

Case study: DOT2DOT (Greece)

Introduction	<p>Dot2dot is a social cooperative founded in 2013, specializing in culture, experiential tourism, research, and education. A pioneer in alternative tours in Greece, the cooperative offers unique experiences in Thessaloniki and its surroundings, creating innovative thematic routes and cultural events. Its main goal is to promote the local history, art, and culture, establishing itself as a reference in cultural tourism and inspiring new projects and partnerships.</p>
Context	<p>In October 2024, the cooperative organized the "Ano Poli: Thessaloniki's Traditional Upper Town" tour for the partners of the GreenTour project. This tour provided an opportunity to explore sustainable practices and the integration of the local community in the context of responsible tourism.</p>
Challenge	<p>Promoting a sustainable and community-respecting tour is a challenge that requires a deep understanding of the local history, the identification of relevant stakeholders, and the implementation of practices that can be effectively applied and communicated. In the case of Dot2dot, the cooperative adopts several sustainable practices during its tours, aligned with the proposal of responsible and conscious tourism.</p>
Actions taken	<p>Examples of sustainable actions in the tour:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Carbon-free tour During the tour, all participants traveled exclusively on foot, exploring the city through walks in historical and cultural spaces. This not only reduced the carbon footprint of the tour but also provided visitors with a more authentic and immersive experience of the city.

	<p>2. Minimizing paper use The cooperative chose to reduce the use of printed materials by replacing them with reusable laminated cards. Participants could access interactive information about the local history practically and sustainably, without generating unnecessary waste.</p> <p>3. Supporting the local economy The tour encouraged the local economy by directing participants to local businesses. At the end of the tour, the partners visited Thessaloniki's oldest café, where they interacted with residents and enjoyed traditional products, boosting local commerce and strengthening their connection with the region's culture.</p>
Results	<p>Dot2Dot's success in integrating sustainability into tourism highlights the importance of balancing environmental responsibility, cultural preservation, and economic benefits. Their initiatives showcase how sustainable tourism is not just a marketing tool, but a transformative strategy for both businesses and communities.</p>
Lesson learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing learning moments during the tours, showcasing the positive impacts of the adopted actions, creates a meaningful experience for visitors, fostering environmental awareness that can extend into other areas of their lives. - Listening to and collaborating with local stakeholders ensures that sustainable tourism is implemented inclusively, aligning the interests of visitors, residents, and others involved. - Sharing practices adopted during the tours through social media, newsletters, and other formats helps spread the benefits of sustainable tourism and attract more participants committed to the cause.