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3.2.2. Upgraded DestiMED Plus Standard

DestiMED PLUS Project

Ecotourism in Mediterranean Destinations: From Monitoring and Planning to Promotion and Policy Support

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INTRODUCTION

The DestiMED Standard is a complete set of criteria and indicators for protected areas and LECs (Local Ecotourism Clusters), developed during the DestiMED project and adopted by the MEET Network, to manage aspects like the quality and the sustainability of the ecotourism products they offer to the market. The Standard consists of several pillars and supporting criteria that take into account governance, conservation, socio-economic and environmental considerations.

The current DestiMED Standard consists of four pillars: Enabling Conditions, Assessment of Product Suppliers, Quality and Sustainability of the Product and Quality of the Guest Experience. These pillars are evaluated over the course of the three phases of the MEET membership. The Enabling Conditions are assessed during the application phase. The second and third pillars, Assessment of Product Suppliers and Quality and Sustainability of the Product, are evaluated during the membership phase. Finally, the Quality of the Guest Experience is assessed during the promotion phase, each time travellers experience a product.

The aim of the present activity is to upgrade the DestiMED Standard considering new indicators and methodologies to improve the completeness and the structure of the Standard. This will allow to give a better and broader picture of the excellence of ecotourism products and to have more accurate data in terms of its performance.

UPGRADED DESTIMED STANDARD

Structure of the upgraded Standard

The upgraded DestiMED Standard contains only two pillars, one dealing with the destination - i.e. the territory under the influence of the Protected Area managing body that act as a tourism DMO (Destination Marketing Organization) - and one on the tourism product - the package.

Each pillar consists of different sets of indicators, grouped according to the different topics, that are used to assess the performance of the ecotourism product and its related destination against the upgraded Standard.

The [first pillar](#) is applied to evaluate the performance of the protected area and the LEC with regard to the “**Enabling Conditions**”, that are the basic and mandatory requirements to comply with, at first instance, to be able to move on to the next phase of the Standard process. The Enabling Conditions consider conformity with two main aspects related to **Conservation** and **Governance**.

Pillar 1, Enabling Conditions, is assessed as follows:

- How? The tool used to collect the data to assess the Enabling Conditions pillar is a Self-Assessment Survey, i.e. a list of performance indicators concerning resp. how the Protected Areas manages tourism and how the LEC governs the product design process.
- When? This first pillar must be evaluated every time a protected area wants to create a new ecotourism product, but it is also necessary to monitor it continuously. In this sense, it will be required to update the Self-Assessment Survey every three years.

The **second pillar** refers to the tourism **product**, and is used to measure the quality and the sustainability of the ecotourism product developed by the LEC. A first set of indicators assesses the overall **quality** of the ecotourism product and of the tour operations quality. A second and a third set of indicators evaluates the **sustainability** of each possible supplier of the ecotourism product from a socio-economic and environmental point of view.

Pillar 2 Product, is assessed as follows:

- How? The means to assess the Product pillar are for the quality part a Self-Assessment Survey and a questionnaire filled in by external “testers” of the package; for the sustainability part the data on each service provider collected by the LEC.
- When? The ecotourism package has to go through the Product pillar assessment every three years. The sustainability part of the second pillar should be also monitored each time there is a new service provider, to be applied only on this new service provider, and with these new data LEC must recalculate the sustainability performance of the whole ecotourism product.

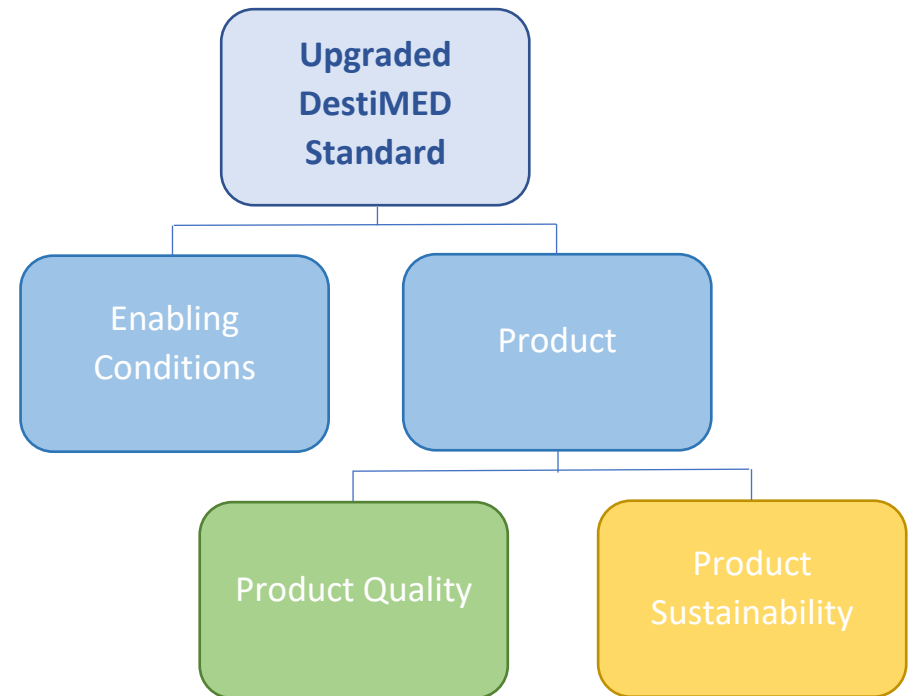


Figure 1. Upgraded DestiMED Standard scheme.

Outcomes of the upgraded Standard

The [results](#) of the evaluation process of the upgraded Standard are quantitative results with values ranging from -2 to +2 depending on the performance degree of the product (Table 1). In order to be able to market the product, it is required that at least a score of 0 is obtained for each topic that composes a pillar. A performance of 0 is associated with compliance with legislation and basic requirements. Along with these quantitative values, a series of guidelines and recommendations are given to allow to improve the performance to reach a minimum score of 0 and be able to commercialize the product or simply improve the performance and reach an ideal performance.

2	Ideal performance
1	Intermediate positive performance
0	Compliance
-1	Intermediate negative performance
-2	No data or Non-acceptable performance

Table 1. Generic scale to assess product performance.

ANNEX 1 UPGRADED DESTIMED STANDARD INDICATORS

1. *Enabling Conditions*

1.1 Legitimacy and voice	1.1.1	Existence of a stakeholder map including an indication of key stakeholders
	1.1.2	Relevant rightsholders and stakeholders are represented in the LEC and can have a say or participate in decision-making
	1.1.3	Ratio of male and female LEC members
	1.1.4	Degree of representation of different age groups at the LEC
	1.1.5	The LEC has a document specifying its organisation (composition, membership, meetings, tasks, roles, responsibilities)
1.2 Direction	1.2.1	There is a consistent strategic and agreed vision for tourism development that is in line with the values of the PA and the REC and that is linked with actions (action plan)
	1.2.2	Regional (REC) and local authorities were informed about the strategy and action plan and did not express any formal objections
1.3 Performance	1.3.1	Degree of participation in product development
	1.3.2	The LEC has specified its service provider selection procedures
	1.3.3	The LEC identifies a tour operator that can, and is willing to, organize and execute the MEET ecotourism package and the required monitoring procedures
	1.3.4	The tour operator has consulted with and obtained approval, where appropriate, from local community leaders regarding cultural experiences to be included in the package tour
	1.3.5	Ratio of planned and implemented measures (according to the agreed tasks of the LEC)
	1.3.6	The LEC ensures the use of monitoring tools (e.g. LEC Self-Assessment, EF) and related data collection as required by the Standard
	1.3.7	Extent to which proposed recommendations (from the improvement plans) are implemented to improve the products
	1.3.8	Degree of activity of the LEC (meetings in person or online)
	1.3.9	Extent to which the LEC has triggered new cooperation between tourism and conservation stakeholders
	1.3.10	Extent to which public authorities and decision-makers are aware of the vision of the LEC and support the further integration of ecotourism aspects into regional policies
1.4 Accountability	1.4.1	Extent to which information about meetings and activities is shared with stakeholders and rightsholders
	1.4.2	Extent to which information on meetings and activities is publicly accessible
	1.4.3	Basic key documents (set of rules, strategy) are available online
	1.4.4	Presence of an easily accessible mechanism to receive and react to LEC feedback
	1.4.5	Degree to which feedback is considered by the LEC
	1.4.6	The REC and the Audit Team dispose of the latest documentation in written form
	1.4.7	Existence of a reporting method from the ITO to the LEC
1.5 Fairness and Rights	1.5.1	Number of complaints reported by local communities, stakeholders and rightsholders
	1.5.2	Extent to which stakeholders and LEC members feel fairly treated
	1.5.3	Number of reported infringements and complaints from authorities

1.

Enabling Conditions (continuation)

1.6 Sound Design Ecotourism Product	1.6.1	The tour package is focused on the Protected Area and the itinerary incorporates several activities related to the Protected Area
	1.6.2	The tour package is targeting MEET target markets
	1.6.3	Presence of a local group leader in the itinerary
	1.6.4	The characteristics of the products to be developed show that is tailored for the off-season; a number of people aligned with what agreed within the LEC is stated in the package programme
	1.6.5	Existence of nature-based activities in the itinerary
	1.6.6	Existence of cultural non-invasive activities in the itinerary
	1.6.7	Existence of an activity of real interaction with local community in the itinerary
	1.6.8	Existence of sustainable transport in the itinerary
1.7 Legal and Regulatory Conditions	1.7.1	The site meets the IUCN definition of a Protected Area and/or is recognised as a 'Conserved Area'. The site is assigned one of the six IUCN Protected Area management categories, or is assigned as an Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measure
	1.7.2	The protected area has a current management/conservation plan or equivalent that is used to guide management priorities and activities. It has stated conservation, but also socio-economic objectives. The park is aware of the major pressures, threats and major park values to enable effective ecotourism planning
	1.7.3	The protected area has applied visitor regulations in place (group size, mode of transport, waste disposal, noise pollution, etc.) designed to minimize negative impacts on biodiversity/natural resources. The information is accessible to users and visitors
	1.7.4	The protected area has a visitor management plan with clear objectives or equivalent specifying the use, the visitor infrastructure and behavioural regulations
	1.7.5	The park manages uses and access in an active way to minimise potential negative impacts (e.g. through permits, design, access control, or education, siting of facilities, provision of facilities, law enforcement) whilst striving to accommodate the needs of users
	1.7.6	The PA continuously monitors visitor flows and impacts (seasonality, peaks, numbers, motivation, survey, hot spots, impacts on ecological status of vulnerable/threatened species)
	1.7.7	The park has a visitor management plan with clear objectives or equivalent specifying the use, the visitor infrastructure and behavioural regulations
1.8 Impacts on Conservation	1.8.1	Existence of a conservation activity
	1.8.2	Total spending for activities directly related to the Protected Area (e.g. entrance fees) and conservation-related activities (e.g. voluntourism) is submitted by the tour operator and approved by the LEC
	1.8.3	Total spending on local suppliers used in the tour package is submitted by the tour operator and approved by the LEC
	1.8.4	The tour operator understands, and complies with, existing local, national and international regulations and guidelines concerning wildlife interactions, including wildlife viewing
	1.8.5	Proof of commitment of tour operator to comply with the rules (as amendment to the contractual arrangement)
	1.8.6	The tour package includes activities providing clear impacts on tourists' knowledge about key conservation values of the PA
	1.8.7	There is no obvious evidence that the environmental impacts of the ecotouristic package are majorly threatening the achievement of the site's objectives

2.1

Product Quality

2.1.1 Product Quality Characteristics	2.1.1.1	Accommodations are integrated with the natural environment and deeply connected with the area's local culture
	2.1.1.2	Meals included in the package feature primarily local ingredients, recipes and cooking methods
	2.1.1.3	Service providers in the tour packages are locally owned and operated
	2.1.1.4	The service provider does NOT buy, trade, or sale endangered, rare wild animals and plants or products
	2.1.1.5	The service provider does NOT keep captive wildlife unless there is evidence of a registered rehabilitation program and or documented management plan addressing animal welfare
	2.1.1.6	Accommodations are integrated with the natural environment and deeply connected with the area's local culture
2.1.2 Tour Operations Quality Assurance	2.1.2.1	The tour operator is professional, responsive, reliable and communicates clearly with visitors before and during the tour
	2.1.2.2	The group leader is local, experienced, and demonstrates extensive knowledge of nature, culture, and/or traditions. He or she is fluent in English
	2.1.2.3	The group leader has applicable qualifications and licenses necessary to fulfill their role.
	2.1.2.4	The excursion guides are local, experienced, and demonstrate extensive knowledge of nature, culture, and/or traditions
	2.1.2.5	The excursion guides have applicable qualifications and licenses necessary to fulfill their role.
	2.1.2.6	The group leader provides insights, context, and deeper understanding of conservation objectives of the protected area and cultural heritage
	2.1.2.7	Presence of a local group leader in the itinerary
	2.1.2.8	The tour package is compatible with the conservation targets, objectives and the ecological coherence of the protected area. The package activities taking place in the protected area are discussed with, and approved by, the protected area manager

2.2

Product

Sustainability

2.2.1 Working Conditions	2.2.1.1	Forced labour / Illegal labour
	2.2.1.2	% of jobs in tourism that are seasonal
	2.2.1.3	Working hours / Overtime
	2.2.1.4	Fair salary
2.2.2 Gender Equality	2.2.2.1	% of employment for each gender and gender wage gap
2.2.3 Health & Safety	2.2.3.1	Presence of a formal policy concerning health and safety
2.2.4 Freedom of Association & Collective Bargaining	2.2.4.1	Workers are free to join unions of their choosing
2.2.5 Training	2.2.5.1	Training hours per year
2.2.6 Local Capacity Building	2.2.6.1	Partnerships involving the local community
2.2.7 Local Employment	2.2.7.1	% of workforce hired locally
	2.2.7.2	% of spending on locally based suppliers
2.2.8 Well-being	2.2.8.1	Residents' perception of tourism impacts
2.2.9 Tourism	2.2.9.1	The service favours local tourism/residents
2.2.10 Integration of sustainability on supply chain	2.2.10.1	Environmental/social criteria for supplier selection
	2.2.10.2	The company works to reduce the environmental impact of its products
2.2.11 Supplier Relationship	2.2.11.1	Payments on time to suppliers
2.2.12 Transparency	2.2.12.1	Use of voluntary verified certifications/labelling for environmental/sustainable quality and/or a sustainability report
2.2.13 Quality of the service	2.2.13.1	Accessibility to people with disabilities
2.2.14 Health & Safety	2.2.14.1	Risk management plan
2.2.15 Feedback Mechanism	2.2.15.1	Presence of a mechanism for customers to provide feedback
2.2.16 Ecological Footprint	2.2.16.1	Percentage of service providers in the package have completed the sector specific Ecological footprint questionnaire

ANNEX 2 DATA VISUALIZATION PROPOSAL

This annex presents a proposal for the visualization of the data obtained from the application of the upgraded DestiMED Standard, focusing already on the new monitoring platform.

The proposal shows a pie chart for Pillar 1 Enabling Conditions and a pie chart for Pillar 2 Product (Figure 2 and Figure 3). Merely what changes is the level of data aggregation, being more aggregated in the second case.

Each pie chart, contains the results of each topic that is part of the given Pillar, according to the colour scale used to evaluate the performance (Table 1). Moreover, the numerical value placed at the centre of the pie chart indicates the average of the performance values of all the topics of the particular Pillar, and therefore, this value determines the overall performance of the product for that pillar.

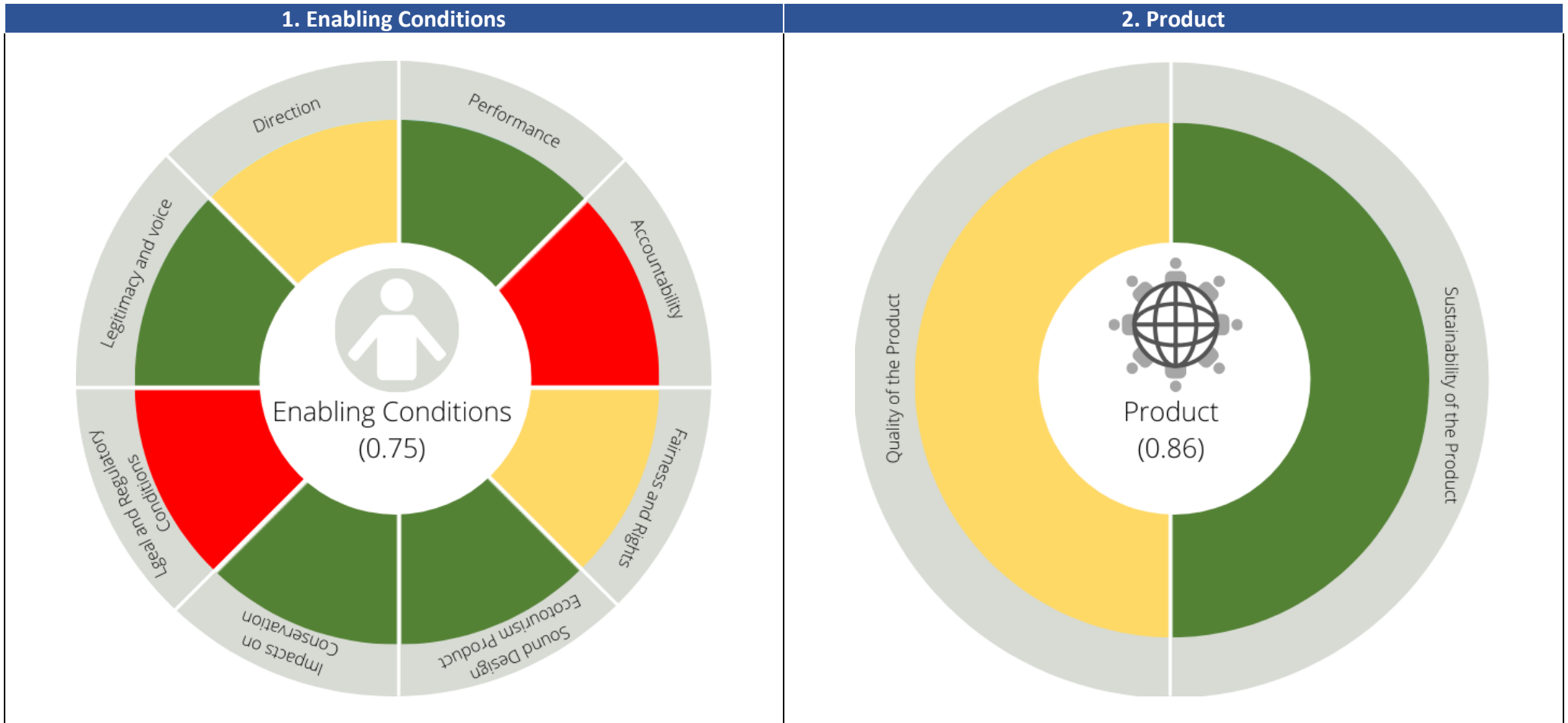


Figure 2. Overview data visualization proposal.

Finally, in the figure of the present page, it is showed how more detailed data from each pillar could be visualized. The idea is that, by clicking on each slice of the pie chart, more detailed results are displayed for each topic. These detailed results consist, first of all and according to the colour scale (Table 1), the performance of each indicator that has been assessed for that particular topic (slice). In second place, it is also interesting that by clicking to each indicator, one can have access to a series of recommendations to be able to improve on that particular issue.

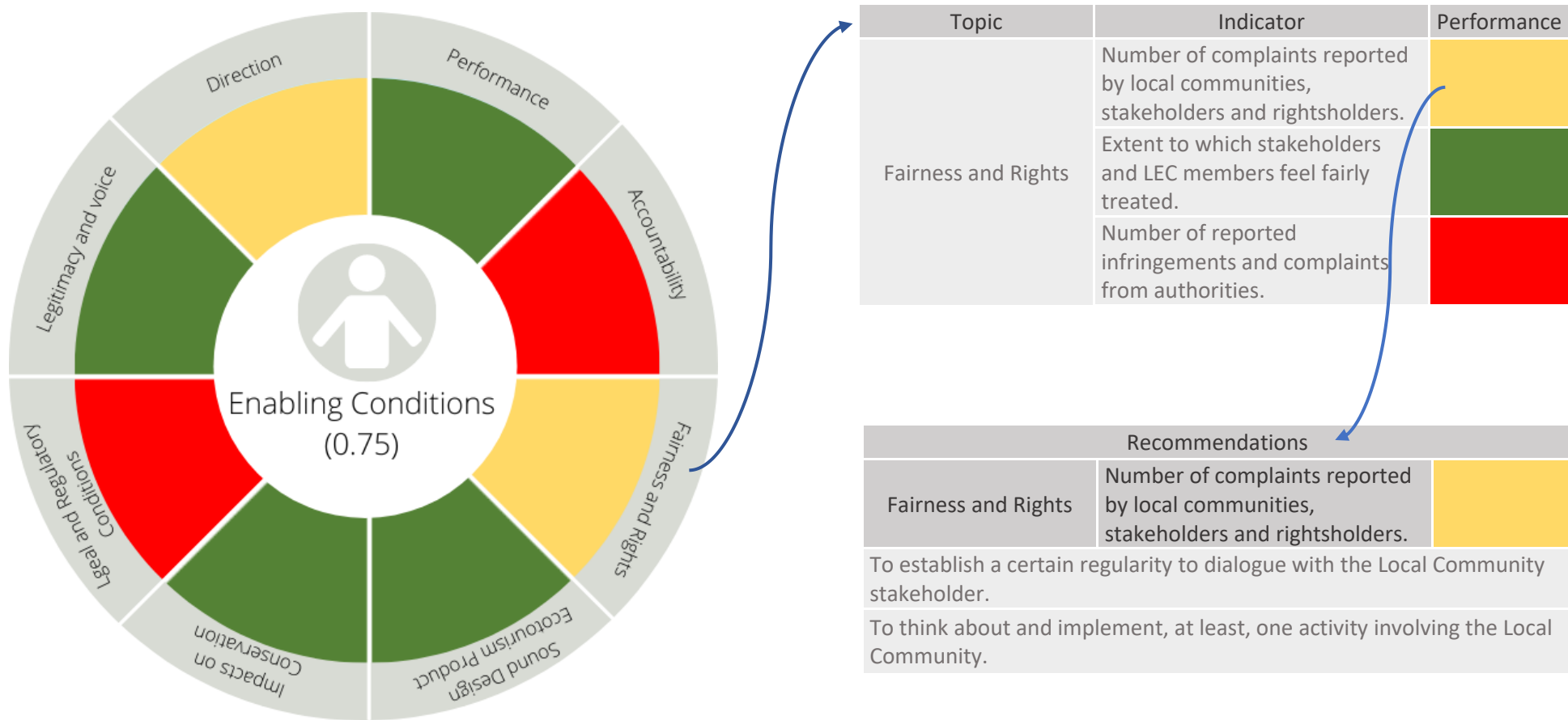


Figure 3. Detailed data visualization proposal.

