

## TOURBIT, the new European project aiming to foster the digitalisation of tourism SMEs, celebrates its Opening Conference in Rovaniemi

- The TOURBIT project has been awarded by the European Union under the COSME Programme aiming to support the competitiveness of the small and medium enterprises
- The opening conference took place today in Rovaniemi (Lapland, Finland) counting with 152 people registered joining both, in person and online.
- The project is addressed to tourism SMEs that want to receive support to start their digital transformation journey and to spur their uptake of new technological solutions

*Wednesday, April 6th, 2022.* – This Wednesday, the University of Applied Sciences of Lapland hosted in Rovaniemi (Lapland, Finland) the opening conference of the European project, TOURBIT, organised with the support of the Catalan Tourist Board, coordinator of the project.

The opening conference aimed at officially present the kick off of the TOURBIT project, specially within the destinations where the project will focus its activities: Belgium, Lapland (Finland), Île De France (France), Iceland, Portugal, Slovenia, and Catalonia (Spain).

It counted with the participation of a dozen of speakers representing the TOURBIT project: the Catalan Tourist Board, the Barcelona Chamber of Commerce, Paris and Co, ARCTUR, Hub Brussels, the Tourism Cluster of Iceland, the University of Applied Sciences of Lapland and NEST - Tourism Innovation Center. Moreover, two representatives from the Lappish tourism stakeholders participated to the programme, showcasing their experience on digitalisation: the Finnish Lapland Tourist Board and the family business Sallatunturin Tuvat.

Among the participants, tourism SMEs, digital experts, start-ups and business support organisations, from all over the TOURBIT destinations were present. The conference presented how the Tourbit project will support the acceleration of the digital transformation

and the innovation uptake of the Tourism SMEs while addressing different topics such as: the first steps for the digitalization journey of a tourism SMEs, the trends on digitalization and enabling technologies applied to Tourism SMEs as well as how the collaboration with technology / startups community support the competitiveness and resilience of tourism SMEs.

Regarding TOURBIT, the rector of the Lapland University of Applied Sciences, Riitta Rissanen, mentioned that the *“TOURBIT project is very important and innovative European project to promote digital tourism business ecosystem in the context of European SMEs. Lapland University of Applied Sciences is the northernmost UAS in Finland and Tourism Business is one of the key business areas in Lapland. We are very happy to be able to develop new opportunities and sustainable services for tourism together with SMEs and our global partners. It’s very obvious, that we all need new skills and capacity building to be able to tackle the challenges of green transition and digitalisation in global tourism. I’m sure, that collaboration at European level is a key to success, so I wish a fruitful collaboration in this TOURBIT - project for all of us.”*

## Actions to support tourism SMEs

The TOURBIT project plans to map new and innovative digital technologies for the tourism industry including the following 7 trending technology solutions: Data Analytics, Cloud Computing, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of things (IoT), Blockchain, Cybersecurity, Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR).

Tourism SMEs will start their journey of digital transformation with the ‘**Digital Readiness Index**’, an online self-assessment tool that will enable them to assess their state of digitalisation and recommend actions to boost it. They will LEARN more about technology tools and innovative solutions thanks to a complete programme of **webinars**.

Connexion, knowledge and collaboration between tourism SMEs and key players from the tourism, technology, and start-ups, will be encouraged through an online **community on Tourism Innovation**. **Co-creating workshops** and a virtual **hackathon** with the participation of stakeholders across Europe will complete the BUILD pillar.

Finally, as part of the TEST AND IMPLEMENT pillar, TOURBIT will also financially support 62 tourism SMEs from the 7 destinations involved in the frame of the **Digital Acceleration**

**Programme.** In each destination, partners will launch a call for proposals that will give a financial support up to 9,000€ to tourism SMEs.

## **TOURBIT, a new European Project focused on the digital transformation of tourism SMEs**

The TOURBIT project, co-funded by the European Union's COSME programme, aims to foster skills and capacity and boost the uptake of digitalisation and innovation and promoting resilient and competitive tourism SMEs.

Until June 2024, the consortium will count on 7 partners to spurring a faster transformation of the European tourism sector:

- the **Catalan Tourist Board**, leader of the TOURBIT project, in charge of promoting and supporting marketing of Catalonia's tourist resources, that runs the entrepreneurship support program "StarTechTour";
- the **Barcelona Chamber of Commerce** that provides all necessary services and means to SMEs to accelerate their digitalisation process and connects them to technology providers in Barcelona;
- **Welcome city Lab of Paris & Co**, the world's first incubator created to support innovative tourism-oriented startups;
- **ARCTUR**, Slovenia's R&D SME, promoter of the Tourism 4.0 initiative;
- the **hospitality.brussels Cluster hosted by hub.brussels** that supports Belgian tourism SMEs to integrate digitalization and technologies digital in its business strategy;
- the **Tourism Cluster of Iceland** that promotes competitiveness and value creation within the Icelandic tourism Industry;
- the **University of Applied Sciences of Lapland** in Finland, a member of the Smart and Sustainable Arctic Tourism Cluster;
- the **NEST Tourism Innovation Center** that improves the use of the technological solutions for problem solving in tourism and links technological providers and in Portugal technological needs of tourism for effective development.

TOURBIT partnership proposes a transnational and cross-ecosystem support scheme based on a framework of three pillars '**Learning, Building, Testing and Implementing**' which goal is to enable tourism SMEs to cultivate their necessary capabilities to thrive in the digital age.

More information:  
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