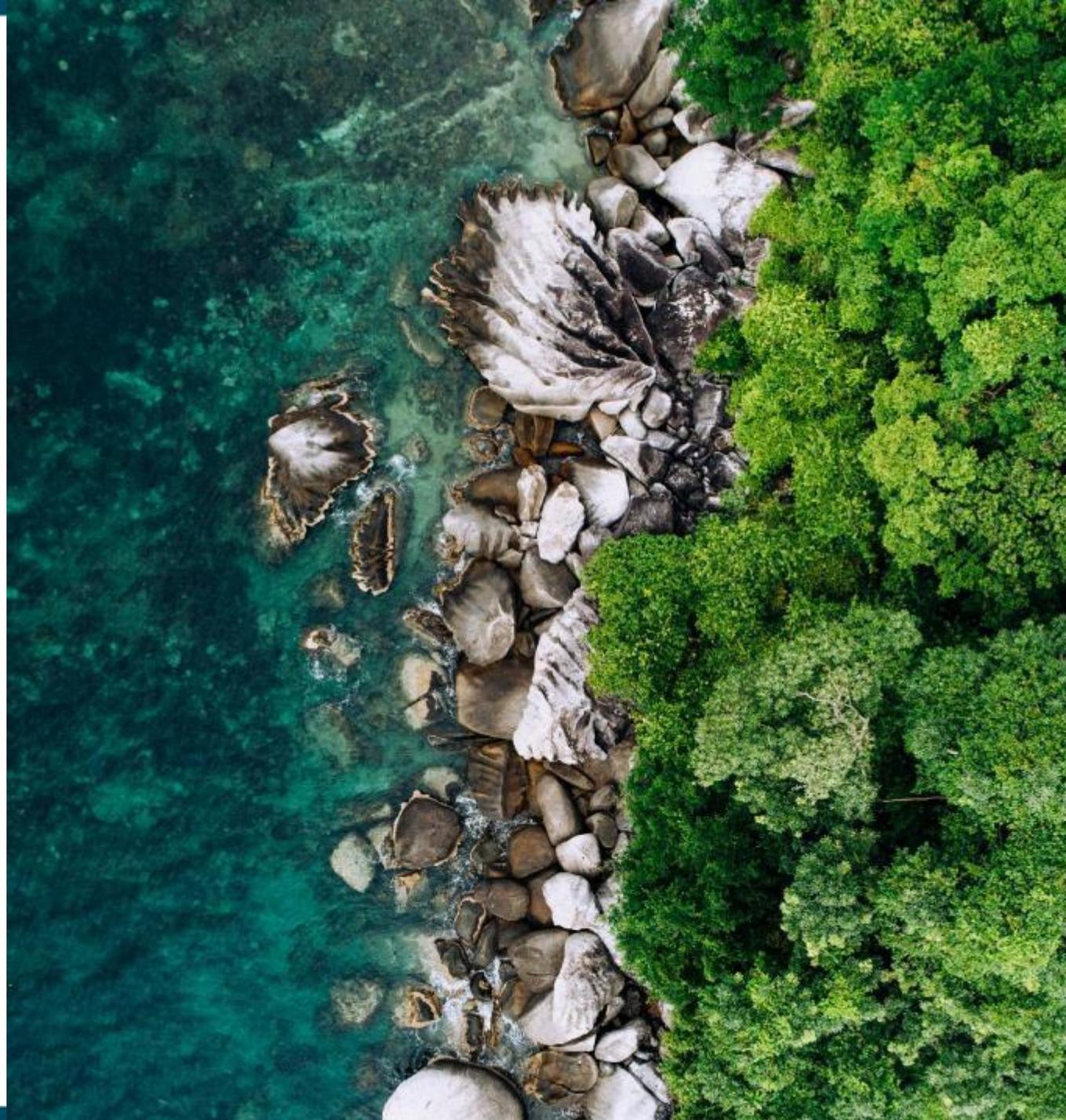GLOBAL
**DESTINATION
SUSTAINABILITY
MOVEMENT**
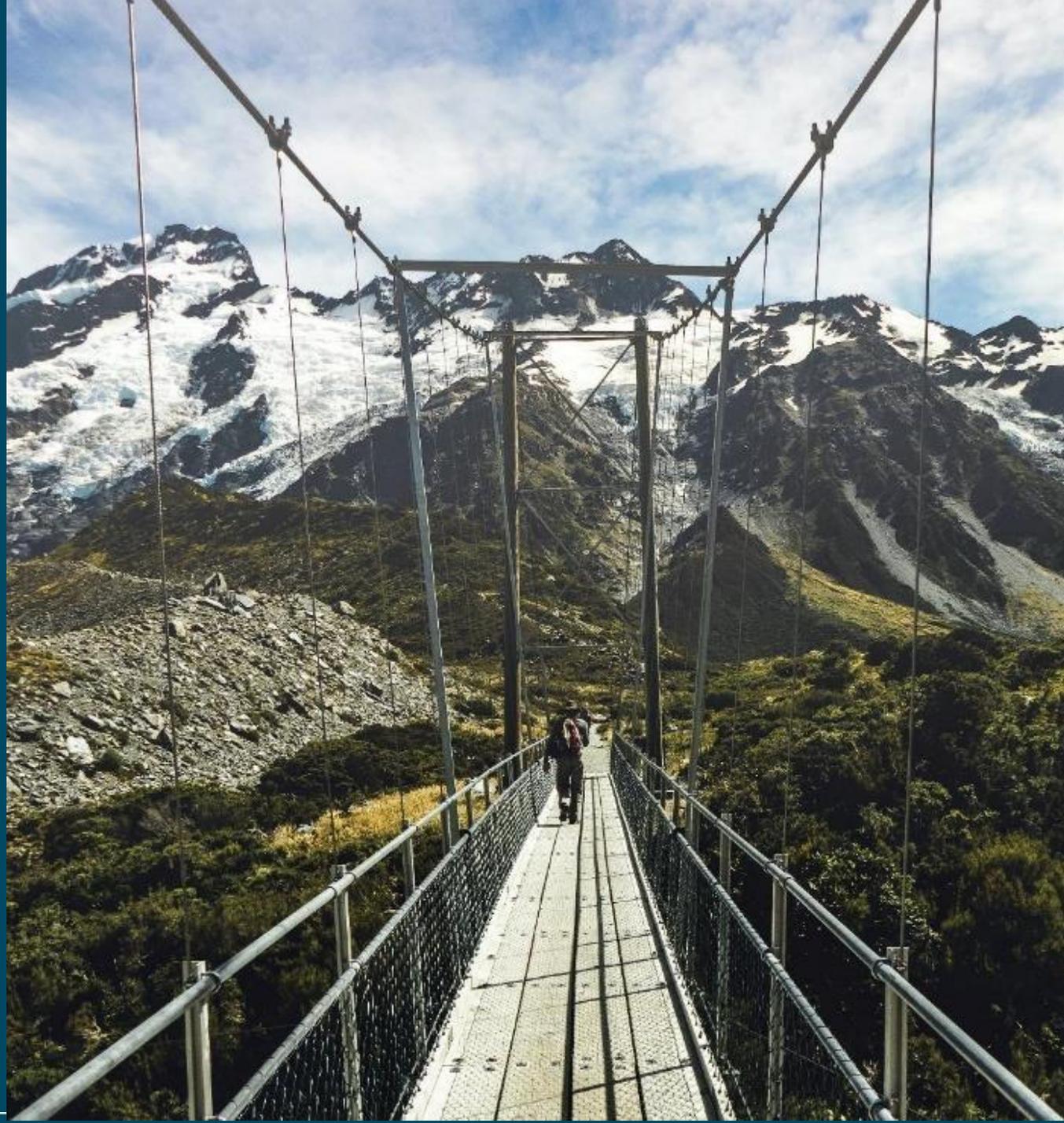
**From Insight to Impact:
How Data Powers Regenerative
Destination Transformation**

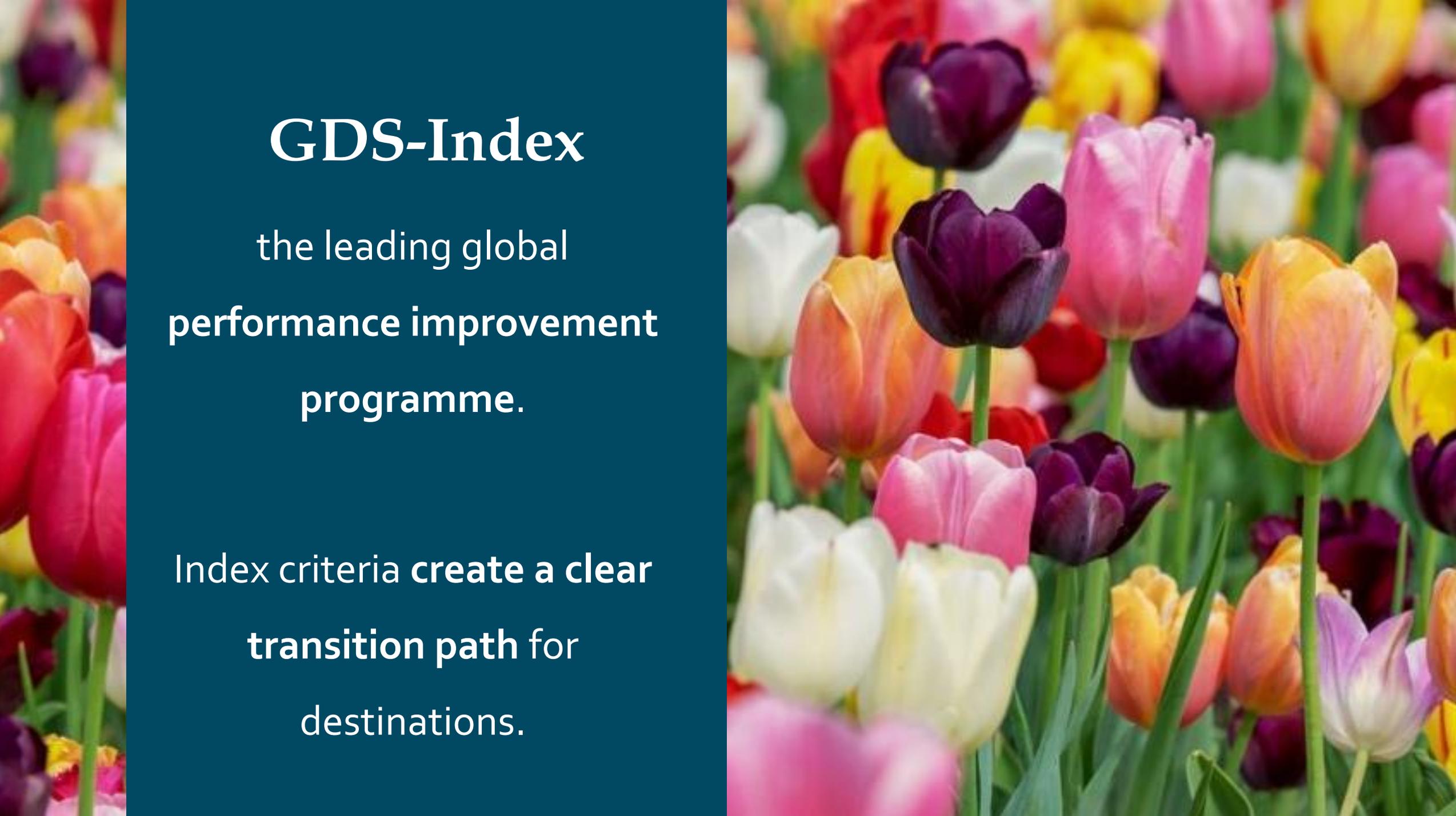**Marta Mills**

Baltic Tourism Forum, 2/10/2025

GDS-Index destinations are

using data

not just to report, but

to improve, make an impact,

and regenerate.

GDS-Index

the leading global **performance improvement programme**.

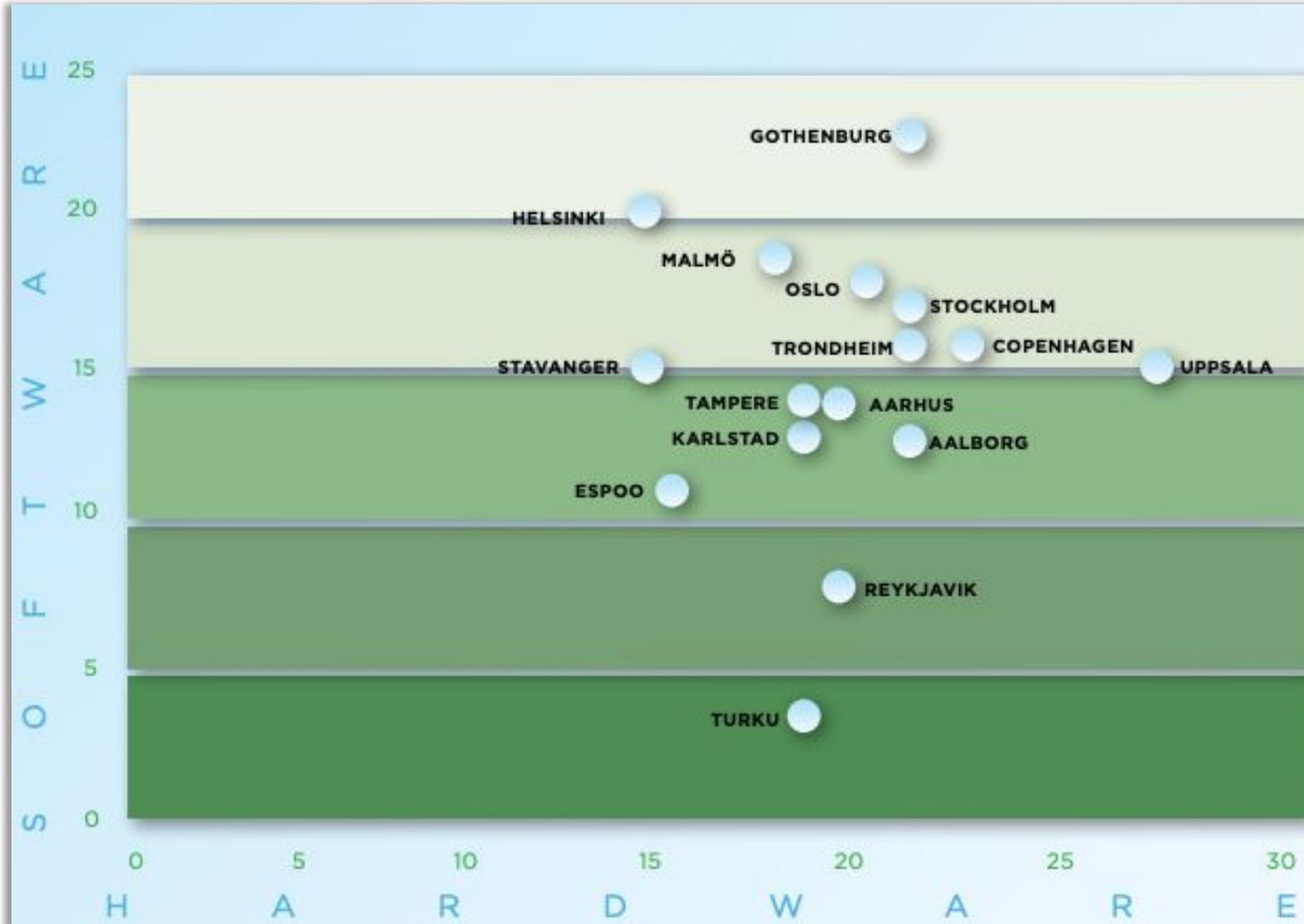Index criteria **create a clear transition path** for destinations.

Scandinavian Sustainable Destination Index

The idea for a sustainability scorecard was born in 2011 and the Scandinavian Sustainable Destination Index was launched in 2012.

2012 ICCA Sustainable Scandinavian Index

Benchmarking	Hardware	Software	Total
Gothenburg	21	22	43
Uppsala	25	15	40
Copenhagen	22	16	38
Stockholm	21	17	38
Oslo	20	18	38
Malmö	18	19	37
Trondheim	21	16	37
Helsinki	15	20	35
Aalborg	21	12	33
Aarhus	19	14	33
Tampere	18	14	32
Karlstad	18	13	31
Stavanger	15	15	30
Reykjavik	19	8	27
Espoo	14	11	25
Turku	18	3	21

GDS-INDEX: WHAT DO WE BENCHMARK?

City Environmental Performance

- Climate, Energy and Emissions
- Circularity and Waste
- Water
- Air Quality
- Transportation
- Biodiversity
- Alignment with Tourism

City Social Performance

- SDG Alignment
- Corruption
- Personal safety
- Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity
- Health, Safety, and Wellness
- Accessibility
- Resident Engagement
- Funding Mechanisms

Supplier Performance

- Hotels
- Airport
- Agencies (PCOs & DMCs)
- Restaurants
- Venues
- Attractions
- Academia
- Tourism and Event Businesses

Destination Management

- Destination Strategy
- Governance and Reporting
- Policy and Certification
- Capacity Building
- Impact Measurement
- Marketing and Communications
- Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
- Mobility
- Climate Action

City Environmental Performance: 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | 7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY | 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES | 13 CLIMATE ACTION | 15 LIFE ON LAND

City Social Performance: 1 NO POVERTY | 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | 5 GENDER EQUALITY | 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES | 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Supplier Performance: 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE | 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION | 13 CLIMATE ACTION | 14 LIFE BELOW WATER | 15 LIFE ON LAND

Destination Management: 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH | 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE | 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES | 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION | 17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
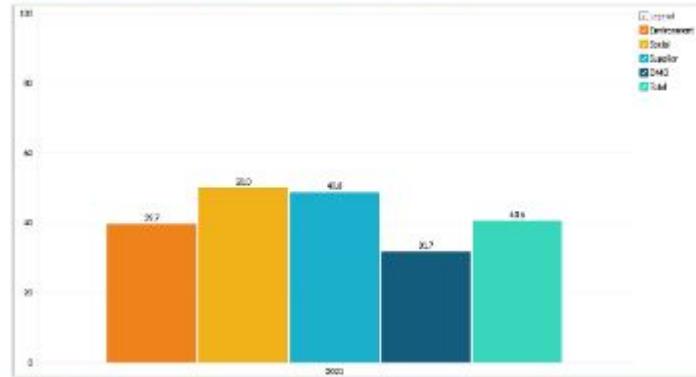
CO-CREATED BY DESTINATIONS FOR DESTINATIONS

For more detail visit: www.gds.earth/index
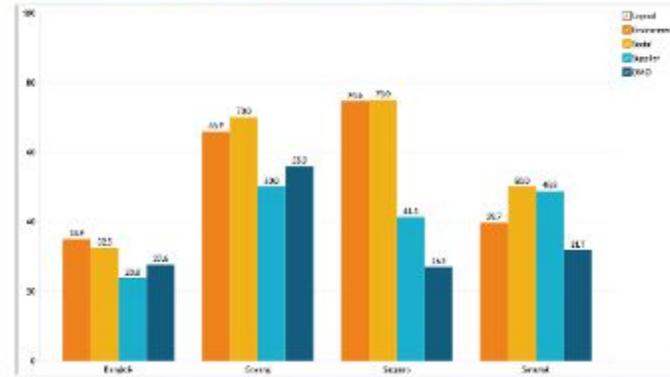
Performance Improvement Report -
Insights and Data

Detailed report on your performance across 4 categories

Destinations performance by category

Comparison with neighbours in your region

Performance against peers and competitors

Identification of your strengths and opportunities

Analysis Summary

A list of recommendations based on the opportunities

Recommendations

10 YEARS DRIVING CHANGE

AVERAGE PERFORMANCE EVOLUTION BY YEAR

Top Ten Average: 59.60% (2016), 69.87% (2017), 73.30% (2018), 79.18% (2019), 73.20% (2020), 81.26% (2021), 85.84% (2022), 89.71% (2023), 85.99% (2024), 87.03% (2025)

The GDS-Index Average: 51.04% (2016), 54.44% (2017), 55.13% (2018), 61.70% (2019), 58.19% (2020), 61.69% (2021), 67.99% (2022), 61.56% (2023), 62.79% (2024), 66.77% (2025)

*TOP TEN AVERAGE

*THE GDS-INDEX AVERAGE

2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025

A **31%** increase in average performance in 10 years and a **46%** increase in the Top 10.

"Destinations are rapidly moving **from inaction to action** on climate.

In just one year, the share of destinations **reporting no climate activity dropped dramatically** across all levels — sector-wide, supply chain, and within DMOs themselves"

· Published **climate action plans nearly doubled (20% → 39%), and climate risk studies rose (20% → 34%).**

· **Net zero commitments** rose 39% → 51%)

· **GD: 18 indexing cities in 2025.** Before we introduced the Climate criteria, around **10 indexing cities** had signed; in 2025, **8 more**.
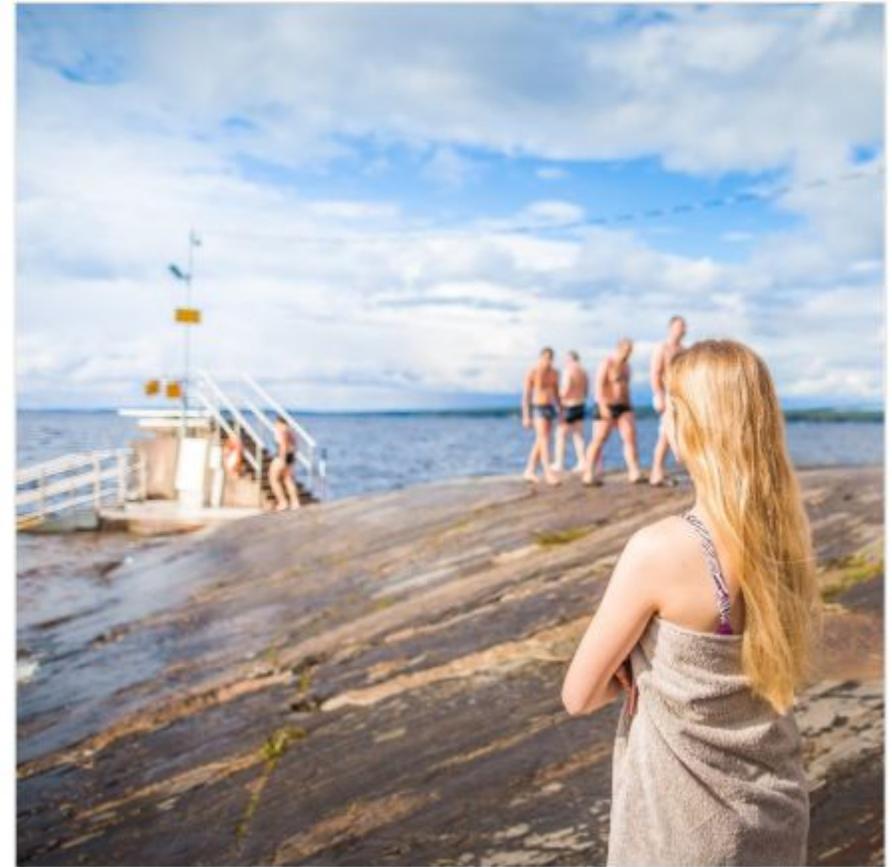
- Added local sentiment on tourism as one of their strategic indicators and started measuring

- Developing ways to direct visitors to less popular saunas and incentivise to visit them during less popular hours

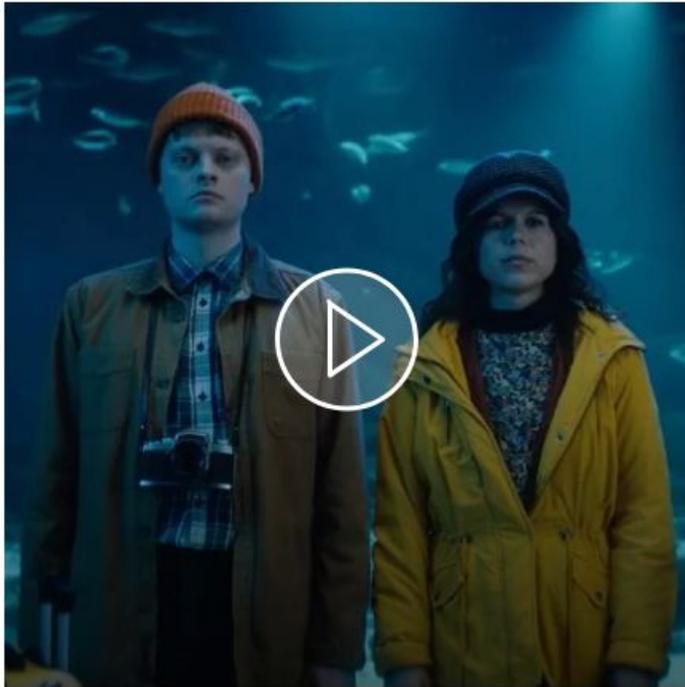SAUNA CAPITAL
TAMPERE · FINLAND

Encouraging suppliers to get certified

New sustainability strategy

Managing overtourism

Engaging suppliers

So much to enjoy, so close to you: https://www.visitaarhus.com/corporate/so-much-enjoy

- Reduced the production crew to three
- The crew was local, catering plant-based, waste was sorted and weighed, and costumes were borrowed.
- Partnered with GoodLoop on YouTube and gave viewers a choice - the more they watched, the more we donated to 1% For The Planet
- They have also measured the CO_2 emissions of the production of the videos as well as from media advertising

Connecting the Dots with GDS-Index System Map: 163 Connections

Most Influential GDS-Index Criteria

Rank	Influential Criterion	Category
1	Climate Action at Sector Level	🟢 Environmental
2	Climate Action for Suppliers	🔷 Supplier
3	Monitor Tourism	🔵 Destination Management
4	Circular Economy	🟢 Environmental
5	Visitor Management – Destination	🔵 Destination Management
6	GHG Emissions	🟢 Environmental
7	DEI Strategy	🔵 Destination Management
8	DMO Strategy	🔵 Destination Management
9	Monitor Events	🔵 Destination Management
10	Community Engagement	🟡 Social

Source: social network analysis of the GDS-Index System Map
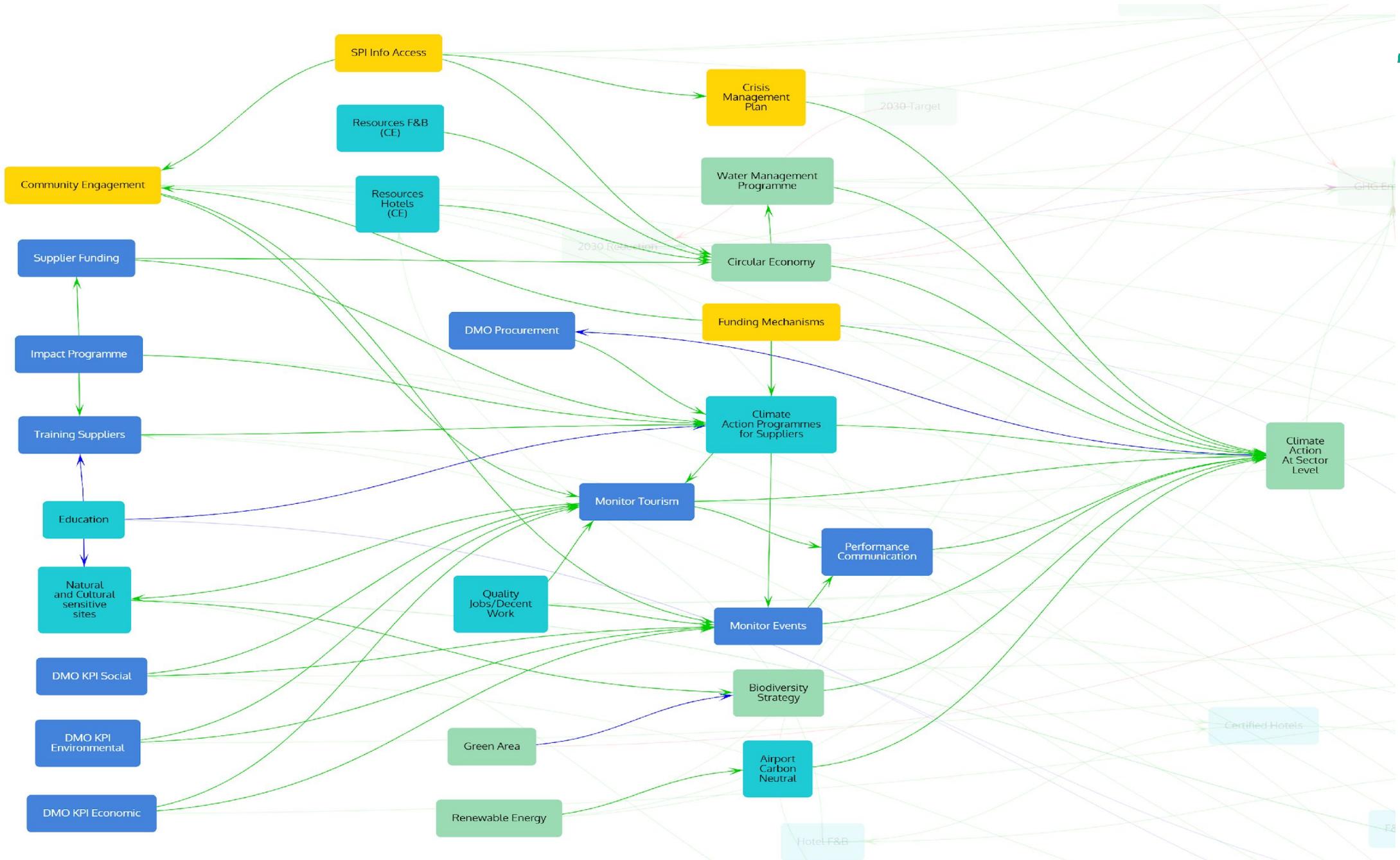
2025 TOP 40

		2025	2024
Helsinki*	1	93.52	92.43
Gothenburg	2	91.51	90.83
Copenhagen*	3	88.76	88.19
Aalborg	4	87.06	82.98
Glasgow	5	86.00	81.88
Tampere	6	85.76	76.96
Aarhus	7	85.15	85.68
Lyon	8	84.40	80.16
Belfast	9	84.40	83.14
Reykjavik*	10	83.72	78.28

		2025	2024
Melbourne	11	83.03	76.61
Kerry	12	82.80	77.65
Singapore*	13	82.34	83.37
Barcelona	14	81.88	75.57
Goyang	15	81.65	78.90
Brisbane	16	81.19	75.23
Berlin*	17	80.50	75.92
Cork	18	80.08	77.18
Dublin*	19	80.05	75.69
Montreal	20	79.82	74.77

		2025	2024
Bilbao	21	79.82	80.27
Basel	22	79.59	71.40
Quebec	23	79.13	73.74
Stockholm*	24	79.13	75.57
Sydney	25	78.56	83.13
Clare	26	77.24	75.77
Victoria	27	77.06	77.17
Songkhla	28	76.84	74.89
Galway	29	76.84	76.06
Faroe Islands	30	75.92	74.88

		2025	2024
Luzern	31	75.69	72.82
Marseille	32	75.00	
Kumamoto	33	74.54	63.42
Milan	34	74.31	70.18
Manchester	35	73.79	63.27
Ostersund	36	72.71	65.71
Strasbourg	37	71.79	66.97
Limerick	38	71.34	73.51
Ljubljana*	39	70.76	64.16
Amsterdam*	40	69.72	61.81

*Capital Cities

Gap in top 40 closed from 31 points in 2024 to 24 points in 2025

Nine new destinations in Top 40
Four new in Top 10

'Just because a destination is in the Top 40 doesn't mean they are "sustainable." No city is. What it does mean is that **they understand the challenges, are engaging stakeholders, and have a plan to make things better**.'

Destinations show leadership through purposeful use of insights and data that helps them regenerate.
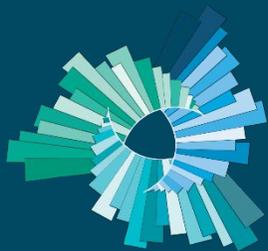
Here is to the next 10 years of transformation!

GLOBAL
DESTINATION
SUSTAINABILITY
INDEX

You?

Thank you

For more information please contact
marta.mills@gds.earth
or visit
www.gds.earth

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MOVEMENT**