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Boosting the tourism sector in Europe through digital tools and innovation – DIGITOUR

Today, 20th December 2021, **L'Agence de Développement et d'Innovation de la Nouvelle-Aquitaine** together with 10 partnering organisations in total, representing 8 European countries, have entered into consortium agreement, based on the signed Grand Agreement, accepting to participate in the project ***“Boosting the tourism sector in Europe through digital tools and innovation – DIGITOUR (101038133)”***, funded through The Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME), entrusted by the European Commission, under the COSME Programme COS-TOURINN-2020-3-04

Since its start in 2020, tourism was one of the hardest-hit sectors by the Covid-19 outbreak at the global level. Currently, tourism SMEs are facing an acute liquidity crisis, with **losses that have reached 85%** for hotels, as well as for tour operators and travel agents. To stay afloat and remain competitive in the coming years, **SMEs need support to adapt to the new challenges and to find novel solutions for an efficient and sustainable management, the development of new products and services is a key of sustainability, and the marketing and promotion of their offer towards the needs of target customers.** Digital tools and technologies could help SMEs in this endeavour; however, the level of skills and knowledge of such tools is not equally distributed among European SMEs and even within the tourism ecosystems.

DIGITOUR project will support tourism SMEs through two types of vouchers, targeting different levels of digital maturity. The two vouchers are geared towards the achievement of different objectives:

- ⇒ **The Up-skilling and Capacity Building Voucher** is targeting individual SMEs willing to increase their skills and knowledge of digital tools and technologies to foster their competitiveness and scale-up. The aim is to improve digital skills and capacities

of tourism SMEs and increase their knowledge of digital tools and technologies through training and individual advisory support.

⇒ **The Collaboration Innovation Voucher** is targeting groups of SMEs wishing to cooperate on innovative projects at the national or transnational level. The aim is to boost innovative ideas for digital solutions by SMEs to improve their offer of products and services and their management, marketing, and promotion in novel and sustainable ways, adapting to the new challenges of the tourism sector, and to foster cross-sectoral and cross-border partnerships among tourism sector SMEs and stakeholders, and providers of innovative, digital, and smart solutions and new technologies. Through this voucher, transnational cooperative projects among SMEs will be encouraged.

Both vouchers will contribute to the achievement of the project overall objective of **sustainably increasing the competitiveness and resilience of tourism SMEs in Europe** to cope with the new challenges of the tourism sector by upskilling their digital knowledge, boosting innovative sustainable ideas and solutions, and fostering cross-border and cross-sectoral partnerships.

The DIGITOUR consortium represents organisations from the following European countries - Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Serbia and Spain, providing an illustrative picture of the European tourism panorama, from north to south, from east to west. Some of these countries are among the top world destinations for international arrivals, such as France, Spain, Italy, and Germany. Some others are emerging destinations, such as eastern countries. The project coordinator is [Venetian Cluster](#) (Italy).

L'Agence de Développement et d'Innovation de la Nouvelle-Aquitaine is highly motivated about the project execution and is committed to mutual and strong cooperation, aiming the achievement of strategic goals of the project.

Based on the number of proposals received, the number of SMEs cooperating on the second type of voucher, and the proposed budget of the project proposals, DIGITOUR expects to provide financial and non-financial support to at least 138 enterprises from 12 countries. During its 26 months of lifetime, the DIGITOUR project will create an innovation-friendly and inclusive environment to build-up and skill-up European tourism SMEs to be ready to integrate innovative digital tools in line with their specific needs and to develop novel offers and business models with the support of experts.

More information about the project timeline, events and core activities will be available soon through the official project website and its social media channels. #DIGITOUR