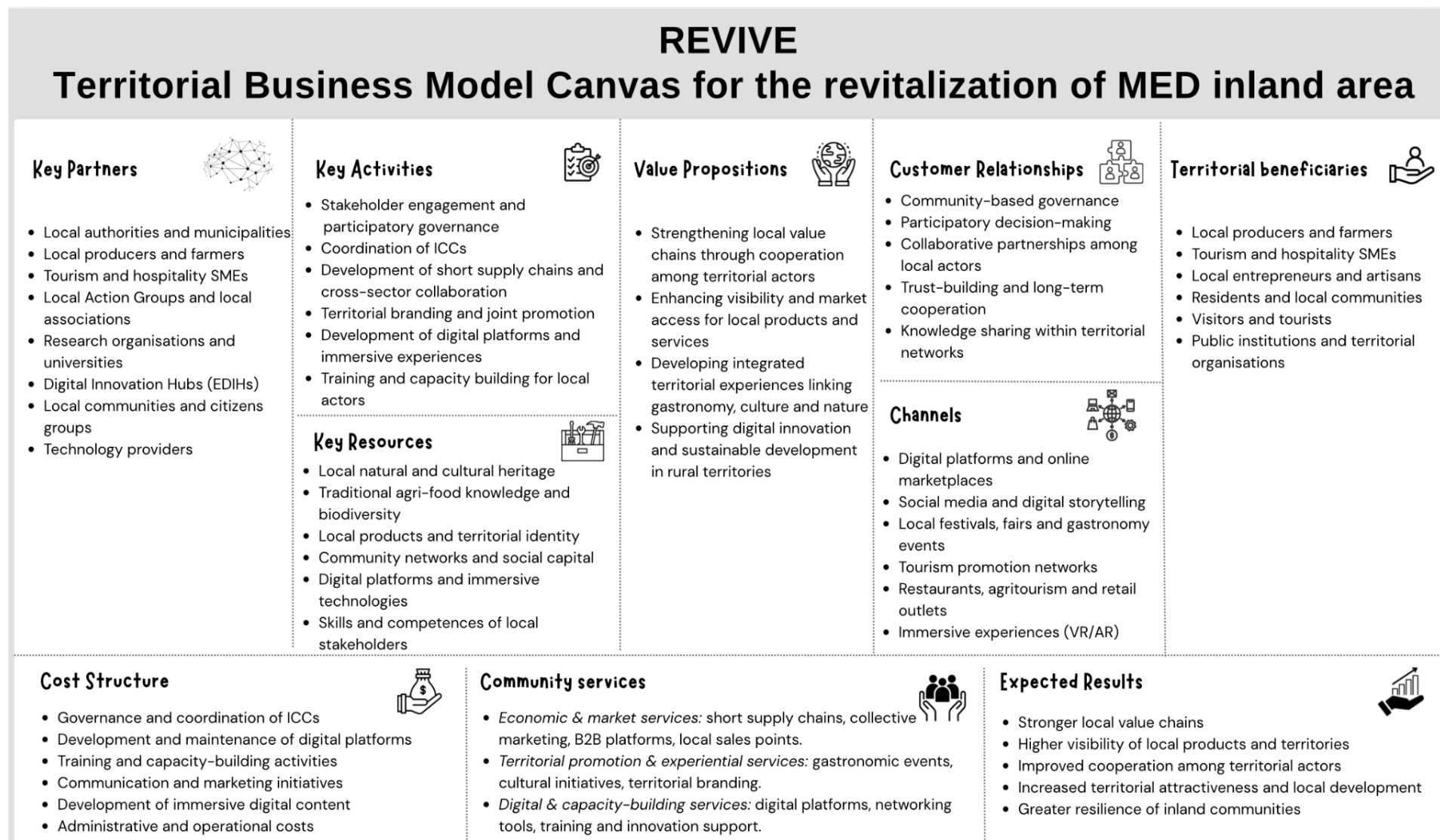
REVIVE

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Figure 2. REVIVE TBM Canvas





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